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The General and Her Soldiers: How Phyllis Schlafly and Eagle Forum Mobilized
the Conservative Movement

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in History

by

Kacey Calahane

Dissertation Committee:
Associate Professor Allison Perlman, Chair
Professor Judy Tzu-Chun Wu
Associate Professor Andrew Highsmith

2022

DEDICATION

To

Max and Kelly; Papa and Grandma

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VITA

Kacey Calahane

- 2011 B.A. in History, University of California, Los Angeles
- 2012-14 Grading and Teaching Assistant, Department of History, San Francisco State University
- 2014 M.A. in History, San Francisco State University
- 2014-15 Adjunct Faculty, Social and Behavioral Sciences Division, Los Medanos College
- 2016-18 Teaching Assistant, Department of History, University of California, Irvine
- 2017- Associate Faculty, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Saddleback College
- 2018-21 Editorial Assistant, *Woman and Social Movements*, University of California, Irvine
- 2019-22 Instructor, Department of History, University of California, Irvine
- 2019- Co-Host and Writer, *Historians on Housewives* Podcast
- 2021-22 Teaching Assistant and Grader, History Department, University of California, Irvine
- 2022 Ph.D. in History, University of California, Irvine

FIELD OF STUDY

History of Women, Gender, and Social Movements in 20th Century America

PUBLICATIONS

Co-Author with Faith Bennett, Emma Chapman, Charlotte Terry, Samantha de Vera, Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, Rebecca Jo Plant, Lisa Materson, and Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor in partnership with the University of California Consortium for the Studies of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Histories in the Americas (UC-WGSHA) and the *Women and Social Movements Journal*, [#EmpireSuffrageSyllabus](#), April 2021

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Television, Public History, and the Historians on Housewives Podcast,” *The Journal of Women’s History* 32 no. 4 (Winter 2020): 135-158.

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Coauthor with Jordan Mylet, “Introduction” to “Women, Gender, and Sexuality in the Archives” in *Women and Social Movements in the United States, 1600-2000* vol. 24 n. 1 (March 2020).

Coauthor with Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, “Introduction” to “Roundtable: The Body and the Body Politic” in *Women and Social Movements in the United States, 1600-2000* vol. 23 n. 2 (September 2019).

Book Review: *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth Century America* by Margot Canaday in *Ex Post Facto* vol. XXIII (2014): 33-36.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The General and Her Soldiers: How Phyllis Schlafly and Eagle Forum Mobilized the Conservative Movement

by

Kacey Calahane

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Irvine, 2022

Professor Allison Perlman, Chair

“The General and Her Soldiers: How Phyllis Schlafly and Eagle Forum Mobilized the Conservative Movement” argues that beginning in the 1960s, Phyllis Schlafly and her Eagle Forum organized a political network to erect new institutions in order to promote a conservative takeover of the Republican Party. While Schlafly and Eagle Forum are widely known for their conservative anti-feminist mobilization to block the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), Eagles were experienced activists working to consolidate conservative political power, before and after the Amendment’s defeat. By participating in movement efforts to build a powerful alternative news media, and designing activist strategy trainings, Schlafly and Eagle Forum forged alliances between grassroots activists, business leaders, and politicians. In the end, their efforts exerted a profound influence on Republican Party politics and policy in the United States. Through archival and ethnographic research, I demonstrate that Schlafly created a distinct model of conservative women’s activism that I call weaponized housewifery. This style of activism was based in the racialized logics of white womanhood and allowed Eagle Forum to function as professionally trained political activists. Schlafly and her Eagles utilized the image of the housewife as a uniform, and as a tactical weapon to deploy on the media, state legislatures, and Congress. Weaponized housewifery combined surveillance, coercion, and gendered

performativity to shape politics on interpersonal, national, and international scales. Schlafly and her Eagles applied this activism style broadly within the conservative movement before, during, and after their anti-feminist bid to block the Equal Rights Amendment. Schlafly occupied a liminal space within the movement. She was neither a member of the grassroots or the movement elite, but she inhabited both spaces simultaneously. Eagle Forum functioned in the same way. Together, Schlafly and Eagle Forum created frameworks of institutional support that continue to shape the conservative movement.

INTRODUCTION

The conservative anti-feminist Phyllis Schlafly died at age ninety-two on September 5, 2016. In the days that followed, obituary writers remembered her efforts to block the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in the 1970s, ushering in a wave of reflections about the modern history of social conservatism in America.¹ To scholars studying 1970s histories of conservatism and second-wave feminism, Schlafly was the ultimate anti-feminist villain combating the gains of the women's revolution.² But conservative activists, commentators, and politicians remembered her more fondly as their movement's iconic hero, immortalized by her crusade against women's liberation. Schlafly's campaign to prevent the passage of the ERA marked an important turning point for the conservative movement. Notably, she proved that their constituency could win at the polls against tremendous odds. For better or worse, Schlafly became the face of modern grassroots anti-feminist social conservatism in the 1970s.

Project Description

My dissertation, "The General and Her Soldiers," offers a case study of Schlafly and Eagle Forum to demonstrate that religious, libertarian, anticommunist, and neo-conservative

¹ Douglass Martin, "Phyllis Schlafly, 'First Lady' of a Political March to the Right, Dies at 92," *New York Times*, September 5, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/06/obituaries/phyllis-schlafly-conservative-leader-and-foe-of-era-dies-at-92.html>; Patricia Sullivan, "Phyllis Schlafly, a conservative activist, has died at age 92," *Washington Post*, September 5, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/phyllis-schlafly-a-conservative-activist-has-died-at-age-92/2016/09/05/513420e2-73bc-11e6-be4f-3f42f2e5a49e_story.html?utm_term=.90f41f527276; Valerie J. Nelson, "'Don't call me Ms. ... it means misery': Phyllis Schlafly, anti-feminist and conservative activist, dies at 92," *Los Angeles Times*, September 5, 2016, <http://www.latimes.com/local/obituaries/la-me-phyllis-schlafly-snap-story.html>

² For example, see: Donald T. Critchlow and Nancy MacLean, *Debating the American Conservative Movement: 1945 to the Present* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 123-176; Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016); Rebecca Klatch, *A Generation Divided: The New Left, the New Right, and the 1960s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Jane Mansbridge, *Why We Lost the ERA* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1986); Catherine E. Rymph, *Republican Women: Feminism and Conservatism from Suffrage through the Rise of the New Right* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Marjorie Spruill, *Divided We Stand: The Battle Over Women's Rights and Family Values that Polarized American Politics* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017).

coalitions overlapped in complicated ways that are often difficult to disentangle. Schlafly had a diverse set of political interests that cannot be reduced to the STOP-ERA campaign or conservative anti-feminism. As a result, this project's purpose is to examine Phyllis Schlafly's intersectionally conservative worldview and approach to activism through the institutions and coalitions she built. The chapters that follow evaluate how these structures sustained conservative activism by providing an ideological and structural foundation to facilitate long-term goals of movement mobilization. Given the institutional focus of the study this research asks how do Schlafly and her Eagles challenge historical frameworks for understanding conservative women's organizing, when the analysis is broadened beyond a grassroots narrative of anti-feminist ERA backlash in the 1970s?

I make three main arguments about Schlafly's and Eagle Forum's contributions to the development of the modern conservative movement. First, Schlafly capitalized on conservative print culture to battle over the identity over the Republican Party, helping to make it increasingly conservative. She taught readers through her books, newsletters, and activist trainings that grassroots mobilization solved every social problem. In the process, she upended the belief in the "expert opinion" to reassure followers that conservatives always knew more than experts or the mainstream media on any issue. Schlafly saw the circulation of print media as a necessary strategy to create and sustain conservative networks and institutional alliances. She used her 1960s works to amass an experienced activist following and, in the 1970s, mobilized in pursuit of cross-organizational conservative coalitions. By the 1980s, with a successful conservative coalition in operation, Schlafly's writings served as a testing ground to experiment with new

movement strategies to further consolidate movement power. This built a culture of insulated misinformation primed for the “fake news” era of the early-twenty-first century.³

Second, embracing what I call weaponized housewifery, based in racialized logics of white womanhood and functioning as professionally trained political activists, Schlafly and her Eagles utilized the image of the housewife as a uniform, and as a tactical weapon to deploy on the media, state legislatures, and Congress. For Phyllis Schlafly and Eagle Forum, the housewife was an occupation, an ideology, a symbol, and a tool that could be weaponized to shape the terms of political debate and policy outcomes. This purposeful and carefully crafted gendered performance allowed Eagles to visually shape politics on the television and within legislative halls. Their meticulously manicured appearance and activism style did not limit Eagles to anti-feminist and family values issues, but rather positioned Eagles as savvy partners within the strategizing of the movement. Eagles operated at high levels within conservative think tanks, and in elected office pursuing broad agendas to consolidate power within the Republican Party, and recruit to the conservative cause. With weaponized housewifery Schlafly and her followers shifted women’s roles within the conservative movement creating an intermediary space where Eagles both pounded the pavement and negotiated institutional relationships between grassroots activists, think tanks, businessmen, and politicians.

While Schlafly exercised a strategic weaponization of the white-middle-class housewife in promoting U.S. empire and conservative politics in the 1960s, she perfected this performance

³ For more on the importance of conservative media messaging and media networks see: Nicole Hemmer, *Messengers of the Right: Conservative Media and the Transformation of American Politics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Bruce J. Shulman and Julian E. Zelizer, *Media Nation: The Political History of News in Modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017); Kristin Kobes Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2020); Allison Perlman, *Public Interests: Media Advocacy and Struggles Over U.S. Television* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2016).

with her Eagles to block the ERA in the 1970s. Weaponized housewifery afforded Eagles great mobility within the conservative movement, especially after the defeat of the ERA in the 1980s. The accounts of Eagle Forum members and allies described Schlafly in the 1970s and beyond as their general, hero, and even as John Wayne in a skirt.⁴ The militaristic language Eagle Forum used to describe their mission underscored their dedication to imbue society with their conservative worldview.

Finally, I argue that Eagle Forum offered both the political machinery and institutional defenses necessary for ensuring long-term conservative mobilization. Beginning in 1967 with the launch of her monthly newsletter, *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, and continuing with Eagle Forum in the 1970s and later, Schlafly created a variety of legal non-profit umbrella groups alongside political action committees (PACs) as subset entities that supported the organization's cash flow while granting various legal and political protections to their mobilizing work. For example, a nonprofit tax-deductible entity called the Eagle Forum Education and Legal Defense Fund financed conservative legal cases and the production of educational movement materials, as a sort of conservative counterpoint to the NAACP. Schlafly was a forward thinking, highly skilled organizer, and an adept communicator. With the end of ERA battles in 1983, Schlafly's career within the conservative movement entered a new phase. Schlafly and Eagle Forum continuously diversified and modernized activist training and education and used political consulting to mobilize the conservative movement into a new century. Despite conservative victory with Ronald Reagan's presidency in the 1980s, Schlafly always looked to the next arena for political battle, ever ready to articulate a call to action and organize a plan for its realization.

⁴ Jayne Schindler (Eagle Forum member, Colorado), interview with author, St. Louis, Missouri, September 21, 2017.

A Biographic Overview of Phyllis Schlafly

Schlafly was born Phyllis Stewart in 1924 and came of age in a Catholic Republican household during the Great Depression in St. Louis, Missouri.⁵ She went through private Catholic schooling at Sacred Heart, where she produced her first regular newspaper for the school as a fifth grader.⁶ After graduating high school as the class valedictorian, she paid her way through college at Washington University by firing rifles and machine guns as a full-time ammunition tester in St. Louis.⁷ After finishing her bachelor's degree, Stewart then decided to pursue a Master of Arts degree in government at Radcliffe College.

She took her first job after Radcliffe in 1945, at the American Enterprise Association, which would later become the American Enterprise Institute. There Stewart engaged in conservative opposition to the New Deal from a business and policy analysis perspective as a researcher.⁸ By 1946, she found employment as a political campaign manager in St. Louis, Missouri, writing candidate speeches and press releases for Republican Claude Bakewell's House of Representatives campaign to serve Missouri's 11th District.⁹ After Bakewell won his election, Stewart moved on to the St. Louis Trust Company and the First National Bank, where she worked as a research librarian.¹⁰ Over the course of three years Stewart learned the ins and outs of writing monthly conservative newsletters from her boss, Towner Phelan; in addition to writing press releases for the president and vice presidents of the bank, Stewart became a popular speaker for local women's groups on topics of financial asset management.¹¹

⁵ Donald T. Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman's Crusade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 21-22.

⁶ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, 20.

⁷ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, 22-23.

⁸ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, 26.

⁹ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, 28.

¹⁰ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, 28.

¹¹ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, 30.

Fred Schlafly was a successful thirty-nine-year-old lawyer in Alton, Illinois, who read a recurring conservative column written by an anonymous author. One day, he decided that he needed to travel to St. Louis, Missouri, to meet the man who wrote these pieces. But upon arriving in St. Louis, he realized he was not meeting a man; instead he met twenty-four-year-old Phyllis Stewart.¹² They were soon married, and the newlywed Phyllis Schlafly moved to Alton, Illinois in 1949, where she became active in the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) and the Illinois Federation for Republican Women.¹³ Throughout the 1950s, Schlafly was a regular speaker for local Republican women's groups and DAR chapters, gaining popularity among active Republican women.¹⁴ Schlafly also took on the challenge of writing a monthly column for the DAR magazine, *The National Defender*.¹⁵ By 1962, the Illinois DAR sponsored a fifteen-minute talk radio segment for twenty-five stations called "America Wake Up!," in which Schlafly interviewed conservative guests and delivered her own thoughts on national defense issues.¹⁶

Between 1952 and 1970, Schlafly ran for Congress twice.¹⁷ In addition, she was elected President of the Illinois Federation of Republican Women in 1960, and in 1964, she was elected as a delegate to the Republican National Convention.¹⁸ By 1976, she found herself speaking on a panel with Mother Theresa titled "What Happened to Religious Life? The Laity Speaks" organized by the Institute for Religious Life (IRL) in St. Louis, Missouri. Despite the renown of Mother Theresa and the presence of a Catholic audience, the time allotted for audience questions

¹² Andy Schlafly, "Eagle Collegians Address" (speech, Washington D.C., July 10, 2018).

¹³ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, 33.

¹⁴ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, 71-72.

¹⁵ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, 72.

¹⁶ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, 72.

¹⁷ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, 38

¹⁸ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, 136.

was disproportionately skewed toward Schlafly. Attendees wanted to discuss issues related to the ERA's potential impact on the Catholic Church in America.¹⁹

Crystal Eastman and Alice Paul of the National Women's Party wrote the ERA and first introduced it to Congress in 1923, to ensure that equality of rights under the law could not be denied on the account of sex. In 1972, both houses of Congress passed the ERA with bipartisan support. Official ratification as an amendment would require the approval of thirty-eight states. Twenty-two states ratified in 1972, eight more in 1973, and five more followed by 1979. Realizing that more time was needed to secure three more states before the ratification deadline of March 22, 1979, Congress passed a ratification extension to June 30, 1982. But, because of Schlafly's STOP-ERA campaign Nebraska, Tennessee, Idaho, Kentucky, South Dakota, and North Dakota rescinded their ratifications, and the ERA was not ratified.

There was no slowing of Schlafly's career in the 1980s, with the defeat of the ERA. During Ronald Reagan's presidency he personally invited her to serve on his National Security Task Force and would call Schlafly at her home to thank her for all that she did for his administration and the Republican Party.²⁰ Beginning in 1981, Schlafly served on the Board of Governors for the secretive organization called the Council for National Policy (CNP), alongside evangelical minister Tim LaHaye, Paul Weyrich of the Heritage Foundation and the Free Congress Foundation, and William Rusher of the *National Review* to name just a few within this cohort.²¹ In her work with the CNP through the 1980s, she was the only woman to be named as a member of the National Defense Committee. She also took on multiple committee assignments

¹⁹ Phyllis Schlafly and Mary Teresa Bojaxhiu, "What Ever Happened to Religious Life? at the *International Religious Life Conference*," 21 April 1978, A0910, Audio Series, Phyllis Schlafly Center, Clayton, MO.

²⁰ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, 274, 291.

²¹ Council for National Policy Pamphlet, 1988, MSS77641, Box 148, Folder 3, William A Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., (hereafter cited as Council for National Policy Pamphlet, 1988).

and participated as a member of the Committee on Communications, the Subcommittee on Television, Cable and Satellite Broadcasting, and she chaired the Committee on the Family.²² The readers of *Conservative Digest* also voted her the Most Popular Female Conservative nationally numerous years in a row in the 1980s beating Nancy Reagan and other prominent women, like Concerned Women for America's Beverly LaHaye.²³

Aside from offering conservative policy advice as a tireless strategist and activist for movement causes, she was also an accomplished lawyer who authored twenty-six books. In 2003, more than three thousand GOP leaders awarded Schlafly the recognition of being the "Conservative Movement's Founding Mother."²⁴ Until her death on September 5, 2016, Schlafly continued to endorse candidates, publish her weekly *Phyllis Schlafly Report* newsletters, and organize Eagle Forum, which was the conservative organization she founded in 1972. In her final months, she was a staunch supporter of Donald Trump's 2016 Presidential campaign, and she penned *The Conservative Case for Trump* shortly before her death.²⁵

Throughout her adult life Schlafly could be found working, often behind the scenes, in countless conservative and Republican Party projects and in a vast array of grassroots organizations, and top-level political strategy meetings. As many scholars and pundits have noted, Schlafly occupied an important space as a public expert on conservative morality. However, she also shaped foreign and domestic policy platforms and the institutions that sustained the movement's political power. Her organization, Eagle Forum, emerged publicly in

²² Council for National Policy Pamphlet, 1988.

²³ Scrapbooks, July-September 1981, MSS85568, Box 10, Vol. 34, Paul M Weyrich Scrapbooks 1942-2009, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Scrapbooks, March-May 1983, MSS85568, Box 12, Vol. 42, Paul M Weyrich Scrapbooks 1942-2009, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

²⁴ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, 270.

²⁵ Phyllis Schlafly, Ed Martin, and Brett Decker, *The Conservative Case for Trump* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 2016).

the media as an anti-feminist institution working to block the passage of the ERA in the 1970s, but it simultaneously engaged a plethora of other issues. Eagle Forum developed ties to a cadre of business leaders, politicians, and allied organizations in a strategic plan for conservative ascension in the 1970s and 1980s. In the process Schlafly and Eagle Forum gained notoriety within the movement as a critical organization for ensuring conservative coalition and victories beyond the defeat of the ERA.²⁶

Historiography

Historians situate the growth and goals motivating the rise of the New Right in America by asking questions about who, where, when, and what animated the conservative ascendancy.²⁷

There are roughly four schools of thought on this topic. Some historians highlighted the rampant white supremacy and racism that fueled the white reaction to desegregation and integration in metropolitan centers, and in various political organizations as a catalyst for social backlash.²⁸

Others argue that the New Right emerged out of class anxieties spawned from the redistribution

²⁶ Conservative politicians continue to praise Schlafly's first book *A Choice Not An Echo* from 1964 as an essential ideological primer, in addition to hailing her defeat of the ERA as one of the most important political victories of the twentieth century; Jay Ashcroft, "Speech at Eagle Council" (speech, St. Louis, MO, September 22, 2017).

²⁷ This is the working characterization of the New Right for this project, which is used interchangeably with the conservative movement. The term New Right emerged after the Second World War to describe the ideology of conservative activists who were united in an intellectual effort to fight Cold War communism. While anticommunism remained a tent pole issue of the New Right, the movement was splintered off into an array of ideas that potentially conflicted with one another. This diverse movement included moral crusaders who worked to curb perceived immoral or unnatural behavior while reintroducing traditional values into the body politic. The social conservative wing of the New Right included religious fundamentalists who preached born-again evangelism as a means of governing state policy. But it also housed fiscal libertarians who used anti-statist rhetoric to champion the deregulation of the marketplace. The New Right first mobilized during the failed Barry Goldwater campaign of 1964 but emerged triumphant with the presidential election of Ronald Reagan in 1980.

²⁸ Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta: and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Joseph Crespino, *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

of wealth from the New Deal and the rise of unionism.²⁹ They credit the need to dismantle New Deal policies and institutions to safeguard elite white hegemony. A third camp of scholars analyzed gender dynamics within the family and larger society in the context of McCarthyism, the feminist movement, and the radical politics of the 1960s, finding that paternalistic gender ideology catalyzed conservatives' activism and ideological transformation.³⁰ These scholars center the labor of rank-and-file housewives in understanding the grassroots growth of the conservative movement in neighborhoods across America. Women became the "suburban warriors" and "kitchen table activists" who advocated a populist conservative message.³¹ The fourth group of scholars locate catalysts to mobilize the movement in reactionary evangelical religious conviction to the *Roe v Wade* decision in 1973, and other social issues perceived as a plague to the born-again Christian community.³² Of course there are overlapping emphases within works as scholars frequently incorporate elements of more than one of these schools of thought into their analysis.

Scholars who incorporated Phyllis Schlafly into their New Right narratives have narrowly focused on her as an anti-feminist activist who fundamentally reshaped the Republican Party by promoting social conservatism. However, this characterization of Schlafly's contribution to the movement truncates her influence over the grassroots and the character of the

²⁹ Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009); Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

³⁰ Michelle M. Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism: Women and the Postwar Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Robert O. Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2013); Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2015); Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Mary Brennan, *Wives, Mothers & the Red Menace: Conservative Women and the Crusade Against Communism* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2011).

³¹ McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 4, 6.

³² Bethany Moreton, "'Why Is There So Much Sex in Christian Conservatism and Why Do So Few Historians Care Anything about It?,'" *The Journal of Southern History* LXXV, no. 2 (August 2009); Rebecca E. Klatch, *Women of the New Right*.

Republican Party. While these studies may mention Schlafly's anticommunist activism around the 1964 Barry Goldwater presidential campaign, they emphasize her leadership and mobilization in support of conservative anti-feminism. For instance, Rebecca Klatch's *Women of the New Right* argues that the movement was split between two kinds of conservatism: social and economic; within this model, Schlafly headed the social conservative wing of the movement and was defined by her anti-feminist attack on the ERA.³³ This framing leaves little room to explore Schlafly's roots in the banking industry, her campaign work, and Cold War defense writing where she built a loyal following in the decades before the 1970s ERA battle.

In *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism* Donald Critchlow's biography of Schlafly foregrounds the importance of grassroots activism to the rise of conservatism and highlights the crucial role of women in this process. He argued Schlafly was significant to conservatism, "because she helped translate the ideas of intellectuals and anticommunist authors to the grassroots... her mental world was that of a partisan and a polemicist, not that of an intellectual who carefully delineated subtleties of logic and gradations of argument."³⁴ In effect, Critchlow casts Schlafly in a role as a translator for the rank-and-file, despite her success as an anticommunist foreign policy writer and organizational innovator in her own right. According to Critchlow then, the grassroots were not places where legitimate forms of intellectual thought were exchanged; rather it only paralleled the development of intellectual conservatism. There is thus a gendered discrepancy, even among historians, not only over who, but for what reasons someone can be considered a symbolic figure, or leader, within the trajectory of the conservative movement. My emphasis on weaponized housewifery challenges Critchlow's work by linking Schlafly's ideology of womanhood to the maintenance of structural racism and the U.S. empire,

³³ Klatch, *Women of the New Right*, 50, 51, 54.

³⁴ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, 41.

and the way Eagle Form functioned as institutional coalition builders supporting the growth of the movement.

Mary Brennan's *Wives, Mothers, and the Red Menace* focuses more on Schlafly's anticommunist activism than Klatch or Critchlow. Understanding Cold War anticommunist women as reinvigorating nineteenth-century ideologies of separate spheres and Republican Motherhood, Brennan argues that anticommunist women saw their political efforts as fulfilling a duty to their families and communities without undermining men. The activism of the women Brennan studied was bound up in their embrace of traditional gender roles, but they entered the public sphere to mobilize at the grassroots and transform institutions. In the process these wives and mothers reshaped how the threat of anti-communism was understood. Brennan contends that "Because women on the Right theoretically supported status quo gender roles, advocating women's political participation contradicted their underlying principles.... They could avoid appearing hypocritical, however, by explaining their behavior as a temporary breach of the norm required by the serious threat of Communism."³⁵ According to Brennan, anticommunist women "posed no threat to the power structure. ... they became a storm trooper for patriarchal dominance," noting that "These women felt compelled to... save their party and their country."³⁶ In building on Brennan's work I situate Schlafly and many of her followers were anti-New Deal activists before the Cold War, so anticommunism was not their induction to politics. While it is true that Schlafly and her Eagles capitalized on their whiteness and gender as a tool to reinforce the patriarchal nuclear family in ways that men could not, Schlafly and her Eagles played leading and co-equal roles to male movement leaders, not subservient ones. Moreover, they actively organized around the internal battle within the Republican Party between its conservative and

³⁵ Brennan, *Wives, Mothers, and the Red Menace*, 9, 102.

³⁶ Brennan, *Wives, Mothers, and the Red Menace*, 9.

establishment factions in the 1960s and 1970s to shift party politics further right. Schlafly's and Eagle Forum's activism created institutional coalitions that transformed the Republican Party and redefined conservative women's roles within the movement.

Few histories of the conservative movement engage Schlafly outside of her anti-feminist activism. But as Nicole Hemmer shows in *Messengers of the Right*, Phyllis Schlafly was an organizer who used "her writing [as] an adjunct of her political work rather than the central mode."³⁷ Rather, I suggest that Schlafly straddled the line of grassroots organizing and movement leadership, and as such her writing was integral to her political work before, during, and after the ERA. Additionally, Elizabeth Gillespie McRae's emphasis on white women's grassroots efforts to maintain segregation in *Mothers of Massive Resistance* situates Schlafly within a post-war "network of female segregationists" mobilizing to protect Jim Crow systems and states' rights.³⁸ This research expands on this facet of Schlafly's organizing.

Building upon these studies, my dissertation further expands the space these authors created to reevaluate Schlafly and Eagle Forum's motivations within the movement before and after the ERA. In the 1960s, Schlafly used conservative media to link segregationists, staunch Cold War warriors, and libertarians; mainstream media noticed Schlafly in the 1970s, when she used the ERA as a vehicle to integrate the religious right and neoconservatives into a successful coalition. Expanding our framework for understanding Schlafly's position within the movement before the 1970s contextualizes the ERA defeat. Anti-feminism was not the tipping point to the movement but created the conditions to capitalize on party realignment within the GOP that had been in progress for decades.

³⁷ See: Nicole Hemmer, *Messengers of the Right*, 230.

³⁸ See: Elizabeth Gillespie McRae, *Mothers of Massive Resistance: White Women and the Politics of White Supremacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 5, 163.

This project's exploration of weaponized housewifery expands and compliments previous biographical work on Schlafly and other female leaders within the movement, such as Ayn Rand and Jeane Kirkpatrick, to name but a few.³⁹ Whereas Schlafly was a life-long conservative activist and organizer, Rand was a staunchly anti-religion and pro-life Russian-born libertarian philosopher and writer. For her part, Kirkpatrick was a democratic feminist that defected into the movement as a neo-conservative working as the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations under Ronald Reagan. Collectively the biographical scholarship on Rand, Kirkpatrick, and Schlafly demonstrate multiple pathways for entering and existing within the conservative movement.⁴⁰ The experience of conservative women was no less dynamic, contentious, or integral to the growth of the New Right than their male counterparts. Exploring the capaciousness of conservative movement ideology and motivating issues, along with these different avenues of activism, more fully accounts for the essential labors that women performed within the movement.

Literature on women and the conservative movement predominately takes two different approaches for framing activism. Some scholars examine women's grassroots mobilization against social issues like desegregation, feminism, birth control and abortion, school curriculum, and Cold War anxieties.⁴¹ Others focus on women's work within the Republican Party and

³⁹ See: Sylvia Bashevkin, *Women as Foreign Policy Leaders: National Security and Gender Politics in Superpower America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); Jennifer Burns, *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Peter Collier, *Political Woman: The Big Little Life of Jeane Kirkpatrick* (New York: Encounter Books, 2012).

⁴⁰ See: Bashevkin, *Women as Foreign Policy Leaders*; Burns, *Goddess of the Market*; Peter Collier, *Political Woman*; Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*.

⁴¹ For discussions of conservative women's grassroots mobilization around social issues see: Mary C Brennan, *Wives, Mothers and the Red Menace*; Donald T. Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*; Donald T. Critchlow and Nancy MacLean, *Debating the American Conservative Movement*; Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*; Rebecca E. Klatch, *A Generation Divided*; Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*; Elizabeth Gillespie McRae, *Mothers of Massive Resistance*; Michelle Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism*; Robert O. Self, *All in the Family*; Marjorie Spruill, *Divided We Stand*; Stacie Taranto, *Kitchen Table Politics: Conservative Women and Family Values in the Seventies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).

auxiliary organizations to shift party politics.⁴² My research merges and compliments the historiography of the conservative movement to show that conservative women within Eagle Forum organized at the grassroots level, and also wielded significant institutional power at the national level in ways that both participated within and eluded Republican Party control. Until now, this facet of the conservative movement has escaped historical inquiry because the strategies women in Eagle Forum deployed fell outside existing analytical frames for understanding the ways women participated in conservative politics.

Histories of conservative women's organizing emphasize the local dimensions of activism and note their national impacts, but Eagle Forum was, and remains, a simultaneously local and national organization.⁴³ Moreover, the important concepts that historians use to frame conservative women's organizing like the "suburban warrior," the "kitchen table activist," or the "housewife populist" rely on centering the home and the housewife in a bottom-up grassroots women's mobilization.⁴⁴ Yet, applying these historical frames to Eagle Forum fails to capture the scale, militancy, and mobilizing focus of the organization's activism. Eagle Forum operates both from the bottom up and top down of the conservative movement. Addressing Eagle Forum as just a grassroots organization eclipses the political power members exercised as individuals working their day jobs within leadership positions at places like the Heritage Foundation, the

⁴² For a discussion of club women within the Republican National Committee and auxiliary organizations see Catherine Rymph, *Republican Women*.

⁴³ For works on conservative women's local mobilization see: Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*; Michelle Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism*; Marjorie Spruill, *Divided We Stand*; Stacie Taranto, *Kitchen Table Politics*.

⁴⁴ Lisa McGirr's "suburban warrior" waged a 1960s counter-revolution to make conservatism electorally mainstream through housewives' "kitchen table activism" enlisting their familial and female communities into a grassroots network of movement participants in the suburbs of Orange County, California. Stacie Taranto built upon McGirr's framework of kitchen table activism in her study of Catholic women's pro-life mobilization in New York, arguing that kitchen table politics allowed housewives to work outside the structures of the Republican Party to make the GOP more conservative, all while being newcomers to political organizing. Michelle Nickerson's concept of "housewife populism" post-war WWII based women's political claims on their status within their communities, protecting their neighborhoods from "outside elitists" as a means to increase their own social power. See McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*; Taranto, *Kitchen Table Politics*, 9; Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism*, xv, 34.

American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), and as elected representatives themselves.⁴⁵

Schlafly and her Eagles did not “humbly cede the limelight to men” but rather worked alongside them as invaluable interlocuters strategizing for more effective mobilization.⁴⁶

There is an important historical distinction to be made between housewife activists and the conservative anti-feminist women of Eagle Forum who were housewives but who put considerable effort into grooming a specific image of housewifery. As a descriptor “housewife” is not a stable category of identity or analysis, even within the context of studying the white women who mobilized within the conservative movement. Eagle Forum’s members may have found their entry into the movement via housewife populism or in a suburban warrior type setting around their kitchen table, but their own activist lives evolved and ascended to a different kind of movement profile as they worked alongside Phyllis Schlafly. Schlafly’s activist roots came from anti-New Deal, Cold War anti-communism, and anti-integration massive resistance ideologies.⁴⁷ Understanding Eagle Forum activism as a form of backlash politics to women’s

⁴⁵ For example: Marylin Shannon was a founding Eagle and her work with Schlafly inspired her to serve as an Oregon State Senator; likewise, Kathleen Teague (now Kathleen Teague Rothschild) was a founding Eagle and the Founder and State Chairman for the Virginia Stop ERA. However, Teague also concurrently served on the Board of Directors for the Free Congress Foundation, the Board of Governors for the Council for National Policy (CNP) and served as the Executive Director for the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). Teague and Schlafly worked closely in coalition within these organizations.

⁴⁶ Nickerson’s housewife populism relied on maternalism as a foundation to address political issues without stepping beyond the white middle-class respectability of the domestic sphere, see Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism*, 34.

⁴⁷ For a discussion about organizing against integration and school bussing, including massive resistance, and the closely related phenomenon of white flight and how it shaped metropolitan development and national politics see: Kevin Kruse, *White flight*; Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Elizabeth Gillespie McRae, *Mothers of Massive Resistance*; Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). The accompanying phenomenon of deindustrialization in the 1960s and 1970s demonstrated the failings of liberalism as much as it energized the conservative movement as the economy transitioned to a post-industrial service economy further devastating metropolitan areas already effected by white flight. For more see: Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003); Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: the 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: New Press, 2012); Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London: Verso, 2006); Tom Frank, *One Market Under God: Extreme Capitalism, Market Populism, and the End of Economic Democracy* (New York: Vintage Press, 2002); Lily Geismer, *Don't Blame Us: Suburban Liberals and the Transformation of the Democratic Party* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Andrew Highsmith, *Demolition Means Progress: Flint Michigan and the Fate of the American Metropolis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Guian McKee,

liberation truncates conservative women's movement and ideological history. Schlafly and many of her Eagles were connected through those movement channels via official GOP women's clubs like the National Federation of Republican Women (NFRW), and they also found each other through organizations like the John Birch Society. Ultimately, Eagle Forum operated as an institution that could bring together conservative women to mobilize both inside and outside of the official structures of the Republican Party to facilitate right-wing growth in a way that made radical right-wing politics respectable, because of the performative character of the white American middle-class housewife.

Schlafly and her Eagles were seasoned political veterans, who had access to political elites that most conservative women's grassroots organizations did not. Moreover, they eagerly controlled the terms of conservative policy debates at local, state, and federal levels of government through their mainstream media outreach practices. Their successes in the 1970s and beyond resulted from a myriad of activities including founding and funding political action committees (PAC) lobbying, coalition building, tactical media training, winning elected office in their local districts and states, and becoming delegates to the Republican National Committee. The home remained an essential site of their local organizing efforts, but Eagle Forum's mission connected all levels of political organizing to interlace local and national issues as one and the same project.

Reevaluating the institutional history of the conservative movement through Phyllis Schlafly's career and the structure of Eagle Forum further complicates historical understandings of conservative mobilization since the 1960s, because there is no regional relationship between

The Problem of Jobs: Liberalism, Race, and Deindustrialization in Philadelphia (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014); Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer, *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

the organization and its activism. Schlafly ran the national headquarters of Eagle Forum from her home in Alton, Illinois, while influential chapters emerged in nearly every state, including California, Oregon, Colorado, and North Dakota. As such, the history of Eagle Forum does not fit within Sunbelt or Bible Belt narratives of conservative mobilization.⁴⁸ Eagle Forum operated across the United States bringing together ideologies of social conservatism, the religious right, libertarianism, and anticommunism. This expansive political commitment allowed for coalition with businessmen, retired military leaders, conservative intellectuals, the Moral Majority, and policy think tanks like the Heritage Foundation and ALEC. Schlafly was invested in the conservative project of deregulating national institutions created during the New Deal and worked tirelessly to motivate a large coalition to invest in this decades-long project. Yet the literature typically associates this movement labor with intellectuals and men from the business

⁴⁸ According to historian Matthew Lassiter after WWII “the metropolitan sunbelt replaced the rural Black Belt as the center of political power in the South” and was “dominated by the interests of large corporations and the priorities of white-collar suburbs,” See: Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 3. This expanse from Virginia to California emerged through the combination of New Deal subsidies through the Federal Housing Administration and GI Bill in tandem with Cold War military-industrial complex investment through the South and West. Lassiter notes that the “single-family suburban neighborhood and the postindustrial Sunbelt economy emerged as the dominant methods of social organization... and the clear [fulcrum] of political power” (See: Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 11). The important distinction between the Sunbelt and the Rustbelt is that the Sunbelt employed a postindustrial wage work service economy as opposed to the deindustrializing economy of the Rustbelt in the 1960s and 1970s. For more about the Sunbelt and the conservative movement see: Joseph Crespi, *In search of Another Country*; Kevin Kruse, *White flight*; McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*; Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart*; Kim Phillips-Fein and Julian E. Zelizer, *What's Good for Business: Business and American Politics since World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Elizabeth Tandy Shermer, *Barry Goldwater and the Remaking of the American Political Landscape* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013); Schulman and Zelizer, *Rightward Bound*; Elizabeth Tandy Shermer, *Sunbelt Capitalism Phoenix and the Transformation of American Politics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015). Bible Belt refers to the evangelical Southern United States and the influential role of religion for shaping society and politics. For a discussion of evangelism and the religious right within the conservative movement see: Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sun Belt: Plain Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2011); Seth Dowland, *Family Values and the Rise of the Christian Right* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Kobes Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne*; Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America* (New York: Basic Books, 2016); Stephen P. Miller, *Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart*; Bruce J. Schulman, and Julian E. Zelizer, *Faithful Republic: Religion and Politics in Modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Schulman and Zelizer, *Rightward Bound*; Daniel K. Williams, *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

community.⁴⁹ Women, on the other hand, are relegated to grassroots activities. But Phyllis Schlafly and Eagle Forum trained grassroots and high-profile movement participants alike functioning as an important interlocutor for those at both the top and the bottom of the movement. And while business began PAC lobbying in the 1970s so too did Eagle Forum. The creation of PAC marked Eagles as an interest group that could provide essential funding for conservative campaigns and initiatives, further demonstrating that there is not a clear separation between men's and women's work organizing the conservative ascendancy.⁵⁰

Interrogating Schlafly's organizing strategies and movement goals offers new perspectives on the success of the conservative movement and the rise of Trumpism while providing more nuance to discussions of citizenship, white womanhood, race, and empire in the United States within contemporary American politics. Schlafly and her Eagles demonstrate the limitations and gendering of archival research that scholarship on the conservative movement perpetuates. Gendered assumptions about who wielded political power and what that looked like in the late-twentieth century too often leave conservative women uncredited for intellectual, institutional, and financial organizing abilities and interests within the movement. Working as political operatives, Schlafly and Eagle Forum helped bolster anti-democratic politics of sexism, racism, and empire within the nation's most powerful institutions.

⁴⁹ For a discussion of male businessmen, and intellectuals shaping the conservative movement see: Kruse, *One Nation Under God*; Nancy MacLean, *Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan for America* (New York: Viking Press, 2017); Gary Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2006); Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart*; Robert E. Mutch, *Buying the Vote: A History of Campaign Finance Reform*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands*; Phillips-Fein and Zelizer, *What's Good for Business*; Daniel T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2012); Shermer, *Barry Goldwater and the Remaking of the American Political Landscape*; Shermer, *Sunbelt Capitalism*. Perhaps historian Jennifer Burns' *Goddess of the Market* is an outlier here in that it focuses on Ayn Rand as a female intellectual influencing the conservative movement. See: Jennifer Burns, *Goddess of the Market*.

⁵⁰ For a discussion about the history of PAC funding see: Benjamin C. Waterhouse, *Lobbying America: The Politics of Business from Nixon to NAFTA* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013); Mutch, *Buying the Vote*.

Sources and Methods

I construct an institutional history of the conservative movement with Phyllis Schlafly's and Eagle Forum's ideas and relationships at the center. Archival material from the Phyllis Schlafly Center in St. Louis, Missouri, is the foundational source base for *The General and Her Soldiers*. This research is the first to make extensive use of the Center's private collections of recordings beyond the ERA files.⁵¹ My research focuses on records pertaining to the structuring, training, and expansion of Eagle Forum since the 1960s, tracing a web of Schlafly's institutional alliances and how they influenced the conservative movement. By excavating Schlafly's documentation of private activist training seminars I connect the various organizations, politicians, and activists that came to Schlafly's Eagle Forum to build coalitions within the conservative movement.

I corroborated evidence in Schlafly's files using archives at the Library of Congress. In addition, ethnographic research from private Eagle Forum activist seminars and oral histories with Eagle Forum founding members and staff illuminated individual experiences within Eagle Forum and offered deeper insight into longstanding recruitment and coalition practices. As such, my methodology diverges from previous studies of Schlafly in two significant ways. First, by emphasizing institutional networks that supported conservative mobilization. And second, by reframing the focus of Schlafly's activism to account for her contributions before and after the ERA battle.

⁵¹ Spruill's *Divided We Stand*, and Critchlow's *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism* used materials from the Phyllis Schlafly Center Archive, but Spruill's work was focused on ERA files and Critchlow's biography of Schlafly likewise focused much more on the anti-feminist maneuvering around the ERA rather than Eagle Forum's organizational practices and the institutional relationships Schlafly built.

Each chapter opens and closes with an anecdote from my participant observation at private Eagle Forum events. Including these ethnographic passages captures the relationship between Schlafly, her Eagles, and the conservative movement through member testimony. These accounts influenced the way I framed archival findings as they provided insight into difficult to quantify historical phenomena, whether it be Schlafly's personal charisma or the deeply held ideological beliefs driving Eagle Forum activism. These anecdotes situate Schlafly in a larger landscape of political relationships, demonstrating concrete ways that Phyllis Schlafly built and sustained conservative institutions and coalitions. Eagles and allies continue to canonize Schlafly as a crucial interlocuter for movement leaders and grassroots participants. Eagle Forum continues to provide an ideological, methodological, and political foundation to facilitate the growth of conservative movement mobilization. Their ongoing veneration of Schlafly legitimizes their work since her death.

Chapter Overviews

What follows are three chronological and thematic chapters focusing on Schlafly's life and legacy. Chapter one maps Schlafly's activism around foreign policy, anticommunism, and national defense from 1945 to 1967. This chapter reorients our understanding of Schlafly to broaden analysis of her as an anticommunist and media savvy grassroots organizer. I explore the way she operated within conservative circles as an institutional and organizing innovator. She was simultaneously a representative of the political establishment and a grassroots activist, transforming both ends of the conservative movement through her communication style. Schlafly and those that followed her in what would become Eagle Forum were skilled political tacticians shaping the conservative ascension of the late-twentieth century.

Chapter two considers the way Schlafly's monthly newsletter, *The Phyllis Schlafly Report (PSR)* dispersed conservative ideology and mobilization strategies from 1967 to 1989, and in the process contributed to the formation of an alternative conservative news media. Analyzing the circulation, distribution, political messaging, and impact of the *PSR*, I chart how Schlafly mobilized a big-tent conservative ideology before, during, and after the STOP-ERA campaign. In the 1960s, the *PSR* looked to network grassroots organizations to each other; by the 1970s, it linked grassroots activists to movement institutions, and by the 1980s, tested strategies to transition the New Right into a new era of wielding more permanent political power within America. The *PSR*'s monthly publication held two sections: Section One and Section Two. However, the bi-monthly release that marked Section Two did not become a staple of the newsletter until Schlafly began fighting the ERA. Significantly, Section Two addressed women's liberation and the ERA whereas Section One continued to cover foreign policy, national defense, and other conservative issues. By the 1980s, Section Two of the *PSR* became a place for Schlafly to consistently advocate for judicial control as a solution to the culture wars and as a means of leveraging a consistent conservative view within the federal government. Mapping the conservative movement through the *PSR* we see a methodical attention to organization, recruitment, and coalition building, and the blending of conservative issues beyond the ERA and anti-feminism.

Chapter three looks to the practical application of Phyllis Schlafly's institution building practices through the process of Eagle Forum activist trainings. I examine Eagle Forum media and lobbying trainings during the ERA battles from the 1970s through 1980s, to assess the way that Schlafly taught members to deploy a weaponized housewifery. Eagles turned the housewife into a strategic weapon, and an organizational uniform, that reproduced the image of Phyllis

Schlafly in the tens of thousands, while providing a degree of camouflage to preform other movement labors as a sort of specialized politicking force. Weaponized housewifery involved surveillance, coercion, and manipulation, on local, national, international levels. At times, it could even be deployed interpersonally between conservative women.

The dissertation concludes with an assessment the ways that Eagle Forum was fractured by the pro-Trump and Never-Trump split within the Republican Party with the election of 2016. The Schlafly family fractured over the election, just as many families did across the nation in 2016. Amidst the chaos of this “coup,” or rightful passage of leadership, depending on the perspective, the organization now operates as two separate entities with no connection aside from legal battles: Eagle Forum and Phyllis Schlafly Eagles. Both entities claim to be the rightful Schlafly heirs carrying on her mobilizing mission.

I attended Eagle Forum’s annual Eagle Council, a private three-day political activist leadership and strategy conference in St. Louis, Missouri, in September of 2017. This gathering marked the one-year anniversary of Schlafly’s death. Eagles were still grieving her loss while celebrating all that they believed she would find exciting about the Trump presidency. As the event was closed to press and meant only for Eagle Forum and their close allies, my presence was instantly noted by members. Eagles nervously shifted, whispered to each other pointing at me. At the opening State of the Organization address Phyllis Schlafly Eagles President, Ed Martin, started his speech announcing that he had invited me after vetting my credentials, noting that I was in fact a “researcher.” He asked that members stop reporting my presence to him and other organization staff, because they were not going to throw me out. Martin encouraged them

to sit and speak with me about Schlafly and what they do as Eagles.⁵² Despite Martin’s blessing Eagles cautiously watched me. I soon understood the significance of this coordinated surveillance as state-level leaders followed Martin’s address with five-minute check-ins about their coordinated local work over the past year.

Kitty Werthmann of South Dakota was the first to kick off the “Eagle Reports.”

Werthmann had been one of Schlafly’s most trusted friends and state-level leaders since the 1970s. Werthmann even accompanied Schlafly and a few other key Eagle leaders to Geneva in 1985, to show support to then President Ronald Reagan at the Geneva Summit.⁵³ She began her remarks asserting that “Phyllis Schlafly was our General, and we Eagles were her troops... We were her soldiers, ... We had to do what she expected of us.”⁵⁴ Even with Schlafly’s death her Eagles framed their mission as carrying on Schlafly’s work of building a conservative America. The Eagles were and remain a tight-knit group of activists committed to the vanguard of conservative institutional and grassroots mobilization. They are ever watchful to identify those who will help them in their project and those would impede their progress. I raised their suspicions, yet they appreciated my desire to write a history about Schlafly and Eagle Forum.⁵⁵ The chapters that follow detail what Phyllis Schlafly, the General, expected of her soldiers.

⁵² Ed Martin, “State of the Organization at Eagle Council” (speech, St. Louis, MO, September 22, 2017).

⁵³ Kitty Werthmann, “Eagle Reports” (speech, St. Louis, MO, September 22, 2017). One of the scheduled events for Eagle Council was a celebration commemorating the Eagles that went with Schlafly to the Geneva Summit in 1985.

⁵⁴ Kitty Werthmann, “Eagle Reports.”

⁵⁵ In part I raised intense suspicions because as Eagles asked if I was excited for their end of Council rally, I kept replying that I would be back in California before it could begin. The Eagles were set to host then Presidential Advisor and Breitbart News Executive Chairman Steve Bannon. Extra security measures to protect against local protests to this gathering were in place, which took the form of security guards, police, and various credential checks inside the hosting conference hotel. I left the hotel around four in the morning on the final day to ensure I was safely to the airport before Bannon’s arrival and the ensuing protests.

CHAPTER 1: BECOMING THE GENERAL

In September 2017, I attended Eagle Council as a researcher. Council is the annual leadership training and education conference for Eagle Forum, the organization founded in 1972 and led by Phyllis Schlafly until her death in 2016. The Friday and Saturday evening dinner banquets at Council mark special celebratory award ceremonies. The two major recognitions awarded annually are highlights for Eagles in attendance and include the Phyllis Schlafly Homemaker of the Year Award and the Phyllis Schlafly Leadership Award. At the 2017 Eagle Council, John Schlafly, the eldest of the six Schlafly children, presented the Leadership Award to former Attorney General Edwin Meese III, who served during the Reagan administration from 1985 to 1988.¹

As Meese proudly accepted this Eagle Forum honor, he was pleased to be in the company of others who had received this acknowledgement, like then-Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Moreton Blackwell. Blackwell was a long-time conservative activist who came of age in the Young Americans for Freedom and went on to establish the Leadership Institute in 1979 as a conservative recruitment, education, and training organization; he was also a long-time ally to Eagle Forum and friend to Phyllis Schlafly.² In addition to expressing his fondness for previous winners, Meese proclaimed that the primary reason to have sentimental attachment to the award was that it carried Phyllis Schlafly's name. This was not just any conservative leadership award

¹ Meese had a long career of working alongside Ronald Reagan both gubernatorially and presidentially. In California as Governor Reagan's Chief of Staff, Meese advocated meeting the student protests free speech movement at Berkeley's People's Park with an occupation by the National Guard. Meese went on to serve on Reagan's Presidential transition team and went on to be the Counselor to the President from 1981-1985 before becoming Reagan's Attorney General from 1985-1988. He was investigated, but not charged, in the Iran-Contra Scandal, but ultimately resigned from office because of the Wedtech Scandal after the Congressional Independent Counsel charged Meese with complicity covering up the unethical awarding of government contracts. Meese continues his work within the conservative movement working in think tanks and public policy councils including the Heritage Foundation, Stanford University's Hoover Institute, and the Federalist Society.

² Edwin Meese III, "Phyllis Schlafly Leadership Award at Eagle Council" (speech, St. Louis, MO, September 23, 2017).

to him. He insisted that “Phyllis Schlafly never believed that she wouldn’t succeed” and that the only person as “optimistic” as Schlafly was Ronald Reagan. In touting her accomplishments as reason enough to be verklempt over Eagles’ recognizing him in this way, he noted that aside from the “ERA [Equal Rights Amendment], the life issue, and protecting the constitution... she kept ballistic missile defense alive before it was picked up and allowed Reagan to take it over in 1983.”³

It was no surprise that Meese made this connection between Schlafly and Reagan. For conservatives Schlafly was the woman who single-handedly defeated the ERA and that commemorates a joint victory within the movement, closely linking the end of ERA with the Ronald Reagan presidency. But Schlafly was not just an important mainstream media face for the movement. Schlafly is the person conservatives acknowledge as being a critical force behind changing the Republican Party Plank to align with the pro-life movement. As Meese intimates, she was known and remembered for being a fierce defender of U.S. empire amidst the Cold War. Long before the ERA battles of the 1970s, in fact, Schlafly developed a reputation in conservative circles for her work on national defense and Cold War strategy. She routinely received accolades from conservatives as an expert on U.S. militarization strategies throughout her lifetime. Schlafly gave keynote speeches across North America as a Cold War and U.S. military strength strategist. Indeed, her work with Cold War foreign policy and national defense was the main avenue with which she recruited her early followers.

Conservative men and women saw Schlafly as a General who led grassroots activists. She offered strategic direction for organizing coalitions with politicians, think tanks, and businessmen. Schlafly was instrumental in galvanizing a generation of mostly white, middle-

³ Edwin Meese III, “Phyllis Schlafly Leadership Award at Eagle Council.”

and-upper class men and women to action. Anti-feminist organizing represented only one aspect of her political career and mission. As Meese indicated, she also advocated for aggressive foreign policy, strong national defense strategy, and libertarian economic planning. Her political outreach informed the conservative movement and the modern Republican Party. In the decades before Ronald Reagan's election Schlafly encouraged conservative men and women to think through, fight for, and transform the Republican Party by creating a grassroots takeover of the GOP. Schlafly is an important interlocutor for tracing the relationships between major figures and organizations that fueled the conservative movement. She connected seemingly disparate ideologies in a complex web of coherent conservative economic and social issues. As a dynamic public figure, she proclaimed that political problems could be solved through mobilizing strategies; her organizing work underpinned the conservative ascendancy before, during, and after the 1980s.

This chapter proposes three arguments. The first, that Phyllis Schlafly was a major movement leader shaping the political public discourse. She was an activist, certainly, but she was also an integral thinker and architect of New Right ideologies and organizational structures.⁴ Schlafly positioned herself as a militant general within the conservative movement in terms of

⁴ George Nash's *The Conservative Intellectual Movement* from 1976 was a foundational study that continues to shape the intellectual top-down conceptualization of the New Right. Nash gives high praise to conservative thinkers and publications including William F. Buckley Jr., Frank Meyer, Russel Kirk, Ronald Reagan, and the *National Review*. Meyers, who pioneered fusionism, ideologically brought disparate strands of anticommunism, libertarianism, and traditionalism together to create a viable coherent intellectual movement. Nash argued that Buckley embodied the original three ideologies that Meyer intellectually united for others. He viewed Ronald Reagan acting much in the same way as Buckley did as a symbol of what a conservative should be. But Nash's work has forged the notion that women were not intellectual thinkers for the party; this role was reserved for elite white men. I argue that Phyllis Schlafly was an integral intellectual as she appealed to women in a way that Buckley and *National Review* could not. Lisa McGirr's *Suburban Warriors* evidenced women learning of Barry Goldwater and deciding to support him because of Phyllis Schlafly's writing, and not *National Review*. See: Gary Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2006); Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 136.

both strategy for structural politicking and the spread of movement momentum. Her issue focus and leadership continuously evolved as she staked out new strategies to consolidate power for conservatives within the Republican Party.

Second, Schlafly aided a larger project of creating an alternative conservative news media in the 1960s to network and mobilize the movement. This point has been made by various scholars; however, no one has given analytical weight to the five books Schlafly authored in the 1960s. The books were significant, though, in the ultimate grassroots takeover of the Republican Party structure. The ideas staked out in her 1960s works are vitally important for understanding the conservative transformation of the GOP in the late-twentieth century, and the character of what becomes Eagle Forum in the early 1970s. Her writings helped to cement a loyal following eager for her political commentary.

Finally, Schlafly dedicated her efforts in the 1960s to Cold War militarization and movement mobilization, both of which captured the intimate relationship between race, gender, and U.S. empire. The defense of white womanhood in response to the civil rights movement and various decolonization efforts around the world offered a through line connecting Schlafly's domestic and international critiques of American politics. In this way, the conservative movement was not only intellectualized and hard fought by elite politicians, businessmen, and academics. Conservative white women provided an ideological backbone and organizing strength for the movement in response to the social climate in the 1960s.

Over the course of the thirty years before the STOP-ERA movement and the founding of Eagle Forum, Schlafly gained significant influence within conservative circles. By 1964, Schlafly demonstrated a fusionism of free-market economics, libertarianism, religious

evangelism, traditional moralism, and social conservatism.⁵ She spoke primarily to middle-class Americans in an accessible way. In doing so she helped bring together various factions within the conservative movement into coalition while recruiting new sympathetic readers into the movement.

Before turning to Schlafly's 1960s texts, I must note the difficulties in tracing the impact of circulation and quantifying readership numbers within the conservative movement's print culture. Historian Steven Teles discusses the challenges in accessing organizational membership information, because there is an element of secrecy within the movement.⁶ Even within Eagle Forum, there is an ongoing legal battle as of 2022 over which members can have access to the internal membership lists; gleaning that information as someone outside the organization and outside of the movement proves an archival feat. Aside from the inability to access key documents, Schlafly adhered to a practice within the movement of independently sustaining print culture. She founded and ran Pere Marquette Press as a way of self-publishing and having full control over her distribution, adding an additional layer of archival silence when attempting to quantify her circulation. More than that, conservative activists constantly clipped and mailed news articles and shared books among their personal contacts to make their network aware of the latest information, scandal, and strategies. This creates further obstacles to evaluating how and when conservatives encountered specific writings. Where possible, I note figures that other

⁵ George H. Nash describes fusionism as the result from conservative intellectuals working to build an intellectual movement with political implications, but not a definitive ideology. In other words, fusionism was a means to create intellectual partnerships through coalitions without having to get various conservative intellectual traditions to agree with each other on a unifying ideology. Anti-communism produced fusion as a common threat. This put Schlafly in step with major male conservative theorists like Frank Meyer, Russell Kirk, and William F. Buckley Jr. in efforts to unite the movement. See: Chapter Three in George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945*.

⁶ For a discussion of challenges researching the conservative archive see: Steven M. Teles, *The Rise of the Conservative Legal Movement: The Battle for Control of the Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 5.

historians found in their own studies of specific regions or organizations in order to highlight movement alliances and gauge potential readership.

Schlafly in 1964: The First Battle

The pregnancy and birth of her sixth and last child did not slow Phyllis Schlafly down in 1964, as she wrote and circulated *A Choice Not An Echo* from her home in Alton, Illinois. *A Choice* stirred up a populist revival that contributed to the building of the New Right coalition during Barry Goldwater's presidential run. The book sold six hundred thousand copies in its first publication in May 1964, making Phyllis Schlafly a household name for conservatives while broadening her own political base.⁷ The book also expanded Schlafly's conservative audience because she purposefully chose to avoid speaking to the Republican Party's establishment. Rather, she recruited a new national audience to the Party as she framed the problems of presidential elections as a national crisis stemming from the wealth, greed, and spinelessness of New York Republicans. This created a regional enemy that fit well into the American mythos of Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis that juxtaposed the rugged individual forging a new American democracy to the American east coast controlling peoples' freedom.⁸ Schlafly's metaphorical framing cast Goldwater, an Arizona senator, as the only hope for American freedom battling the entire east coast political machinery embodied in New York's Nelson Rockefeller.

In making the case for Goldwater, *A Choice* argued that the GOP faced the problem of the liberal in sheep's clothing. Terming certain Republicans "kingmakers," Schlafly propagated

⁷ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, 117, 124, 125.

⁸ Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1894.

the idea that liberals, mostly elites from the east coast, were infiltrating the Party.⁹ She argued that since 1936 the kingmakers “dictated the choice of the republican presidential nominee just as completely as the Paris dressmakers [controlled] the length of women’s skirts.”¹⁰ This gendered comparison is telling. Schlafly condemned so-called New York-based kingmakers for subverting the power of the Republican Party by exploiting party virtue and cheapening the Party’s appearance in favor of staying fashionable and socially relevant. Just as women’s dress hems were shortened and became more revealing, Schlafly believed that the traditional virtues and moral values of the Party had been significantly truncated since 1936 to the point that the GOP risked alienating its voters by nominating Republicans in name only, (or RINOS, as they would come to be called in the 1990s).

She gave examples of the kingmaker phenomenon causing Republican Party corruption. She named Republicans who were “liberal [of the] ‘me too’ variety” closely aligned with the “top-level leftwing democrats” including luminaries such as Nelson Rockefeller, Robert Strange McNamara, George Romney, Richard Nixon, J. William Fulbright, Paul H. Nitze, David Rockefeller, and President Eisenhower.⁶⁶ Schlafly’s list drew from a tradition of McCarthyism dating back to the Second Red Scare and the anticommunist paranoia surrounding the first decade of the Cold War.⁶⁷ By naming who she believed to be kingmakers, Schlafly sought to purge the Republican Party of members who were not Republican enough, in other words supporters of (or those who had made peace with) the New Deal. In Schlafly’s view, everyone

⁹ Phyllis Schlafly, *A Choice, Not an Echo: The Inside Story of How American Presidents Are Chosen*, (Alton, IL: Pere Marquette Press, 1964), 6.

¹⁰ Schlafly, *A Choice, Not an Echo*, 6.

⁶⁶ Schlafly, *A Choice, Not an Echo*, 107-109, 84-85, 104-105.

⁶⁷ Mary Brennan emphasized the importance of McCarthy’s practice of naming names to create lists of communists and the spectacle created with the McCarthy hearings, which caused people to be ever alert from slipping into communist subversion. See: Mary Brennan, *Wives, Mothers & the Red Menace*.

more conservative than these people had the true interests of the Party in mind, while everyone who was more liberal was a saboteur of the Party.

Only through a purge could the Party emerge purified and representative of its truly conservative base. And by naming culprits, she made bipartisan cooperation a suspect strategy to the grassroots members of the Party. Schlafly argued: “It is easy to spot the most trusted agents of the kingmakers because they are men who move with ease in and out of both parties.”⁶⁸ Schlafly sought to replace this sort of bipartisan maneuvering with a more rigid emphasis on toeing the party line and building an uncompromising brand of conservatism. Schlafly’s position was clear: the kingmakers were “destructive of the two-party system... [confusing] the issues and especially the responsibility [of government].”⁶⁹

Schlafly used *A Choice* as a tool to mobilize conservative voters and push the Republican Party to the right, and by extension the center of the political spectrum. Schlafly’s contemporaries recognized *A Choice*’s impact on shifting the political center and saw it as contributing to the creation of party disunity. In the *Los Angeles Times* on July 2, 1965, Rowland Evans and Robert Novak condemned Schlafly for her “notorious pamphlet [that] ripped the hide off any Republican even slightly to the left of Barry Goldwater.”⁷⁰ Phyllis Schlafly cast Goldwater as the political litmus test for Republicans and the new party baseline, especially for conservative voters. Political writers and analysts like Evans and Novak feared the ramifications of party purging in the mid-1960s in the aftermath of *A Choice*. They cited “ideological warfare” occurring within the party because of Goldwater and blamed publications such as *A Choice* for

⁶⁸ Schlafly, *A Choice, Not an Echo*, 108.

⁶⁹ Schlafly, *A Choice, Not an Echo*, 110.

⁷⁰ Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, “Bliss Learning That the Center Sometimes Is the Storm Center,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 2, 1965, A5.

creating fractures between the GOP's moderate wing and the Goldwater conservatives.⁷¹ The Republican Party was in an identity crisis, one that Phyllis Schlafly had skillfully exacerbated. She exploited these party tensions and ideological differences, capitalizing on her ability to inspire and nurture grassroots conservatives. In so doing she ushered in her own brand of right-wing politics that would ultimately gain significant traction in the decades to come.

Fundamental to Schlafly's new conservative party take-over was an aggressive foreign policy program driven by a rabid fear and hatred of communism. In fact, Schlafly's primary political motivation in writing the pamphlet was national security. In Schlafly's own words, "the most important national problem is the survival of American freedom and independence in the face of the Communist threat."⁷² Schlafly connected the Soviet threat to the idea that liberals were too inviting of communism both globally and in America. She demanded that Congress and the President become more bellicose and confrontational toward the Soviet Union and warned that if Washington had any hope of containing communism's spread it would need to "reinstate the Monroe doctrine."⁷³ Schlafly turned her ire toward the so-called kingmakers and Democratic administrations whom she believed were weakening national security. She wanted to build a following that was as stridently anticommunist as she was.

Perhaps as a challenge to Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique*, published in 1963, or as a rebuke of John F. Kennedy's Presidential Commission on the Status of Women founded in 1961, Schlafly briefly took on the issue of women's liberation within *A Choice* by discussing the benevolence of the free market. Defending the free market, Schlafly wrote: "The man who did as much as anyone to emancipate women from their daily drudgery was the inventor of the sewing

⁷¹ Evans and Novak, "Bliss Learning That the Center Sometimes Is the Storm Center," *LA Times*, July 2, 1965, A5.

⁷² Schlafly, *A Choice, Not an Echo*, 12.

⁷³ Schlafly, *A Choice, Not an Echo*, 91.

machine.”⁷⁴ According to Schlafly, then, men were responsible for emancipating women, particularly through new technologies. Daily house chores were made easier by the booming marketplace of appliances. These few paragraphs were not a separate issue but rather an important part of exposing what she viewed as political corruption, weakened national defense, foolish foreign policy, and an overreaching national government. As she would throughout her political career, Schlafly pursued her antifeminist strategy as part of a larger conservative worldview. Schlafly framed her arguments as a celebration of innovative American culture over what she considered Soviet degradation. The Kitchen Debates between U.S. Vice President Richard Nixon and the Soviet Union’s Chairman of the Council of Ministers Nikita Khrushchev in 1959, took place around a staged American model kitchen. As these leaders argued about whether capitalism or communism was the superior economic system, these debates centered the white middle-class suburban housewife lifestyle. The Kitchen Debates probably influenced Schlafly’s belief that she could lead the American populace towards a moral and cultural victory over Communism by preserving the tightly intertwined ideologies of patriarchy, paternalism, and the white suburban lifestyle that these encounters highlighted.

Unlike those who saw legislation as key to improving working peoples’ lives, Schlafly maintained that the free market, which produced goods for the domestic sphere like ironing boards, would best address the drudgery of housewifery. Appliances, Schlafly explained, should be greeted as liberators of wives’ time, work, and servitude; all of which were essential for ensuring conservative women’s recruitment into the conservative movement to transform the Republican Party. Since Schlafly first started volunteering for the Party in 1945, she preached that it was women’s duty to “build stronger Republican organization, inject enthusiasm, inspire

⁷⁴ Schlafly, *A Choice, Not an Echo*, 90.

and persuade women to work for the Party, and solve problems of many kinds... because I believe in working for good government.”⁷⁵ She framed women’s political work as serving the public good. Protecting the community in this way at the local, state, and federal levels ensured the security of the family, in addition to the well-being of national liberty and independence. Thus, Schlafly combined foreign policy concerns, anxieties over perceived domestic crises, advocacy for small government, and Cold War McCarthyism in a modern, politically charged articulation of Jane Addams’ concept of “municipal housekeeping.”⁷⁶ She demanded a morally good leadership, an end to corrupt government that worked against the maintenance of a strong Republican Party, and the dedicated participation of white women to do the political work required to carry out these desires.

A Choice agitated for a new conservative Republican Party to bring about an end to what she believed was a cycle of corruption in government and politics, caused by New York kingmakers manipulating the Republican National Conventions since 1936. From the polemic’s tagline: “the inside story of how American presidents are chosen,” Schlafly depicted herself as privy to semi-confidential knowledge of the inner workings of the GOP and federal government. Her message was for the grassroots, of which she herself did not truly belong. Her husband, Fred Schlafly, was a high-profile conservative lawyer, and their social circle included well-to-do conservative figureheads within the movement. Nonetheless, Schlafly became associated with grassroots activism because of her ability to communicate with a broad audience, which in turn allowed her to decisively influence the character of national politics.

Phyllis Schlafly pioneered and occupied a space that straddled the grassroots and the establishment. And she knew it. By 1964, Schlafly had already run for Congress and worked as a

⁷⁵ Schlafly, *A Choice, Not an Echo*, 117-118.

⁷⁶ Jane Addams, “Why Women Should Vote,” *Ladies Home Journal*, 27 (January 1910): 21-22.

campaign manager; she understood that grassroots support was integral to Party success, yet she identified herself as a Party leader. She recognized that she was in a “unique position where I have had intimate contact with both the high and mighty in the Republican Party, as well as the little people who work on the precinct level.”⁷⁷ The way that Schlafly understood her position was important, because it allowed her to advocate for something new. Schlafly openly told the Party her vision of how it would be reorganized, and the power redistributed. She claimed: “it should not only flow from the bottom up; it must flow also from the top down...it is just as important for the men on top to be loyal to the humble many, and vice versa. It is not enough to say that the rank and file should fall in step behind.”⁷⁸ In this way Phyllis Schlafly envisioned a symbiotic relationship between politicians, entrepreneurs, media figures, and grassroots activists that would create an impenetrable unity falling in lock step to boost party strength, loyalty, and conservative power over the state and federal governments.

In 1964, Schlafly explicitly dared the Republican National Convention to nominate anyone else but Barry Goldwater for the presidential run. She rallied behind Goldwater, because he represented a popular conservatism that she believed was necessary for ensuring a conservative vision for a fiscally, socially, and militarily strong America. Schlafly reserved the last page for her urgent final plea: “politics is everybody’s business... Do your part in this educational effort while there is still time...Let your voice be heard! Tomorrow may be too late.”⁷⁹ With *A Choice* more broadly, but this closing sentiment especially, Schlafly hoped to put enough grassroots pressure on the establishment that they could not nominate anyone else without significant party fracture. She argued that if Goldwater’s main competition, Nelson

⁷⁷ Schlafly, *A Choice, Not an Echo*, 118.

⁷⁸ Schlafly, *A Choice, Not an Echo*, 118.

⁷⁹ Schlafly, *A Choice, Not an Echo*, 128.

Rockefeller, were nominated then the Republican Party would be the party of the elite interest, not the party of the people. She claimed that Goldwater showed people that “conservatism is popular” and that the minority (who sided with him) could win if they spread the word to support him.⁸⁰

Schlafly wanted people to read her book and emerge on the other side as newly radicalized rank-and-file members of the conservative movement. The tone of *A Choice* and sense of immediacy came complete with a detachable order form and networking instruction page at the back of the book. More than that, *A Choice* positioned Schlafly as a movement leader with a clearly articulated strategy for mobilization through boosting the access to conservative education around the election issues via the circulation of her book. Her insistence on forging a “Party loyalty” that held elected officials accountable to the grassroots, and in turn the grassroots responsible for who could get elected created a pathway for a conservative takeover within the Republican Party.

Capitalizing on Momentum: “Managed News” and The Gravediggers

Once Barry Goldwater received the votes from the Republican National Convention (RNC) in 1964, to run as the Presidential candidate for the Republican Party, conservatives continued to mobilize to make Goldwater victorious over incumbent Democratic President, Lyndon B. Johnson. Retired Rear Admiral of the United States Navy, Chester Ward, reached out to Schlafly in August 1964, to gauge her interest in co-authoring a book on national defense before the November election.⁸¹ Together they penned *The Gravediggers*, which debuted in October 1964, as a last effort to push Goldwater into the White House. This was the first of five

⁸⁰ Schlafly, *A Choice, Not an Echo*, 80.

⁸¹ See: Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, 133.

books that Schlafly and Ward co-authored. Ward would write chapters in Honolulu, Hawaii, and mail them to Schlafly in Alton, Illinois, and vice versa. where he would offer comments before mailing materials back to Schlafly. Schlafly had full control over the copyright. She also was credited with the full copyright on each of their co-authored publications. In that way, their co-authored works appear to be skewed toward Schlafly's design and ownership. Within two months, *Gravediggers* sold two million copies.⁸²

Aside from being a pro-Goldwater treatise, in what was ultimately a failed presidential campaign, *The Gravediggers* contributed to the growth of an alternative conservative news network that informed and mobilized the movement. Pere Marquette Press, the book's publisher, was in fact a Schlafly creation, founded specifically to publish and distribute her works.⁸³ In a conversation with Bruce Schlafly, the third born of the Schlafly children, he remembered his childhood as a series of moving trucks filled with his mother's books showing up to the front of the house and getting shipped all over the country, in bulk, from their garage.⁸⁴ The bulk selling of books suggests that local conservative groups across the United States bought copies of the various Schlafly publications to read as part of regular coffee klatch studies in the 1960s. Since Schlafly had connections to nationally known conservative organizations and publications like the *Manion Forum*, *Human Events*, and *National Review*, which offered built-in publicity for her books to aid a larger project of legitimizing alternative conservative media sources.⁸⁵ Historian Nicole Hemmer explains that "media activists" shaped the movement by creating independent

⁸² Carol Felsenthal, *The Sweetheart of The Silent Majority: The Biography of Phyllis Schlafly*, (New York: Doubleday), 216.

⁸³ "Pere Marquette Press Inc Company Profile: Alton, IL: Competitors, Financials & Contacts - Dun & Bradstreet," Dun & Bradstreet - Accelerate Growth and Improve Business Performance, accessed January 21, 2022, https://www.dnb.com/business-directory/company-profiles.pere_marquette_press_inc.99da5e74110ce5aac7e9c9a127216569.html.

⁸⁴ Bruce Schlafly, in discussion with the author, St. Louis, MO, September 23, 2017.

⁸⁵ Nicole Hemmer, *Messengers of the Right*, 99.

publishing, radio, and magazine networks to transform the political landscape; Phyllis Schlafly was a media activist in her own right and successfully participated in these kinds of alternative media making enterprises.⁸⁶ A distinguishing aspect of conservative media activism was “the belief that there was a concerted effort by mainstream media to block out conservative ideas.”⁸⁷

The Gravediggers tested the catchphrase, “managed news” as a kind of shorthand to claim that the mainstream media obscured information and worked to undermine conservative principles. The tagline on the cover of the book read “The story of ‘managed news’ suppressed – Who is really risking nuclear war?” Schlafly and Ward went on to flag what they identified as risks to national security noting, “No Government security regulations have been broken – only the ‘managed news’ barrier.”⁸⁸ By introducing this concept of managed news, the authors sought to discredit information presented by the mainstream media and cast those journalism outlets as suspect. Amidst the geopolitics of the Cold War, Schlafly and Ward cautioned conservatives against trusting information presented to them that could be tainted by people labeled gravediggers: “[they] aren’t Communists. They are card carrying liberals. They will not commit the crime. They will merely dig the grave... risking nuclear war... [gambling] with the lives and freedom of American citizen,” hoping that the “Soviets will never attack.”⁸⁹ In other words, for Schlafly and Ward the media critiques urging votes against Barry Goldwater for being too aggressive toward foreign policy were misleading American people toward a weaker stance against Communism in 1964.

The authors considered the social and technological advancements that the mainstream media touted as victories for the Johnson Administration as distractions from defense planning

⁸⁶ Hemmer, *Messengers of the Right*, x.

⁸⁷ Hemmer, *Messengers of the Right*, xi.

⁸⁸ Phyllis Schlafly and Chester A. Ward, *The Gravediggers* (Alton, IL: Pere Marquette Press, 1964), 2.

⁸⁹ Schlafly and Ward, *The Gravediggers*, 5-6, 10-11.

for Cold War military victory. They argued that the administration continually cut military project budgets in favor of “spending vast sums on non-military boon-doggles such as putting a man on the moon, and on purely political projects such as the Poverty Bill.”⁹⁰ Referring to Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society as a “Poverty Bill,” Schlafly and Ward had much to say about the way the administration shifted money away from militarization. The Great Society, in their view, was a misuse of national funds. In opposition they lamented, “Not a single new bomber has been built for the United States since 1962... Although Congress appropriated \$525 million for another wing of B-52s, [Secretary of Defense] McNamara refused to spend what Congress considered essential for U.S. security.”⁹¹

The author’s objections to strengthening the social safety net laid bare their frustrations with policy and federal budget changes resulting from the civil rights movement that they saw as detracting from the defense of U.S. empire. Schlafly and Ward framed Kennedy’s New Frontier and Johnson’s Great Society as ploy to “[divert] funds from defense into domestic projects that buy votes, [so] they can keep a liberal administration in Washington.”⁹² Similarly, they argued that appeasement to or allyship with the Soviet Union internationally was the result of being duped by the Kremlin’s use of “psychological warfare,” and threatened all nations’ sovereignty.⁹³ The United States’ engagement in the proxy wars with the Soviet Union inherently exerted colonial pressure over people fighting their own anti-colonial freedom struggles. As Schlafly and Ward detailed specifics about American military bases around the world, various warhead capacities, and submarine technologies, their focus was broader than simply winning the Cold

⁹⁰ Schlafly and Ward, *The Gravediggers*, 8.

⁹¹ Schlafly and Ward, *The Gravediggers*, 14-15.

⁹² Schlafly and Ward, *The Gravediggers*, 79. For his part, Goldwater voted against the 1964 Civil Rights Act and against Great Society programs.

⁹³ Schlafly and Ward, *The Gravediggers*, 21.

War.⁹⁴ The goal was unquestionable, permanent, U.S. military dominance. To demonstrate the importance of military power they quoted Goldwater's pledge for the "immediate and full restoration of our defense" alongside George Washington saying, "If we desire to secure peace... it must be known that we are at all times ready for war."⁹⁵

In laying out their case for a Barry Goldwater presidency, Schlafly and Ward linked the managed news to pop culture and experts as complicit in the gravedigging scheme of U.S. disarmament, casting Goldwater as a trigger-happy threat to the world if given access to nuclear codes.⁹⁶ Warning that "slogans are Communism's best gimmick," Schlafly and Ward explained that the potential fear the United States "might start World War III... [is] a form of international blackmail practiced on us by the Soviet sloganeers."⁹⁷ *The Gravediggers* blamed movies like Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove* for amplifying disarmament propaganda, and "selling Americans on defeatism, pacificism, and... surrender to Communism," which worked in tandem with the managed news and Johnson campaign ads to reinforce fears of the end of humanity with a Goldwater presidency.⁹⁸ Schlafly and Ward also saw universities and scientific communities as partially responsible in scaring the public away from a Goldwater vote through "technical propaganda...enveloped in so much egghead lingo" that spread "Rather Red than dead" responses "through the highest echelons of our government, businesses, scientific and academic communities" creating "A massive campaign of managed news... deliberately concealing from the American people the truth about this [presidential] choice," in 1964.⁹⁹ Their closing

⁹⁴ See: Schlafly and Ward, *The Gravediggers*, Chapter 3.

⁹⁵ Schlafly and Ward, *The Gravediggers*, 115.

⁹⁶ The infamous "Daisy" ad that aired in September of 1964 during the Johnson-Goldwater race opened with a young girl picking petals off a daisy and ended in nuclear explosion insinuating that Goldwater embodied the epitome of reckless destruction. See: Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Campaign. "Peace, Little Girl: [Daisy Political Spot]," September 7, 1964.

⁹⁷ Schlafly and Ward, *The Gravediggers*, 31, 33-34.

⁹⁸ Schlafly and Ward, *The Gravediggers*, 37-38.

⁹⁹ Schlafly and Ward, *The Gravediggers*, 51, 111.

argument compared Goldwater to General George Washington, because Goldwater “had the strength of character to get the job done, and the leadership to inspire others to follow him”; the job being the use of “American military and nuclear power [as] the last best hope of the free world.”¹⁰⁰

The Gravediggers discredited the mainstream media, entertainment industry, and university research as invalid avenues for information gathering, and instead painted them as various threats obscuring critical thinking abilities. Schlafly was by no means alone in working to create an alternative conservative media, but she certainly aided the project by creating her own conservative publishing company and writing books to influence election results. In true Schlafly style, there was an order form at the back of the book like the one at the back of *A Choice*. Readers could buy copies in bulk for further circulation as part of an “educational effort,” enlisting friends, neighbors, doctors, employers, precinct workers, and “editors, clergymen, teachers, writers, and elected officials” to “Distribute it at meetings on trains, in motels,” and “local newsstands, bookstores, and libraries.”¹⁰¹ This grassroots work did not catapult Goldwater to victory, but it did help to bring together like-minded conservatives and grow a committed activist base in the 1960s.

A Strong Offense is Good Defense: U.S. Empire to Prevent Megadeaths

With each book Schlafly penned in the 1960s, she laid out another animating project mobilizing grassroots action and, in the process, widened her audience. *A Choice* staked out a precursor to the Republican in Name Only, or “RINO” epithet, and *The Gravediggers* attacked the bias of mainstream media against conservatives. Her third book that she penned with Chester

¹⁰⁰ Schlafly and Ward, *The Gravediggers*, 114-115.

¹⁰¹ Schlafly and Ward, *The Gravediggers*, 128.

Ward in 1965, *Strike from Space: A Megadeath Mystery*, sold a half-million copies and emphasized their prescription for U.S. Cold War militarization.¹⁰² There, she and Ward argued that the Soviets were racing ahead of the United States in the arms contest, producing “strategic nuclear weapons and space weapons” to destroy America. They warned that a death toll counted in the “megadeaths” of Americans would befall the country without the bolstering of defense strategies. American leaders, Schlafly and Ward believed, were unable or unwilling to see the Soviet weapons advance, because of the immense focus on the Vietnam War. According to the authors, the Viet Cong were working with the Soviets to further provoke the U.S. “into a shooting war... against minor targets in Vietnam” as a “doctrine of diversion,” allowing Soviets the cover to conduct a “massive surprise attack” to annihilate the United States from space.¹⁰³ Focusing military funding and defense strategy on Vietnam, rather than working to create an anti-missile system could lead to American annihilation, as it diverted, “U.S. attention from Soviet capabilities in space.”¹⁰⁴ For Schlafly and Ward, quickly wrapping up the Vietnam War through military escalation would demonstrate a hard line against the spread of communism while leaving more resources for the construction of anti-missile defense systems and other weapons.

American exceptionalism and American empire went hand in hand for the authors. Schlafly and Ward saw conservatism as a conduit to preserving the ideal of the United States as a country with no equal. Even without the Cold War context of battling the Soviets, Schlafly constantly recommended a combination of Monroe Doctrine and Teddy Roosevelt’s “Big Stick” policy to conduct foreign policy throughout her solo and co-authored writings and speeches. This

¹⁰² Felsenthal, *The Sweetheart of the Silent Majority*, 220.

¹⁰³ Phyllis Schlafly and Chester Ward, *Strike from Space: A Megadeath Mystery* (Alton, IL: Pere Marquette Press, 1965), 19, 30-31.

¹⁰⁴ Schlafly and Ward, *Strike from Space*, 32.

would end European interference in the Western hemisphere and allow both American neutrality and security through decisive military action. The book's prescription for a resurgence in militarization to strengthen the U.S. empire included the recommendation that grassroots conservatives fortify themselves in "faith," "issue education," "political action," "public opinion," and invest in "missile defenses and bomb shelters" and the "private development of defense weapons."¹⁰⁵ According to Schlafly and Ward, the turn to a privatized military industrial complex would effectively circumvent any federal delays to or the defunding of the American military. Schlafly was an agent of U.S. empire mobilizing other conservatives toward the goal of American superiority around the globe. She asserted, "We must have the will to run the strategic arms race.... [and be] brave enough to face the campaign of nuclear terror and demand a new national strategy."¹⁰⁶ She directed readers to "Work your precincts with fidelity and devotion to assure the election of Congressional candidates and other Government and Party officials on every level who are *for* keeping America strong."¹⁰⁷

She went on in *Strike from Space* to criticize the Johnson administration's foreign policy regarding Vietnam. She lamented: "American boys are bogged down in that little country.... One of the chief weapons against which our soldiers must defend themselves is the sharpened bamboo pole – more primitive even than the bow and arrow.... The bombs we use aren't even as powerful as we used in WWII."¹⁰⁸ The orientalism imbued in this statement and others throughout her 1960s works cast the Vietnamese as archaic people living in an undeveloped, uncivilized country. She was not antiwar as it related to Vietnam, but she could not reconcile the length and cost of the war, since she believed the Vietnamese to be inferior in all aspects to

¹⁰⁵ Schlafly and Ward, *Strike from Space*, 201-204.

¹⁰⁶ Schlafly and Ward, *Strike from Space*, 200-201.

¹⁰⁷ Schlafly and Ward, *Strike from Space*, 202.

¹⁰⁸ Schlafly and Ward, *Strike from Space*, 32.

American citizens and the United States. As far as she was concerned there was no reason not to drop an atomic bomb and be done with the war entirely, and in doing so demonstrate American power to the Soviet Union. She argued that “there is absolutely no risk to general nuclear war so long as the United States has escalation dominance, that is, as long as we have strategic superiority over the Soviets and they believe we will use it if necessary.”¹⁰⁹ The way she discussed the Vietnam War was entirely misleading in terms of the devastation and death it wrought on the Vietnamese people and their country’s landscape. Her rebuke of the cost and time frame of the war stemmed from her belief that it “diverts public and even Congressional attention from our defense against a space age Pearl Harbor,” as she feared the impending Soviet strike from space.¹¹⁰

Critiques of the Vietnam War and the general handling of foreign policy in the Johnson administration segued easily into a reaffirmation of her earlier work to reproach trusted news and field experts. Sowing the seeds of distrust in American institutions, politicians, scientists, and academics, *Strike from Space* warned that an obvious Soviet bait-and-switch plan was facilitated by the conciliatory attitude of “a very few [American]” gravediggers.¹¹¹ This book went further than *The Gravediggers* in criticizing “this scientific and intellectual elite” as “digging our graves” and manipulating “managed news” to dupe the American people from easily seeing the duplicity of Soviet militarization.¹¹² Attacking experts as “highly educated” gravediggers, Schlafly and Ward insisted the media and experts were able to “slant their managed news to convince Americans we are 3 or 4 times stronger than the Soviet Union and winning the race to

¹⁰⁹ Schlafly and Ward, *Strike from Space*, 178.

¹¹⁰ Schlafly and Ward, *Strike from Space*, 33.

¹¹¹ Schlafly and Ward, *Strike from Space*, 8.

¹¹² Schlafly and Ward, *Strike from Space*, 66, 122.

the moon.”¹¹³ As a result anyone in the pro-disarmament camp was cast as promoting “various shades of ‘rather red than dead’ among the general public, through intellectual and academic circles, and in the halls of congress,” and using “tax-free money to finance books and publications, sponsor prestige meetings, and discretely subsidize those in education, communications, religion, and even government.”¹¹⁴ The authors framed these scientific and academic expenditures as wasteful displays that prevented the financing of an anti-missile defense; the dynamic they created in *Strike from Space* pitted experts against average Americans.¹¹⁵

The content in *Strike from Space* shared significant overlap with *The Gravediggers*, continuing the project of fueling an alternative conservative media. By peddling nuclear arms race theories alongside weapons inventory and firing power details of B52 bombing planes and other military technologies, Schlafly legitimized her defense expertise and strategic knowledge for readers. Even though she was no longer a ballistics gunner, perhaps her partnership with Ward gave additional authority to her statements about the state of the military technology in the book. It also made Schlafly a sort of movement martyr to the grassroots; they saw her as a civilian sharing her expertise without government funding and without the support of the GOP, unlike the media, politicians, academics, and experts whom they believed were forming a complicit alliance to dupe the American people.

In this way *Strike from Space* expanded Schlafly’s previous 1960s works in connecting forms of civil disobedience to what she saw as an outgrowth of gravediggers in media, the government, and academia. The book blamed the Supreme Court for enabling “disgusting

¹¹³ Schlafly and Ward, *Strike from Space*, 75, 122.

¹¹⁴ Schlafly and Ward, *Strike from Space*, 136, 139.

¹¹⁵ Schlafly and Ward, *Strike from Space*, 132.

demonstrations about Vietnam: the mobs halting troop trains, the burning of draft cards... the handbooks for draft evaders” and practices allowing conscientious objection.¹¹⁶ The authors suggested that if the Court took a hardline stance against these behaviors, it would root out these forms of protest by paving the way for conservative law and order responses to those who would go along with “Communist aggression.”¹¹⁷ Only when conservatives were able to “Fire the gravediggers,” or replace appointees in the case of the Supreme Court, could America secure Cold War safety and victory.¹¹⁸

Losing a Battle but Not the War

Domestic race relations, white womanhood, and U.S. empire were the animating themes in what was perhaps Schlafly’s most provocative and significant ideological text from the 1960s, *Safe Not Sorry*. Published in December 1967, it offered a rancorous reproach of various civil rights and peace protest movements and detailed her departure from the National Federation of Republican Women (NFRW). Schlafly wrote *Safe Not Sorry* to mobilize for the 1968 election, and to serve as a testimony to her supporters about the ways that establishment Republicans ostracized conservatives from places of power within the party. It was this book that began to position Schlafly as a general within the grassroots of the conservative movement, with foot soldiers looking to her to take their cues. The dedication read: “This book is affectionately dedicated to the thousands of wonderful women who gave me the full measure of their loyalty in May 1967 – in the hope we may persuade enough American citizens to combine practical politics with the idealism which motivates our volunteer efforts to save our Republic.”¹¹⁹ It was

¹¹⁶ Schlafly and Ward, *Strike from Space*, 147-148.

¹¹⁷ Schlafly and Ward, *Strike from Space*, 148.

¹¹⁸ Schlafly and Ward, *Strike from Space*, 202.

¹¹⁹ Phyllis Schlafly, *Safe Not Sorry* (Alton: Pere Marquette Press, 1967), 4

May of 1967 when Schlafly lost her election to be the national President of the NFRW after years serving as the Vice President. This opening acknowledgement signaled that Schlafly intended to continue leading women within the NFRW despite her purge. Not only that, but she also planned to multiply followers regardless of her official titles or organization affiliations. Schlafly was mobilizing through her writing to challenge the identity and political composition of the GOP to make it conservative.

Altogether, *Safe Not Sorry* can be read as a manifesto against Black liberation and global decolonization efforts. To date, the only historical work that broaches Schlafly's relationship to systemic racism is Elizabeth Gillespie McRae's *Mothers of Massive Resistance*. While Donald Critchlow's biography and Mary Brennan's work emphasize Schlafly as a Cold War warrior, their analysis focuses on her as a domestic agent rather than situating Schlafly's perspective and activism in a global context.¹²⁰ *Safe Not Sorry* opens on the "terrifying... Racial violence [exploding]... [destroying] large areas as effectively as if they had been bombed by enemy planes" and denounces "The moral sickness of the Federal Government" because of "a no-win war in Vietnam, a no-prosecute war on crime and Communism, and a no-work war on poverty."¹²¹ The Summer of 1967, also known as the 'long, hot summer' saw 159 race riots erupt across the United States. These "Bloody riots," according to Schlafly caused "Women and children in our cities [to] live in constant fear of criminal attacks."¹²² Her reference to the war on crime referred to what she saw as a lack of prosecution for damages caused by these uprisings. This was a connected issue to the war on poverty since Schlafly argued in her previous books that Johnson's Great Society unnecessarily siphoned money away from Cold War defense. She

¹²⁰ See: Elizabeth Gillespie McRae, *Mothers of Massive Resistance*; Brennan, *Wives, Mothers, and the Red Menace*; Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*.

¹²¹ Schlafly, *Safe Not Sorry*, 6-7.

¹²² Schlafly, *Safe Not Sorry*, 6.

went on to assert that “Candidates are simply afraid to speak out on the issue of riots and crime for fear of losing some hypothetical minority votes.”¹²³ She stated that “the primary purpose of the poverty program is political power in the hands of the Johnson Administration, and social revolution in the hands of the liberal extremists.”¹²⁴ In other words, Schlafly accused Republican politicians of not taking a hard enough stand against Great Society programs, and in so doing, courting minority votes to what she felt was the detriment of U.S. society. In response, she called for Republican leaders to “rid our nation of this colossal fraud... [by pledging] to abolish” Johnson’s Great Society.¹²⁵

Schlafly went on to highlight the solidarity between Black liberation and decolonial and revolutionary movements around the world noting, “The fact that [Stokely Carmichael] can travel from one Communist country to another to foment grief for the United States is visible evidence that he is able to defy our laws at will.”¹²⁶ Schlafly feared that leaders like Carmichael would enabled other Black people to believe “that Negroes are not bound to obey laws made by white people.”¹²⁷ She claimed that Carmichael “made an illegal trip to Cuba to solemnize the relationship between his ‘Black Power’ movement and Castro-Guevara ‘guerrilla warfare’” that led him to “[issue] his own call for revolution.... [and take] credit for the Newark riots,” in the summer of 1967.¹²⁸ Like other conservatives and many liberals at the time, Schlafly understood civil rights leaders like Stokely Carmichael, Martin Luther King Jr., and SNCC Chairman H. Rap Brown as paramount internal threats that must be stopped for both domestic and international security. Referring to Carmichael and Brown specifically, Schlafly proclaimed, “Their world is

¹²³ Schlafly, *Safe Not Sorry*, 8.

¹²⁴ Schlafly, *Safe Not Sorry*, 22.

¹²⁵ Schlafly, *Safe Not Sorry*, 22.

¹²⁶ Schlafly, *Safe Not Sorry*, 33.

¹²⁷ Schlafly, *Safe Not Sorry*, 33, 28.

¹²⁸ Schlafly, *Safe Not Sorry*, 31-32.

hate, violence, and riot. As they travel from city to city, they leave a spoor of moral and material destruction,” further claiming that Brown specifically “[traveled the U.S. stirring up racial violence.”¹²⁹ As far as she was concerned King was just as responsible for the 1967 uprisings as leaders like Brown and Carmichael because he used “language to inflame and incite – just a bit more [delicately] and more [grammatically] than [Brown].”¹³⁰

Schlafly argued that the Johnson Administration’s Great Society program funded the destruction she associated with the Black Power movement. She partially blamed federal workers implementing Great Society programs for stirring up the conflicts of the Long, Hot Summer. Schlafly proclaimed that “Negroes might not normally react to oppression” and it was in fact it was these federal employees stirring Black communities to rebellion and that the “poverty war... [preached] that Negro goals can only be achieved by violence.”¹³¹ To ideologically explain the social unrest of the Summer of 1967, Schlafly insisted, “To believe that race riots are not caused by people, but by conditions such as rats and poor housing, is as silly as to believe that illegitimate babies are not caused by people but by conditions.”¹³² She reasoned that the riots were “organized by outside agitators and armed guerrillas, by various civil rights and New Left groups saturated with Communists... who think that violence is the quickest way to glory, by professional revolutionaries filled with a hatred of Western civilization, and by Federally-financed poverty workers... who think the only way to solve the problems of the ‘ghetto’ are to burn it down.”¹³³ She attributed the change in America to the late-1950s, noting that since then “demagogic politicians have been in a bidding contest to win the Negro vote.

¹²⁹ Schlafly, *Safe Not Sorry*, 27-28.

¹³⁰ Schlafly, *Safe Not Sorry*, 57.

¹³¹ Schlafly, *Safe Not Sorry*, 10.

¹³² Schlafly, *Safe Not Sorry*, 23.

¹³³ Schlafly, *Safe Not Sorry*, 23-24.

They exaggerate legitimate grievances, they create grievances where none exists, and then they promise everlasting handouts in order to buy the people's vote with their own money."¹³⁴ Put another way, according to Schlafly after the Supreme Court's 1954 decision to strike down "separate but equal" in *Brown v Board* national order was upset, which in turn reshaped the entire political landscape.

Safe Not Sorry advocated the use of extreme force against citizens to stomp out Black liberation in the late-1960s. Schlafly insisted that "Guerrillas in our cities can be stopped by the courage of 50 armed policemen – but not when their Mayor or their Governor forbids them to shoot."¹³⁵ In other words, Schlafly suggested that police should be able to gun down protestors in the streets at will to stop urban uprisings. The double-meaning here of guerrilla invoked Schlafly's recurring image of American streets becoming the jungles of Vietnam in a clear stereotyping of Black Power activists like Carmichael and Brown that cast them as ultra-violent. In a sort of double-speak it also suggested that Black Power activists and the Viet Cong were aggressors standing in the way of American prosperity and security.

The addition of cartoons at the opening of each chapter made *Safe Not Sorry* unique among Schlafly's 1960s works. There is no artist credit, but her eldest son, John Schlafly, may have drawn some of the illustrations, since he was known to circulate original political satire, and Phyllis Schlafly would then recirculate it in her *Phyllis Schlafly Report* newsletters that began in 1967. Chapter Five opened with a cartoon of a white soldier talking to his commanding officer to ask "Sir, could I bring my wife to Saigon? – It's safer for her here than in Washington, D.C."¹³⁶ Cartoons like this reiterated two underlying themes. The first, that the Vietnamese were

¹³⁴ Schlafly, *Safe Not Sorry*, 50.

¹³⁵ Schlafly, *Safe Not Sorry*, 49.

¹³⁶ Schlafly, *Safe Not Sorry*, 48.

not worthy adversaries to the US. And second, the urban uprisings she associated with the spread of Black Power activism threatened white womanhood. *Safe Not Sorry* subtly argued that white women were under siege because of Black “crime,” and that civil rights protests created more dangerous domestic living conditions than the Cold War with the Soviet Union. Washington, D.C. had become a heavily Black city by 1967, and Schlafly declared that “Women cannot go down to the laundry or empty the garbage at night. There are murders even in fashionable apartment houses. The State Department advises its women employees to ride the elevators in pairs and to stand near the alarm button.... [and] it is not safe for women employees to walk one block to their cars at the end of the work day.”¹³⁷

The last section of Schlafly’s nearly two-hundred-page treatise detailed her purge from the NFRW. As Schlafly became a household name in conservative politics across the country in 1964, she was also elected to the position of First Vice President of the NFRW, which she held from 1965 to 1967. Boasting more than 500,000 members, the Federation was the largest female political organization in the world at that time.¹³⁸ The NFRW awarded her three recognitions for “Dedicated Service to Republican Ideals and Philosophy” in 1964, 1966, and 1967.¹³⁹ But Schlafly’s 1967 presidential bid exacerbated the same tensions within the Federation as *A Choice* had within the larger party establishment in 1964; the tension being the battle for conservative control over the GOP. The NFRW’s primary job was to oversee precincts and the campaigning process. If Schlafly won the election, some members worried that it was almost certain that she would alienate the centrists within the party and force the organization further to the right. On election day the Schlafly delegates were thrown out of the voting chamber, busses were unable to

¹³⁷ Schlafly, *Safe Not Sorry*, 59-60.

¹³⁸ Robert E. Shaw, “GOP Women Should Pick Mrs. Schlafly,” *Dixon Evening Telegraph*, March 21, 1967.

¹³⁹ Phyllis Schlafly, *The Winning Image For '68 Phyllis Schlafly For President National Federation of Republican Women*, Phyllis Schlafly, Alton: IL, 1968.

transport voters to the polls, and Schlafly herself intimated that the voting machines were rigged in Ohio, which was the state with the biggest voting bloc.¹⁴⁰ Schlafly constituents argued that each vote cast for Schlafly was instead recorded as a vote favoring her opponent, Gladys O'Donnell from California. According to reporter Carol Felsenthal, had the Ohio machines not been rigged, "there is absolutely no doubt that Schlafly would have won that election.... [She was] the women's leader in America."¹⁴¹

Schlafly blamed the root cause of her purge from the NFRW on the combination of establishment GOP politicians and party-sponsored auxiliaries fearing a conservative takeover. She concluded that "conservatives have shown no comparable tenacity for political action, or any realization of the vast importance which control of the Republican Party means to the future of America. They... largely failed to use the power which was in their hands to secure the control of the Republican Party."¹⁴² Here, more explicitly articulated than anywhere else in her 1960s writings was Schlafly's prescription for the conservative movement: use political action through grassroots mobilization to take over the Republican Party, and in so doing wield political and social power for the long-term. Schlafly's purpose in churning out a series of short but urgent tracts was to push conservatives into waging an ideological battle over the GOP and by extension the identity of America. Her efforts around election organizing were tied to a long-term vision of political control via appointees in the federal government, like the Supreme Court. Even as Schlafly ascended within the NFRW between 1965-1967, the National Chairman of the GOP, Ray Bliss, actively worked with moderate Republicans to purge Schlafly. By 1967 Schlafly was

¹⁴⁰ Felsenthal, *The Sweetheart of the Silent Majority*, 190, 193.

¹⁴¹ Felsenthal, *The Sweetheart of the Silent Majority*, 193.

¹⁴² Schlafly, *Safe Not Sorry*, 147.

considered a legitimate threat to the establishment control of the Republican Party, because of her growing grassroots popularity.¹⁴³

Losing the NFRW election did not hinder Schlafly's popularity but instead galvanized a large base of overwhelming support. In June 1967 the *Los Angeles Times* reported that Phyllis Schlafly was "the choice of three-fourths of California women" and that she contributed to "Party unity in California."¹⁴⁴ California's conservative women did not support their local Long Beach candidate Gladys O'Donnell in her NFRW win over Schlafly. With this by all accounts bizarre and politically charged NFRW presidential loss, Schlafly decided that rather than continue to work through the Federation, she would launch her own newsletter to distribute within her own network of followers. *Safe Not Sorry* marked this breaking point and transition within Schlafly's activist trajectory. So, in response she began publishing *The Phyllis Schlafly Report* in 1967, which operated as a rightwing educational monthly newsletter to distill Schlafly specific policy and candidate information to readers. *The Report* connected her to a hardened core of conservative female supporters that followed her directly out of the NFRW and conservative grassroots organizations.¹⁴⁵

Mobilizing to Victory: Indicting Betrayers and Consolidating Power

With Schlafly freshly removed from the NFRW and election season still in full-swing, Schlafly and Ward released *The Betrayers* in October 1968, as an election treatise much like Schlafly's 1964's *Choice Not an Echo*. *The Betrayers* built on the previous works that the duo co-authored in the 1960s. Here the "betrayers" was as a catch-all term that was both broader and

¹⁴³ Schlafly, *Safe Not Sorry*, 148-170.

¹⁴⁴ "Mrs. Schlafly Will Address CRA Meeting," *Los Angeles Times*, June 14, 1967.

¹⁴⁵ Felsenthal, *The Sweetheart of the Silent Majority*, 195.

more insidious than the “gravedigger.” The term functioned as an indictment of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. It was possible to be both a gravedigger and a betrayer; a gravedigger was an “advocate of nuclear disarmament” whereas a betrayer included those supporting “criminals” including “public officials who fail to enforce the law... mayors and Governors who handcuff the local police, the prosecuting attorneys who fail to prosecute, the judges who fail to hand down proper sentences, [and] the Supreme Court Justices who set criminals and Communists free.”¹⁴⁶ The only way that gravediggers and betrayers were interchangeable was in their Cold War disarmament desires. Otherwise, the betrayer was both invested in destroying American from within by crippling military strength and defense strategies, and the social structure of the country. The emphasis on “law and order” targeted those participating in domestic civil rights, student, and peace movements who Schlafly and Ward dubbed “filthy, foul-mouthed Yippies, hippies, and chippies” and “criminals.”¹⁴⁷ *The Betrayers* was such a popular grassroots book that at one point the sale orders exceed the supply of printed books, so Phyllis Schlafly included a call in her *Phyllis Schlafly Report* asking readers to allow the publisher to “buy back fresh copies [at] 20 [cents] each.” This book must have been receiving large bulk orders, because Schlafly specified that “Each shipment must contain at least 10 copies.”¹⁴⁸

The 1968 election was interesting because voters had a third-party option with the American Independent Party running the former Alabama Governor, George Wallace. As an ardent pro-segregationist, Wallace was a popular choice for many white Southerners. Notably, Schlafly and Ward had no ill words regarding Wallace. Wallace made a name for himself as one

¹⁴⁶ Phyllis Schlafly and Chester Ward, *The Betrayers*, (Alton: Pere Marquette Press, 1968), 9.

¹⁴⁷ Schlafly and Ward, *The Betrayers*, 12, 116.

¹⁴⁸ Phyllis Schlafly, “Kennedy Book Hurts His Presidential Changes,” *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 2, No. 11, June 1969.

of the nation's leading opponents of the civil rights movement, and *The Betrayers* noted that "Many good people are casting a hopeful eye on [Wallace]." ¹⁴⁹ Rather, the authors urged conservatives to vote Nixon only because they believed that the two-party system would not allow for third-party victory. Schlafly and Ward cautioned, "History shows that a third party, however well-intentioned and well-financed, and however able and articulate its leader and dedicated workers, cannot succeed" in elections. ¹⁵⁰ They urged conservatives to settle for Nixon even though they believed Nixon would do no more for conservatives than restore military capacity and strength. ¹⁵¹ Schlafly hinted that the co-authors disagreed on their presidential endorsement, feeling split between Wallace and Nixon. She said, "Chester never forgave me for insisting that our 1968 book endorse Nixon.... He knew Nixon was a liar then." ¹⁵² Ultimately, Ward ceded the book's endorsement to Schlafly; *The Betrayers* was articulating a long game for a conservative take-over of the identity of the Republican Party. Schlafly was not interested in staking out the viability of a third party in the established political system. Instead, Schlafly and Ward wanted to consolidate conservative political power, not split it between the GOP and Wallace.

The authors suggested that conservatives vote in elected officials whose policies reflected those of Wallace to usher in a fuller "housecleaning" in the 1968 election cycle. They chided conservatives who were only laboring on Congressional races and not the presidential election noting that "Such a decision is out of touch with all political reality because the power of the Executive has so far outstripped the power of Congress." ¹⁵³ Schlafly and Ward noted that the

¹⁴⁹ Schlafly and Ward, *The Betrayers*, 117.

¹⁵⁰ Schlafly and Ward, *The Betrayers*, 117.

¹⁵¹ Schlafly and Ward, *The Betrayers*, 120.

¹⁵² Felsenthal, *The Sweetheart of the Silent Majority*, 221.

¹⁵³ Schlafly and Ward, *The Betrayers*, 114.

GOP needed a full election sweep of the executive and legislative branches for two reasons. Their first reason was to ensure “New appointments to the Supreme Court,” because “the Justices are known to ‘follow the election returns’ and, if a new Administration is elected, a change in decisions could come even before vacancies occur.”¹⁵⁴ Their second argument for a robust election mobilization was that “Military strength is our basic guarantee of continued freedom and independence.... The Republican Position... is based on a posture of overwhelming military superiority over any possible aggressors. This... will keep us out of war and safe from nuclear attack.”¹⁵⁵

To demonstrate the importance of controlling judicial appointments *The Betrayers*, used pornography as an example. Schlafly and Ward reminded conservatives that “When President Johnson appointed his friend, Abe Fortas, to the [Supreme] Court, it tipped the scales in favor of pornography.”¹⁵⁶ The authors’ transition into anti-obscenity was not based in a yet to emerge politics of family values, but rather served as a reminder to conservatives of the cost of losing presidential elections. Domestically, this meant the inability to appoint Justices. They went on to suggest that the practice of free love in the Soviet Union had been scrapped in favor of “the family” and “a strict code of morality” to become “strong, producing vigorous, disciplined young men and women who scored impressive triumphs in the Olympics and make good soldiers.”¹⁵⁷ Schlafly and Ward did not ground their advocacy of anti-obscenity and the nuclear family in a religious context. Instead, the family served the purpose of regimented, structured units that in turn ordered nations. They blamed the Soviets, along with Justice Fortas, for “promoting

¹⁵⁴ Schlafly and Ward, *The Betrayers*, 9-10.

¹⁵⁵ Schlafly and Ward, *The Betrayers*, 119-120.

¹⁵⁶ Schlafly and Ward, *The Betrayers*, 105.

¹⁵⁷ Schlafly and Ward, *The Betrayers*, 108

immorality in the United States because of its destructive effect on our national fiber.”¹⁵⁸

Ultimately, pornography was used as a vehicle in the text to encourage conservatives to get out the vote for Nixon so that the Republican Party could wield the power of the judiciary.

The Betrayers stoked rage against domestic civil rights issues for their potential effect on American standing with other countries around the world during the Cold War. Schlafly and Ward believed that the social and economic status quo in the United States was a great system as it was; those challenging it in various 1960s social revolutions were an enemy from within. Schlafly and Ward looked to the potential of a Nixon presidency as an opportunity for conservatives to renew their efforts for a political takeover. No longer a part of the NFRW, and successfully publishing monthly newsletters from her home with *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, the late-1960s signaled a shift for Schlafly. Now that she had dedicated followers, she could cultivate her own grassroots following while continuing to forge alliances within the movement.

Ready to March

When former Attorney General Ed Meese praised Phyllis Schlafly’s determination and Cold War defense strategy, he acknowledged the role that she played in building the successful conservative coalition that went on to elect Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. This moment of conservative ascendancy signaled that the GOP was becoming conservative; the Party’s identity crisis that Schlafly wrote about in the 1960s was over. Schlafly gave direction to the movement with long-term plans to consolidate political power for conservatives permanently within the GOP, and by extension in the federal government through a populist grassroots movement. She

¹⁵⁸ Schlafly and Ward, *The Betrayers*, 108.

brought fervor and ingenuity to grassroots mobilization creating institutions to structure the movement.

Schlafly's publishing company, Pere Marquette Press, and *The Phyllis Schlafly Report* newsletter that she launched in the 1960s aided the creation of an alternative conservative media, that vilified mainstream journalism, experts, and academia. She used her 1960s books to network and mobilize conservatives, and to position herself in a place of authority within the movement. Each new work added to the grassroots marching orders, like a roadmap, to conservative ascendancy within the GOP. *A Choice* encouraged conservatives to take a stand against establishment "kingmaker" Republicans. *The Gravediggers* coined the notion of "managed news" manipulating American knowledge of the Cold War and Soviet Union. *Strike from Space* cautioned against disarmament policies and criticized the lack of clear victory in Vietnam, suggesting that anything other than decisive victory made America look weak on the world stage, and casting anti-war advocates as un-American. *Safe Not Sorry* was a frenzied call to grassroots action to mobilize against Great Society programs, Black Power activists, and politicians courting minority votes rather than putting a stop to urban uprisings. In detailing Schlafly's NFRW exit, it argued that the GOP could purge conservatives from the Party structure but that ultimately conservatives would be able to attain and assert power through sustained grassroots action. *The Betrayers* served as a booster publication for electing Richard Nixon to the presidency in 1968, to provide Americans with a renewed commitment to Cold War defense, conservative law and order policing, and domestic judicial control.

Schlafly was a leader speaking to rank-and-file participants in a way that influenced the political public discourse in the 1960s. She combined ideologies of traditionalism, libertarianism, and anti-communism unite conservative factions into coalition. One way this was evidenced was

by conservative organizations looking to Schlafly to provide reading lists as education materials for their members.¹⁵⁹ But her efforts to bridge different factions within the conservative movement could also be seen in the way her 1960s books constructed a big tent phenomenon of issues to resonate with readers across the country.

Schlafly's 1960s works continue to serve as a sort of conservative evangelizing tool today. In attending a conservative youth education weekend hosted by Phyllis Schlafly Eagles in 2018 Kentucky Senator Rand Paul spoke to teens about reading old copies of *A Choice* in his youth and realizing he was a conservative. As he spoke, he proposed that a knowledge of Schlafly's early writings were an indication that someone could claim true bona fides as a committed conservative that understood both the history of the movement and the issues to mobilize around. A room full of young people walked away with their own goody bags filled with various Schlafly books.¹⁶⁰ Pere Marquette Press is still operational boasting nearly eighty-thousand dollars a year in revenue from new book sales; roughly fifteen thousand new Pere Marquette Schlafly books sell every year, and that does not include used book sales on other platforms.¹⁶¹

Schlafly herself was neither a pure member of the grassroots, nor was she part of the GOP establishment. She occupied a liminal space where she could direct both the top and the bottom of the conservative movement. She embodied the crucible of New Right formation by standing for religious evangelism, moral traditionalism, libertarianism, free-market economics, states' rights, and anti-communism. Through her work to create a conservative coalition Schlafly

¹⁵⁹ Nicole Hemmer, *Messengers of the Right*, 99.

¹⁶⁰ Rand Paul, "Address at Eagle Collegians" (speech, Washington D.C., July 10, 2018).

¹⁶¹ "Pere Marquette Press Inc Company Profile."

became an important vector for tracing the relationships between major figures and organizations that fueled the conservative movement.

CHAPTER 2: THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE: MOBILIZING A CONSERVATIVE NETWORK WITH *THE PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY REPORT*, 1967-1989

I sat in a conference room with Andy Schlafly at the Phyllis Schlafly Center in the fall of 2018, as a large portrait of his mother in a light blue dress and pearls gazed down on us. As we spoke Andy compared the volume and the prolific messaging in his mother's writing to playwright William Shakespeare. He believes, after making his own calculations, that his mother wrote more than the Bard himself.¹ In fact, this comparison is mentioned frequently within the Eagle Forum leadership. In their worldview, grounding Phyllis Schlafly's legacy in this way positions her as an important thinker and writer carrying on the mantle of what they would consider white Christian Western civilization.

This Eagle Forum framework situating Schlafly as a prolific writer sets her apart from her contemporaries by highlighting her commitment to the movement, while gesturing to a sense of timelessness because of her critiques and prescriptions for U.S. politics and mobilization strategies. Like Shakespeare, Schlafly's letters could carry different meanings to different readers; a new movement convert might read a newsletter and come away with issue talking points and a plan to write to their congressman. Whereas a seasoned activist might take away a full organizing to-do list from the same newsletter that could include contacting other organizations, or setting up a local study group event, or enlisting colleagues for precinct work. Regardless of how much or little a reader understood about Schlafly's mobilization prescriptions the *Phyllis Schlafly Report (PSR)* met readers where they were at and gave them direction for their next steps through discussing the state of U.S. empire, the military industrial complex,

¹ Andrew (Andy) Schlafly, interview with the author, Clayton, MO, October 10, 2018.

patriarchy, race relations, and leveraging politics and institutions to boost the power and reach of the conservative movement.

Eagle Forum's celebration of Schlafly's power with the pen was already part of her legacy by the Reagan Revolution of the 1980s. For example, one of the milestones celebrated at the 1987 Eagle Council gathering was the twentieth anniversary of the distribution of *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*. In a panel dedicated to Eagle Forum's "Growing Effectiveness," Phyllis Schlafly addressed the audience explaining the importance she placed on the circulation of this monthly newsletter. She asserted that the *Schlafly Report* "has been the communications lifeline of our movement and our political tool in winning political battles over the years."² According to her oldest son, John Schlafly, subscribers of the *Schlafly Report* were to read it, reuse the arguments found therein for publications within their local communities and organizations, and then continue to circulate the letter along to friends, local, state, and federal politicians, and sympathetic conservative organizations.³ Phyllis Schlafly never wanted credit for the circulation of her ideas beyond her report; she wanted her arguments used and reused to produce streamlined, uniform, and concise arguments to shape policies and capture the power of the Republican Party for the conservative movement. Her followers recalled that *The Phyllis Schlafly Report* was an important local tool to aid communities in their various fights to "save America," in whatever issue that fight manifested.

Tracing the circulation of the *PSR* is no less difficult than tracking the readership numbers of Schlafly's 1960s books. She funded her newsletter through the Eagle Trust Fund, established in 1978, keeping the authorship and distribution within Schlafly's sole purview.

² Phyllis Schlafly, "Eagle Forum News Conference/Eagle Forum's Growing Effectiveness at *Eagle Council XVI*," September 25, 1987, A0158, Audio Series, Phyllis Schlafly Center, Clayton, MO.

³ John Schlafly, "Leadership and Phyllis Schlafly at *Eagle Council XLVT*" (speech, St. Louis, MO, September 22, 2017).

What little is known about circulation comes from statements I found in archival recordings of Eagle Forum membership meetings or brief passages in other historians' work noting when their subject of study received *PSRs*. By the 1980s there were roughly 80,000 Eagles circulating these reports between rank-and-file members, organizational leaders, business moguls, and politicians working to create a united front on grassroots conservative messaging.⁴ This newsletter, then, functioned as the first line of defense networking conservative activists and providing a constant flow of information regarding communications and mobilizing strategies. There is no way to understate *The Phyllis Schlafly Report's* significance to conservative activists as a primer for political mobilization and leadership training since 1967.

Schlafly addressed a broad range of policy concerns with her newsletter, demonstrating that her activism energized the conservative movement in more expansive ways than just her contributions to the anti-feminist and anti-ERA movements in the 1970s. To restrict Schlafly's activism and influence to that political episode stunts the understanding of her significance to conservative mobilization since the late 1960s. This chapter focuses on how Schlafly practiced political messaging to transmit the information she wanted the movement to hear. Where the ideas themselves originated is a different intellectual and analytical project from assessing the ways that people consumed information as Schlafly packaged it. Instead, "The First Line of Defense" maps the policy issues, buzz words, and coalition building that Schlafly repeatedly modeled for her followers from the first publication of the monthly *Schlafly Report* in August of 1967. I analyze these newsletters in relationship to other Schlafly publications in the 1970s and 1980s, to further expand on the marketing, circulation, and mobilizing strategies developed in

⁴ Phyllis Schlafly, "Eagles Are Needed More Than Ever Before!" September 25, 1993, A1061, Audio Series, Phyllis Schlafly Center, Clayton, MO.

these texts. While Schlafly wrote the *PSR* until her death in 2016, this chapter only analyzes letters through December 1989, to center Schlafly's relationship to emergent institutions in that period that went on to secure the movement's national staying power for decades after.

This chapter makes two arguments: first, that *The Phyllis Schlafly Report* was a tool for consolidating conservative movement power in U.S. politics. The *PSR* archives the mobilization history of the movement through Schlafly's perspective, flagging key policy issues and elections, instructing local leaders on the process of institution building, coalition navigation, and sharing the different labors Eagle Forum members used to sustain the New Right. Monthly installments of the *PSR* made Schlafly accessible to grassroots conservatives through print culture. As these newsletters circulated, and they found their way to new local leaders and groups they served a double purpose of recruiting dedicated activists into the ranks of Eagle Forum by the 1970s. This vastly understudied source in conservative movement histories offers a unique avenue for tracing women's centered relationships between major figures and organizations that sustained the New Right.

Second, these reports served as a continuation of Schlafly's interest in aiding the growth of an alternative conservative media network. As she distilled information on an array of foreign policy, economic, and social issues, she supported an anti-intellectual, anti-elite grassroots conservative ideology. In so doing, she was able to carve a space out for herself, and her hardened female followers, as a potent oppositional force against civil rights progress. That Schlafly, and her Eagles, were predominately white and wealthy created a national media sensation of conservative women undermining the social possibilities of a shared feminist sisterhood. In that way, the *PSR* taught conservative female readers how to navigate the terrain of the anti-feminist movement and culture wars in a way that fortified systemic structural racism,

patriarchy, and U.S. empire through the combination of alternative conservative media and women's organizing. Even though the *PSR* only ever made the ERA and women's liberation a secondary mobilizing issue Schlafly's frenzied anti-feminist newsletters served as an outreach opportunity to lure newcomers into a broader conservative media network that transformed new converts into dedicated foot soldiers for the movement.

Within these newsletters there are three distinct transitions marking Schlafly's and Eagle Forum's evolution as organizers within the conservative movement. For Schlafly the 1960s was a project of amassing an experienced network that could work together to challenge the political identity of the GOP to make it conservative. The suburban housewives that subscribed to Schlafly's newsletter in the late-1960s were not new to political activism in partisan women's clubs. Unlike conservative women who reacted to the ERA and reproductive politics in 1970s, Schlafly amassed a following in the decades before.⁵ By the time *A Choice Not an Echo* debuted in 1964, Phyllis Schlafly already had a national following with substantial political newsletter writing experience in her organizing arsenal.⁶ She used the *PSR* to capitalize on her purge from the NFRW in 1967, launching herself as an independent leader within the movement backed by a

⁵ See: Stacie Taranto, *Kitchen Table Politics*, 2017.

⁶ Donald Critchlow highlights Schlafly's 1946 successful campaign management through written press releases and candidate speeches securing the Congressional election of Claude Bakewell in St. Louis' 11th district. After the Bakewell campaign she went on to write the monthly newsletter that circulated for the St. Louis Trust Company and the First National Bank and create a financial planning for women program that collectively distilled conservatism to the broader St. Louis area. The Company scheduled speaking engagements for Schlafly networking her to a variety of local women's groups across St. Louis to address questions about trusts, estate planning, and marital taxes. By 1949 Schlafly actively participated in the Illinois Federation of Republican Women and the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). Beyond regular speaking appearances in both organizations around the country Schlafly was the five-time National Chairman of National Defense for DAR issuing monthly articles for the DAR magazine, and in 1962 Schlafly added a recurring radio appearance to address national security issues, sometimes with popular conservative guests, for DAR's "America Wake Up" that reached twenty-five Illinois stations. As historian Michelle Nickerson notes DAR "developed many of the radical-watching techniques and institutions that came to characterize female political culture on the right,"⁶ that Schlafly could then apply within Eagle Forum. For more see: Donald Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*. As historian Michelle Nickerson notes DAR "developed many of the radical-watching techniques and institutions that came to characterize female political culture on the right." See: Michelle Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism*, 4.

loyal following. Schlafly claimed that 200,000 members of the NFRW left the organization because of what members considered foul play blocking her election, and further evidence that conservative women were unwelcome in GOP auxiliary groups.⁷ The letters between 1967 and 1972, served a networking purpose between those disaffected NFRW organizers connecting allied grassroots leaders and groups across. The early years of the *PSR* intended to leverage these relationships to exert social movement pressure on the Republican Party and its auxiliary groups, like the NFRW, in an ongoing bid to amass institutional conservative power within the party.

Phyllis Schlafly Reports from February 1972 until 1983, coincided with the national battle over the ERA and the emergence of the Reagan coalition. There were two major interconnected changes to the *PSR* in these years. First, Schlafly added “Section Two” to her newsletters doubling her monthly publications to address conservative organizing against the feminist movement. Second, this section offered an outreach arm to recruit newcomers into the conservative movement, because Section Two readers were not necessarily the same readership as those invested in Section One, which addressed Cold War foreign policy and defense, election strategies, and conservative mobilization tactics as just a few of the recurrent themes. Over time newcomers invested in blocking the ERA could immerse themselves in Section I, but Section Two offered an avenue for conservatism to go mainstream through STOP-ERA. While all subscribers received both sections, Section Two could also be purchased as a packet of quick primers as an immersion vehicle to galvanize grassroots momentum. Section Two fueled the culture wars, and helped facilitate the emergence of the pro-family, pro-life, evangelical

⁷ Phyllis Schlafly, Interview by Peter Carroll, Alton, Ill., October 31, 1983.

movements, with Jerry Falwell insisting his Moral Majority members subscribe and in addition purchase Schlafly's curated collection of highlight reports related to STOP-ERA.⁸

The *PSR* entered a final stage of audience transformation and purpose from 1983 to 1989. With the ERA defeated and a conservative administration in the White House the purpose of the *PSR* changed from networking a movement to finding new pathways forward that would simultaneously energize the grassroots base while instilling methods for maintaining permanent institutional power. Eagle Forum continued to grow through the 1980s, as did their relationships with other conservative organizations; in this period the *PSR* became a behind the scenes site to test new movement strategies in the sense that Schlafly and the Eagles faded from the media spotlight they held in the 1970s but became ever more celebrated within conservative circles. The *PSR*, then, offered a continuing "how to" guide for consolidating conservatism within national politics without requiring the same influx of newly activated grassroots members.

Assessing a collective view before and after the ERA Schlafly intertwined national and foreign policy issues producing a big-tent conservative ideology to simultaneously tackle social, cultural, and political ills by attacking communism, experts, political moderates, and the Democratic Party. From Schlafly's perspective this cadre worked in concert producing military instability, political corruption, and social turmoil through civil rights movements. In presenting an accessible conservatism for a growing grassroots interest Schlafly offered readers crucial tools to usher in decades worth of institutionalized conservative political power. She trained readers that the solution to any disagreement with foreign or domestic policy issues could be solved through more persistent and committed grassroots mobilization.

⁸ Phyllis Schlafly and Jerry Falwell, "Phyllis Schlafly Speech for Moral Majority on ERA in Orlando, Florida," 1 January 1980, A0582, Audio Series, The Phyllis Schlafly Center, Clayton, MO.

In promoting this kind of grassroots anti-intellectualism, Schlafly unsettled the belief that expert opinion should hold social prestige and transmit accurate knowledge. In her invocation of “expert” Schlafly lumped those who were PhD educated with skilled government appointees, analysts, heads of state and federal committees, and military strategists and officials, as being insufficiently trained to ever be able to meaningfully weigh in on any policy concern. By shaking the foundations of public trust in skilled professionals, Schlafly positioned herself as an integral holder of political knowledge and military strategy sharing intel with her readers that they could not get from mainstream media. The very act of discrediting experts translated into a false belief that grassroots activists knew more about any issue than any trained so-called expert because followers came to see conservative media as more truthful and more attuned to the goals of partisan interests. Thus, the systematic attention to the promotion of anti-intellectual grassroots networks, discrediting of American journalism and experts energized a movement to inculcate conservatives within a burgeoning alternative news media.

Schlafly’s attacks on expert knowledge aligned with the concurrent neoconservative critique of the “New Class” that began in the 1960s. Neoconservatives saw the “New Class” as an “adversary culture” comprised of “academia, media, fine arts, foundations, and some realms of government, such as the social welfare and regulatory agencies” that institutionalized anti-Americanness.⁹ While Schlafly avoided the “New Class” term, she nonetheless positioned bureaucrats, intellectuals, and media people as consolidating and extending their own class position by presenting government programs as solutions to social problems in order. Schlafly, summarized this phenomenon as a moral crisis and as a problem of the liberal establishment. Schlafly framed the neoconservative “New Class” as an outgrowth of unchecked liberalism.

⁹ Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 51.

Schlafly did not create a new organizing mold with the *PSR*, but rather applied methods that already proved effective. Historian Lisa McGirr emphasized the ways that the John Birch Society appropriated the hierarchical organizing structure of the left in the 1960s and pursued activities like letter-writing, film screenings, and circulating recruitment literature within Orange County, California in the late-1950s and 1960s.¹⁰ Conservative print culture doubled as both education and recruitment for the movement that could be passed around within the social networks of a core group of activists within their local communities.¹¹ Printed materials “provided seemingly authoritative voices and helped to build a new level of consciousness and politicization among recruits. Networks and the availability of outside resources thus were central to the growth of the grassroots conservative movement in Orange County,” and beyond.¹² Phyllis Schlafly was particularly skilled at positioning herself as a special authority in her published works regardless of what issue she highlighted for her audience.

The *PSR* fits into a longer history of social movement organizing through print culture. Organizations use newsletters to grow their membership, inform readers, shape political activism, and share information about protests, rallies, and allied groups. Like other social movement newsletters, *The Phyllis Schlafly Report* connected various membership chapters to one another not just through the act of reading, but by sharing effective local strategies, and offered a source of funding for Schlafly’s emerging social movement institutions.¹³ Sustaining independent social movement print culture also created an alternative conservative media to

¹⁰ Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 78-79.

¹¹ McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 97.

¹² McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 98.

¹³ For more on the way that print culture facilitates social movements see: Robyn Spencer, *The Revolution has Come: Black Power, Gender, and the Black Panther Party in Oakland* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 71-73.

circumvent mainstream news offering readers movement specific sources of information.¹⁴

Schlafly ultimately understood the effectiveness of merging print culture with a legally protected nonprofit funding stream (through the establishment of the Eagle Forum Trust Fund) to sustain her own institutional growth and mobilizing power within emergent conservative news.

Foreign and Domestic Policy, August 1967-January 1972

The *PSR* functioned as a key contribution Schlafly made to the project of building conservative media and bridging various factions together within the movement to create successful coalitions. Schlafly intently focused on “[setting] up a media operation so that we can put the proper spin” on issues “and communicate it to republicans...”¹⁵ In that sense, the *PSR* offered a useful extension of her Pere Marquette Press; her newsletters required no fact checking, no peer review, and no external distribution companies for circulation. She could directly mail to other organizations, and individual readers while cutting mailing costs by working under an educational designation for “nonprofit status with the Postmaster” to receive a “special nonprofit bulk mailing permit.”¹⁶ Technically, the reduced rates applied for educational and not lobbying materials. However, once Eagle Forum and *PSR* newsletters received their postal status, there was no financial repercussions to lobbying through newsletters since “The postal service makes no distinction as to whether you engage in lobbying or not.”¹⁷

Schlafly researched and wrote her monthly news report from her home in Alton, Illinois, by providing conservative subscribers with the argumentative structure and mobilization

¹⁴ Nicole Hemmer, *Messengers of the Right*, 6.

¹⁵ Phyllis Schlafly, “Where Do We Go From Here? Address by Phyllis Schlafly, October 13, 1990, A0976, Audio Series, Phyllis Schlafly Center, Clayton, MO.

¹⁶ John Schlafly, “Tax & Reporting Rules for Eagle Forum & PACS,” September 18, 1983, A00776, Audio Series, Phyllis Schlafly Center, Clayton, MO.

¹⁷ John Schlafly, “Tax & Reporting Rules for Eagle Forum & PACS,” Audio Series.

strategies necessary to achieve electoral and legislative success at the local, state, and federal levels. The first issue that circulated in 1967 titled “Giveaway of Our Panama Canal,” which focused on foreign policy, accomplished three things. First, it positioned Schlafly as a conservative commentator with an avid interest in foreign policy strategy aimed at protecting the strength U.S. empire during the Cold War. She dedicated the majority of this *Schlafly Report* to a discussion of the Kennedy Administration’s handling of the Bay of Pigs incident, and what Schlafly saw as their eagerness to sacrifice U.S. sovereignty over the Panama Canal leaving not just Panama, but the U.S. open to Fidel Castro’s communist threat.¹⁸ Second, this newsletter positioned itself as the flagship publication for women disillusioned with the National Federation of Republican Women (NFRW) to follow. The issue highlighted what Schlafly and her NFRW supporters saw as a conspiracy to rig the national election to prevent her from winning the presidency, blocking her from the institutional power that should have been hers.¹⁹ This newsletter provided an outlet for conservative women in the NFRW to turn to in the wake of this scandal, and gave Schlafly the platform that the election denied her for directing the activism of conservative women from across the nation.

The third function of this newsletter offered conservatives a solution to their frustrations with the political climate through activism. Schlafly suggested readers could participate in a letter writing campaign to “express themselves” to their local NFRW clubs, RNC Chairman Ray Bliss, and Congressmen to show that “our women stand for honest elections and integrity in politics, and they will not tolerate or acquiesce in any betrayal of moral principles.”²⁰ Schlafly further encouraged readers to contact their senators to get ahead of Congressional votes related to

¹⁸ Phyllis Schlafly, “Giveaway of Our Panama Canal,” *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. I, No. I, August 1967.

¹⁹ Schlafly, “Giveaway of Our Panama Canal,” August 1967.

²⁰ Schlafly, “Giveaway of Our Panama Canal,” August 1967.

Cold War defense instructing readers that “Now is the time to let your Senator know how you want him to vote.”²¹ Aside from direct outreach to auxiliaries and elected officials, Schlafly instructed readers how to secure “The Changing Strategic Military Balance” report from the American Security Council to understand the “megatonnage gap” in nuclear weapons between the United States and Soviet Union.²² Once a reader procured the report they were to take it to their “newspaper editor and ask him for a news story, editorial, or feature story.” Afterwards, readers needed to “take this Report to your minister and ask him to assume his responsibility to defend religion and freedom against atheistic Communist aggression by advising his congregation that we have the moral duty to defend our homes and churches from nuclear attack.”²³ *PSR* readers could be sure that each installment would provide multiple ideas and opportunities to channel their movement energy toward winning elections, nominations, or legislative votes with easy-to-follow instructions.

The final purpose buried at the end of this inaugural newsletter was quite visionary: a tiny column that would continuously reappear in future publications called “Keep- Your-Sense-of-Humor-Department.” This issue reprinted some of Gladys O’Donnell’s (Schlafly’s victorious challenger for the NFRW presidency) remarks in the *Long Beach Press Telegram* on May 28, 1967. O’Donnell stated that she supported birth control pills and abortion, intimated that the extreme right in the U.S. echoed the bigotry and intolerance of Nazi Germany, and left Schlafly’s name out of the list of NFRW leaders that she believed were successful with organizing around social concerns. An additional snippet came from June 30, 1967 (name of newspaper and reporter not given) where Dorothy Elston “accused Phyllis Schlafly of ‘subversion’ because she

²¹ Schlafly, “Giveaway of Our Panama Canal,” August 1967.

²² Schlafly, “Giveaway of Our Panama Canal,” August 1967.

²³ Schlafly, “Giveaway of Our Panama Canal,” August 1967.

distributes anti-Communist literature from her home!” at a Los Angeles Conference, and apparently on a different occasion blamed Schlafly for placing cockroaches in the National Federation office.²⁴ Schlafly adeptly used this section to signal to followers that the NFRW leadership did not support white conservative women within the organization.

The *PSR* sometimes included quotations to other published news but withheld full publication information about source material; this allowed Schlafly to streamline messaging for readers. This was a recurrent tactic to portray O’Donnell, Elston, and the NFRW as hostile to conservatism, fully antagonistic to herself and the broader Schlafly faction, and out of step with coffee klatch practices of combating the Cold War by spreading anti-communist literature. In demonstrating to readers that this was something to laugh at (as cued by the headline of the subsection of the newsletter) Schlafly deflected these criticisms in a way that allowed readers to further unite under their shared sense of ostracization within mainstream Republican politics. Thus, Schlafly crafted an easy to digest narrative of conservatives as informed citizens cast to the fringes of society by elites and a political system corrupted by liberalism and Communist propaganda. The *PSR* created a shared space for like-minded people to network and mobilize outside of existing party structures.

Schlafly’s newsletters emphasized the need for conservatives to battle over control of the GOP, because the alternative was the decay of the U.S. empire. From August of 1967 until January of 1972, Schlafly covered a variety of national and international policy issues which were completely disassociated from battles over feminism, women’s rights, and the Equal Rights Amendment. She focused heavily on issues surrounding nuclear armament; conservative disagreements, both foreign and domestic, with the Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) Administration;

²⁴ Schlafly, “Giveaway of Our Panama Canal,” August 1967.

purging the Republican Party of centrist participants, and grassroots organizing strategies. Men and women subscribing to her letters became well-versed in Schlafly-specific conservative political stances for a wide range of pressing policy debates. In every publication from 1967 to 1972, Schlafly argued that the only way to reclaim the nation from those too sympathetic to the Soviet Union was to sustain grassroots efforts to elect conservative Republicans at every level of the political infrastructure, including within Republican women's auxiliaries like the National Federation of Republican Women and the state Federations that organized under their umbrella.

The newsletters from this period offered an avenue to condense arguments from Schlafly's 1960s books, further boosting circulation for the Schlafly owned Pere Marquette Press. Study groups reading the *PSRs* would be encouraged to add Schlafly titles to their rotation. She opened her first newsletter in August 1967, by scrutinizing the way that the Kennedy and Johnson administrations handled Cold War foreign policy. Specifically, Schlafly argued that Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara's actions consistently threatened U.S. superiority by signing treaties that in her estimation devastated national sovereignty and military dominance.²⁵ She wrote about McNamara and other military officials and moderate Republican, and Democratic politicians as "gravediggers" which both invoked and publicized her 1964 book, *The Gravediggers*. The book indicted everyone politically left of conservative America for their handling of Cold policies that dug the grave of the United States by risking American lives and world power by not extinguishing the Soviet Union with the full force and might of the military.²⁶ Schlafly also encouraged subscribers to read her 1965 *Strike From Space* to familiarize activists with her arguments on America's position within the arms race and the ways

²⁵ Schlafly, "Giveaway of Our Panama Canal," August 1967.

²⁶ Phyllis Schlafly, "When You Park Your Ballot Remember This Big X," *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol 1. No 2, September 1967.

in which the Soviets threatened the country because of the lack of an anti-missile defense system in the United States.²⁷

The *PSR* allowed Schlafly to claim solo authority as a Cold War military strategist, since her writing partner, Chester Ward, did not write or produce the newsletters. This meant that with the circulation of this inaugural newsletter and those that followed in the late-1960s, Schlafly positioned herself as a leading national critic of US Cold War policies and military engagements, capitalizing on the credibility from her self-authored, and self-published books.²⁸ In so doing, she continued her work toward a long-term project of undermining scientific and military experts around the country as she attacked their testimonies to elevate her own. Her reports encouraged followers to rent recordings of various television programs that she appeared on as a commentator about nuclear weapons and defense. She suggested that Eagles rent these programs for the cost of postage and hold viewing parties for the various clubs and study groups that they attended.²⁹ In this way Schlafly destabilized the clout and trust in trained experts while she created a new category of the layman expert who self-educated to be just as, if not more informed, than someone with multiple degrees and decades of field experience. Her anti-intellectual, anti-elite framework offered an alternative, yet complimentary, media source to William F. Buckley Jr.'s *National Review* and other conservative and neoconservative

²⁷ Schlafly, "When You Mark Your Ballot Remember This Big X," September 1967.

²⁸ Schlafly appeared on and hosted numerous radio shows and was a sought-after civilian speaker on Cold War defense. She also provided defense testimonies to Congress and sat for nationally televised interviews on Cold War strategy.

²⁹ Phyllis Schlafly, "Is Your Congressman in the Republican Mainstream?" *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 1, No. 3, October 1967; Phyllis Schlafly, "Clear-Cut and Total Victory" For Conservative GOP Women in California Courts," *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 1, No. 7, February 1968; Phyllis Schlafly, "Crisis in Law and Order," *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 1, No. 10, May 1968; Phyllis Schlafly, "Thurmond's Roll in Miami," *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 2, No. 1, August 1968.

periodicals. According to historian Heather Cox Richardson, Buckley attracted conservative elites, whereas Schlafly pitched her writing to ordinary readers at the grassroots.³⁰

Phyllis Schlafly spread her influence beyond *The Phyllis Schlafly Report* and boosted membership with casual recruitment assignments that attracted new converts to her fold. Those that followed her proposed lesson plans from the *PSR* came to see her as one of the leading conservative voices on Cold War foreign policy.³¹ In addition to frequent *PSR* reminders to “Write, phone or wire your Senators and Congressmen and tell them you want... Immediate production of the Nike X anti-missile... [and the] reversal of the McNamara-Nitze policies” readers were also directed to study her previous books on defense like *Strike from Space*.³² In the early years of *The Phyllis Schlafly Report* neither Schlafly nor her followers focused on the feminist movement; it was not even on their radar. Instead, Cold War defense, electoral politics, federal nominations, campus free speech, the Civil Rights Movement, and the judiciary branch captured their attention. Their fight pre-ERA was as much a fight within the Republican Party over what the character of the party should be, all the while articulating a firm belief that if the GOP was not conservative, it was liberal. In other words, the early years of Schlafly’s newsletter continued her 1960s efforts to purge the Republican Party of those who were not conservative enough. I offer a close reading of four different *Phyllis Schlafly Reports* from before the ERA battle to consider Schlafly’s political project, appeal, and following; the ERA fit into larger narratives Schlafly trumpeted, rather than signaling a new mission.

³⁰ Heather Cox Richardson, *To Make Men Free: A History of the Republican Party* (New York: Basic Books, 2021), 331.

³¹ Eagles and friends of Eagle Forum continuously praise Schlafly’s Cold War defense work as equivalent, if not more important to her STOP-ERA campaign.

³² Phyllis Schlafly, “When You Mark Your Ballot – Remember This Big X,” *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. I, No. 2, September 1967.

In July of 1969, Schlafly wrote and circulated a letter called “Shift to the Right – Rift on the Left.”³³ The larger goal for this publication was to cast conservatism as the shared consciousness of up to “seventy percent” of Americans.³⁴ In demonstrating the popularity of conservatism via June election outcomes in large cities, Schlafly imbued readers with hope for a larger groundswell of conservative election victories to come. She opened stating: “The conservative swing in America today is now so obvious that it cannot be denied by even the most extreme liberals. Law-and-order candidates scored upset victories over liberals in mayoral elections...”³⁵ When Schlafly writes about the “conservative swing” and victorious “Law-and-order candidates” she may have been giving a subtle acknowledgement to readers who actively volunteered in these municipal elections as well as the local grassroots conservative organizations that labored for their victories in response to all of the various political backlash against the Black freedom movement, anti-war protests, and urban uprisings of the decade. Here then, we find Schlafly in a front row seat narrating the 1960s political realignment in America while advocating for a conservative shift that refused to relinquish any modicum of power to social movements on the left, or politicians who might be willing to compromise with them.

Since no *PSR* could be complete without mobilization instructions, even when celebrating election victories, Schlafly included a section to encourage readers to track “Your Congressman’s Voting Record.”³⁶ In this section Schlafly reproduced two posters that the Ohio Federation of Republican Women created to chart what their elected officials voted for. The idea was that noting the rollcall of the votes would help readers “keep informed” to better “study

³³ Phyllis Schlafly, “Shift to the Right – Rift on the Left,” *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 2 No. 12, July 1969.

³⁴ Schlafly, “Shift to the Right – Rift on the Left,” July 1969.

³⁵ Schlafly, “Shift to the Right – Rift on the Left,” July 1969.

³⁶ Schlafly, “Shift to the Right – Rift on the Left,” July 1969.

national and state legislation and thus become better acquainted with the issues.”³⁷ Implementing these charts within a local group would require readers to “study the legislation, record the important information, and bring [the charts] to club meetings for discussion and display.”³⁸ Schlafly further suggested that readers could “fill in the blanks for your own Senator and Congressman.”³⁹ Activism tactics like this fed into the Eagle Forum model of weaponized housewifery by employing forms of surveillance to closely watch elected officials. In turn, Eagles became a kind of interest group for politicians, who would expect immediate calls and letter writing campaigns (per other requested *PSR* forms of political action) should they stray from voting the way Eagles expected.⁴⁰ Moreover, this kind of political watchfulness was an ongoing activity that required significant amounts of time to study policy, calendar the votes, and then track the rollcalls at local, state, and federal levels, in addition to other organizing labors women had within their local clubs.

This *PSR* offered an excellent example of Schlafly’s ability to network organizations to each other and mobilize nationally by highlighting local forms of activism that proved effective. While she consistently boosted the confidence readers had in the potential for movement success, she also continuously reminded readers that there was never a time to be complacent, even when celebrating election victories. The *PSR* effectively offered consistent tools to encourage various scaled forms of activism that could do everything from get a political novice started (by contacting their representatives), to activities designed for more experienced activists (like organizing issue study groups and tracking rollcall votes). Additionally, Schlafly’s *PSR* model

³⁷ Schlafly, “Shift to the Right – Rift on the Left,” July 1969.

³⁸ Schlafly, “Shift to the Right – Rift on the Left,” July 1969.

³⁹ Schlafly, “Shift to the Right – Rift on the Left,” July 1969.

⁴⁰ Schlafly, “Giveaway of Our Panama Canal”; Schlafly, “When You Mark Your Ballot – Remember This Big X”; Schlafly, “Shift to the Right – Rift on the Left.”

coupled a movement issue whether it was election outcomes, a recent event, or proposed policy with a proposed mobilizing solution continuously. This strategy fed a key purpose behind the creation of alternative conservative media: organizing and educating conservatives within a comprehensive movement worldview to work toward the goal of consolidating power within the Republican Party and American institutions.

Adding the ERA

Schlafly's activism before, during, and after the ERA display a dynamic and assertive activism that addressed policy and movement making issues as symbiotic in remaking the Republican Party into a conservative stronghold. In 1970 and 1971, Schlafly wrote on a spectrum of issues that her readers followed. They included Schlafly's congressional campaign, the Vietnam War, dissent on college campuses, women's roles in primaries, sex education, aid to foreign countries, federal spending, Washington briefings, pornography, parent's rights, Republican candidate election strategies, recruiting college and high school students to the Republican Party, Democratic Party strategy, "ping-pong diplomacy" and President Nixon, the enactment of Republican policy versus Party platform, and stopping mandatory bussing, were just some of the topics Phyllis Schlafly addressed in her monthly newsletter.⁴¹

In the 1970s, Schlafly looked to diversify forms of political action for readers, which included youth outreach. Schlafly was appointed to judge the 1970 Young Americans for Freedom (YAF) essay contest, and suggested her readers recruit students to YAF.⁴² Founded by William F. Buckley Jr. in 1960, YAF offered a venue for collegiate conservative activism to

⁴¹ Phyllis Schlafly, "Phyllis Schlafly A Candidate For Congress," *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 3 no. 6, January 1970; Phyllis Schlafly, *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 2, No. 6, January 1970 — Vol. 5, No. 5, December 1971.

⁴² Phyllis Schlafly, "Why Don't Conservatives Do Their Homework?" *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 3, No. 7, February 1970.

mobilize and challenge leftist campus groups like Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). According to Schlafly this form of political action that would make students aware of the “factual history of Communism... and the threat of Communism to our freedom.”⁴³ In aligning with YAF, Schlafly forged an alliance with conservative youth while encouraging her followers to include youth mobilization against various civil rights, free speech, and anti-war movements animating college campuses as an integral part of movement organizing.

Schlafly only took up the ERA and the feminist movement for the first time on February 1, 1972.⁴⁴ Writing against the feminist movement marked the emergence of a new recurring policy issue after nearly four and a half years of monthly newsletters mobilizing the conservative grassroots. According to Schlafly, she was not aware of the Equal Rights Amendment until 1972, when a friend sent her a copy of the proposed amendment.⁴⁵ Foreign policy and national defense consumed her attention making women’s issues a periphery issue at best before then. Schlafly had no qualms with section one of the amendment. It read: “Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.”⁴⁶ However, section two caused Schlafly to rebuke the government and feminism for what she saw as their joint attempt to violate states’ rights. Section two read: “The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.”⁴⁷ Thirty states voted to ratify the ERA by the end of 1973, which was just eight states shy of the total needed to pass the

⁴³ Schlafly, “Why Don’t Conservatives Do Their Homework?”

⁴⁴ Phyllis Schlafly, “What’s Wrong With “Equal Rights” For Women?” *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 5, No. 7, February 1972.

⁴⁵ Even though Schlafly became aware of the ERA in 1972 she was still actively writing against foreign policy and the decisions surrounding national defense publishing *Kissinger on the Couch* in 1974. In her early entry into the ERA debate, she worried that it would take her attention away from the policy issues that really mattered to focus on women’s legislation. For more see: Mark DePue and Phyllis Schlafly, Interview with Phyllis Schlafly, *Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum*, January 5, 2011, <https://presidentlincoln.illinois.gov/Resources/e1001976-82d4-4a4e-9d3c-1388e13fed87/download>.

⁴⁶ *National Woman's Party. 1962. Equal rights amendment. Washington: [publisher not identified]*.

⁴⁷ *Equal Rights Amendment*.

amendment. Schlafly's activism against the ERA pushed back on feminist struggles for full legal equality while further galvanizing the New Right in a vigorous campaign against the Amendment's passage.

Schlafly's inaugural anti-ERA *PSR* "What's Wrong With "Equal Rights" for Women?" recommended two forms of political action to block the amendment. She instructed readers to, "Tell your Senators NOW that you want them to vote NO on the Equal Rights Amendment. Tell your television and radio stations that you want equal time to present the case FOR marriage and motherhood."⁴⁸ These two strategies could not be easily accomplished by new activists; anyone could contact their elected representatives, but it required more experience and skill to contact radio and television stations to request airtime to present the anti-ERA position. Schlafly was great at providing readers with tools to scale to their savvy with political action, always finding ways for activists to contribute to the movement regardless of how new they may be to activism. Additionally, skipping over study group meetings as a suggestion and going straight toward media spots as a solution helped to quickly launch STOP-ERA as a nationally visible movement. Perhaps Schlafly prescribed media attention as one of the first two mobilizing actions because she may have expected that experienced readers contacting the media would in effect be providing listeners and viewers with a condensed high-profile study group by highlighting the main points from the *PSR*. In any case, by asking Eagles and other readers to contact the media Schlafly bridged alternative conservative media into the mainstream with STOP-ERA talking points, boosting the profile and reach of the conservative movement.

An important sub-section of the women who fought against the ERA and women's liberation alongside Schlafly found themselves in that struggle because of the opportunity these

⁴⁸ Schlafly, "What's Wrong with "Equal Rights" for Women?"

issues afforded them to amass a grassroots network that could be mobilized on behalf of other policies. Throughout the 1970s, conservative white suburban women consolidated their political power by connecting longer fought Cold War policy agendas to their anti-feminist concerns over potential negative social implications of women's rights. Interestingly, a closer look at the content of *The Phyllis Schlafly Report* demonstrates that blocking the ERA was not of immediate interest to Schlafly or her core followers as they continued to prioritize other issues before addressing the ERA for the second time in her report issued May 1, 1972.⁴⁹ In between considering what was wrong with ERA Schlafly returned to domestic and foreign policy topics including: relations with China, communism, school busing, and nuclear weapons.⁵⁰

As Elizabeth Gillespie McRae argues, massive resistance to busing since the late-1950s was an issue that sustained conservative coalitions both locally and nationally allowing segregationists to rebrand themselves into the New Right using racially coded language while sustaining "a broader politics of white supremacy."⁵¹ Schlafly, for her part, facilitated the spread of anti-busing politics to conservative women beyond the South. The ERA and feminism more broadly did not elicit Schlafly's full attention immediately because, busing and Cold War foreign policy already offered a unifying bread and butter conservative position for her network to mobilize around. It took time to develop the ERA as a vehicle to convert newly identified conservative activists into her fold by positioning the amendment as a big tent from which drastic changes to notions of white womanhood, the nuclear family, and national and foreign policy would follow.

⁴⁹ Phyllis Schlafly, "The Fraud Called The Equal Rights Amendment," *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 5 No. 10, Section 2, May 1972.

⁵⁰ Phyllis Schlafly, *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, vol. 5 no. 8 – vol. 5 no. 10 (March – May 1972).

⁵¹ Elizabeth Gillespie McRae, *Mothers of Massive Resistance*, 240.

After her first *PSR* on the ERA in February 1972, Schlafly appeared on the Phil Donohue Show on April 19, 1972, to refute the benefits of the amendment. Her newsletter in May 1972 stated that, “The live studio audience was 98 percent against women’s lib and the Equal Rights Amendment” and that her February publication “drew the biggest response in the five-year history of this newsletter.”⁵² She went on to tell readers that she experienced a “flood of fan mail which resulted from the show... from women in all walks of life – who are not politically active in any way, but are just average American women who happened to have their television sets on that morning.”⁵³ Because of the influx of women interested in Schlafly’s STOP-ERA rebuttal she included an entire “What Can You Do?” section in this *PSR* that carefully broke down a series of next steps for grassroots action.⁵⁴ She urged readers to “run, don’t walk, to the home of your most effective and persuasive woman friend. Take this Report with you and discuss it with her.”⁵⁵ She noted that readers could also look to the February edition for more background information on the ERA for recruitment purposes. After locally networking Schlafly instructed readers to “telephone your own State Legislator” to find out when the State Legislature is in session. Specifying that “Tuesdays and Wednesdays are usually best” Schlafly told readers to take “you and your friend, and a couple of other women... to the State Capitol and talk personally to every State Legislator, using the arguments given in this *Report*.”⁵⁶ She emphasized that readers needed to be able to put the *PSR* arguments into their own words for the best effect, and for her more seasoned readers, she once again reminded them to contact radio and television stations for “equal time.”⁵⁷

⁵² Schlafly, “The Fraud Called The Equal Rights Amendment.”

⁵³ Schlafly, “The Fraud Called The Equal Rights Amendment.”

⁵⁴ Schlafly, “The Fraud Called The Equal Rights Amendment.”

⁵⁵ Schlafly, “The Fraud Called The Equal Rights Amendment.”

⁵⁶ Schlafly, “The Fraud Called The Equal Rights Amendment.”

⁵⁷ Schlafly, “The Fraud Called The Equal Rights Amendment.”

This newsletter that came out in May 1972, marked only the second time in the publication's history where Schlafly produced two issues of the *Phyllis Schlafly Report* in one month. The first occurrence was January of 1972, when Schlafly double-published on issues surrounding the Nixon Administration.⁵⁸ Two different sections of the newsletter circulated in May; section one, titled "Red China – Top Drug Producer," and section two, "The Fraud Called the Equal Rights Amendment/Phyllis Schlafly Received Two Awards."⁵⁹ But then there was another lull in Schlafly's writing about women's liberation because she did not expressly write and publish about feminism and the ERA again for six months, waiting until November 1, 1972, to address the subject.⁶⁰ This time, between publications on ERA she wrote about the SALT treaty, the Soviet Union, conservatism and the Republican Party, and international relations with China.⁶¹ She finished 1972 with a report in December on passport security.⁶² In all, only three out of the fifteen, or one fifth, of the *Schlafly Reports* from 1972 addressed ERA and the political demands of women's liberation.⁶³ Anti-ERA policy slowly emerged as a grassroots vehicle to mobilize a new conservative coalition comprised of both seasoned and up and coming activists in 1972.

As Schlafly increased her publications against the passage of ERA in 1973, she continued to pursue the broad spectrum of other topics that occupied her before becoming synonymous

⁵⁸ Schlafly Phyllis, "Are We For The Captive Nations or the Captors," *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 5, No. 6, January 1972; Phyllis Schlafly, "The Nixon's Administration's First 1000 Days: One Legislator's Appraisal," *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 5 No. 6, Section 2, January 1972.

⁵⁹ Phyllis Schlafly, "Red China – Top Drug Producer," *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 5, No. 10, Section 1, May 1972; Phyllis Schlafly, "The Fraud Called the Equal Rights Amendment," *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 5, No. 10, Section 2, May 1972.

⁶⁰ Phyllis Schlafly, "The Right To Be A Woman," *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 6, No. 4, November 1972.

⁶¹ Phyllis Schlafly, *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 5 No. 11 – Vol. 6, No. 3, Section 2, (June – October 1972); It should be noted that the October 1972 publication has a Section 2, but neither Section 1 or Section 2 from this month address the women's movement or ERA.

⁶² Phyllis Schlafly, "The Problem of Passport Security," *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 6, No. 5, December 1972.

⁶³ Schlafly, Phyllis, *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, vol. 5 no. 6 section 1 – vol. 6 no. 5 (January 1972 – December 1972). There were fifteen reports total published in this year.

with STOP-ERA activism in section two of *The Schlafly Report*. Education, foreign policy and defense, anti-communism, the Vietnam War, the Panama Canal, the election of judges, Supreme Court decisions, election procedures, crime, marijuana, unemployment, media bias, and the election of GOP candidates are only some of the issues that Schlafly devoted herself to in tandem with STOP-ERA throughout the 1970s. She frequently added the ERA to the mix of political issues by authoring a second monthly newsletter noted as “Section Two” publications. Section Two could be targeted toward new conservative anti-feminist converts by spoon feeding them a variety of policy positions filtered through a critique of the ERA and feminism. Whereas the variety of other issues presented in Section One always sustained her core readers rather than isolating the ERA as their primary mobilizing concern. Schlafly even continued to take periodic breaks from ERA related topics throughout the rest of the 1970s, choosing to occasionally publish a single letter on non-ERA topics rather than double-publish in a month to dedicate a whole volume to isolated attacks on the feminist movement. Any newsletter directly addressing women’s liberation, and or the ERA, was always relegated to section two of *The Phyllis Schlafly Report* establishing a mix-and-stir approach to Schlafly’s outreach. Section Two is where Schlafly did most of her communicating to experienced grassroots conservatives, leaving Section One instructions mostly for the benefit of new converts. Schlafly probably expected new converts to evolve through *PSR* exposure into experienced rank-and-file conservatives, or at least stay frenzied over feminism creating a sort of tunnel vision around a single issue that could continue to easily mobilize large numbers of people.

Overtime she linked federal support for the ERA to a confluence of social ills including big money in politics, communist infiltration, and the attempted expansion of the federal government via child-care. Debates over federally funded daycare highlighted her conservative

ideology that stood in opposition to these forms of government expansion geared toward social outreach via wealth redistribution. But her ideas about gender also reinforced her policy positions, and she worked to revitalize nineteenth-century notions of Republican Womanhood. Republican Motherhood emphasized the education of women for mothers to be able to raise patriotic children, and in so doing pass on the values of the Revolution to the children of the next generation. This ideology helped to erect the home as a separate sphere of women's dominion where women could positively influence the country through their roles as a wives and mothers. Political education and grassroots activist training for women was a key part to Schlafly's and Eagle Forum's organizing that grew out of this older ideology of womanhood. For Schlafly, homemakers held a special place of privilege in the nation through their ability to mother the next generation for America. Suburban mothers were themselves a weapon in the Cold War who had a responsibility to ensure the health and well-being of the nation through their role as housewives. To combat what she saw as a feminist attack on the privileges of motherhood and homemaking Schlafly instructed readers to build local coalitions to promote the anti-ERA position by "[lining] up any and all organizations functioning in your broadcast areas.... These local organizations can include: Eagle Forum, Stop ERA, any and all religious groups, any and all political groups, pro-life groups, unions, conservative or liberal groups. The more the better...."⁶⁴ Building coalitions to block the ERA, even though organizations might not agree on any other political issue, was a core strategy for Schlafly. Cross-organizational and bipartisan efforts were necessary to ensure the continuation of "American women [as] a privileged group" as "the beneficiaries of a tradition of special respect for women," because Schlafly believed that,

⁶⁴ Phyllis Schlafly, "How to Cope with TV and Radio Bias," *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 9, No. 9, Section 2, April 1976.

“The family gives a woman the physical, financial and emotional security of the home – for all her life.”⁶⁵

In April 1977, Section One of the *PSR* tied Eagle Forum to the American Legislative Exchange Council, better known as ALEC.⁶⁶ ALEC is a conservative non-profit organization that networks legislators and private sector representatives through collaborative projects drafting model legislation for distribution through state governments. ALEC pushed legislation protecting free trade and deregulation in all forms, including education, and works to gut public works projects and welfare. Although they called themselves non-partisan, their ready-made legislation enabled the acceleration of neoliberalism and circulated conservative bills disguised as nonpartisan solutions to social and economic ills that saw a circulation to “more than 8,000 state legislators, 535 members of Congress, major national organizations, members of the press and others” in the late-1970s.⁶⁷

Secrecy around ALEC proceedings, archives, and membership information makes historical studies of ALEC particularly difficult. However, the *PSR* and Eagle Forum records shine a useful light on the organization’s early years. The dedication of an entire *PSR* to ALEC during the height of the ERA battle further evidenced that Schlafly and Eagle Forum’s activism aimed to bolster conservative institutions; the goal was to amass a grassroots to grassroots network of conservative organizing to usher in a new era to dismantle the New Deal redistributive and regulatory state. In the newsletter, Schlafly instructed readers to purchase ALEC’s “1977 Suggested State Legislation” noting that “the booklet contains an actual draft of

⁶⁵ Schlafly, “What’s Wrong With “Equal Rights” for Women?”

⁶⁶ Schlafly’s friend and ally, Paul Weyrich, founded ALEC and the conservative think tank, Heritage Foundation in 1973. Weyrich went on to establish the Free Congress Foundation in 1977 and then co-founded the Moral Majority with Jerry Falwell in 1979.

⁶⁷ Hon. Donna J. Carlson and Hon. Louis Woody Jenkins, eds., “1978-79 Suggested State Legislation,” *1978-79 Suggested State Legislation* (Washington, D.C.: American Legislative Exchange Council, 1977), 3.

each proposed bill, ready to be submitted to your legislature” for only six dollars and fifty cents.⁶⁸ The newsletter went on to summarize the model legislation readers could purchase for circulation in their own states. At the end of the *PSR* Schlafly suggested that interested readers contact “Miss Kathleen Teague, Executive Director, American Legislative Exchange Council” for copies of pre-made legislation booklets. Kathleen Teague is also seen in the archive as “Kathy Teague,” co-chairman, and co-founder of the Virginia STOP-ERA.⁶⁹

Teague was one of Schlafly’s most reliable Eagle Forum members. The Virginian STOP-ERA newsletters likewise encouraged readers working to block the ERA to seek out Phyllis Schlafly for guidance urging supporters “to subscribe to the *Phyllis Schlafly Report*. The cost is only \$5.00 per year. You will receive two reports each month: one on some aspect of ERA or women’s lib, and another on an issue of current national interest. ... This could be one of the best investments you’ve ever made. Get your friends to do the same.”⁷⁰ In this way, the *PSR* traveled from Schlafly, to Eagle Forum members, to individual STOP-ERA chapters, and ostensibly through mutual connections with Teague, through ALEC membership as well.

In the wake of the United Nations’ 1975 International Women’s Year (IWY) conference in Mexico City that highlighted policies and issues that affect women, President Ford signed an executive order to establish the National Commission on the Observance of International Women’s Year to investigate domestic women’s issues in America. A bill co-sponsored by U.S. House Representatives Patsy Mink and Bella Abzug allotted five million dollars to fund regional state-level conferences that would elect delegates to culminate in the National Women’s Conference in Houston, Texas, in 1977. Historian Marjorie Spruill argues that these federally

⁶⁸ Phyllis Schlafly, “1977 Suggested State Legislation,” *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 10, No. 9, April 1977.

⁶⁹ Virginia STOP-ERA Special Bulletin, 2 August 1973, Box 22, Folder 12, ERA Series. ERA State Files. Virginia, The Phyllis Schlafly Center, Clayton, MO.

⁷⁰ Virginia STOP-ERA Special Bulletin, 2 August 1973.

funded (IWY) state and national conferences represented the climax of second-wave feminism and the central event for political party restructuring around women's issues.⁷¹ Houston symbolized a political bipartisan effort to further women's rights with First Ladies Rosalynn Carter, Betty Ford, and Ladybird Johnson all in attendance. Moreover, it showcased the diversity of women and issues within the feminist movement, bringing attendees from various backgrounds into coalition together to craft twenty-six planks in the National Plan of Action on women's rights. The official report from the National Conference, called the *Spirit of Houston*, persuaded Congress to extend the ERA ratification deadline to 1982.

By the time that the IWY culminated in the Houston Convention of 1977, Schlafly had become a household name in the fight to block the advances for women gained by the feminist movement. And she famously helped bring together an oppositional anti-IWY rally in Houston to convene at the same time as the feminist delegations. In considering how quickly and efficiently the grassroots mobilized in response to Schlafly's writings it must be noted that Schlafly only wrote seven newsletters, in total, addressing IWY as a main subject.⁷² Despite the spectacle of Schlafly's pro-family mass gathering counter-attack, she did not make it a habit to scrutinize the actual IWY commission and state delegate election conferences, and only mentioned them for the first time in *Phyllis Schlafly Report* on September 1, 1976.⁷³ After this

⁷¹ For more on the state level and national IWY meetings see: Marjorie Spruill, *Divided We Stand*.

⁷² Phyllis Schlafly, "The Ripoff of the Taxpayers Known As: The Commission On International Women's Year, or Bella Abzug's Bondonoodle," *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 9, No. 6, Sec. 2, January 1976; Phyllis Schlafly "How the Libs and the Feds Plan to Spend Your Money," *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 9, No. 10, Sec. 2, May 1976; Phyllis Schlafly "IWY Commission Enjoined From ERA Lobbying," *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 10, No. 10, Sec 2, September 1976; Phyllis Schlafly, "Federal Financing of a Foolish Festival For Frustrated Feminists," *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 10, No. 10, Sec. 2, May 1977; Phyllis Schlafly, "IWY: A Front for Radicals and Lesbians," *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 11, No. 1, Sec. 2, August 1977; Phyllis Schlafly, "What Really Happened in Houston," *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 11, No. 5, Sec. 2, December 1977; Phyllis Schlafly, "Press Comment About the IWY Houston Convention," *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 11, No. 6, Sec. 2, January 1978.

⁷³ Phyllis Schlafly, "IWY Commission Enjoined From ERA Lobbying," *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 10, No. 10, Sec. 2, September 1976.

first report on IWY in September of 1976, seven reports intermittently followed addressing IWY finishing with a newsletter in March 1978, three months after the Houston conference. Out of those seven letters that Schlafly distributed, five letters circulated before the gathering in Houston, and two afterward. But President Ford signed the Executive Order launching IWY in January 1975. This meant that after the launching of IWY, Schlafly remained silent in publications for the first year, and then dispersed much of her written commentary over the course of five newsletters over the fourteen months leading up to Houston.

Perhaps the minimal *PSR* reporting on the IWY state commissions in the build up to Houston could be attributed to the pressing schedule of Schlafly's other activist commitments. Schlafly published *Ambush at Vladivostok* with Chester Ward in 1976, criticizing the policies resulting from the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) between the Ford Administration and Soviet Union.⁷⁴ Then, in 1977, she authored *The Power of the Positive Woman* as her anti-ERA anti-feminist manifesto for conservative women in 1977.⁷⁵ The crux of her position against women's equality in both the *PSR* and *The Power of the Positive Woman* was that the ERA would negatively affect national security and American culture should the nuclear family formation fundamentally change with women's legal emancipation. *The Power* provided readers with a twelve-point strategy for ensuring women's security in opposition to women's liberation that enshrined women's difference arguments from the Progressive Era, and emphasized religious moralism, small government, strong military, and the institution of family. Points one and four argued for the right of full-time motherhood "recognized by laws" where it was the husband's responsibility "to provide the primary financial support and a home" with "job

⁷⁴ Phyllis Schlafly and Chester Ward, *Ambush at Vladivostok* (Alton: Pere Marquette Press, 1976).

⁷⁵ Phyllis Schlafly, *The Power of the Positive Woman* (New York: Arlington House Publishers, 1977).

preference... to a wage earner supporting dependents.”⁷⁶ Schlafly believed male breadwinners were duty bound to support their wives and children, without the extra support of a second wage from the wife. Except that by the 1970s neoliberal austerity measures swept the nation making the maintenance of a middle-class lifestyle nearly impossible without subsidizing the family income through the wife’s wages. Given Schlafly’s allegiance to the free market the blame for the economic changes in the 1970s could not be attributed to these new belt-tightening policies at the local, state, and federal levels.⁷⁷ Rather, the five-million-dollar federal spending bill to support the IWY, the feminist movement, and other federal social safety net projects then, took the brunt of Schlafly’s rage over the increasing instability for middle-class suburban housewives. Moreover, IWY spending seemed to further frustrate Schlafly because President Carter “did not appoint a single member of Stop ERA or Eagle Forum” to the Commission on IWY.⁷⁸ In response she argued “One thing is very clear. Those who talk so much about ‘equal rights’ are not willing to give equal rights to those who are opposed to the Equal Rights Amendment!”⁷⁹

Assessing Schlafly’s collective publications from these few years demonstrates the immediacy of grassroots response to these newsletters. Schlafly wrote twenty-two total letters in 1975, twenty-two letters in 1976, twenty-one letters in 1977, and twenty-two letters in 1978; but out of the eighty-seven reports that circulated in those four years, only seven addressed IWY, and only five of the seven were meant to direct pre-IWY organizing initiatives. Simply stated, Schlafly used less than a tenth of the reports in those years to maneuver around IWY. Since each *PSR* gave various mobilization instructions from direct contact of representatives, study groups,

⁷⁶ Schlafly, *The Power of the Positive Woman*, 175.

⁷⁷ For a discussion on 1970s austerity policies and their impact see: Kim Phillips-Fein, *Fear City: New York’s Fiscal Crisis and the Rise of Austerity Politics* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2017).

⁷⁸ Phyllis Schlafly, “Federal Financing of a Foolish Festival For Frustrated Feminists,” *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 10, No. 10, Section 2, May 1977.

⁷⁹ Schlafly, “Federal Financing of a Foolish Festival For Frustrated Feminists.”

media spots, cross-organizational coalition building, and neighborhood recruitment Schlafly only needed a few newsletters to coordinate her anti-IWY pro-family rally that ran concurrently in Houston. Schlafly and her readers joined together anticommunists, libertarians, conservatives, and the religious right, creating a coalition between evangelicals, “Catholics, Fundamentalists, and Orthodox Jews.”⁸⁰ The *PSR* network grew and increasingly diversified, and with it came the “pro-family” movement in opposition to the ERA.

Expanding the statistical breakdown of the frequency with which Schlafly addressed the ERA and women’s liberation in the 1970s reveals more surprising figures. In no year during the 1970s did the frequency of her writings on the ERA and women’s liberation ever meet even half of the newsletter publications in any given year.⁸¹ In other words, there was never a set of months when Schlafly prioritized STOP-ERA over the plethora of other issues in her writing. Yet this work against ERA is what most Americans, and historians, remember. In fact, out of the 192 reports of the 1970s, only 67 addressed arguments against women’s liberation and the ERA as the purpose of the report. And out of those 67, seven *Phyllis Schlafly Reports* on the ERA were not written by Schlafly herself but were instead commentaries made by other people friendly to the anti-feminist conservative movement.⁸² So even though she addressed women’s liberation and the ERA in about one third of her 1970s newsletters, she directly authored less

⁸⁰ Carol Felsenthal, *The Sweetheart of the Silent Majority*, 277.

⁸¹ This statistic was obtained by counting the reports per year and separating issues between women’s liberation and the ERA in one group, and all other issues that Schlafly worked on before these movements in another and dividing by the total reports. The actual figure: 47.8 percent of newsletters addressed ERA and women’s liberation.

⁸² Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr., “Why The Equal Rights Amendment Should Be Rejected,” *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 10, No. 9, Sec. 2, April 1977; Grover Rees III, “Should the Seven Year Timeline For ERA Be Extended?,” *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 11, No. 4, Sec. 2, November 1977; Brigadier General Andrew J. Gatsis (Ret.), “Women in Military Combat?: The Supreme Tragedy of the Equal Rights Amendment,” *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 11, No. 2, Sec. 2, September 1977; Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr., “Can A State Rescind ERA?,” *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 11, No. 10, Sec. 2, May 1978; Brigadier General Andrew J. Gatsis (Ret.), “How the Pentagon Promotes ERA,” *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 12, No. 1, Sec. 2, August 1978; Harold M. Voth, M.D., “The Family and the Future of America,” *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 12, No. 3, Sec. 2, October 1978; Brigadier General Andrew J. Gatsis (Ret.), “The Plan to Put Women in Combat,” *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 12, No. 9, Sec. 2, April, 1979.

than that figure.⁸³ Her writings on the ERA and the feminist movement greatly tapered off in 1978 and 1979, dropping about a tenth of the attention from previous years. Phyllis Schlafly did not need to write about feminism more in the *PSR* because her network effectively mobilized by the late 1970s, in response to her directions and local Eagle Forum and STOP-ERA chapters. Schlafly and her local leaders communicated back and forth about how to yield the best results creating an evolving battle plan for grassroots activism.

The way that Schlafly used the ERA as a recruitment tool and scaled her recommendations for political action for readers within the *PSR* helped bring the conservative movement to the forefront of American politics. While the *PSR* functioned as a means of networking and mobilizing through alternative conservative media, the ERA allowed conservative messaging to carry over into the mainstream. Schlafly did not break down the “how to” of organizing as frequently in Section One of her newsletter since its original readership comprised of experienced conservative activists. Rather, Schlafly used the *PSR* to educate and direct the movement and perhaps expected newcomers to either immerse themselves in anti-ERA action or to slowly make a full conversion into the conservative fold with the rest of the Section One publications.

The 1980s

Schlafly did not fade from stardom with the defeat of the ERA when states failed to ratify by the 1982 extension deadline, especially for conservatives in the 1980s. If anything, she assumed new public bona fides as a member of Ronald Reagan’s Defense Policy Group, the National Security Subcommittee for the 1984 Republican Platform Committee, and the

⁸³ The exact figure: 33 percent of the newsletters addressed women’s liberation and the ERA but that includes letters not written by Schlafly. Subtracting publications that she didn’t write leaves the figure at 31 percent.

Commission for the Bicentennial. But as the New Right ascended with Reagan's Presidential election in 1980, Schlafly began looking for ways to ensure a permanent conservative foothold on local and national government. She understood that the ERA alone could not continue to amass conservative acolytes and secure a steadfast organizing network. Schlafly's work in the 1970s was publicly visible, but in the 1980s, she orchestrated her activism from a place of prominence within her community, and less legible to mainstream media. This section on the 1980s examines Schlafly's mobilization work through a range of channels after the defeat of the ERA, inclusive of but not limited to the *PSR*.

Perhaps the best example of Schlafly operating under the radar of mainstream media in the 1980s can be seen with her participation in the Council for National Policy (CNP). The Council formed in 1981, as a secret organization of conservative movement strategists and donors that was to meet once quarterly to "carry out the projects and activities of the Council" with the goal of further consolidating conservative power in the Republican Party and American institutions.⁸⁴ The CNP had strict rules members needed to adhere to regarding organizational efforts and quarterly meeting attendance. Before 1983, members needed to raise a "minimum contribution;" five-thousand-dollars was preferred but less was accepted, and in lieu of a financial contribution, members could pay two-hundred-dollars per person to attend. But in September of 1983 this financial obligation was waived, allowing members to attend without fundraising at least for the fall gathering.⁸⁵ These meetings were usually inaccessible to those who were not already a member, or a spouse of a member. A letter preceding the September 1983 meeting emphasized that "Special guests may attend only with the unanimous approval of

⁸⁴ Re: CNP Committee Assignments and Committee Chairmen, 17 November 1981, Box 148, Folder 3, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

⁸⁵ Re: Things to Remember Regarding September 9-10 Meeting, 4 August 1983, Box 148, Folder 6, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

the Executive Committee.... Only unusual circumstances justify approval of non-family special guests. Under the rules, a member must request permission to invite a special guest *no later than 21 days prior to the Board meeting.*⁸⁶ Limiting attendance and closely monitoring who could participate without their own official membership helped the CNP maintain an intense level of secrecy allowing them to function as political operatives without drawing unnecessary media attention to their efforts. This was also why a twenty-one-day window was necessary to ensure time for unanimous voting on admitting potential non-member guests.

Two other cardinal rules for the CNP included stipulations on parallel meetings and confidentiality. The rule on parallel meetings stipulated that “members are asked to avoid organizing or attending meetings of other groups or organizations in the same city before, during, or immediately after a Board meeting, unless such meetings have been approved by the Executive Committee.”⁸⁷ This rule ensured that neither the media nor non-CNP members would bring attention to the organization. In compartmentalizing CNP work from other organizational commitments, members of the CNP avoided public visibility for Council-specific activities. The parallel meetings policy reinforced the confidentiality rule, barring members from divulging “the time and place of the Board meeting, as well as the names of participants.”⁸⁸ The Council did, however, further network conservative organizations together in coalition; some Council members would have actively read the *PSR* as they were Eagles themselves or worked in coalition with Eagle Forum (like Kathleen Teague). It can be assumed that members like Teague circulated the *PSR* to people in their own organizations (Teague was connected to ALEC and worked to build coalition between ALEC and Eagle Forum), and Schlafly would likewise receive

⁸⁶ Re: Things to Remember Regarding September 9-10 Meeting, 4 August 1983.

⁸⁷ Re: Things to Remember Regarding September 9-10 Meeting, 4 August 1983.

⁸⁸ Re: Things to Remember Regarding September 9-10 Meeting, 4 August 1983.

and recommend other organizational newsletters or political action templates to Eagles, like she did with the Ohio Federation of Republican Women voter rollcall worksheets.

While the headquarters of the CNP could be found in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, these covert meetings happened in various places across the country. The inaugural meeting of the committees and subcommittees took place in Dallas, Texas on Sunday, January 17, 1982.⁸⁹ Schlafly was one of the initial members of the CNP. Her 1981-1982 committee assignments included serving on the Committee on Communications, the Subcommittee on Television, Cable and Satellite Broadcasting, the Committee on National Defense, and leading the Committee on the Family as the chairperson.⁹⁰ With the exception of the committee that she chaired, Schlafly was the lone woman in each of her committee assignments. Out of the seven women listed with committee assignments in the CNP's first year, five regional Eagle Forum leaders, including Kathleen Teague from ALEC.⁹¹ Of the ten original CNP committees and subcommittees, Eagle Forum leaders and close allies of Eagle Forum could be found in all of them.⁹²

Members within the CNP were encouraged to contribute funds as an ongoing responsibility of their participation. In 1981, Schlafly's supporting three-thousand-dollar contribution came not from Eagle Forum, but another organization located in Alton, Illinois called Defenders of American Liberties.⁹³ However, Schlafly's name appeared in CNP files and communications as solely connected to Eagle Forum, organizationally speaking. Who the Defenders of American Liberties were, and their full relationship to Schlafly remains uncertain because of the way conservative organizations seal their files to maintain secrecy of their

⁸⁹ Committee Assignments, 1981-1982, Box 148, Folder 1, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

⁹⁰ Committee Assignments, 1981-1982.

⁹¹ Committee Assignments, 1981-1982.

⁹² Committee Assignments, 1981-1982.

⁹³ Committee Assignments, 1981-1982.

activities and membership. By the spring of 1982, the CNP had one-hundred-forty-two members who had raised over one-hundred-thirty thousand-dollars by the fall of 1981, with three-hundred thousand as their fundraising goal for the end of the 1982 fiscal year.⁹⁴ These funds probably supported the CNP gatherings and perhaps also funded lobbying initiatives that emerged from member meetings.

The full content of discussions held at CNP meetings is uncertain, because of the organizational emphasis on confidentiality. Phyllis Schlafly was, however, recognized with one of the first CNP “Special Achievement Awards” for “Family Law” in October 1982. She received her award alongside other CNP awardees that appear frequently in Eagle Forum archives, a list which included Reagan Administration Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, Senator Jesse Helms, Congressman Jack Fields, and Dr. Pat Robertson.⁹⁵ Schlafly’s participation as an inaugural member of the CNP built more intimate connections to the Heritage Foundation, the American Legislative Exchange Council, and the Moral Majority.⁹⁶

An example of ongoing coordinated CNP work Schlafly aided included the Subcommittee on the Judiciary, which was to “monitor vacancies in the federal judiciary as they occur, evaluate prospective judicial nominees and communicate the Council’s recommendations to the Reagan Administration.”⁹⁷ In other words, one of the missions for the CNP beginning in

⁹⁴ Report on Recent Financial Support, 27 October 1981, Box 148, Folder 3, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; Bob J. Perry to William A. Rusher, 11 February 1982, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

⁹⁵ Council for National Policy Program, 9 September 1983, Box 148, Folder 2, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

⁹⁶ Board of Governors List Council for National Policy, 1 September 1981, Box 148, Folder 1, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C. Kathleen Teague held executive positions within Paul Weyrich’s Free Congress Foundation, further linking the relationship between Weyrich, Schlafly, and Eagle Forum. During her years in the CNP she had to vote to approve Edgar (Ed) Dale Prince, father of Erik Prince who went on to create the private military company *Blackwater*, and Trump Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos; as well as Richard DeVos of the Amway Corporation and father-in-law to Betsy DeVos.

⁹⁷ Re: CNP Committee Assignments and Committee Chairmen, 17 November 1981.

1981 was conservative court packing. Committee Chairmen were selected for their “experience, expertise, and interest;” since these members were those with a high-profile within the conservative movement the chairpersons of the committees within the CNP had fairly open access for strongly offering their recommendations on the Reagan White House.⁹⁸

Historian Steve Teles writes about the broader conservative legal movement that sought to establish a more permanent conservative presence using the American court system in the 1970s and 1980s. Even as conservatives saw electoral success with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, they understood that the key to true legal transformation and long-term influence over national politics resided in control of the courts. In many ways, Schlafly offers earlier glimpses of this effort through her 1960s publications. Schlafly used the *PSR* to build alliances within the conservative coalition over the election of judges; in a continual process of chipping away at the legislation underpinning New Deal liberalism, Johnson’s Great Society, and civil rights advancements, conservatives could agree that “opposition to liberal judges, professors, and public interest lawyers” in favor of “‘strict constructionism’ and ‘judicial restraint’” paved a strategic path forward for their movement.⁹⁹ Teles notes that ideas needed networks to spread, organizations to support forms of activism, and financial backers to fund mobilization.¹⁰⁰ The *PSR* demonstrates Teles’ argument that the creation of conservative organizational networks was necessary to “compete directly with liberals” beyond electoral organization.¹⁰¹ Even as Teles laments the limits of the archive in piecing together organizational alliances, the *PSR* offers a window into a more extensive understanding of the evolution of

⁹⁸ Re: CNP Committee Assignments and Committee Chairmen, 17 November 1981.

⁹⁹ Steven M. Teles, *The Rise of the Conservative Legal Movement: The Battle for Control of the Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 2.

¹⁰⁰ Teles, *The Rise of the Conservative Legal Movement*, 4

¹⁰¹ Teles, *The Rise of the Conservative Legal Movement*, 2.

strategy related to the courts, and how, when, and why conservative organizations worked together.¹⁰² Phyllis Schlafly and Eagle Forum were ideologically committed to the movement and coalition building beyond the scope of the ERA, and the *PSR* opens a vast well-preserved primary source base about conservative activism. More importantly, the *PSR* traces organizations through women's networks and labor, both as paid employees and unpaid volunteers.

Filing amicus briefs was a popular strategy for both feminist and anti-feminist activists to appeal to courts and vie for favorable outcomes from judges with ERA related cases in the 1970s. These briefs were legal documents filed by non-litigants offering additional relevant information for the court to consider before handing down their decision. The newsletter from March 1981 was a copy of the Amicus Curiae Brief Against Drafting Women in the Supreme Court of the United States from October 1980. Eagle Forum women ages eighteen to twenty-six featured as the non-litigants from the brief that was filed from the U.S. District Court from the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.¹⁰³ Even though this newsletter shared information regarding activism surrounding the ERA this was published in Section One, not the typical Section Two. The reason it qualified as Section One material was that it signaled a new means of mass mobilization tactics more broadly to deploy across the United States. This tactic had the ability to both tie up court proceedings and to sway judges toward conservative rulings bypassing legislatures, or at the very least finding ways to appeal to the courts as an additional line of defense by filing amicus briefs. This was not the kind of movement labor that any grassroots member could complete. Instead, this form of activism required legal savvy, access to lawyers, and deep knowledge of who was serving on which circuit benches. Schlafly's instruction to

¹⁰² Teles, *The Rise of the Conservative Legal Movement*, 5.

¹⁰³ Phyllis Schlafly, "Amicus Curiae Brief Against Drafting Women in the Supreme Court of the United States October Term, 1980," *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 14, No. 8, Sec. 1, March 1981.

mimic this strategy more broadly would broadcast differently to the dedicated follower who had been in the fold for decades rather than more newly integrated conservative anti-feminist groups. The *PSR* steadily argued in the 1980s that true conservative power and political legacy lay in the lifetime appointments of judges and Supreme Court justices.

Six months later, in another Section One newsletter dated September 1981, Schlafly further articulated her vision for the role of the courts in sustaining the conservative movement. The title alone set an ideological tone: *It's Time To Reform the "Imperial" Judiciary*.¹⁰⁴ She stirred readers by arguing that the courts were subverting the democratic process because she claimed voters would never have upheld policies of forced busing, women's right to abortion, or the banning of prayer in public schools. Ultimately, she referred to the Supreme Court as a "super-legislature" and suggested that "lower Federal courts have become even more carried away with delusions of their own power."¹⁰⁵ Her evidence for this was the way that "tyrannical Federal district courts" had the judiciary power to intercede and prescribe norms in the "day-to-day running of a public school system, and of a prison system, and of the political reapportionment of legislative districts."¹⁰⁶ What Schlafly was working through within her attack on the courts was an awareness of the way that the court system could continually present road blocks to enacting conservative policies.

In a system designed around checks and balances within the three branches of government, Schlafly argued that the judiciary branch had the power to tip the institutional balance. Schlafly already had a decades-long career in mobilizing the grassroots around election strategies and appealing to legislators in a variety of ways including testimonies, funding

¹⁰⁴ Phyllis Schlafly, "It's Time to Reform the "Imperial" Judiciary," *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol 15. No. 2, Sec 1, September 1981.

¹⁰⁵ Schlafly, "It's Time to Reform the "Imperial" Judiciary," September 1981.

¹⁰⁶ Schlafly, "It's Time to Reform the "Imperial" Judiciary," September 1981.

dinners, and protests. But the judiciary branch was simultaneously easier to maintain long-term control of and harder to gain immediate change over because of judges' lifetime appointments. She felt that both impeachment and constitutional amendments offered impractical ways of exploiting this institutional imbalance. She did, however, consider the possibility of applying an ideological litmus test since "Federal judges have more say about the future of the United States, its laws, its schools, its morals, its internal defenses, its culture, than Congress. Federal judges are accountable to no one and... [are] free from the insecurities of elections."¹⁰⁷ In other words, elections were important, but not just for the immediate legislative goals of whatever the conservative movement wanted their elected officials to enact for that particular term. Winning elections could mean winning lifetime judges on the bench.

From that vantage point the way that education, prayer in schools, feminism, and gay rights enter *The Phyllis Schlafly Report* can be seen as an articulation of anger and resentment of what the movement is unable to legally control in the ways they desired in the 1980s, despite conservative ascendancy with Ronald Reagan's presidency and his stacking of the federal judiciary with conservative judges. Schlafly touted the defeat of the ERA while continuously noting that single issues could work their way through the courts resulting in continual ERA and civil rights gains slowly chipping away at the white heteronormative patriarchy that grounded the conservative world view. Although Schlafly was no longer in the public limelight like she was in the 1970s, she was using her decreased visibility to stake out a strategy to battle for control of the judiciary branch to hold conservative influence over national and foreign policy legislation.

The Legacy of The Phyllis Schlafly Report

¹⁰⁷ Schlafly, "It's Time to Reform the "Imperial" Judiciary," September 1981.

Schlafly once reflected to colleagues on the role that *Phyllis Schlafly Reports* had, and continues to have, for the growth and sustenance of the conservative movement. She noted that: “Most of these other conservative and pro-family organizations that employ hundreds of people call...for information. I mean it’s every day in the week. And I’m not going to name them, but a lot of them read *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*...and then they know what to put in their newsletter next week, next month.”¹⁰⁸ The printing, sharing, circulation, and unattributed reprinting of conservative literature both on Schlafly’s part and others fed the grassroots with a steady stream of strategy and a sense of community. The scope and potency of the circulation of these newsletters point to a diverse and varied political project that Schlafly built into Eagle Forum in the late 1960s and beyond. While the ERA looms large in histories of Schlafly and conservative anti-feminism this burgeoning movement relied on Section One of her newsletters, not just section two. In other words, the issues Schlafly addressed before, during, and after the ERA mattered to Eagle Forum members and to conservative coalition building. *The Phyllis Schlafly Report* articulated a conservative ideology that undergirded the arguments against the passage of the ERA that were couched in the languages of anti-communism, the free-market, and libertarianism. For Schlafly and those that followed her, issues like infant protections, parental rights, education, racial violence, and anti-feminism could easily equate to and be solved by taxation, budgeting, the unencumbered market, and changing the composition of the courts to roll back the decisions of the 1950s through 1970s.¹⁰⁹

Viewing the conservative movement through Phyllis Schlafly’s and Eagle Forum’s network alone there is evidence of a methodical and meticulous attention to organization,

¹⁰⁸ Phyllis Schlafly, “Eagles Are Needed More Than Ever Before!” September 25, 1993, A1061, Audio Series, Phyllis Schlafly Center, Clayton, MO.

¹⁰⁹ Phyllis Schlafly, “1977 Suggested State Legislation,” *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, Vol. 10, No. 9, Sec. 1, April 1977.

recruitment, coalition, and rightward movement of the Republican Party since 1967. *The Phyllis Schlafly Report* was just one tool at Schlafly's disposal to aid a broad swath of conservative efforts. Various leaders and organizations crossed paths with Phyllis Schlafly throughout the 1970s, as seen in Section One of the Schlafly newsletters. This made Schlafly and Eagle Forum an intermediary force to network and direct the participants of the conservative movement from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds and interests. The men and women who followed Schlafly found themselves energized by many issues beyond the ERA. Schlafly herself put stock into battling women's liberation because it was the first time that she believed she had an "advantage" because she felt that she could triumph before she even started; the ERA afforded an opportunity to tie together a variety of conservative issues through arguments against the feminist movement that easily blended tentpole ideas while doubling down on the image of the Cold War middle-class suburban housewife. The fight against the ERA gave Schlafly a new confidence because as ratification slowed it demonstrated that "conservatives can win."¹¹⁰ In order to keep winning, Schlafly instructed her followers "to go find their news event."¹¹¹

Schlafly skillfully created news events with tactics like her counter-IWY pro-family conference, while simultaneously weaponizing a white middle-class housewife conservatism to accomplish work in her other political coalitions. This strategy allowed her work with conservative anti-feminism to take center stage in the public consciousness drawing attention away from her other activist efforts. With *The Schlafly Report* as an entry point it is possible to begin mapping Schlafly's work to build conservative institutions, coalitions, and networks that united grassroots anti-feminist women with elite male theorists, businessmen, and politicians in a

¹¹⁰ Phyllis Schlafly, "The Future of America and Eagle Forum," September 17, 2011, A1404, Series, Phyllis Schlafly Center, Clayton, MO.

¹¹¹ Phyllis Schlafly, "Media Workshop – Speech and Q&A by Phyllis Schlafly," December 11, 1978, A0992-A0993, Audio Series, Phyllis Schlafly Center, Clayton, MO.

shared project of conservative ascension. Schlafly, and those who followed her, were not the typical conservative grassroots housewives; they were political tacticians establishing organizational methods for the movement. By unmasking Schlafly's political work before and after the ERA, her contributions to conservatism can be rethought in a broader historical context of institutional social movement making. No doubt her contributions to a variety of conservative strategies and organizations can move into fuller view for new considerations about what made her brand of modern conservative anti-feminism so potent and long-lasting.

Perhaps sexism alters the way that historians weigh the conservative archive, privileging male contributions to a higher degree. However, historians' reluctance to engage the vast resource of *The Phyllis Schlafly Report* more deeply as an archive for understanding Schlafly, Eagle Forum, and conservative grassroots mobilization stunts analysis of the conservative movement. Schlafly's unbroken monthly publication since 1967 can reveal much about the nature of conservative coalition building, the nuts and bolts of election organizing, and strategies deployed to secure desired conservative legislation across the country. Schlafly's importance to the conservative movement is much larger than her work against the ERA. If anything, her ability to strategize and mobilize off camera after its defeat left more permanent marks on American society, and a more lasting imprint on the conservative movement.

Visiting the Phyllis Schlafly Eagle's Center in Clayton, Missouri, and touring the Schlafly home awards cover whole hallways, sometimes rooms too. Dedicated plaques, statues, and mementos from grassroots groups, and even photos with personalized thank you messages, including from popular figures like Ronald Reagan, recognize Phyllis Schlafly's unparalleled mobilizing skill. These items span from the 1960s through the Tea Party movement into the 2010s. According to the Center's staff, displaying the copious number of tea pots proved

difficult, but tea pots and tea sets arrived frequently to Schlafly's pleasure.¹¹² Members of these organizations, spanning almost fifty years of movement making consumed the *PSR* and felt Schlafly as a regular presence in their activist lives. The *PSR* remains a roadmap charting a history of the conservative movement and offering activists a tool for consolidating a permanent conservative power in American politics.

¹¹² On every visit to the Schlafly Center I notice awards I did not see before, and each time staff members tell me more stories about receiving tea-themed recognitions during the Tea Party movement.

CHAPTER 3: “IT’S JOHN WAYNE IN A SKIRT!”: SCHLAFLY’S TACTICAL TRAINING FOR EAGLE FORUM

I met Jayne Schindler, an original Eagle Forum member from Colorado, over dinner in 2017. When asked about her first impression of Phyllis Schlafly she recounted this story: she wrote to John Wayne looking for a hero to stop the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in the 1970s, and he never responded. Soon after, she met Phyllis Schlafly and her first impression was “It’s John Wayne in a skirt!”¹ Schindler and her friends in Eagle Forum still laugh about this metaphor. Despite the humorous imagery there are significant parallels between John Wayne, star of the Western genre, and Phyllis Schlafly, conservative anti-feminist leader and icon. Both were staunch anti-communist conservatives who emulated a magnetic individualism that served their film and political communities respectively. While they were extremely patriotic both would have considered themselves mainstream conservative Republicans, even if members of the public believed them to be more extremist.² Wayne symbolized a rugged white masculinity, and perhaps more than any other anti-feminist leader Schlafly became the image of white conservative anti-feminism. Wayne’s characters, and Phyllis Schlafly, took on causes that required great struggle usually facing unbelievable odds. Politically, one common cause was protecting traditional American family values.³

The notion of the cowboy in the rugged west going off to promote U.S. expansion as the solution to restoring white American manhood stretches back to Teddy Roosevelt and the

¹ Jayne Schindler, Interview with the author, St. Louis, MO, September 21, 2017.

² For a discussion of Wayne’s political ideologies see: Richard Grenier, “The Cowboy Patriot,” *The National Interest*, No. 45 (Fall 1996), pp. 84-88.

³ For a discussion of Wayne and traditional family values see: Max Westbrook, “Flag and Family in John Wayne’s Westerns: The Audience as Co-Conspirator,” *Western American Literature*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Spring 1994), pp. 25-40.

Spanish-American War at the turn of the nineteenth century.⁴ Similarly, invoking a “new imperialism” with the image of the American cowboy in response to Cold War communism offers a visual representation of the conservative movement within popular culture.⁵ By the 1970s, the cowboy stood as “[symbol] of a mythical past” alongside soldiers and warriors combating the “crisis of masculinity” that resulted from the Vietnam War, and the feminist and civil rights movements.⁶ Historian Kristin Du Mez argues that Wayne functioned as “an icon of Christian masculinity,” and Wayne’s “militant masculinity... linked religious and secular conservatism.”⁷

When Schindler cast Schlafly as a female John Wayne she invoked the image of a true patriotic, heroic, conservative, white, anti-feminist woman that could train others to aid in the project of saving America from any number of threats.⁸ But Schindler’s metaphor also elevated Schlafly as a unique leader through her persona, talent, and commitment to the conservative movement. For women like Jayne Schindler, who felt that housewives would be made obsolete by second-wave feminism, Phyllis Schlafly became their fearless and poised leader, inspiring the grassroots troops in their uphill battle to block the ERA despite legislative and popular support for the Amendment. And while John Wayne is famously remembered for his cowboy walk, Schlafly’s symbolic hair style and dresses set her apart from other conservative women’s leaders in the 1970s, turning her into the media icon still remembered.

⁴ See: Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

⁵ Kristin Kobes Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2020), 31.

⁶ Kobes Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne*, 12.

⁷ Kobes Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne*, 10-11.

⁸ While John Wayne recorded a radio ad for Schlafly’s failed 1970 congressional campaign, I have no evidence that Schindler knew this. Wayne and Schlafly emerged as connected symbols in her experience within the conservative movement. For more on Wayne’s support of Schlafly’s campaign see: Kobes Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne*, 67.

When Schlafly left the National Federation of Republican Women in 1967, devout acolytes from within the organization followed her, which she called Eagles. That same year she established the Eagle Trust Fund to financially support the publication of her own monthly conservative newsletter, *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*. With the ERA battle of the 1970s, Schlafly built new organizations around the Eagle Trust Fund creating Eagle Forum, as a 501(c)(4) which could lobby and fund various political campaigns, as well as serve as a conservative network to mobilize against the ERA and other policy issues.⁹ In the 1970s and early 1980s, the national headquarters of Eagle Forum was based out of Schlafly's home in Alton, Illinois, but it incorporated state and local chapters. Schlafly's eldest son, John Schlafly, provided the legal work to incorporate Eagle Forum chapters.¹⁰ In the case of Eagle Forum of California, John Schlafly made sure that the state-level organization could function as a "corporation that can legally lobby" but "not endorse or oppose candidates."¹¹ The state-level Eagle Forum chapter could then oversee the creation of local chapters within the state. Local chapter presidents were chosen by the state board in California and given a manual outlining the organizational volunteer jobs that needed to be done and how to do them.¹² Eagle Forum chapters across the country could be involved in a variety of activism including: educational outreach, legal defense, lobbying, and other forms of legislative and political activities having to do with campaigns. This structure allowed Eagle Forum to create political action committees (PACS) and funnel money into elections.

⁹ Andrew (Andy) Schlafly, Interview with the author, Clayton, MO, October 10, 2018.

¹⁰ Phyllis Schlafly, "Eagle Forum's Growing Effectiveness" September 25, 1987, A0158, Audio Series, Phyllis Schlafly Center, Clayton, MO.

¹¹ Schlafly, "Eagle Forum's Growing Effectiveness," Audio Series.

¹² Schlafly, "Eagle Forum's Growing Effectiveness," Audio Series.

The national Eagle Forum training, called Eagle Council, gathers Eagles from across the country every year for one weekend where Schlafly and other leaders impart their tactical expertise in political organizing. The use of Council as an official membership training gathering dates to 1971, just before Eagle Forum officially formed in 1972. Schindler's characterization of Schlafly, then, is important for understanding the ways that Schlafly could command an audience, inspire followers, and not only hold her own, but carve out a space for herself within a male world of politics all the while presenting herself as a traditional conservative housewife in both dress and ideology. Schlafly prepared her followers to become leaders in their individual locales, ever ready to deploy a weaponized housewifery using her strategies for carefully crafting and meticulously training the Eagles' appearance and demeanor for public consumption. By this I mean that the idea and image of the homemaker became a strategic political weapon that Schlafly deployed on behalf of conservative policy issues. But to make Eagle Forum a successful grassroots army required frequent and intensive education on the intimate knowledge of politicking provided by Schlafly herself. The goal of Eagle Council, as such, was to manicure this sort of militant housewifery as a means of ensuring successful lobbying, fundraising, and campaigning for the right, to sway public perceptions toward supporting the conservative movement and anti-feminism in the 1970s and 1980s. The militarized conservative housewife was in a sense a professional grassroots activist; she was not an amateur when it came to the nuts and bolts of passing policies, electing officials, and recruiting like-minded comrades.

This chapter highlights the practical training that Phyllis Schlafly provided Eagle Forum through annual private organizational meetings, called Eagle Council. I argue that it was through these meetings that Schlafly perfected the tactic of deploying weaponized housewifery in the media and on campaign trails. Schlafly used the idea of the housewife as a nostalgic costume to

shape the conservative movement and influence national politics in the 1970s, as the white middle-upper-class women's equivalent to the invocation of the cowboy symbolizing both the protection of American empire and rugged individual anti-statism. However, weaponized housewifery was more than a strategic approach to visual argumentation in the media. It was a skill set that Eagles learned that included surveillance and coercion of other conservative women and organizations, as needed, to obtain their mobilizing objectives. By sharing examples of what practical training looked like at Council I analyze an Eagle Forum specific mode of conservative women's activism that was militant, savvy, and rooted in the performativity of the white middle-class housewife.

Annual Council gatherings would begin on a Friday evening and continue through Sunday. Council seminars, which were confidential and closed to press, addressed a variety of topics, and recognized key state-level Eagle leaders for their local mobilization efforts throughout the previous year with Eagle Awards. While Phyllis Schlafly personally taught some seminars, others were led by familiar state-level Eagle leaders and friends of the organization making recurrent appearances throughout the decades. Longtime allied speakers included Paul Weyrich of the Heritage Foundation and the Free Congress Foundation, Moreton Blackwell of the Leadership Institute, Arizona State Representative and American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) affiliate Donna Carlson, and Admiral Jerimiah Denton. In-house Eagle Forum leaders included: Connaught Marshner, the Executive Vice-President of the Free Congress Foundation; Jayne Schindler, head of the Colorado STOP-ERA movement; Tottie Ellis, the national Vice-President of Eagle Forum; Kathleen Sullivan, head of the Florida STOP-ERA; Kitty Werthmann, head of the South Dakota STOP-ERA; Elaine Donnelly, national media chair

of Eagle Forum and head of the Michigan STOP-ERA; and Shirly Curry, Vice President of the Tennessee Eagle Forum.¹³

Despite the recognition that Eagle Forum received in relation to anti-feminism and fighting the ERA, the organization promoted an Eagle Forum specific education program that united social and fiscal conservatism in their approach to activism. Seminar sessions attracted participants with topics like: “How to be Elected Delegate to the 1980 National Conventions,” “How to be Elected to Public Office,” “How to Tell Your Message to the Media,” “News of Eagle Activities Not Covered by the Media,” “How to Communicate with Your Congressman,” “What You Can Do to Win Elections,” “Campaign Strategy,” “Building Coalitions,” “Anticipating the Opposition,” and “Serving God and Country.”¹⁴ These titles indicate that Eagle Forum valued detailed training to unify communications strategies, political messaging, and election organizing in a way that made their activism synonymous with a sense of religious duty and patriotism. It would be difficult to say that social conservatism was the only ideological grounding for Phyllis Schlafly and Eagle Forum.

On the Friday and Saturday evenings after dinner Eagles could break into caucuses to build fellowship and to plan their next steps for organizing their states for the conservative movement. Eagle Forum attracted members from various religious faiths. As such, Sunday mornings offered a variety of church services before breaking into additional educational courses: Protestant, Church of Christ, Mormon, and Catholic church meetings were offered by 1980 and were led by Eagle women.¹⁵ The multiple and simultaneous offering of various

¹³ Eagle Council Program, September 1980, Box 8, Folder 8, Vol. 29, Paul M. Weyrich Scrapbooks, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; Eagle Council Program, October 1979, Box 7, Folder 8, vol. 26, Paul M. Weyrich Scrapbooks Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

¹⁴ Eagle Council Program, October 1979.

¹⁵ Eagle Council Program, October 1979.

denominational church services in the mid-1970s was a purposeful organizational step taken by Schlafly that served to unite Eagles not only through conservative anti-feminism, but through the emergence of cross-denominational coalition with the Religious Right.

A core issue at every Council was teaching Eagle women how to maintain a uniform organizational appearance for the media to reproduce the image of Phyllis Schlafly in the tens of thousands when Eagles returned home. As such, cosmetics consultation in the 1970s and early 1980s constituted a core strategy for Eagle Forum. In certain Council years an Eagle could even seek personal consultations with available leading experts within the organization on “TV training,” “Cosmetics,” “Political Strategy and Elections,” “Organizational Activities,” “Moral Action Workshops and Church Coalitions,” and “ERA Rescission” as long as an appointment was scheduled through Eagle member Rosemarie Droete in advance.¹⁶ Schlafly could not be everywhere at once giving interviews for local news stations, but she could impart the tactical skills for knowing the political rules of engagement from the TV to legislative halls, and she could teach Eagles to manipulate their demeanor and physical appearance in the most effective ways for appealing to undecided voters and lawmakers who had the power to sway legislation.

With her media trainings Schlafly doubled-down on the housewife’s image to create a firm visual contrast between the dress-wearing conservative anti-feminists and the pants-wearing feminists of the women’s liberation movement. Blocking the ERA was an important issue in the 1970s to grow the Eagle Forum ranks, but their ideological mission was much broader than the ERA alone as the trainings for shaping elections and policy outcomes detail. The women of Eagle Forum functioned as a special operations force of sorts to ensure that the conservative movement would continually make legislative and policy gains to enshrine the sanctity of

¹⁶ Eagle Council Program, September 1980.

traditional American family values, protect citizens from the threat of communism, and to scale back the size of the federal government including regulations against the free market.

The strategies women in Eagle Forum employed and deployed fall outside of existing analytical frames for understanding grassroots conservative women's activism. Histories of conservative women's grassroots organizing emphasize the local dimensions of activism in order to note their national impacts, but Eagle Forum was, and remains, simultaneously local and national.¹⁷ Moreover, the incredibly useful concepts historians used previously to explain the phenomena of conservative women's grassroots efforts such as "housewife populism," "kitchen table activists," and "suburban warriors" fall short in this instance of capturing the scale and militancy of Eagle Forum's activism, and the experience of Eagle activists.¹⁸ Unlike many activists in these other frameworks, Eagle Forum's participants had much more formal political training and experience engaging the political process. Moreover, Schlafly provided her Eagles with how-to instruction guides for working within the existing Republican Party structure to expand conservative women's political currency. It was common for session speakers to hand out accompanying flyers or other print materials for Eagle use. For example, Schlafly wrote the *Citizen's Good Government Manual* to educate Eagles on how to run elections at the precinct level to "help elect the right candidates" to transform American politics across the country.¹⁹ She

¹⁷ For studies of conservative grassroots organizing see: Mary Brennan, *Wives, Mothers, and the Red Menace*; Donald Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*; Michelle Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism*; Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*; Stacie Taranto, *Kitchen Table Politics*; Catherine Rymph, *Republican Women*. While Critchlow examines Schlafly's career he is concerned with how she translated conservative ideas to local grassroots activists across the country shaping the conservative movement; in many ways his history centers on Schlafly's production from her own home; the significances, then, that Critchlow's narrative analyzes have to do with Schlafly's impact on the nation from her home.

¹⁸ See: Michelle Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism*; Stacie Taranto, *Kitchen Table Politics*; Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*.

¹⁹ Phyllis Schlafly, *Citizen's Good Government Manual*, 1980, The Phyllis Schlafly Center, Clayton, M.O.

also tackled everything from campaign organizing and media outreach to fundraising by offering classes, conferences, and her monthly *Phyllis Schlafly Report* newsletter.

Eagle Forum's goal was to wield power over the Republican Party and conservative politics using the existing structures of the two-party political system, and to innovate coalitions of conservative institutions to push the Republican Party to the right on the political spectrum. As such, Schlafly believed that her organization had to be equal parts education and activism to fulfill this mission. Thus, seasoned political actors within Eagle Forum continuously honed their craft while quickly training incoming novices to control the terms policy debates at all levels of government. In the 1970s and 1980s, Eagles developed strategies for lobbying legislative bodies, coalition building, managing media relations, offering conservative tactical training seminars, founding and funding PACS, becoming elected officials for their states, and working their way into the Republican National Committee as delegates. Even though the home remained an essential site of local organizing, Eagle Forum's mission required an infrastructure that connected local, state, and national layers of political organization to interlace local and national issues as one and the same project.

There is an important historical distinction to be made between housewife activists and the conservative anti-feminist women of Eagle Forum who were housewives but who put considerable effort into grooming a specific image of housewifery. In other words, using housewife as a descriptor while informative in other histories of women and the conservative movement flattens analysis of the way that Eagle Forum methodically considered gendered presentation expressly to consolidate political power. For Phyllis Schlafly and Eagle Forum, the housewife was an occupation, an ideology, a symbol, and a tool that could be weaponized to shape the terms of political debate and policy outcomes. Using the term housewife as a

descriptor for Eagle Forum activists, then, prevents a fuller understanding of their political ingenuity and the militancy with which they engaged in the political process.

Eagle Forum members may have looked the part of the stay-home, white, middle-class mother June Cleaver, but they executed their activism in highly organized, methodical, and institutional ways. Both John Wayne's characters and the conservative women of Eagle Forum believed that their heroic sacrifices to the cause of preserving white middle-class America were their duty to protect a transforming nation from straying away from rugged individualism, the white nuclear middle-class family, and patriotism. To promote their conservative America both Wayne and Eagle Forum crafted a public image for consumption that reinforced the conservative, anti-communist, anti-feminist belief system they found falling to the wayside in the 1970s.²⁰

Division of Labor and Demeanor in Media Relations

Phyllis Schlafly believed that each Eagle had their own unique skill set for furthering the conservative movement. Not every Eagle could be adept at every job that needed to get done to make Eagle Forum a successful educational, fundraising, and lobbying organization. Schlafly encouraged her followers to self-select for the organizational labor and trainings that best fit their natural skills. In this way Schlafly knew that the organization would be the most effective when duties could be delegated to those best suited to handle specific kinds of organizational and movement labor, especially in regards to the way conservatism was portrayed in the news. Schlafly reflected in 1982 that conservatives "Can't afford to think in a box when it comes to the

²⁰ For a discussion of how Wayne created a specific image for film see: Westbrook, "The Cowboy Patriot," (1994), 30-31.

problem of the media.”²¹ For Schlafly the problem was that she believed that the media was skewed to the left long before the 1970s, which meant that it would be harder for conservative messages to win over viewers through TV networks. Schlafly strategically taught Eagles to deploy a variety of strategies to shape the way that the general TV audience felt about policy debates. As such, a great deal of Council time went into making sure Eagles understood the various volunteer efforts that went into monitoring and configuring media releases to address specific policy issues.

Watching television and engaging with local and national news networks comprised a time consuming but necessary job for mobilizing grassroots support. Schlafly addressed her Eagles in a “Media Workshop” in December of 1978. She explained the volunteerism needed to strengthen Eagle Forum’s ability to mold the way mass audiences perceived policy debates. She instructed that “The first type we need is the woman who is willing to watch television and to keep a record of what she sees and where necessary to turn on her tape recorder and record what she hears.”²² This type of labor was necessary for keeping track of how the news media discussed the ERA. These volunteers needed to know who was speaking, in what capacities, on which channels, and the frequency with which specific messages went out. This allowed Eagle Forum to be well-versed in the feminist arguments for ERA, and to approach stations on Fairness Doctrine complaints to boost STOP-ERA TV coverage. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) instated the Fairness Doctrine in 1949, to require television and radio broadcasters to address controversial issues of public importance in fair, balanced, and equitable ways. Television watching and note taking allowed Eagles to report Fairness Doctrine violations

²¹ Phyllis Schlafly, “Ohio Good Government Seminar,” March 6, 1982, A0452, Audio Series, Phyllis Schlafly Center, Clayton, MO.

²² Phyllis Schlafly, “Media Workshop – Speech and Q&A by Phyllis Schlafly December 11, 1978, A0992-A0993, Audio Series, Phyllis Schlafly Center, Clayton, MO.

with their local stations claiming that Phyllis Schlafly, STOP-ERA, or Eagle Forum had been attacked on the station's programming, which then required the station to provide free airtime for an Eagle representative to respond. Although the FCC eliminated the Fairness Doctrine in 1987, its existence alongside the Equal Time Rule in the 1970s, allowed Eagle Forum and other media savvy organizations from across the political spectrum to boost airtime for their issue stances. By knowing how to properly file Fairness Doctrine and Equal Time complaints, Eagle Forum could receive free or greatly discounted media spots.²³

However, this position dedicated to watching and notetaking television media required a lot of hidden organizational labor, because while it took place in one's living room it had a major impact on how Eagle Forum as an organization could quickly counter the feminist movement. There must have been stunned faces looking up at her in the audience, because Schlafly continued: "Now this is the hardest task of all to fill... I've been saying this for years and every time I say this, I see that sick look on people's faces. And that look tells me, Phyllis we'll go to the capital for you, we'll write thousands of letters for you, we might even die for you, but we won't watch television for you."²⁴ Her serious, yet partially joking retort to the audience's facial response revealed the deep commitment Eagles felt to Schlafly regardless of the various requests she asked of her followers. In this case, Schlafly attempted to impart the importance of this labor, because the constant monitoring of television media was the only way Eagles could quickly file Fairness Doctrine and Equal Time complaints with local and national networks in time to get ahead of state legislature's ERA votes by the late-1970s. But the awareness of how feminist support of the ERA was being framed and consumed by the public and politicians also more

²³ Schlafly, "Ohio Good Government Seminar," Audio Series.

²⁴ Schlafly, "Media Workshop – Speech and Q&A by Phyllis Schlafly," Audio Series.

effectively helped Eagles to dispense conservative anti-feminist dissent in response both on TV and in personal meetings with policymakers.

The recruitment of the second type of media labor addressed at the 1978 Council, involved Eagles contacting their local news stations. Schlafly cautioned that this skill, “takes a really sophisticated type of person. I don’t think that every one of you here should be contacting the stations except in rare circumstances. It is a delicate operation... It has to be the type of woman who’s got a rare combination of patience, politeness, and perseverance.”²⁵ To contact a station about Equal Time or Fairness Doctrine complaints required that the caller be adept at navigating these policies and remaining calm and congenial in conversation so as not to be shut down by station managers. This labor was vitally important in generating media against the ERA, because one of the requests these women would make to stations was for free television spots due to Fairness Doctrine regulations. As such, Schlafly’s STOP-ERA movement received free media ads to compete with media advertisements funded by feminist coalitions supporting ERA.²⁶ Schlafly encouraged Eagles to remember that their success in winning over local stations hinged on differentiating themselves from the way that feminists “threaten” the news media into giving airtime to their issues; but if “charm and persistence” and the Eagle Forum “position paper” failed to influence stations to hear anti-ERA positions then “175 calls in one day will do an effective piece of work.”²⁷ Here Schlafly distinguished feminists from anti-feminists in that she believed that ERA supporters aggressively forced their agenda on stations. To combat what Schlafly saw as a hostile style of activism she encouraged her Eagles to play into notions of patriarchy, leading with feminine magnetism. If that approach taken by the single Eagle handling

²⁵ Schlafly, “Media Workshop – Speech and Q&A by Phyllis Schlafly,” Audio Series.

²⁶ Schlafly, “Ohio Good Government Seminar,” Audio Series.

²⁷ Schlafly, “Media Workshop – Speech and Q&A by Phyllis Schlafly,” Audio Series.

a local news station did not work, then the Eagles from that region could resort to tying up station phone lines for as long as necessary. Should a local Eagle Forum chapter manage to schedule their own news conference after winning over a station, then an additional kind of self-selected labor was required. The Eagle equipped for this position would manage local news conferences. Schlafly informed, “there’s a certain procedure you go through, so it looks like you’re doing the right thing... We have a little packet called Public Relations for Eagles.”²⁸ The task of overseeing these events required a personally organized, detail oriented, and time-managed individual to accomplish all the tasks that went into successful public relations campaigns.

The next type of media labor outlined in 1978, enlisted those who were adept at public speaking for television and radio interviews. Schlafly instructed the women in the audience on how to prepare for these engagements. She noted that, “It’s very important that you prepare ahead of time for what you are going to say... when you get your minute and a half on television or radio... you got to be able to give a message in ninety seconds... you have to be able to say it quickly and convincingly in a very short period of time.”²⁹ Not every Eagle was up to the task of being interviewed, because the short radio and television spots required confident, succinct but not rushed, and well-articulated answers. As Schlafly continued instructing her Eagles she transitioned into a discussion of the awareness of one’s physicality involved with interviewing. Schlafly’s request of those booking radio and television appearances was that “You have to develop a pleasing voice.... Smiling is very important so that you look like you’re comfortable...don’t let them throw you and don’t look mad.”³⁰ A pleasing voice and an

²⁸ Schlafly, “Media Workshop – Speech and Q&A by Phyllis Schlafly,” Audio Series.

²⁹ Schlafly, “Media Workshop – Speech and Q&A by Phyllis Schlafly,” Audio Series.

³⁰ Schlafly, “Media Workshop – Speech and Q&A by Phyllis Schlafly,” Audio Series.

unbreakable smile reinforced the image of the happy housewife. It was imperative that Eagles not get flustered during interviews because it would render the housewife character less effective if media interviews depicted Eagles as hostile, angry, or uncertain of their cause by not having witty and amiable responses. Schlafly reiterated, “Smile no matter how hostile the question is. No matter how obnoxious the questions are... I’ve had much hissing at college campuses... smile, you’re on candid camera.”³¹

To construct the uniform housewife image necessary for visiting politicians or sitting for televised and print media interviews, an integral part of Eagle training included the purposeful attention to individual fashion and demeanor to shape the public image of conservative anti-feminists. Schlafly detailed the importance of hair and makeup for the cameras. She asserted that, “You need more makeup than you normally wear. You need eye makeup, eyeliner, eyelashes, you shouldn’t be too much of anything, but it should be a little more so than normal makeup,” because of course, “The lights tend to bleach out the color in your face.”³² The image of the well-groomed, confident, and trustworthy housewife could be shattered if Eagles looked sickly on television from being washed out by the studio lighting. Schlafly knew that television media amassed national audiences and the way to win viewers over to the Eagle Forum policy side required the purposeful deployment of the sitcom housewife image; a proportion of white middle-class American women already identified with June Cleaver, or at least held an affinity for her. So, by capitalizing on that kind of public presentation Schlafly knew that she could recruit network viewers to the conservative anti-feminist platform on the ERA. The uniformity in the Eagle Forum housewife fashion reinforced notions of a shared identity and nostalgia in the traditional white nuclear family.

³¹ Schlafly, “Ohio Good Government Seminar,” Audio Series.

³² Schlafly, “Media Workshop – Speech and Q&A by Phyllis Schlafly,” Audio Series.

But an Eagle's failure to look the part on camera, then, also meant that it would not matter how well she spoke and conducted herself if the audience thought she did not visually represent them. As such, hair styles mattered too and needed to be based on age, and the potential for negatively distracting from the well-groomed message and image that styled the Eagles. The idea was not to make older women look younger, or to make younger women look older; instead, this aspect of media strategy involved delivering a polished respectability in the housewife image. Schlafly informed them that, "You shouldn't have your hair teased too much... If you're over thirty you shouldn't wear long flowing hair, shouldn't have dangling earrings, or sequins, or diamonds, or anything like that," but she did concede that it was acceptable to wear the organization's identifying Eagle pin to add a pop of glitz.³³ But she warned, "And sometimes even that reflects... Remember television exaggerates everything. If you're ten pounds overweight you're going to look thirty pounds overweight on television."³⁴ Schlafly's emphasis on image imparted how important it was for Eagles to fit a character on TV. If an Eagle's hair was teased too much, or if her hair was long and flowy but she was middle-aged, these styling errors would break the 1950s housewife character that Schlafly's media strategy sought to duplicate. Dangling earrings, sequins, and diamonds were perfectly acceptable for a variety of social events. The problem with that kind of styling and accessorizing on television was that it would catch studio lights and provide a constant glimmer, which would detract from the audience's ability to absorb the Eagle's image and message in a focused way.

The potential for winning television debates and converting home viewers came down to a few straightforward rules for Schlafly that included awareness of body size, clothing choices, and the focus of one's eyes. Finishing her thoughts on women's weight and their probability for

³³ Schlafly, "Media Workshop – Speech and Q&A by Phyllis Schlafly," Audio Series.

³⁴ Schlafly, "Media Workshop – Speech and Q&A by Phyllis Schlafly," Audio Series.

media success, she noted, “Most of the people who are effective on television are very little, small people... TV automatically puts another twenty pounds on you.”³⁵ Putting forward petite women, then, was a strategic training tactic to promote Eagles who could be perceived in living rooms across America as the happy, healthy, cosmetically beautiful housewife. And if one possessed the desired dimensions, they needed to remember that according to Schlafly, “Dresses shouldn’t be too short or too tight. Blacks, whites, and prints are awful on television... A warm solid is the best.”³⁶ The goal was not to look overly sexy with a short hem or a dress that detailed every curve, especially since the camera exaggerated features. The complete picture including makeup, hair, and clothing, then, needed to craft the image of a confident, amiable, beautiful, respectable, and white middle-class housewife without drawing audience attention away from an Eagle’s talking points.

Schlafly made sure that Eagles would know how to perform in front of the camera with their bodies as a canvas. She declared that “The quality that comes across the best on television is eye contact. And that is what reveals the amateur quicker than anything else. People who are new at this don’t know what to do with their eyes and they wander all over the place.”³⁷ For Schlafly, wandering eyes could be a sign of inexperience, nervousness, or losing a debate. To look prepared and professional Eagles needed to practice what to do with their gaze. She instructed her Eagles: “Don’t sit there and let the eyes wander around,” instead she told them, “You look at somebody all the time. You should always expect that the camera is on you.”³⁸ It would be detrimental to get caught with eyes wondering or making faces, because those behaviors would break the theretofore carefully crafted housewife persona.

³⁵ Schlafly, “Media Workshop – Speech and Q&A by Phyllis Schlafly,” Audio Series.

³⁶ Schlafly, “Media Workshop – Speech and Q&A by Phyllis Schlafly,” Audio Series.

³⁷ Schlafly, “Media Workshop – Speech and Q&A by Phyllis Schlafly,” Audio Series.

³⁸ Schlafly, “Media Workshop – Speech and Q&A by Phyllis Schlafly,” Audio Series.

In providing tips of the trade Schlafly offered advice on best practices for how to conduct oneself while interviewing with a news reporter. She noted, “I see no objection to tape recording. I do this often... I say, ‘you don’t mind if I tape this interview?’... I have never had a reporter object to that, there’s no reason why they should take offense at that.”³⁹ In taping interviews Schlafly had a readymade recording should she believe that her remarks were taken out of context. Schlafly suggested that “Another device is to have somebody with you. You really should not give an interview alone. You should have a friend with you. It’s just simply good protection.”⁴⁰ Interviewing in pairs offered similar protection as making your own recording but it added the benefit of a confidence booster when talking to reporters who might be purposefully trying to see if they could break the happy housewife character. In teaching Eagles that the labor of interviewing could not be tackled by all, Schlafly reminded them of the precarity associated with meeting reporters. Schlafly urged Eagles to remember that “There’s just a thousand traps that can be laid for you to fall into... after you’ve made your main points, just stop. You’ve got an appointment with a doctor, you have to pick up your child at the school. You’ve got your whole list of emergencies that you have to take care of, so that you’re not led into talking about inconsequential or trivial things.”⁴¹ The Eagle that interviewed, then, needed to be astute at being measured about what she said, and the length at which she allowed reporters to question her. Schlafly wanted her Eagles to come away from media trainings with the knowledge that a sixty to ninety-second sound bite could greatly benefit the conservative movement and the STOP-ERA cause, but it could just as easily adversely impact them should Eagles over speak.

³⁹ Schlafly, “Media Workshop – Speech and Q&A by Phyllis Schlafly,” Audio Series.

⁴⁰ Schlafly, “Media Workshop – Speech and Q&A by Phyllis Schlafly,” Audio Series.

⁴¹ Schlafly, “Media Workshop – Speech and Q&A by Phyllis Schlafly,” Audio Series.

Learning to Lobby

Eagle Forum as an organization established itself in a way that could accommodate a variety of activism. In addition to Eagle Forum and Eagle Trust Fund, Phyllis Schlafly established the Eagle Forum Education and Legal Defense Fund in 1981. John Schlafly explained that, “on the national level the Eagle Forum Education and Legal Defense Fund is an educational organization” which was also “involved in litigation activities...to support lawsuits which defend rights.” This made Eagle Forum a conservative organization akin in some ways to the function of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).⁴² The difference between Eagle Forum and the Eagle Forum Education and Legal Defense Fund was that Eagle Forum as a lobbying organization could “engage in lobbying to an unlimited extent as part of its educational mission.”⁴³ The organizational entity of the Legal Defense Fund could receive tax deductible donations as a 501(c)3, while Eagle Forum could not, however it was still a nonprofit organization.⁴⁴ Both, however, paid “the annual Franchise Tax. And both the Eagle Forum and the Education and Defense Fund” were “separately incorporated and [filed]... annual reports.”⁴⁵ In addition, there was the Eagle Forum Political Action Committee (PAC) that attempted to raise and spend money to influence elections.⁴⁶

⁴² The Iran-Contra Scandal in 1987 offers an example of the Eagle Forum Education and Legal Defense Fund in action. The Reagan Administration sold arms to Iran despite an embargo preventing arms sales. Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North then used the profits from the arms deals to illegally fund the Nicaraguan Contras in their insurgency against the socialist Sandinista government of the country. Through the subsequent Congressional investigations and trials, North expressed his gratitude to Phyllis Schlafly and the Eagles for “[paying] off the extraordinary legal and security expenses... and I’m grateful for the fact that you’re also helping me protect my family” with security. With the financial backing and support of the Eagle Forum Education and Legal Defense Fund, all three of North’s felony charges were dropped by 1991. See: Phyllis Schlafly and Oliver North, “Commitment, Trust and Family, Part 1,” *Eagle Council XVII*, Address (September 23, 1988).

⁴³ John Schlafly, “Tax & Reporting Rules for Eagle Forum & PACS,” September 18, 1983, A0076, Audio Series, Phyllis Schlafly Center, Clayton, MO.

⁴⁴ Schlafly, “Tax & Reporting Rules for Eagle Forum & PACS,” Audio Series.

⁴⁵ Schlafly, “Tax & Reporting Rules for Eagle Forum & PACS,” Audio Series.

⁴⁶ Schlafly, “Tax & Reporting Rules for Eagle Forum & PACS,” Audio Series.

With an organizational structure that could support lobbying and the funding of campaigns Council seminars expressed a dual mission when it came to lobbying. The first was to indirectly lobby the public with media outreach trainings and the help of television and radio interviews. The second required Eagles to thoughtfully and meticulously directly engage in the practice of lobbying legislators to garner influence over local, state, and federal policy outcomes. One of Schlafly's Eagles asked her in a taped question and answer session to educate them on how to become more effective lobbyists with politicians. Schlafly responded, "I feel very inadequate telling any southern women how to lobby because it's one of my principles that all southern women know how to handle men better than anybody else."⁴⁷ Based on Schlafly's response, it would seem that the Eagle who posed the question was from a southern state. However, this construction of womanhood reiterated the notion of the stock character of the Southern Belle who was captivating, respectable, and who could wield a lot of social power within southern culture. The Belle represented the idea of white gendered female power that could influence powerful white Southern men with their finely tuned appearance, conversation skill, and hospitality. Similarly, Eagles in the 1970s and 1980s, implored mostly white male policymakers to hear and act on their issue stances. Instead of protesting, which Eagle Forum associated with civil rights and feminist movements, Schlafly's invocation of "southern women" employed the idea that housewife hospitality was in itself a tool for lobbying.

Lobbying was an early effective gendered practice for Eagle Forum at a time when, as historian Benjamin Waterhouse points out, from the 1970s through the 1980s, political mobilization of business increased lobbying and campaign donation, but this explosion of

⁴⁷ Schlafly, "Media Workshop – Speech Q&A by Phyllis Schlafly," Audio Series.

lobbying practice was considered to be a corporate and male past time.⁴⁸ By 1986, the message of Schlafly's lobby training communicated that since politicians were male, female charm could be used to persuade them to enact legislation on behalf of white, wealthy conservative women. Schlafly knew that lobbying was considered a practice of men, and in some ways invoked the Puck's Gilded Age cartoon *Bosses of the Senate* (see *Figure 1*) when she noted that, "When you think of a lobbyist you think of a greasy, fat, over stuffed man, with a big cigar in his mouth, sitting in a bar, passing money in brown paper bags under the table to some legislator."⁴⁹ But she wanted Eagles to reimagine lobbying as one of the fundamental concerns for conservative women's political training.

When approaching male politicians Schlafly instructed: "You talk to them like you would talk to any other men and you try to persuade them of the rightness of your position. And, also, that everybody you know supports that position."⁵⁰ Eagle Forum's lobbying strategy employed both a deference to traditional gender roles between men and women as well as intricate knowledge of the political process. Schlafly taught the Eagles that this was a form of tactical activism that fell under legal protection as a "First Amendment Right just like your right of freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and freedom of press. You don't hear much about it, but it is the First Amendment right of the people peaceably to assemble and petition the government for a redress of grievances... we have every right to tell them what we want... and how they should vote on various pieces of legislation."⁵¹ Blending media skill with attention to appearance, congenial conversation in lobbying became an Eagle Forum technique to advertise

⁴⁸ Benjamin C. Waterhouse, *Lobbying America: The Politics of Business from Nixon to NAFTA* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 10.

⁴⁹ Phyllis Schlafly, "Lobbying: A First Amendment Right or, How to Lobby," September 27, 1986, A1053, Audio Series, Phyllis Schlafly Center, Clayton, MO.

⁵⁰ Schlafly, "Media Workshop – Speech Q&A by Phyllis Schlafly," Audio Series.

⁵¹ Schlafly, "Lobbying: A First Amendment Right or, How to Lobby," Audio Series.

and market conservative anti-feminist positions at various levels of the governmental process. Moreover, Schlafly framed this organizational take on lobbying as an extension of women's daily housework amplified to apply to an Eagle Forum army of strategically trained conservative women. Schlafly reminded the Eagles that, "Most of us are lobbying somebody all our lives; we lobby our husbands, our children, our friends, it's a year-round activity. And we do the same thing with our legislators in order to achieve our pro-family agenda."⁵²

The execution of Eagle Forum lobbying required a gendered appeal in both arguments and visual self-presentation as well as the perception of mass numbers of people backing the same issues. Schlafly believed that legislators would vote for ERA, or any other policy position even if they supported the Eagle Forum stance, because of their fears of feminists and news media retribution unseating them in their next election. In order to buffer the fears of elected officials Schlafly instructed Eagles that, "the most important thing you have to convey to your legislators is not only that you're right, and not only that the majority of the women in his district are against ERA, but that you... will put your money where your mouth is, and your volunteer work where your mouth is" to reelect your officials.⁵³ In other words, Eagle Forum women could reassure their elected officials that regardless of media and feminist outcry against his policy vote, the Eagles had enough money and manpower to null and void liberal critique. And Eagles made sure their legislators knew that the robust mobilization of the organization, from canvassing at the precinct level to paid and volunteer grassroots lobbying, interviewing, and fundraising on behalf of conservative political machinery.

The Housewife as a Weapon

⁵² Schlafly, "Lobbying: A First Amendment Right or, How to Lobby," Audio Series.

⁵³ Schlafly, "Media Workshop – Speech Q&A by Phyllis Schlafly," Audio Series.

But Schlafly knew that Eagle Forum strategy required more than media and lobbying savvy. She needed to create a feeling of Eagle Forum surveillance of legislators to truly gain a strong foothold in shaping politics. Eagles were encouraged “to participate in all the aspects of grassroots lobbying: rallies, letters, phone calls, campaign work, and PACS,” because creating an organizational structure that ran the gambit of activism would provide “the power that is behind that lobbyist.”⁵⁴ The individual Eagle lobbying for a policy could not effectively mobilize votes. Instead results came from the legislator with “the vision in his mind’s eye of seventy-thousand Eagles out there who are watching him.”⁵⁵ Weaponizing housewifery meant that conservative Republican politicians both revered and feared the organization of Eagles, because these conservative women played an important role in who was elected, who was unseated, and who would be pressured to vote in specific ways.

As a result, Eagle Forum opened their own Washington, D.C. office on Pennsylvania Avenue in 1981, specifically to have a constant lobbying and Eagle presence on Capitol Hill. The opening of an additional Eagle Forum office in Washington, D.C., is consistent with Waterhouse’s observation that direct lobbying increased for corporate businesses in the 1970s, so that by 1979, there were 650 firms that retained registered lobbyists, and 247 of them had created the support for staff in D.C.⁵⁶ Schlafly’s Eagle Forum practiced both direct lobbying, which required the paying of lobbyists, and indirect lobbying, or grassroots lobbying through newsletters which instructed the conservative public to lobby policymakers by writing letters on a volunteer basis. Lobbying expenditures for Eagle Forum women could be covered by their local Eagle Forum Chapter.⁵⁷ In either case, this 1981 opening of an Eagle Forum D.C. office

⁵⁴ Schlafly, “Lobbying: A First Amendment Right or, How to Lobby,” Audio Series.

⁵⁵ Schlafly, “Lobbying: A First Amendment Right or, How to Lobby,” Audio Series.

⁵⁶ Waterhouse, *Lobbying America*, 11.

⁵⁷ Schlafly, “Tax & Reporting Rules for Eagle Forum & PACS,” Audio Series.

potentially signaled that Schlafly's Eagle Forum was not going to concede ground to corporations as far as lobbying went. The opening of this additional office also offered more extensive networking opportunities between Eagle Forum and other conservative organizations, think tanks, and corporate leaders that frequented the capital.

In this way, Schlafly turned Eagle Forum and its conservative women into an interest group that policymakers needed to contend with, not unlike the way that corporations turned their political power in the 1970s into an interest group through the increase of lobbying and campaign financing.⁵⁸ Eagle Forum got involved with campaign financing too, and by 1978, had a Political Action Committee (PAC) that put 25,000 dollars into the Florida senate races to elect anti-ERA politicians.⁵⁹ In this way Schlafly's Eagle Forum united lobbying with campaign funding, not unlike larger businesses in the 1970s, which offered a way for lawmakers to directly experience a mutually beneficial relationship with the organization when voting for Eagle Forum backed policies.

The ability to lobby through a variety of ways amplified Schlafly's individual power over elected officials within the conservative movement in the 1970s and 1980s, but it also diffused her power through Eagle Forum, fortifying it as an essential institution for providing conservative infrastructure to engage the political machinery. In opening a D.C. office Schlafly told Eagle Council that, "It is necessary for us to have a presence there so that the congressmen know we're out there so that they can have this feeling that they're being watched. And so, they

⁵⁸ Alice O'Connor argues that business reorganized in the 1970s through coalition and the building of infrastructure to recreate business as a powerful political interest group in "Financing the Counterrevolution." See: Alice O'Connor, "Financing the Counterrevolution," in *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s*, ed. Bruce J. Schulman and Julien E. Zelizer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 161.

⁵⁹ Phyllis Schlafly and Jerry Falwell, "Phyllis Schlafly Speech for Moral Majority on ERA in Orlando, Florida," January 1, 1980, A0582, Audio Series, Phyllis Schlafly Center, Clayton, MO.

can think I'm there watching them.”⁶⁰ The watchful Eagle Forum army combined with a new D.C. office created the impression of a constant Eagle surveillance of policymakers. In so doing, Schlafly redefined what it meant to be a grassroots lobbyist; this was not a practice of citizens imploring policymakers to support specific initiatives as much as it was reinforcing the notion that election results for any individual conservative politician hinged on toeing the Eagle Forum line. Should a politician fail to vote in the appropriate ways desired by Eagle Forum they could expect a nearly immediate response from Schlafly and her Eagles.

Weaponizing housewifery meant being ready to battle over the terms of any policy debate, even if that meant using surveillance over other conservative anti-feminist women and groups outside of Eagle Forum. Schlafly assured Eagles:

“I did not allow people to use such arguments as: ‘ERA is a communist plot,’ or ‘we’re against ERA because the bible tells us to be against ERA,’ or ‘we are against ERA because we don’t approve of the morals and lifestyle of Gloria Steinem...and all of those people on the other side.’ You can search all of my materials and those arguments are not there. And nobody who worked with me in the movement ever used those arguments and we didn’t let them. And every now and then somebody would show up at a hearing with one of these arguments and we would try to gag her and take her out and hide her in the restroom until the hearing was over...It’s important that you make the right arguments.”⁶¹

In prohibiting arguments against ERA that were couched in conspiratorial anti-communism Schlafly may have been attempting to differentiate Eagle Forum from right-wing fringe organizations like the John Birch Society. But she seemed to also desire a more solid political foundation in argumentation than what could be provided from religious fundamentalism because biblical arguments against ERA would not sway enough voters and policymakers to make for a winning strategy. Instead of articulating how conservative principles disagreed with platforms put forth by feminist leaders, like Gloria Steinem, it was more strategic to use

⁶⁰ Schlafly, “Lobbying: A First Amendment Right or, How to Lobby,” Audio Series.

⁶¹ Schlafly, “Lobbying: A First Amendment Right or, How to Lobby,” Audio Series.

argumentation where what was at stake was the character of the nation in relationship to federal and state policy. Thus, Schlafly's tactic, which in this case involved the surveillance, and the potential removal of other conservative anti-feminist female activists with divergent arguments, was a necessity to ensure that Eagle Forum's message was the most prominent and uniform one heard.

In 1980, Schlafly condensed the Eagle Council model into an education course for allied grassroots organizations to boost conservative mobilization for the 1980 election. In fact, Jerry Falwell insisted that the Moral Majority "underwrite" the cost of running the program and insisted to his pastors that at least one member from every church attend Schlafly's training.⁶² Attendees received the manual she wrote to accompany the training, called the *Citizens Good Government Manual*. The manual offered timetables and checklists for ensuring the successful execution of various precinct work and outlined a uniform approach for grassroots activists to oversee local, state, and federal elections. The Good Government Seminar was a condensed version of nearly a decade worth of Eagle Forum trainings packaged in a weekend-long course to mobilize other conservative organizations with the same tactics and ideological foundation as Eagles. The manual's appendix even offered ready-made Thank You, fundraising, voting reminder, and Precinct Captain letters and survey templates, news releases, and victory squad instructions to expedite mass mailings. Schlafly toured the country educating allies through the Good Government Seminar with her program training partner, Paul Weyrich.

The movement relationship between Schlafly and Weyrich that grew throughout the 1970s and 1980s, demonstrates that an essential facet of Schlafly's weaponized housewifery was interpersonal coercion between movement wives. Perhaps the best example comes from a letter

⁶² Schlafly and Falwell, "Speech for Moral Majority on ERA," Audio Series.

Schlafly wrote to Joyce Weyrich, (wife of Paul Weyrich), on January 22, 1980, to force Joyce into agreeing that Paul could continue weekend travel across the country for the Good Government Seminar without interference.

Dear Joyce,

I just want you to know how much I, and all those working for a better America, appreciate Paul's participation in our Good Government Seminars.

The awful thing about these Seminars is that they are on weekends, and I know what an extra tremendous amount of dedication and sacrifice it takes to be away from the family on weekends. I hate being gone on weekends more than anything else I do. The only child I have still at home is home *only* on weekends, and it is a real loss and disappointment to both of us for me to be away then. I have no weekend help in the house, which leaves my child and my husband to care for my helpless old mother (which Fred doesn't exactly see as his mission in life).

So I know very keenly what a sacrifice it is – both for Paul and for you – for him to attend so many Seminars on weekends like the recent one in Chicago. All I can say is that I truly believe the project is worthwhile – else I wouldn't do it myself. If I knew anyone else to send, I would vary the teaching staff to ease the strain. But there doesn't seem to be anyone else to do the precise job that Paul and team are doing.

We are thrilled with the success of the Chicago Seminar, and I pray that the others will be just as fruitful. Thank you for *your* important part in making the Seminars worthwhile for all those who attend, which in turn will bear fruit for our dear nation in this crucial year of 1980.⁶³

The subtext within this letter is that Paul expressed to Schlafly that Joyce was unhappy with the travel commitments inherent in their mobilization efforts. The other implication was that Joyce disliked her husband spending his weekends with Schlafly as his professional partner. Schlafly clearly understood but did not want to make adjustments because of Joyce Weyrich's reservations, and promptly used this letter to guilt Joyce into cooperation, using gendered appeals.

⁶³ Phyllis Schlafly, Letter to Joyce Weyrich, 22 January 1980, Box 8, Folder 2, Vol. 27, January-June 1980, Paul M Weyrich Scrapbooks 1942-2009, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Schlafly's letter to Joyce Weyrich encapsulates an example of the coercion inherent in weaponized housewifery. Schlafly purposefully deployed a modernized notion of Republican motherhood to persuade Joyce into forgoing weekends with her husband for the benefit of the movement. If Joyce requested Paul stop his work with Schlafly, then Joyce would actively be sabotaging "all those working for a better America" in a "crucial election year." If Joyce implored Schlafly to try out substitutes for Paul in favor of Weyrich family time, then there would be a record of Joyce acting selfishly against the backdrop of Schlafly's noted "sacrifice."⁶⁴ The context of the letter may have left Joyce wondering if her husband's friendship with Schlafly was such that he would share intimate marriage details about these time commitment disagreements to encourage Schlafly to intervene, or if Schlafly was taking the independent initiative to meddle in the Weyrich marriage. In either case, Schlafly's letter represented a style of housewife performativity that minimized and dismissed Joyce Weyrich's concerns to shift the focus back to Schlafly's dedication to the movement and the essential organizing work that Schlafly and Paul Weyrich performed together. Schlafly left no room for Joyce Weyrich to protest this arrangement, especially given that Fred Schlafly inverted his own gender role within his family to provide child and elder care as a form of labor for movement mobilization. Schlafly strategically coerced Joyce Weyrich into submission to Paul Weyrich's travel schedule. The alternative for Joyce Weyrich would have potentially created fracture in her relationships to her husband, Schlafly, and the conservative movement more broadly.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Phyllis Schlafly, Letter to Joyce Weyrich, 22, January 1980.

⁶⁵ Before and after finding Schlafly's letter to Joyce Weyrich members of Eagle Forum shared what I initially flagged as gossip but came to see as a deeply believed Eagle Forum open secret that pitted Schlafly against Beverly LaHaye, founder of the Concerned Women of America (CWA), and wife of Evangelical minister Tim LaHaye. After finding the Joyce Weyrich letter I can only imagine the interpersonal tension between Phyllis Schlafly and Beverly LaHaye. Eagle men and women believe that Beverly LaHaye was jealous of the time Tim LaHaye and Schlafly spent together touring the country on conservative mobilization projects. So, in response, Beverley LaHaye founded CWA in 1978 as her own version of Eagle Forum to keep her husband's attention focused on her rather than Schlafly. Of course, this whisper network always included that Schlafly never strayed from Fred, and that these

Schlafly relied on the manipulation inherent to weaponized housewifery to influence politics on an international stage during the Reagan presidency in the 1980s. The Eagle Council I attended in 2017, commemorated the “The Women of Geneva” who traveled with Phyllis Schlafly to the 1985 Geneva Summit, where President Reagan and Premier Gorbachev held their first diplomatic meeting. Schlafly handpicked a team of thirty-four women to fly to Switzerland with her as a visual sign of support in the global media for Reagan’s foreign policy amidst arms race negotiations with the Soviet Union. Since Schlafly had died in 2016, and her Geneva cohort was also dwindling in numbers, the organization decided to celebrate the surviving women who Schlafly considered close compatriots and loyal Eagle Forum members. Naming this delegation Women for Peace Through Real Defense, their chief goal was ensuring that the U.S. implemented SDI (Strategic Defense Initiative), as an anti-ballistic missile program also known as Star Wars in the 1980s.

Schlafly included Honorable Faith Whittlesey, Reagan’s Ambassador to Switzerland, in the logistical planning for the delegation’s trip. Whittlesey, who claimed Schlafly as “a close personal friend” reflected that Schlafly believed that the key to political successes lay in what cameras communicated visually. Whittlesey recounted Schlafly telling her “We have to win not only by what we say, but by the way we look. So, she brought with her the most beautiful, elegant ladies, and they engaged in Geneva in street theater.”⁶⁶

married men allied to Eagle Forum saw Schlafly as a colleague and nothing more. Rather, the emphasis was on the jealousy that Beverly LaHaye held onto because she was not the female conservative movement star. Paired with the Joyce Weyrich letter, reinforces the coerciveness of weaponized housewifery among conservative women; as national media amplified Schlafly, and leading conservative men celebrated her organizing prowess, other conservative women had to work harder to emulate Schlafly as the model conservative women, making Schlafly mainstream within the movement. Schlafly did not want or need to directly control other grassroots groups, especially when they modeled themselves after Eagle Forum.

⁶⁶ Helen Marie Taylor, Hon. Faith Whittlesey, and Kitty Werthmann, “The Women of Geneva,” (speech, St. Louis, MO, September 24, 2017).

Long-time Eagle, Helen Marie Taylor, recalled strategizing this display of “street theater” as she chatted with Schlafly in preparation for travel to Geneva in 1985. Schlafly proposed that they “should get a group together, but we should all have press passes, so we can be part of the press corp.” When Taylor asked Schlafly how the accompanying women would secure these passes she recalled Schlafly’s instruction to check in with “every contact you have with the press, get them to issue you a pass that you’re representing them.”⁶⁷ The plan to have the group recognized by various presses would give the illusion that the women in attendance were from a variety of trusted news organizations. Schlafly would only issue an Eagle Forum press pass if one could not be procured by any other means.⁶⁸

Once Schlafly’s Eagle cohort arrived in Geneva they consciously deployed weaponized housewifery as a justification for increasing U.S. armament amidst Cold War tensions. Eagle Forum’s Women for Peace Through Real Defense were aware of transnational feminist organizing efforts for Cold War demilitarization and disarmament. Eagle Kitty Werthmann recounted “infiltrating” feminist peace marches in Geneva in an attempt to gather intel on their feminist opponents.⁶⁹ The Eagles’ gendered performance in Geneva sought to visually undercut the feminist pressure for disarmament at the Summit. Whittlesey shared that when “the feminists were around and the people who were trying to persuade the world that Reagan was a war-

⁶⁷ Taylor, Werthmann, and Whittlesey, “The Women of Geneva.” Helen Marie Taylor was one of Schlafly’s most trusted Eagles, and friends for nearly fifty years. Taylor studied to be an actress in London in her twenties and enjoyed a moderately successful stage career. These meticulously crafted performance techniques came in handy as an Eagle engaging in media spots, lobbying activities, and organizational outreach. Always perfectly styled and ready to interact in public like a camera was always on her, she, like Schlafly and other high-profile Eagles, can be found in the conservative archive in various institutional movement spaces quietly networking and strengthening the movement. Taylor was a political aide to evangelical preacher Pat Robinson in Washington D.C., and she also aided Paul Weyrich with establishing the conservative Heritage Foundation public policy think tank in the 1970s. Consequently, Taylor’s claim to fame within conservative circles is being a cousin of two former presidents: Zachary Taylor and James Madison. She died at age 98 in January 2022. Ed Martin and John Schlafly did a tribute to Taylor here: #WYNK: The Incredible Life of Helen Marie Taylor, Ed Martin and John Schlafly, January 26, 2022, #ProAmerica Report, Phyllis Schlafly Eagles.

⁶⁸ Taylor, Werthmann, and Whittlesey, “The Women of Geneva.”

⁶⁹ Taylor, Werthmann, and Whittlesey, “The Women of Geneva.”

monger, there came Phyllis and her thirty-four ladies talking to every press outlet and letting the people know that there were people in the United States that fully supported our president.”⁷⁰

This purposeful gendered performance for an international audience visually argued that American wives and mothers supported Reagan’s foreign policy, and that the heads of state from around the world should trust American mothers to be mindful of the security of families across the globe. Furthermore, the manicured appearance of each Eagle likewise communicated a middle-upper-class network of Reagan support, as an implicit visual signaling through media coverage for an international class consciousness of elites.

Trained and Ready for Battles

The interpersonal, institutional, national, and international scales of weaponized housewifery is another distinction between Schlafly’s Eagle Forum model and “kitchen table activists,” “suburban warriors,” and “housewife populist,” models of conservative women’s political organizing.⁷¹ While all these frameworks add important nuance and understanding to conservative women’s grassroots activism, Schlafly and Eagle Forum charted yet a new model for conservative women’s political participation. Eagle Forum’s women functioned as a sort of special operations force within the conservative movement. They were militant in their dedication to conservative activism and the professionalization with which activism was performed. Not just any conservative grassroots housewife could operationally toe the line for Schlafly. The women of Eagle Forum needed political savvy, dedication, and the understanding

⁷⁰ Taylor, Werthmann, and Whittlesey, “The Women of Geneva.”

⁷¹ See: Taranto, *Kitchen Table Politics*; Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*; Michelle Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism*.

that they needed to make housewifery into a political chip to be feared and revered to boost their organizational power during the creation and passage of policy.

Historian Stacie Taranto uncovered a telling exchange between Schlafly and pro-life groups forming in New York in the 1970s, in *Kitchen Table Politics*. However, the content of the letter is understood differently when read through the perspective of Eagle Forum's surveillance tactics. Taranto noted that the only thing connecting various New York groups was the *Phyllis Schlafly Report*, and that the report allowed these organizations uniform policy messaging.⁷² In a letter from Phyllis Schlafly to a woman named Claire Middleton, Schlafly said, "You are on sound ground if you stick to the arguments in my newsletters and do not stray afield."⁷³ Taranto interpreted this as a means of Schlafly "[bolstering] her own power by fanning the grassroots."⁷⁴ But from an Eagle Forum perspective, this wasn't about Schlafly's individual power as much as it was about keeping tabs on upstart organizations to ensure they would follow Eagle Forum's lead. If not, as far as Schlafly and Eagle Forum were concerned, Middleton's group and others like hers, could account for the next round of bathroom lockups at congressional hearings. Taranto went on to note that Schlafly even attended the inaugural meeting of non-Eagle Forum pro-life anti-ERA groups in New York.⁷⁵ But Schlafly did not offer her newsletter or attend local grassroots meetings out of altruism or to inflate her own power at the grassroots. Schlafly's actions amounted to her skill at, and Eagle Forum's practice in, wielding a weaponized housewifery that militantly monitored other conservative groups as well as local, state, and federal officials. In other words, Schlafly needed to assess whether these groups would be fit for coalition, whether they would organize in ways that she approved, and if they would pose issues

⁷² Taranto, *Kitchen Table Politics*, 99-100.

⁷³ Taranto, *Kitchen Table Politics*, 100.

⁷⁴ Taranto, *Kitchen Table Politics*, 100.

⁷⁵ Taranto, *Kitchen Table Politics*, 100.

in argumentation going forward for Eagle Forum at state and federal level policy hearings. In moments like these, Schlafly was first and foremost tactically planning like the general that Eagle Forum understood her to be.

Eagle Forum did not want to recruit every conservative anti-feminist woman. Rather Schlafly desired a committed, passionate, well-trained base of members that would prioritize tactical strategy for fulfilling political missions to shape elections and policy. Strategically engaging the political process also meant that Eagles had “to know when to keep quiet,” because “we didn’t expose our friends.”⁷⁶ Should Eagles convince a politician to change their vote at the midnight hour than secrecy was the best discretion for ensuring similar coalition in the future. In this way, Eagles not only monitored the media once it was news, but they engaged in a process of carefully managing what could become a breaking story in the first place.

The purpose of Eagle Council was to replicate Schlafly in other Eagles to spread the effectiveness of conservative anti-feminist outreach and to consolidate political power. And Phyllis Schlafly saw the combination of media and lobby training as a means of gaining more direct control over the structures and institutions upholding American government. Schlafly explained that the way to influence legislators’ votes was to understand what she called the “elements of power.”⁷⁷ Her first element of power could be found in gaining “patronage and perks” which could be “handed out by somebody in authority.”⁷⁸ People like the President who “are in a position to offer jobs... to offer appointments to commissions... to offer invitations to the white house, to channel federal or state taxpayers’ money” offered one avenue for gaining a political foothold to direct policy.⁷⁹ Closely related to patronage, the second element of power

⁷⁶ Schlafly, “Lobbying: A First Amendment Right or, How to Lobby,” Audio Series.

⁷⁷ Schlafly, “Lobbying: A First Amendment Right or, How to Lobby,” Audio Series.

⁷⁸ Schlafly, “Lobbying: A First Amendment Right or, How to Lobby,” Audio Series.

⁷⁹ Schlafly, “Lobbying: A First Amendment Right or, How to Lobby,” Audio Series.

came from monetary contributions. While this power had been within the purview of business, Schlafly remained optimistic because “individuals have learned how to have” a similar impact to the business community “through their donations to political action committees.”⁸⁰ Thus, Eagles quickly learned that money created “leverage in lobbying.”⁸¹ The media was the third element of power, which Schlafly believed was the most important. She argued that “what is going through the minds of the congressman is ‘what am I going to look like on Dan Rather and in the Washington Post?’... Their vote really has very little to do with what are the elements of right and wrong, or good and bad, on that issue.”⁸² Eagles could combat the media’s criticism of conservative politicians by offering them reassurance of Eagle Forum’s continued support. Eagle Council’s trainings on how to control media on issues provided a springboard not just for directing votes, but for navigating Schlafly’s fifth and sixth elements of power: personal friendships and the masses of the people. Successfully navigating these elements of power required an Eagle to use the trainings they received in lobbying, honoring the secrecy of strategic coalitions, and performing weaponized housewifery to manage the way broadcast viewers perceived political conflict.

The success of the Eagle Forum model relied on Eagles internalizing Council trainings and understanding where their talents could best serve the labor of the organization. While many Eagles might have believed that Phyllis Schlafly would always be the best person to meet with their legislator or interview for their local media Schlafly herself dissuaded followers from that line of thinking. Schlafly told the Eagles, “I’m sorry to have to say this but your legislator doesn’t care a thing in the world about what Phyllis Schlafly says or thinks... I’m not big in his

⁸⁰ Schlafly, “Lobbying: A First Amendment Right or, How to Lobby,” Audio Series.

⁸¹ Schlafly, “Lobbying: A First Amendment Right or, How to Lobby,” Audio Series.

⁸² Schlafly, “Lobbying: A First Amendment Right or, How to Lobby,” Audio Series.

life... he cares more about one sentence from you than a whole book from me... A one-line letter from you is more important, more convincing, more everything than a whole speech from me.”⁸³ Schlafly needed Eagles to be able to function effectively and efficiently without her constant physical presence. Because of this, Council trainings taught Eagles that where one lived, voted, and volunteered was the primary battleground to influence national policy. Schlafly could not be everywhere at once, nor did she want to be. The ability to maintain the illusion that she was always watching and ready to respond was effective enough.

The women of Eagle Forum became trained political operatives through Eagle Council gatherings developing efficient strategies to ensure political victories from the local to national level. Being a housewife was not in itself a means to an end. These women knew that the housewife image needed to be visually manicured to curry favor with conservative male politicians and to drum up heightened media attention over the feminist and anti-feminist policy platforms. And the clearly defined housewife image also translated into creating visual distinctions between liberal feminist and conservative anti-feminist politics. In this way the housewife became both a uniform, and a tactical weapon to deploy on media, state legislatures, Congress, and the Senate.

Jayne Schindler’s image of Schlafly as John Wayne in a skirt brings a heightened awareness of the ways that Phyllis Schlafly was an experienced general leading her Eagle Forum foot soldiers into political battles. With up to eighty-thousand members nationally Phyllis Schlafly could turn a small, outnumbered grassroots army into an institutional political machine tipping the electoral and voting odds toward conservative favor.⁸⁴ Eagle Council provided the

⁸³ Schlafly, “Lobbying: A First Amendment Right or, How to Lobby,” Audio Series.

⁸⁴ Phyllis Schlafly, “Eagles Are Needed More Than Ever Before!” September 25, 1993, A1061, Audio Series, Phyllis Schlafly Center, Clayton, MO.

opportunity for Schlafly to shape Eagles in her image, essentially duplicating Schlafly-like qualities and tactical thinking in conservative anti-feminist activists across the country. The President of Eagle Forum since 2016, Ed Martin, reflected on why Schlafly chose the Eagle for her organization; Schlafly liked the Eagle because “Eagles fly into the storm.”⁸⁵ Schlafly’s reasoning mirrors the cinematic image of John Wayne riding into show downs on his horse to defend the white settler inhabitants of small western towns. Schlafly only needed a handful of Eagle Forum foot soldiers ready to deploy a weaponized housewifery to reassert the political currency of the white nuclear middle-class American family in the face of social and cultural upheaval in the 1970s, and beyond.

⁸⁵ Ed Martin, “Address,” (speech, Washington, D.C., July 12, 2018).

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

One of the problems with remembering Phyllis Schlafly as an anti-ERA activist first and foremost, is that her career path and focuses were much more varied than what studying this period of her activism suggests. Although the defeat of the ERA was a tangible conservative victory and a major blow to the feminist movement in the United States, Schlafly made her career a project of continuously pushing the Republican Party further to the right of the political spectrum from 1964, until her death in 2016. By the time the ERA was defeated in 1982, Phyllis Schlafly had become integral to transforming the national political discourse and in shaping conservative grassroots activism. Schlafly used the ERA as a vehicle to mobilize a new coalition of activists under the conservative movement. The anti-ERA campaign offered a venue to reach a broader audience for Schlafly by publicizing her conservative ideas within the mainstream media, which influenced the growth of the Religious Right and pro-family movements. Schlafly occupied a liminal space within the movement organizing both the grassroots and political elites to shape conservative institutions and policymaking in the United States. Eagle Forum functioned in the same way.

This dissertation made three major arguments about Schlafly's and Eagle Forum's contributions to the development of the modern conservative movement. First, this project demonstrated that Schlafly used conservative print culture to battle over the identity of the conservative movement and influence the political trajectory of the Republican Party. In so doing, she helped to make the GOP increasingly more conservative through her emphasis on election mobilization and supporting conservative candidates for local, state, and national office. Secondly, this dissertation examined how *The Phyllis Schlafly Report* networked conservatives into effective coalitions. Schlafly undertook a multipronged approach to grassroots activism that

included contacting representatives to neighborhood recruitment, organizing study groups and capital visits, monitoring the rollcalls of votes, holding elected officials accountable to supporters, planning media outreach, and filing amicus briefs.

Taken together, Schlafly presented a dynamic approach to activism that encouraged conservatives to engage the political process in sophisticated ways, regardless of their experience in politics. Some of her mobilizing techniques required more labor and contacts within the movement than others; some necessitated specialized skillsets and professional credentials (like access to a lawyer or personal legal training). Even though Schlafly is closely associated with her grassroots STOP-ERA movement, she mobilized for conservative control over the judiciary branch since the 1960s, to ensure the institutional support and long-term influence of the movement.

Second, embracing what I call weaponized housewifery based in racialized logics of white womanhood, and functioning as professionally trained political activists, Schlafly and her Eagles utilized the image of the housewife as a uniform, and as a tactical weapon to deploy on the media, state legislatures, and Congress. Chapter three highlighted the ways that for Phyllis Schlafly and Eagle Forum the housewife was an occupation, an ideology, a symbol, and a tool that could be weaponized to shape the terms of political debate and policy outcomes. Using the term housewife as a descriptor for Eagle Forum activists, then, prevents a fuller understanding of their political ingenuity and the militancy with which they engaged the political process. Eagle Forum members were highly trained to communicate conservative ideology to the mainstream media and to politicians in legislative hearings. Furthermore, they purposely developed activist strategies to wield notions of gender essentialism to transform the spectrum of politics within the United States.

Finally, all three chapters charted the ways that Phyllis Schlafly and Eagle Forum shaped the institutional growth of the movement through an alternative conservative news media and shrewd organizational design to support long-term conservative mobilization. Schlafly's contributions to alternative media staked out a plan for conservatives to take over control within the Republican Party. Schlafly established her own publishing company, Pere Marquette Press, so that she could write, publish, and distribute her self-authored books. Even when co-authoring books with Chester Ward, Schlafly maintained sole control over the copyrights. When she decided to begin the *PSR* she used a trust fund to support monthly mailings. Furthermore, she designed Eagle Forum as two different legal entities: Eagle Forum had the capability to lobby as a 501c4 and the Eagle Forum Education and Defense Fund was a nonprofit 501c3. With this tandem structure Eagles were able to function as an education organization and still create political action committees to fund conservative campaigns and mobilize around multiple issues. Moreover, Eagles were themselves seasoned activists within the conservative movement forging alliances between Eagle Forum and other organizations like Young Americans for Freedom, the American Legislative Exchange Council, the Free Congress Foundation, the Heritage Foundation, the Moral Majority, and the Council for National Policy.

Phyllis Schlafly continued working tirelessly for the conservative movement after the defeat of the ERA in 1982. In addition to serving as a founding member of the Council for National Policy in the 1980s, she launched a second newsletter called the *Education Reporter* in 1986, to advocate for conservative policies in education.¹ A strident pro-life advocate, Schlafly

¹ This newsletter continues to advocate for parental choice, abstinence education, and curriculum changes, including the anti-Critical Race Theory (CRT) movement that arose as a response to national protests after the George Floyd killings in the summer of 2020. Sue Kunstman, "Updated Abstinence Education Program Also Promotes Good Citizenship; Counters Critical Race Theory" *Ed Reporter Monthly Email Edition*, May 31, 2021, <https://www.phyllisschlafly.com/family/education/may-2021-ed-reporter-monthly-email-edition/>.

then founded the RNC For Life political action committee in 1990, furthering anti-abortion activism for Religious Right and family values coalitions. She went on in the early 1990s to create *The First Reader* for parents to teach their children how to read using the phonics system, before children could “[learn] wrong habits in school.”² In addition to mobilizing around education initiatives, Eagle Forum organized around anti-vaccination rights.³ Continuing to strategize ways to bring new generations into the conservative movement Schlafly established Eagle Collegians, as a college-aged version of Eagle Forum that convened every June beginning in 1993. With Collegians, Schlafly networked conservative youth around the country to other likeminded peers and to politicians in Washington, D.C. As technology and media advanced, so too did Schlafly’s efforts to fortify the effectiveness of the alternative conservative media. In the 1990s, she forged alliances between talk show radio host Rush Limbaugh and political consultant and pollster Kellyanne Fitzpatrick (later Conway).⁴ Schlafly used Eagle Council’s and Eagle Collegians’ meetings to mobilize against the Clinton and Obama Administrations. She continued hosting these gatherings until her death in 2016. In the final years of her life, she argued that the social justice movement in the United States cast America as “a racist, oppressive, unjust society” spurred on by “Obama [preaching] the class war.”⁵ With Barack Obama’s presidential victories in the 2008 and 2012 elections, Schlafly funneled her energies into further bolstering

² Phyllis Schlafly, interview by Stuart Roth, “Phyllis Schlafly Interview on Literacy, Phonics, and First Reader 1995,” YouTube video, 4:50-4:54, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=87J1jnCEy4E>.

³ Barbara Loe Fischer and Kathleen Rothschild, “A Threat to Your Privacy and Your Life,” September 11, 1998, 9813, Video Archives, Phyllis Schlafly Center, Clayton, MO.

⁴ Rush Limbaugh, “Address at Eagle Council,” September 27, 1991, Video Archives, Phyllis Schlafly Center, Clayton, MO; Kellyanne Fitzpatrick, “Making Sense Out of Public Opinion Polls,” September 1999, 972, Video Archives, Phyllis Schlafly Center, Clayton, MO.

⁵ Phyllis Schlafly, “The Future of America and Eagle Forum,” September 17, 2011, A1404, Audio Series, Phyllis Schlafly Center, Clayton, MO.

the alternative conservative media and “electing a new crowd” of conservatives across the country in coalition with the Tea Party Movement.⁶

When asked about her views on the 2016 Presidential election in January of 2016, Schlafly replied, “[Donald] Trump is the only hope to defeat the kingmakers.”⁷ While she liked Senator Ted Cruz’s conservatism, she argued that she would rather see Donald Trump become president so that Cruz could sit on the Supreme Court. She declared: “that would be the perfect fit for [Cruz]... his qualifications are enormous, his education and his experience.”⁸ Even in her nineties, Schlafly insisted that she was still committed to “trying to shape the Republican Party” as she had done since the early days of her career.⁹

Then on March 11, 2016, at the St Louis Peabody Opera House at age 91, Phyllis Schlafly gave her official Trump endorsement. News outlets shared, “Most of Schlafly's closest allies on the right flank of the party preferred Ted Cruz... many of her colleagues pleaded for her to hold off on an outright endorsement.” Apparently Schlafly attempted to avoid any hinderances to her plans since only a “few of Schlafly's trusted confidants knew what she was planning until, suddenly, there she was on stage at Trump's one and only St. Louis rally.”¹⁰ Schlafly’s daughter, Ann Schlafly Cori, became the leader of a faction Eagles claiming that Schlafly-appointed Ed

⁶ Schlafly, “The Future of America and Eagle Forum,” Audio Series; Rep. Allen West, “What is the Role for the Tea Parties?” June 2, 2011, A1392, Audio Series, Phyllis Schlafly Center, Clayton, MO.

⁷ Julia Hahn, “Exclusive- Phyllis Schlafly Makes the Case For President Trump: ‘Only Hope to Defeat the Kingmakers,’ *Breitbart*, January 10, 2016, accessed March 15, 2016, <http://www.breitbart.com/big-government/2016/01/10/phyllis-schlafly-makes-the-case-for-president-trump/>.

⁸ Hahn, “Exclusive-Phyllis Schlafly.”

⁹ Hahn, “Exclusive-Phyllis Schlafly.”

¹⁰ Sarah Fenske, “The Man Who Replaced Phyllis Schlafly,” *Riverfront Times*, December 7, 2016, sec. St. Louis Metro News.

Martin (former RNC Chairman of Missouri) coerced her into the endorsement. They believed that without Martin's interference, Schlafly would have supported Ted Cruz's presidential race.¹¹

By the late-1980s, presidential candidates made it a point to court Eagle Forum for their endorsement.¹² Ted Cruz had been making appearances to Eagle Council in a bid to further his political ambitions.¹³ Head of Texas Eagle Forum, Cathie Adams, supported Cruz as a homegrown candidate, and she along with other Eagles may have felt surprised and perhaps slighted that Schlafly endorsed Trump instead of the politician who already had a record as an ally to the organization.¹⁴ Given the years of Eagle Forum training in weaponized housewifery to build relationships with politicians, monitor their voting record, and hold them accountable for upholding conservative policy, some Eagles may have seen Cruz as the obvious choice. Eagles had no rapport with Donald Trump. Martin, however, insists that Schlafly was "sure" that Trump was the nominee because of how he "doubled-down" in the media and worked the mainstream news into a frenzy without ceding his positions.¹⁵

Eagle Forum and the Schlafly family were not immune to the Donald Trump-Ted Cruz split that fractured the Republican Party in the 2016 election, otherwise known as the Never Trump contingency. While Americans felt a deepening rift in their relationships pitting liberal and conservative individuals against each other within familial and social networks, this phenomenon played out amongst the Schlafly family and Eagle Forum. Each person needed to decide if they were witness to the Ed Martin "coup" to take over Eagle Forum and manipulate

¹¹ Christine Ayala, "Despite Phyllis Schlafly's Endorsement of Trump, Many Eagle Forum Members Sticking with Cruz," *The Dallas Morning News*, March 14, 2016; Sarah Fenske, "The Man Who Replaced Phyllis Schlafly"; Dan Quinn, "The Knives Are Out," *Texas Freedom Network* (blog), April 11, 2016, <https://tfn.org/the-knives-are-out/>.

¹² George Bush, Bob Dole, Pete DuPont, Jack Kemp, and Pat Robertson, "Meet the Candidates for President in 1988," September 26, 1987, A0165, Audio Series, Phyllis Schlafly Center, Clayton, MO.

¹³ Hon. Ted Cruz, "States in the 2012 Election," September 21, 2012, 1615, Video Archives, Phyllis Schlafly Center, Clayton, MO.

¹⁴ Cruz, "States in the 2012 Election," Video Archives.

¹⁵ Ed Martin, "Address at Phyllis Schlafly Collegians" (speech, Washington D.C., July 10, 2018).

Schlafly into the Trump endorsement against her wishes, or if his appointment by Schlafly was an uncoerced passage of leadership. Schlafly's children and the Eagles then sorted themselves accordingly into the appropriate organizational affiliations. Phyllis Schlafly Eagles based out of Schlafly's original center in Clayton, Missouri, became the organizational home of the Martin faction. The anti-Martin faction kept the Eagle Forum title and office in Washington, D.C. Eagle Forum and the Phyllis Schlafly Eagles now operate as two separate entities with no connection aside from their ongoing lawsuits. Both entities continue to claim that they are the rightful Schlafly heirs carrying on her mobilizing mission.

The confusing part to the Eagle Forum feud that seemingly tied Martin's ascendancy to Schlafly's Trump endorsement is why any Eagles were surprised by Schlafly's position on the 2016 election. Surely, with the way that *A Choice Not an Echo* continues to hold prominence within the organization, it would make perfect sense that Schlafly backed Trump. Trump created his own media events defying the Republican Party establishment and energized a grassroots movement. Why would some Eagles believe Martin coerced Schlafly into endorsing Donald Trump? Why did the factions not reconcile after Trump named Mike Pence as his Vice President? Schlafly bestowed Pence with the honor of being "one of our favorite speakers," and an ally attending Eagle Forum events through the years.¹⁶ Even though Ted Cruz courted Eagle Forum for their support of a presidential bid, Schlafly was not snubbing Cruz by endorsing Trump.¹⁷ She clearly expressed a long-term vision that included Trump appointing Ted Cruz to a lifetime of service on the Supreme Court. Schlafly was not rejecting conservative desires, but

¹⁶ Phyllis Schlafly and Mike Pence, "Address," June 10, 2004, A0227, Audio Series, Phyllis Schlafly Center, Clayton, MO.

¹⁷ Texas Eagle Forum Chairman, Cathie Adams, successfully booked Texas Senator Ted Cruz for Eagle Forum events beginning in 2012, where he began courting the organization for their backing in his political career. Cathie Adams, as a friend of Senator Ted Cruz, was especially upset over Schlafly's Trump endorsement. For more see: Hon. Ted Cruz, "States in the 2012 Election," Video Archives.

rather seeking a more permanent solution for centralizing conservative power within American institutions, and she made Cruz central to that mission.

As of 2022, lawsuits challenging the legitimacy of the opposing factions continue through litigation to sort out the legalities, finances, leadership, and inheritance issues between Phyllis Schlafly Eagles and Eagle Forum. In addition to the organizational turmoil, Schlafly's youngest child, Anne Schlafly Cori of the Eagle Forum faction, filed a lawsuit against her brothers Bruce, Andy, and John Schlafly of the Phyllis Schlafly Eagle contingency. She alleges that her brothers manipulated their mother to remove her as a co-trustee, leaving only John in charge over the family trust. She further alleged that in her mother's final months that her brothers coerced their mother into reducing Cori's share of the trust by all "Lawsuit Related Costs."¹⁸

At Eagle Council in 2017, Helen Marie Taylor, who was an original Eagle and once Chairman of Eagle Forum, then Chairman of Phyllis Schlafly's Eagles, shared in an address to all the attendees that those leading the Eagle Forum faction-were unelected successors. She believed that Cori and her conspirators led a dishonest coup against Martin and Schlafly for control of the organization. She said with great sadness that they "sent Phyllis to her grave an unhappy person," and that she had been appointed to her position to protect Ed Martin and Phyllis Schlafly from their faction.¹⁹ To debunk rumors that Ed Martin prevented Schlafly from seeing Eagles as part of his power grab, Taylor further shared that she stayed with Schlafly at her home in fellowship through her final months, along with other original Eagles, Kitty Werthmann and Kathleen Sullivan. Taylor recounted memories of great dinner parties together in Schlafly's

¹⁸ Kevin McDermott, "Schlafly Daughter Alleges Brothers Sabotaged Her Inheritance in Ongoing Family Fight," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 22, 2017; Kurt Erickson, "Years after Her Death, Phyllis Schlafly's Family Still Battling over Inheritance," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, August 24, 2021.

¹⁹ Helen Marie Taylor, "Address" (speech, St. Louis, MO, September 22, 2017).

last days, including a dinner the four of them had the night before Schlafly died. Dispelling suggestions that Schlafly had mentally weakened with age and cancer, Taylor went on to note that Schlafly finished writing her final *Phyllis Schlafly Report* on a Friday night. They chatted about the content amongst themselves throughout the weekend before Schlafly died that Sunday. As far as Taylor was concerned, Schlafly was mentally sharp until the end.²⁰ Schlafly may have dipped in and out of lucid moments in her final months raising concerns for those supporting the anti-Martin contingency. Or maybe she was completely lucid the whole time, and pro-Cruz Eagles did not want to accept Donald Trump as the conservative presidential candidate. Similarly, it is possible that Schlafly was both saddened by the Eagle Forum fracture and the alienation of her youngest daughter, but nonetheless experienced great joy in the dinners she spent with her friends.

One of the events at that same Council, included a tour of Schlafly's home. I had seen video footage in the archive from Council's past, of Schlafly's home packed with Eagles celebrating each other. Her sons, John and Andy, were in the process of filing the paperwork to register their mother's home as a local historic landmark. The house had been kept entirely like Schlafly had prepared it from videos in the archive. Schlafly collected antiques and proudly displayed honors and awards from conservative grassroots organizations from across the United States. A signed Donald Trump "Make America Great Again" cap hung from her four-poster bed, a modern stamp on what could otherwise appear as a bedroom from a time capsule maybe a century before (see *Figure 2*). I learned from the tour that Fred and Phyllis Schlafly thought sharing a smaller bed was healthy for the marital relationship. Her closet still housed every outfit, carefully hung (see *Figure 3*). Next to her closet was mirrored vanity with studio lighting

²⁰ Taylor, "Address."

that would mimic media lighting for interviews. The guest room sported a patriotic eagle bedspread (see *Figure 4*). Some of the displayed photos were taken while the entire Schlafly family vacationed during Republican National Convention gatherings.

Phyllis Schlafly embodied weaponized housewifery; she carefully manicured that performance throughout all visible aspects of her life. As I took the opportunity to explore Schlafly's Eagle Forum office in Clayton, Eagles formed a line to sit at her desk and take photos. But what struck me was the cabinet behind her desk. Books, papers, an acrostic poem "Phyllis," and statues were packed together including a figure of Paul Revere on horseback, and five different eagles, including an American eagle rotary telephone (see *Figure 5*).²¹ Schlafly's décor celebrated American nationalism and empire, expounding the politics she perpetuated throughout her lifetime. Her Eagles learned to deploy weaponized housewifery, and without Schlafly's charismatic presence, they turned that tactic interpersonally on each other seeking organizational control, untethered from the larger mission of conservative coalition to ensure U.S. military dominance abroad and continuous movement mobilization domestically.

Later during that same weekend, Janet Folger Porter and Iowa Congressman Steve King spoke to the Eagles over lunch, about the origins of the Heartbeat Bill. This bill bans abortion as soon as a fetal heartbeat can be detected, just six weeks after gestation. Porter distributed red cowboy hats to all in attendance labeled "RNC For Life" in commemoration of Schlafly's successful efforts to create the RNC for Life PAC in 1990. As Congressman King spoke, he recounted sitting with Porter behind the Trump and Conway families at Schlafly's funeral. He explained that he and Janet Folger Porter came up with this bill to continue the pro-life work that

²¹ It took all my effort not to laugh as I saw this phone as the conservative equivalent to the red emergency phone Commissioner Gordon used to call Batman in the 1966 *Batman* television series.

Schlafly began.²² They articulated that instituting the Heartbeat Bill as law would take the unrelenting mobilization work of Eagle Forum. Porter proclaimed that Eagles “are the special forces of the culture war.”²³ Even as Eagles looked to Schlafly as their general for decades, leaders and politicians within the conservative movement saw them as an essential battalion shaping policy and political discourse.

Project Reflection

I was not prepared for the emotional toll this project would take. The rise of Trumpism in 2015, the dual Supreme Court draft leak overturning *Roe v. Wade*, and the ongoing investigations into the capital insurrection of January 6, 2021, politically bookended the research and writing of this dissertation. During this time, the political and legal attacks to scale back access to health care including women’s reproductive care, the physical capture and separation of refugee children on the U.S.-Mexico border, the privatization of public education, the ongoing racial violence against non-white Americans, and the joint climate and COVID crises were lived as much in my present moments as they painfully flashed their antecedents in Schlafly’s archive.²⁴ Issues of patriarchy, empire, and race deeply intertwine in the history of American conservatism and Phyllis Schlafly’s Eagle Forum. Those connections will continue to be more fully mapped not just by me, but by future historians as well.

²² Representative Steve King and Janet Folger Porter, “Keynote Address,” (speech, St. Louis, MO, September 23, 2017).

²³ Rep Steve King and Janet Folger Porter, “Keynote Address.”

²⁴ In the most personal ways this project tortured me. My sister stood to lose her healthcare as someone who could finally have health insurance because of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and Trump’s ascendancy threatened that as she sought necessary medical treatment 2017. I spent July of 2017 walking in and out of the Schlafly Center in St. Louis, Missouri, crossing through picket lines of protesters organizing against Eagle Forum locally, and conservatives nationally to protect pre-existing conditions under the ACA. I desperately wanted to join those demonstrations in solidarity but did not for fear of losing access to the archive and members willing to talk with me for this research.

While I realize that research projects rarely resemble their initial designs for all kinds of reasons, I am working through the stages of grief to accept that this was not the dissertation I set out to write. Only the first three of the five chapters I initially planned appear here, although chapters four and five exist in partially drafted forms. On the first day of what was supposed to be my fifth and final year completing this dissertation a motor vehicle hit me from behind while I stopped at a red light on my way to a prenatal Pilates class, which launched my SUV through two lanes of traffic. First responders attended to me as my car wrapped a light post. My head rest broke off my driver's seat and catapulted to the tailgate. Neither the paramedics, ER staff, nor campus doctors bothered to concussion check me in initial appointments, since I was only seen as a baby vessel—I was eighteen weeks pregnant—nothing else mattered other than the health of the fetus inside of me, which thankfully remained healthy despite my injuries. Within two weeks, I was lost in my own home unsure how to move between rooms, had trouble speaking, and could not understand anything I read. Insisting on a new doctor who agreed to concussion check me I promptly fell over unable to stay standing when closing my eyes. Doctors diagnosed me with a Traumatic Brain Injury and prepped me for a five-year recovery plan to get back to my pre-accident baseline to begin rehab once I was postpartum. In those immediate pre-accident appointments, I repeatedly shared that I was sure I damaged my left shoulder; it took nearly two years post-accident before doctors would investigate; my concussed pregnant and then postpartum body absorbed all the doctors' attention. It took two and a half years before my shoulder would be surgically repaired in the final weeks of writing this dissertation.

I spiraled and continue to move in and out of an identity crisis from that accident. I spent five months on bedrest, in isolation, to carry my pregnancy to term. I did not know what cognitive skills would return or in what time frame. Then, I gave birth two and a half weeks

before the COVID-19 lockdowns of March 2020, which came with continued isolation and further delays to my medical treatment. The entire time this project just sat and stared at me untouched for months, as a constant reminder of the disassociation in my life before and after the accident. I medically advocated for myself to receive care so I could be both a functional mother and resume my career as a professional historian. In maneuvering systemic sexism and misogyny, Schlafly constantly reappeared in my thoughts as I realized my case moved faster with fewer snags through insurance when I framed my desire to continue rehabilitative therapies as a need to mother my son rather than to also recover the skills I used in my professional life.

In processing these frustrations exacerbated by the culture that Phyllis Schlafly and weaponized housewifery fostered, I took solace in Crystal Eastman's "Now We Can Begin" speech from 1920. In her speech, Eastman staked out a pathway to women's equality beyond the vote. It was comforting to remember that my own joy of motherhood and dedication to mothering my son was part of an ongoing feminist movement. Eastman spoke of the necessity of ensuring women's economic freedom to enable voluntary motherhood. She considered both aspects as essential in freeing women's souls and enabling them to embrace the work-life dynamic they desired for their mental and emotional wellbeing. For Eastman, choosing "voluntary motherhood" included pausing careers to enjoy mothering if desired. It also required "[developing] homemaking husbands," and "[bringing] up feminist sons" to equitably share the tasks of domestic life to "institute a revolution in the early training and education of both boys and girls."²⁵ In many ways, Eastman's prescription for solving gender inequality remains as visionary now as it was over one hundred years ago. Dedication to voluntary motherhood and

²⁵ Crystal Eastman, "Now We Can Begin," *The Liberator* (December 1920).

systemic change to ensure women's economic freedom is an act of intergenerational resistance to combat some of the social injustices perpetrated by the conservative movement.

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APPENDIX

Figure 1:

The Bosses of the Senate, 1889

Courtesy of the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

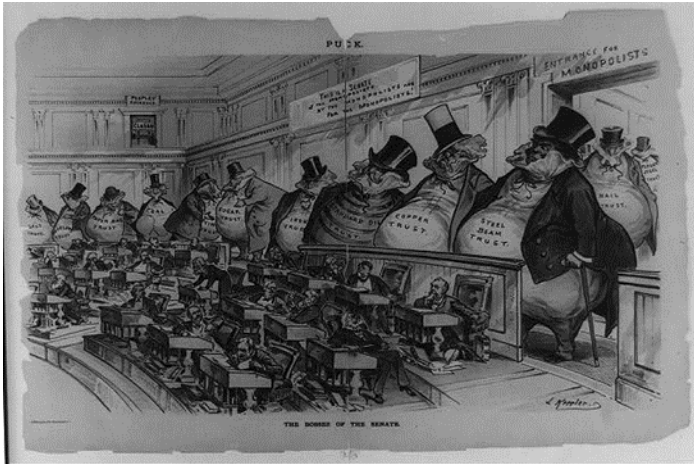


Figure 2

Photo of Fred and Phyllis Schlafly's Bedroom, September 22, 2017. Photo taken by author.



Figure 3

Photo of Phyllis Schlafly's Closet, September 22, 2017. Photo taken by author.



Figure 4

Photo of Phyllis Schlafly's Guest Room, September 22, 2017. Photo taken by author.



Figure 5

Photo of cabinet behind Phyllis Schlafly's desk in the Clayton, Missouri Eagle Forum office, September 22, 2017. Photo taken by author.

