Women's Commissions and Their Friends
–Statistical Highlights–

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Foreward

The information in this Statistical Highlights report is an interim step in a larger project exploring the structure and operations of women's commissions around the country and their affiliated "Friends" organizations. The project was initially begun as a joint effort of The Center Foundation and Friends of the Delaware County Women's Commission, of which I was then President. Information was solicited from all the commissions listed in 1996 on the rolls of the National Association of Commissions for Women (NACW) to begin a process of inventorying and connecting these supporting organizations in order to assist them to learn from each others' successes and challenges to better assist their commissions.

After the receipt of the mailed survey responses, The Center Foundation, which had assumed full responsibility for the project, consulted with and retained Dr. Janet Rosenberg, formerly of Widener University, to prepare a quantitative and statistical analysis of the data. In addition we have consulted with Dr. Barbara Ryan, chair of the Women's Studies Program at Widener with regard to constructing the in-depth interviewing protocols for conducting the on-site research of a select sample necessary to complete the study. This second stage qualitative work will provide a fuller picture of the structural and programmatic characteristics of successful commissions and their complex interrelations with affiliated Friends groups.

The highlights of Dr. Rosenberg's statistical report, which was received by me this week, I have condensed and summarized below. I have also added commentary where needed for ease of understanding. After I have fully reviewed her analysis in conjunction with the supporting materials received from commissions, I will produce a report which will set out in more detail the profiles of women's commissions and their activities as well as any recommendations learned from the research thus far. In addition, we plan to contact those commissions who evinced an interest in participating in the next stage of this study. In the meantime, I wish to thank the NACW for its support of this project and the commissioners and staff who gave so generously of their over-extended time to answer our questionnaire and share information about their Women's Commissions with the thought of helping others.

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Introduction and Methods

The data analyzed in this report are responses to a questionnaire sent to Women's Commissions in all regions of the United States. The study was initiated in 1996 by the Center Foundation in Media, Pennsylvania, and data collection was completed by summer, 1997. The purpose of the study was to profile the characteristics of both Women's Commissions (WCs) currently in operation and those of affiliated support groups, Friends of the Commission (FWCs).

Descriptive statistics, primarily frequency distributions, were used to construct the profiles of both Women's Commissions and Friends groups. In addition the relationships of selected variables were analyzed to determine which variables may be related to the level of services delivered. These included several variables not provided for in the questionnaire namely Region (nine regions designated by the Bureau of the Census), and Location (state, metropolitan, and non-metropolitan areas including cities and counties). Further, summary measures were created for certain structural variables : Breadth (specificity) of Mission, Services Delivered, Levels of Support, and Levels of Impediment (restrictions). These variables were used to test the possibility that significant relationships exist between selected environmental and structural characteristics of WCs (such as Location, Staffing, Date of Establishment, etc.) and their performance (Services Delivered).

The results of the analysis are described in three sections of the report. The first includes the profile of the Women's Commissions and the tests of relationships described above. The second profiles the Friends of Commissions and their relationships with the commissions with which they are affiliated. The final section is a brief commentary on the results of the research and some suggestions for the second stage of the study.

Section I: Women's Commissions: Demographics, Profile and Analysis

Sample and Demographics. The Center Foundation designed and distributed 242 questionnaires to all Women's Commissions in the nine regions (U.S. Bureau of the Census) that were listed with the National Association of Women's Commissions in 1996. (See Appendix I for Census Bureau Region State Listing) After receiving an initial response rate of approximately 56% of the original mailing (n=136), slightly above the average response rate for mailed questionnaires, the questionnaires were evaluated and twenty were excluded from the final sample. The criteria for exclusion included duplication (responses were received from more than one member of a commission), non- response to critical questions, or the respondent organization was a regional office of a statewide system, had been folded into another government office, or simply an advisory or non-governmental group. Also information was received to exclude 10 commissions from the mailing list that were no longer active thus increasing the actual final return to 50%. The final sample includes responses from 116 commissions (47.7% of the original list); an average rate of inclusion for mailed questionnaires. Thirty out of forty active state level commissions responded for a response rate of

75% of active state commissions. (See Appendix II for Responding Commissions.)

Despite the self-selection of responding commissions and an uneven pattern of exclusions, the original and the final sample have similar regional distributions. Both are heavily weighted by commissions in the South Atlantic, Mid-Atlantic, and to a lesser extent, in the Pacific region. The geographical distribution of commissions in the sample is approximate to the distribution of commissions in the nine regions.

Location: State, Metropolitan and Non Metropolitan. State commissions account for 24.1% (n=28) of the sample and non-metropolitan commissions for 22.4% (n=26); the largest number of WCs are located in metropolitan areas (n=62, 57.8%). Also it can be seen in this sample that the number of commissions increases with the size of the population in a particular area. Consequently, though there are fewer large metropolitan than smaller metropolitan districts in the country, there are many more WCs in the larger metropolitan areas than in the smaller. The smallest metropolitan areas with 500,000 or less residents have only five commissions (8.1%), those with up to 1,000,000, have eleven (17.7%), with up to 3,000,000, seventeen (14.7%) and those districts with 3,000,000 or more have twenty-nine (40.3%).

Date Established. As shown in Table 1, the majority of the Women's Commission were established by 1979. After President Kennedy's executive order established the President's Commission on the Status of Women (1961), governments at all levels responded to the urgings of the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor to establish state and

Table 1: Date Commissions Established by Location

Date	*Location: State*	*Metropolitan*	*Non-Metropolitan*
No Response	**3.6%**	**6.6%**	**0.0%**
To 1979	**71.4%**	**50.8%**	**59.3%**
1980-89	**7.1%**	**32.8%**	**37.0%**
1990-1997	**17.9%**	**9.8%**	**3.7%**
Total	100%	100%	100%

local commissions. Consequently, by 1980, sixty-seven (57.8%) of the WCs in the sample were in place. However, the pace of organization then slowed markedly. During the 1980s thirty-two (27.6%) were chartered, but only twelve (10.3%) between 1990 and 1997. The pattern of distribution established during the l960s and 1970s has continued. Of the Commissions chartered during the 1980s, sixty-two percent were in metropolitan locations. During the period 1990-1997, of the twelve commissions organized, five were created by states, six by local government in metropolitan districts, and only one in a non-metropolitan location.

In summary, we find WCs are more likely to be established by jurisdictions in metropolitan locations, primarily in the largest population centers. They cluster along both the Atlantic and Pacific

Coasts and were established early in the contemporary movement to secure women's rights. It also appears that whatever social and political forces influenced state and metropolitan governments to create more WCs in the past continue to operate. Consequently, during the past twenty years there has been an increasing concentration in metropolitan districts, primarily in the largest jurisdictions that already have relatively large numbers of WCs.

Profile: Structure of Commissions. There is a similarity of origin among the commissions; 88.8% of those responding were established by government mandate; that is by statute, legislation, executive order or resolution, 3.4% by voluntary action. A total of 93% are in the executive branch, 62.9% as free standing commissions, and 30.2% housed in departments. Virtually all (93.1%) are appointed by government officials, either the executive (governor, mayor or county commission (75.9%) and/or by a legislative body and an executive each with rights to appoint a proportion of commissioners (14.7%). The commissions vary in size; 53% of all commissions have fewer than seventeen members, while 44% have a considerably larger number, 15.5% over 23 members.

The average term of service is two to three years (61.2%) although the patterns of length of term vary somewhat among state, metropolitan, and non-metropolitan locations (Table 2). States have the largest percent of commissioners with four-year terms in comparison to local commissions in which the term is more likely to be two to three years.

Table 2: Average Term of Service of Commissioners by Location

Term of Service	Location: State	Metropolitan	Non-Metropolitan
1 year	3.6%	0.0%	7.4%
2-3 years	42.9%	70.5%	59.3%
4 or more	42.9%	21.3%	29.6%

Profile: Autonomy and Control. Commissions appear to be relatively free to manage their internal affairs. Government officials serve as commission members on only eleven commissions (9.5%) and in only 7% have a say in appointments to the commissions' committees. This might suggest the absence of direct government intervention in their decision-making process, but that is not the case. The autonomy of WCs is seriously limited by other critical factors in their political environments, primarily the powers of appointment and of the purse.

Officials can appoint, reappoint, and make decisions about whether or not to maintain a full roster of commissioners thereby controlling whom and for how long many commissioners serve. Some respondents commented that a failure to fill commission seats was a serious problem that left them with too few members to operate effectively. Further, during sunset hearings, officials could abolish commissions and permanently put an end to their activities.

One-third of WCs operate without an independent budget. Further, 53% are fully dependent on government for funds and another 25.8% depend primarily on government, but may also raise relatively small amounts of money from grants, contributions, and revenues. A smaller

number (9.5%) reported outside revenue support only and 6% indicated a current lack of any funding.

There was too little information given on the actual amounts of the budgets to generalize to the entire sample since only forty-six (39.6%) provided budget amounts. Nevertheless, it is of some interest to note that 28% of those responding had budgets ranging from a few hundred dollars up to $5,000; 11% up to $10,000; and 8.7% from $10,000 to $25,000. Only one commission had $25,000 to $50,000, but 38.4% had budgets of $50,000 or more. These figures have to be interpreted with extreme caution, first because there is a tendency in surveys for more successful respondents to reply to sensitive questions. In addition, it is not at all clear that all the WCs are reporting discretionary funds or the budgets of government departments such as Social Services or Civil Rights in which they are housed. Finally some figures may reflect direct services such as for domestic violence victims, displaced homemakers, etc. Seven of the ten commissions reporting budgets of $100,000 or more are in executive branch departments of state government and may be reporting departmental budgets with only a proportion used to support WCs operations.

Profile: Staffing of Commissions. Thirty-five (30.2%) commissions in this sample operate within an executive department. Consequently, the information with respect to paid staff is subject to the same caution exercise with respect to amount of budget. Fifty percent of commissions have either no paid staff or only one part-time employee and are therefore very dependent on voluntary help. Others are better staffed with 18% having between one and 12 staff, and 31.9% with two or more full-time employees. Further, of the seventy-one (60.2%) commissions reporting the titles of paid staff, 10.3% operated with only a full or part-time administrator with no staff, and 14.7% by part or full-time staff person but no administrator. Only 32.8% of commissions reported having an administrator assisted by staff.

Profile: Mission, Services and Outstanding Achievements. Most of the organizations surveyed described their missions in abstractions aspiring to future ideal states without clearly articulating practical means of reaching them; forty-six (39.7%) of respondents wrote analogous descriptions. As an example, one spokesperson wrote, "To assure that women and men have equal opportunity to function fully and optimally as citizens in the City, as participants in the economy, in politics and government, education, social development, the system of justice and in all other facets of life." Another similar statement of purpose was, "To encourage the increase in participation in the social, political and economic progress of their communities [and] to enhance the quality of life for women and families; [to provide] advocacy for women and families, education, information and referral services for women and families." Comparing the two, both statements express the hope that their work will contribute to an ideal future when the rights and interests of women will be reflected in the operations of all social, political and economic institutions. However, whereas the first declaration provides few guidelines for arriving at that state, the second does. It suggests that advocacy, education, and provision of formal ways to link women to services already available in their communities may be the best strategy. Indirectly the statement suggests an agenda; a rational means of discussing priorities, and a guide for distributing resources efficiently.

Comparing Mission Statements, Services and Outstanding Achievements. In order to describe and compare the contents of mission statements with actual delivery of services and subsequently to the ranking of significant achievements, a content analysis was done of the open-ended questions on mission and significant successes and challenges overcome. In addition, a list of services was provided and respondents were asked to check the categories that matched commission activities. Table 3 is composed of the data related to these factors.

In examining the mission statements, it was found that the majority of the respondents included an abstract statement, but most specifically described at least one intended project as well. In the first column are the ranks (by frequency) of concrete means to their abstract ends. Advising was most frequently mentioned, followed in rank order by education, advocacy, research, networking/outreach, and finally, direct services. The rank ordering of the frequency of services delivered is somewhat different. Education is the most often delivered service, followed closely by advising and networking in a tie for second place, then research, advocacy, and direct services last in descending order.

Table 3: Percent Reporting on Mission, Services and Outstanding Achievements

Mission		*Services Delivered*		*Outstanding Achievements*	
1. Advice	56.9%	1. Education	87.1%	1. Education	24.1%
2. Education	28.4%	2. Advice	80.2%	2. Direct Service	19%
3. Advocacy	27.9%	2. Network/out	80.2%	3. Advocacy	10.3%
4. Research	19.8%	3. Research	55.2%	4. Research	9.5%
5. Network/Out.	18.1%	4. Advocacy	37.1%	5. Network/Out	6.0%
6. Direct Service	6.9%	5. Direct Service	23.3%	6. Advice	3.4%
Other (14)	12.1%	Other (32)	27.5%	Other (25)	21.6%

It is clear when one compares services delivered to outstanding achievements, that the most frequently provided services were not necessarily those judged as the most outstanding achievements. There is a match on education, as it is provided by 101 commissions (87.1%) and is ranked first on the list of outstanding achievements. In contrast, although 95 commissions (80%) report advising officials, it is named as an outstanding success or significant achievement by only four (3.4%) of commissions and is last on the list. On the other hand, direct services, rarely specifically mentioned as a component of mission and rarely provided by WCs, ranks second on the list of significant achievements. Virtually every commission that has a direct service program noted it as an outstanding success, whether it was established independently or in collaboration with health, legal, or service agencies.

Without further detailed information we cannot determine the causes of shifts between what commissions do and the activities by which they measure their own success. It may be that the delivery of conventional services are less likely to generate feelings of satisfaction than those that require some risk, or are accomplished at extraordinary costs of time, money, and energy.

The accounts of the twenty-five representatives whose responses did not neatly fit into the usual categories point in that direction. Of the twenty-five classed as "other", eleven gave accounts of overcoming political challenges and internal problems that threatened their survival. In the face of one such threat, the situation was described in near heroic terms; the commission had Arisen as a phoenix from the ashes@ and was active again. Three commissions described the successful establishment of working groups and forums to explore relations between women of color and white women in the hope of increasing mutual understanding and diversifying their constituencies. Most accounts described overcoming serious threats, of groundbreaking innovation or unexpected legislative success. This does not mean that commissions place no value on the services they customarily provide. Note educational services, most often delivered and most often cited as an outstanding success. However, it does suggest that the battles won, development of ground-breaking ways of serving women, and unexpected success in the face of opposition are credited with special significance.

Supports, Impediments, and the Most Serious Challenge. The data for this section was reported in both closed and open questions. Respondents were asked to describe their current political and organizational environment and identify any specific advantages or supports and any impediments to or restrictions as well as their most significant successes and challenges or frustrations. Table 4 summarizes the components of support, obstacles, and most serious challenge-showing each by rank and frequency. At the top of the table is the percent of commissions reporting whether or not they have any particular supports or advantages, identifying impediments, or naming a singular challenge or frustration.

Overall, WCs have reported having more problems than they have supports and advantages. Whereas 46.4% noted some supports, a larger group (74.1%) face many obstacles; 64% cited at least one major challenge. After examining the sources of advantages and supports, we see that government is the most frequently cited source, but by less than one-third of the respondents. Communities and departments, organizations, and Friends groups follow government. Funding is cited last in the ranks of supports, by only eight (6.9%) of the respondents, suggesting that regardless of the size of their budgets, commissions believe that they are underfunded as to their costs of operation and services.

Table 4: Supports, Impediments, and Serious Challenges

Supports		*Impediments*		*Most Serious Challenge*	
None	53.4%	None	25.9%	None	36.0%
Yes	46.4%	Yes	74.1%	Yes	64.0%

Ranks

1. Political	30.2%	Lack Funds	53.4%	Lack Funds	31.3%
2. Comm./Dept.	18.1%	Politics	39.7%	Politics	21.8%
3. Organizations	12.9%	Internal Problems	16.4%	Internal Problems	9.5%
4. Friends Group	11.2%	Staff: no support	15.8%	Comm./Dept.	5.2%
5. Funding	6.9%	Comm./Dept.	10.3%	Staff	.9%

As to impediments, predictably lack of funds is ranked first (74%), followed by political problems including significant opposition to their programs, shifts in power, and the rise of conservative interest groups. Funding and politics are followed by internal difficulties with respondents describing a lack of leadership, factionalism, and a shortage of time and commitment related to their dependence on volunteer workers. One respondent explained the situation by pointing out that typically professional women are appointed to commissions, women with little time to participate fully in their affairs, women whose energies are already stretched by career and family and other community responsibilities. Finally, the ranking of serious frustrations closely matches the list of restrictions. Once again a shortage of funds ranks first, politics and internal problems follow; with a small minority citing communities or departmental obstacles.

The profile of Women's Commissions could seem to describe organizations that are exceedingly fragile. Operating at the pleasure of officials, necessarily cautious in their planning, and short on resources and supports, they must cope with many problems while trying to serve their communities. None the less, some are very successful; providing direct services, networking nationally and internationally, educating on a variety of fronts, sending out newsletters, tracking legislation, determined to continue their services regardless of the obstacles that stand in their way. What makes it possible for some, but not others to maintain good records of service? Are there identifiable features of the structure of commissions or in their environments that can help explain the variations in the levels of performance?

Statistical Analysis of the Relationship of Structural and Demographic Characteristics to the Performance of Women's Commissions. First we examined specific variables that may logically affect the performance of commissions. To facilitate these tests four summary measures were constructed; one for the sum of services delivered, and others for breadth (specificity) of mission statements, supports and for impediments. Those commissions that checked few categories of services were scored as low providers of services. To be categorized as providing moderate levels of service the respondent had to give at least one example of a service performed, and to be categorized as a high or very high provider had to give examples in several categories of service. The summary measures of both supports and impediments are based on the presumed importance of their sources. Those indicating adequate funding, political support or both are rated at the highest

level. The measure of impediments uses a similar criterion with those naming both funding and political obstacles characterized as having the most serious problems.

Secondly, the effects of selected variables were examined as to the performance of commissions as measured by the summary of services they deliver. Tests were done for the statistical significance of the relationship between performance and the following; date the commission was established, term of service of commissioners, the number of paid employees on the staff of a commission, source of funding, the substance of their mission statements, the summary measure of breadth of support, and finally the summary measure of impediments they encounter. Each of these is hypothetically related to the ability of all organizations to operate effectively.

As expected, a number of these variables are related to the breadth of service that a commission is able to deliver. The range of activity is positively related to the number of paid staff and the levels of support from officials, community, and other organizations. Of particular interest is that the services delivered are associated with the specificity and breadth of objectives expressed in the commissions' mission statements. Abstract statements' lack of clarity in their objectives or means at arriving at them are associated with low service while those expressing particular goals as well as programmatic guidelines are related to higher levels.

Surprisingly, the number and source of impediments was unrelated to services provided. Regardless of the level of support reported, or the levels of services delivered the vast majority of respondents (n=80; 69%) report that they encounter serious obstacles in their efforts to establish and sustain their programs.

The sum of services delivered is also related to location, that is whether a commission is a part of the state government or appointed by governments in metropolitan or non-metropolitan cities and counties. A broad to very broadest range of services is delivered by state commissions (56.3%), followed by those in metropolitan areas (31.3%), and the fewest in the cities and counties in non-metropolitan locations (12.5%).

Once it was established that location and services were significantly related, other tests were done to examine the relationship of location to some of the same variables tested against summary of services. The tests indicate that location is not only related to level of service, but positively to the number of paid staff, specificity of mission statement and the level of support. Furthermore, in small metropolitan areas, broad and very broad services are delivered by only 6.3% of commissions as compared to 32.6% in larger districts. State commissions provide the highest level of service (53.5%) and unexpectedly non-metropolitan commissions provide more than small metropolitan districts (19.2%). It is unclear what the reasons are for this unexpected distribution of support. This is an issue that could benefit from further research during the second stage of this research.

It appears that governments serving the largest populations, and consequently having more economic resources, are motivated to establish and support women's commissions. Whether they do so out of commitment to the ideals they share or because it is politically expedient that they avoid the

risk of alienating an important constituency is impossible to tell. Regardless of motive, more support is associated with the provision of services and, consequently, with a commission's overall performance. As was discussed above, even in non-metropolitan and small metropolitan areas, commissions operate effectively if the government invests sufficient funds, if there are paid employees, and the work of the WCs is publicly endorsed.

SECTION II: Friends of Commissions: Structure, Services and Relationships

The second purpose of the study was to construct a profile describing the structure of Friends organizations and their relations with Women's Commissions. In this section, we do that by using descriptive statistics. In reviewing the data, it is important to keep in mind that only twenty-three commissions (19.8% of the sample) reported having Friends groups that were operative, although another 6% were in the process of forming such groups. In addition to the small number of respondents, many did not answer all of the questions concerning their affiliates, perhaps because they were unfamiliar with the details of their day-to-day operations. Nevertheless, describing the data on hand may provide a tentative profile of the groups, expecting that further research will provide more information.

Profile: Demographics. The WCs with Friends are concentrated, as are the Commissions, with six (26%) in the Mid-Atlantic, five (22%) in the South Atlantic, and three (13%) in the Pacific Region. One interesting region is the West North Central, where there are only three commissions and all reported having a Friends group. Like the distribution of WCs, Friends groups tend to cluster in metropolitan districts, but to a greater extent than do the Commissions. We see this clustering mostly in large metropolitan areas with 1,000,000 or more populations. Forty percent of all commissions, but 52% of the Friends groups are located in these districts. Like the WCs with which they are affiliated, there is a concentration in those areas with three million or more residents.

Profile: Structure. The majority (56%) of Friends of Women's Commissions (FWCs) are organized as non-profit corporations, although some are loosely associated voluntary groups. Their boards are typically appointed or elected by sitting board members, all members, or both (48%). Virtually no groups have funding sources other than solicited contributions and dues.

Profile: Friends and Women's Commissions: Coordination. Virtually all organizations coordinate their activities, formally, that is by establishing organizational procedures for that purpose and by informal consulting, information exchange, and social arrangements. Each is essential to effective integration. Typically, formal links between organizations and their affiliates consist of interlocked boards, appointment processes, specified reporting procedures, or by other means. As seen on the table below, Friends and commissions rely heavily on informal relationship to coordinate their

Table 5: Coordinating Relationships, Women's Commissions and Friends

Type of Relationship	Number	Percent
No Response	n = 2	8.7
Informal relationships	n = 14	60.9
WCs appoints to FWCs' boards	n = 9	39.1
Other Formal Relationships	n = 8	34.8
Interlocked Boards	n = 4	17.4
FWCs report to WCs	n = 4	17.4

More structured relationships exist among others, most often with boards of commissions appointing a proportion of members of Friends boards. Among the formal relations categorized as "other" on the list, three commissions exercise fiscal controls on their Friends group, another has joint ad hoc planning sessions, and one shares staff.

The "density" of relationships does not refer to their effectiveness, but to the number of ways that WCs and FWCs coordinate their activities. Five (21%) Friends groups depend solely on informal relations in comparison to 65% that coordinate their work through both formal and informal arrangements. Only four commissions are closely linked to their Friends in highly formalized ways that evidently give them a voice in the fiscal and policy matters of their affiliate. A considerably larger number, eleven (47.8%) have fewer formal procedures linking them to one another. However, this is not necessarily a disadvantage for either organization since it may assure the autonomy that voluntary groups expect in exchange for their support. In situations where officially chartered groups are affiliated with voluntary organizations, a balance heavily tilted toward informal relationships rather than formal procedures may be the most productive, encouraging continued cooperation and support.

Mission, Services Delivered and Most Helpful Services. Examining the table below we can compare the mission of Friends, the services they provide to the respective commissions, and those judged most or least helpful, all from the point of view of representatives of Commissions. From that perspective we see that services delivered match the needs of the commission. Before we describe the table below, it should be noted that the breadth of services generally delivered to commissions is narrow, with 21.7% reported as not giving service and 39% providing only one type of service. Nevertheless, the ranks on the three dimensions are quite consistent. Funding is ranked first on mission, service delivered, and most helpful service, while the last on all the dimensions is research. There is some rearranging of ranks between these extremes, but nothing remarkable.

Table 6: Friends' Mission, Services Provided, and Most Helpful Service by Ranks

Mission		Services Delivered		Most Helpful Service	
1. Funding	52.2%	Funding	65.2%	Funding	56.5%
2.Volunteers	26.1%	Advoc./Adv.	30.4%	Volunteers	21.7%
3. Education.	21.7%	Education	26.1%	Advoc./Adv.	13.0%
Networking	21.7%	Networking	26.1%		
4. Advoc./Adv.	17.4%	Research	17.4%	Education	8.7%
5. Research	13.0%			Research	0%

The rankings are as would be anticipated given organizations that are in chronic need of assistance with their projects and with money to finance them. Although the range of services provided is narrow, the majority of FWCs address the WCs most serious problem, underfunding and its effect on service. In addition not all FWCs have had much time to impact directly as they are more newly established than WCs; of the 48% reporting a date of formation, 36% were formed in the 1980's and 24% after 1990.

In summary, we see that Friends of Commissions are typically organized as non-profit corporations. Most are coordinated with their affiliates by a balance of informal and formal relations. The density of coordinating relationships linking WCs and FWCs is low to moderate, allowing each to maintain its independence from the other. Friends appear to be primarily fund raising auxiliaries whose services are well matched to the needs of the WCs. Beyond raising funds many groups help by providing volunteers and lobbying.

SECTION III: Discussion and Recommendations

Women's Commissions, like others organized by government, are often caught in the crosshairs of competing ideological and political interests. They are vulnerable to conflicting pressures from groups and officials with varying degrees of power to support or subvert their work, whether it involves taxes, and trade, civil rights or zoning and playgrounds. This no doubt affects the decisions they make.

Commissions that do their work over long periods of time, who depend on fluctuating budget allocations, and whose recommendations and policies may be controversial, must often bow to the whims of the more powerful groups in their political and social environments. They tread a narrow path in their attempt to balance what is possible with effective service. As well as deriving from the limitations of their statutory or other creating authority, this precarious situation may be reflected in the services that most provide. Education and advice are important and safer than active lobbying or advocacy on issues that might divide a community. This need for caution as well as a lack of trust may account, in part, for the fact that some respondents seemed to avoid reporting details of their problems. In response to an open-ended question asking for a description of challenges one cautious representative of a very troubled group wrote in bold lettering, "**Not here, not now!**"

The parts of the system within which Women's Commissions operate are, of course, interdependent. In situations where they are well supported and reasonably funded they tend to have sufficient resources to deliver an array of services. Where these services meet communal expectations and are celebrated by potential constituencies they gather support, and may become marginally more powerful in dealing with their respective governments. Under these circumstances elected officials may want to avoid the risks of losing important constituencies by publicly moving to defund or otherwise threaten the commissions. Those that are a part of this uphill ride may develop more innovative programs, and risk lobbying aggressively on more controversial issues such as the passage of a state law involving pay equity, which one successful group claims as its most outstanding achievement.

Based on the data in this study, many commissions in the sample are not so fortunate. Rather they are seem to be caught in a system of accumulating disadvantage that push them in an opposite direction. Understaffed, lacking funds, limited in their activities, they in turn may become less credible, less visible and less able to attract the support they need to secure a firm foundation for their work. It is apparent in these data, as it is in the histories of other organizations, that having significant advantages can lead to the accumulation of others, while serious disadvantages can take them down a slippery slope. A number of respondents complained of invisibility and loss of support and the suspension of services as their funding was reduced or withdrawn, threatening not only the quality of their services but the health of the commission. Unrewarded effort often turns into fatigue, and the decline of commitment; these in turn may signal exit from the arena. The surveys suggest that commissions that are less successful are vulnerable to this course. But it is perhaps more interesting that others in the same position report, as you will recall, that they were "rising as a phoenix from the ashes" after resolving extremely destructive internal problems.

An important question that cannot be answered from the survey data is why some commissions are successful, even under the worst conditions, and others are unsuccessful under the best. It may be due to external factors not explored in the survey, or it may have to do with structural relations that have their roots in the original charter of an organization. A major factor in the dynamics and performance of all organizations is leadership, a topic that could not be explored in survey format. Several respondents explained that there was continual conflict among members of the commission. In one case the mayor and each member of the elected city council had the right to appoint a proportion of members. Once seated they rarely reached stable consensus on any issue, each addressing it from a partisan point of view, stalling programs and creating personal conflict. A similar situation resulted in a state commission with appointment rights assigned to the legislative leadership and the governor. When a commission's board becomes a vehicle for promoting a political agenda, its legitimacy is called into question and its support likely to decline as programs are deferred and its original objectives possibly lost in the battle.

The structure of Friends groups and their relationships with Women's Commissions was examined above. Recalling that the original objective of these auxiliary organizations was to support WCs, they effectively fulfill that goal, primarily by funding, volunteer and lobbying efforts. The function and impact of Friends should also be studied from the perspectives of both groups as cooperating organizations. Detailed accounts of their operations, environmental conditions and relationships can only be acquired through using in-depth interviewing techniques. Although no direct effects on the levels of service provided to their affiliated commissions were able to be statistically shown from the sample population, there may be important interactive effects that enhance the performance of women's commissions which should be explored in further study of these complex support systems.

Conclusion

It is too early to make recommendations as to the optimum structures and operations of Women's Commissions and Friends based on the preliminary review of the data available. Nevertheless, it is clear that this study will be able to make suggestions to NACW and its member commissions of what criteria tend to make them successful and what criteria tend to make them less successful. In our final report after further in-depth interviews we expect to be able to provide information for WCs to see from the tested and documented experience of other commissions and Friends the kinds of factors that make some simply more effective in working together to achieve real gains for women!

Regions of the United States,
United States Bureau of the Census

Northeast: Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut

Middle Atlantic: New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Puerto Rico

South Atlantic: Delaware, Maryland, Washington, D.C., West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida

East North Central: Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Illinois

West North Central: Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas

East South Central: Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Alabama

West South Central: Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas

Mountain: Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Idaho, Utah,   Arizona, and Nevada

Pacific: Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska, and Hawaii

List of Women's Commission Survey Responses	
Commission Name	County *In the case of state commissions, this column lists the CITY of the office address
Alaska	
Anchorage Women's Council	
Arizona	
Phoenix Women's Commission	
Pima County/Tucson Women's Commission	Pima County
California	
California Commission on the Status of Women	(Sacramento, CA)
Contra Costa County Women's Advisory Committee	Contra Costa County
Fresno City/County Commission on the Status of Women	Fresno County
Humboldt County Commission on the Status of Women	Humbolt County
Los Angeles Commission on the Status of Women	Los Angeles County
Los Angeles County Commission for Women	Los Angeles County
Merced County Commission for Women	Merced County
Monterey County Commission on the Status of Women	Monterey County
City of Pasadena Commission on the Status of Women	
Riverside County Commission for Women	Riverside County
San Francisco Commission on the Status of Women	
San Joaquin County on the Status of Women	San Juaquin County
Commission on the Status of Women in San Mateo County	San Mateo County
Santa Barbara County Commission for Women	Santa Barbara County
Santa Cruz County Women's Commission	Santa Cruz County
Santa Monica Commission on the Status of Women	
Colorado	
Denver Women's Commission	
City of Fort Collins Commission on the Status of Women	
Connecticut	

Connecticut Permanent Commission on the Status of Women	(Hartford, CT)

Delaware

Delaware Commission for Women	(Wilmington, DE)

District of Columbia

District of Columbia Commission for Women	

Florida

Brevard County Commission on the Status of Women	Brevard County
Broward County Commission on the Status of Women	Broward County
Florida Commission on the Status of Women	(Tallahasee, FL)
Dade County Commission on the Status of Women	Dade County
Mayor's Commission on the Status of Women	(Jacksonville, FL)
City of North Miami Beach Commission on the Status of Women	
Sarasota County Advisory Commission on the Status of Women	Sarasota County

Georgia

Georgia Commission on Women	(Atlanta, GA)

Hawaii

Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women	(Honolulu, HI)
Hawaii County Commission on the Status of Women	Hawaii County
Honolulu County Committee on the Status of Women	Honolulu County

Idaho

Idaho Commission on Women's Programs	(Boise, ID)

Iowa

Iowa Commission on the Status of Women	(Des Moines, IA)

Illinois

Chicago Advisory Council on Women	
Cook County Commission on Women's Issues	Cook County

Indiana

Commission on the Status of Women, Bloomington IN	
Mishawaka City Commission on the Status of Women	
Indiana Commission for Women	(Indianapolis, IN)

Kansas	
Topeka Mayors Commission on the Status of Women	
Wichita Commission on the Status of Women	
Kentucky	
Jefferson County Office for Women	Jefferson County
Kentucky Commission for Women	(Frankfort, KY)
Louisiana	
Commission for Women of Bossier City, LA	
Lafayette Mayor's Commission on the Needs of Women	
Louisiana Office of Women's Services	
Maryland	
Maryland Commission for Women	(Baltimore, MD)
Anne Arundel County Commission for Women	Anne Arundel County
Baltimore City Commission for Women	Baltimore County
Baltimore County Commission for Women	Baltimore County
Calvert County Commission for Women	Calvert County
Garrett County Commission for Women	Garrett County
Harford County Commission for Women	Harford County
Howard County Commission for Women	Howard County
Montgomery County Commission for Women	Montgomery County
Saint Mary's County Commission for Women	Saint Mary's County
Washington County Commission for Women	Washington County
Wicomico County Commission for Women	Wicomico County
Massachusetts	
Somerville Commission for Women	
Massachusetts Governor's Advisory Committee on Women's Issues	(Boston, MA)
City of Boston Women's Commission	
Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women	
Michigan	
Michigan Women's Commission	(Lansing, MI)

Minnesota	
Minnesota Commission on the Economic Status of Women	(St. Paul, MN)
Missouri	
Missouri Women's Council	(Jefferson City, MO)
Nebraska	
Lincoln/Lancaster Commission on the Status of Women	
Nebraska Commission on the Status of Women	
New Hampshire	
New Hampshire Commission on the Status of Women	(Concord, NH)
New Jersey	
New Jersey Advisory Commission on the Status of Women	(Trenton, NJ)
Atlantic County Advisory Commission on Women	Atlantic County
Bergen County Commission on Women	Bergen County
Essex County Advisory Board on the Status of Women	Essex County
Gloucester County	Gloucester County
Hudson County Commission on Women	Hudson County
Mercer County Advisory Commission on the Status of Women	Mercer County
Ocean County Advisory Commission on the Status of Women	Ocean County
Salem County Commission on Women	Salem County
Union County Advisory Committee on the Status of Women	Union County
Warren County Commission for Women	Warren County
New Mexico	
New Mexico Commission on the Status of Women	(Albuquerque, NM)
New York	
New York State Division for Women	(New York, NY)
Erie County Commission on the Status of Women	Erie County
Nassau County Office of Women's Services	Nassau County
New York City Commission on the Status of Women	
Syracuse Commission for Women	

Westchester County Office for Women	*Westchester County*

North Carolina	
Charlotte Regional Council for Women	
Buncombe County Women's Involvement Council	*Buncombe County*
Craven County Council on Women	*Craven County*
Gaston County Council on the Status of Women	*Gaston County*
Mecklenburg County Women's Commission	*Mecklenburg County*
Greensboro Commission on the Status of Women	
Orange County Commission for Women	*Orange County*
North Carolina Council for Women	*(Raleigh, NC)*

Ohio	
Ohio Women's Policy and Research Commission	*(Columbus, OH)*

Oklahoma	
Lawton Mayor's Commission on the Status of Women	

Oregon	
Oregon Commission for Women	*(Portland, OR)*

Pennsylvania	
Pennsylvania Commission for Women	*(Harrisburg, PA)*
Berks County Commission for Women	*Berks County*
Bucks County Commissioners' Advisory Council for Women	*Bucks County*
Delaware County Women's Commission	*Delaware County*
Lackawana County Commission for Women	*Lackawana County*
Luzerne County Commission for Women	*Luzerne County*
Mercer County Commission for Women	*Mercer County*
Montgomery County Commission for Women and Families	*Montgomery County*
The Greater Pittsburgh Commission for Women	
Chester County Women's Commission	*Chester County*
Women's Alliance of Lancaster County	*Lancaster County*
Penn State Women's Commission	
Schuylkill County Commission for Women	*Schuylkill County*

Puerto Rico	

Puerto Rico Commission for Women's Affairs	(San Juan, PR)

Rhode Island

Rhode Island Commission for Women	(Providence, RI)

South Carolina

South Carolina Governor's Office Commission on Women	(Columbia, SC)

Texas

Texas Governor's Commission for Women	(Austin, TX)
Commission on Human Needs, Wichita Falls	

Utah

Utah Governor's Commission for Women and Families	(Salt Lake City, UT)

Vermont

Burlington Council on Women	
Vermont Governor's Commission on Women	(Montpelier, VT)

Virginia

Alexandria Commission for Women	
City of Fairfax Commission for Women	
Fairfax County Commission for Women	Fairfax County
Falls Church City Commission for Women	
Loudoun County Commission for Women	Loudoun County
Prince William County Commission for Women	Prince William County

Washington

Seattle Women's Commission	

West Virginia

West Virginia Women's Council	(Charleston, WV)

Wisconsin

Wisconsin Women's Council	(Madison, WV)