

POLITICAL ORIGINS

*of the*

FEMALE FRANCHISE

by

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This version: December 1, 2017

*Political Origins of the Female Franchise*

Why did male politicians agree to extend voting rights to women? As this book shows, it was not about progressive ideas about women or suffragists' pluck. Elected politicians fiercely resisted enfranchising women whether or not they believed it was just, preferring, instead, to extend such rights only when it seemed electorally prudent and in fact necessary to do so. Suffrage leaders struggled in the early days to recognize the electoral basis of their exclusion, but learned to target their demands to the institutional and political structures. Through a careful examination of the tumultuous path to women's political inclusion in the United States, France, and the United Kingdom, this book demonstrates that the formation of a broad movement across social cleavages, and strategic alliances with political parties in competitive electoral conditions, provided the leverage that ultimately transformed women into voters.

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For Sylvia and Madeleine, and your indomitable namesakes.

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*You cannot lift the world at all,  
While half of it is left so small.<sup>1</sup>*

## PREFACE

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In setting out to write about women and democratization I have at several points wondered if it was enough to write about “just” women. The historical, philosophical, and perhaps even the material baggage of democracy is so weighty that it can be quite tempting to write about all of that as well. But time and again when one reads the great tracts on democracy’s founding there is scarcely a mention of the fairer sex. A sophisticated reader could be forgiven for thinking that the story of women’s political emancipation has been quite separate from the progression of democracy itself.

With this book I hope, above all, to convince even those readers not particularly interested in feminism that women were not outside of history when democratic governments were born and solidified. In fact, in these new systems women’s struggle against the remnants of authoritarianism bears many resemblances to the struggles of other groups including the non-landed elites, industrial workers, indigenous peoples, and immigrants. For each of these groups, history has produced moments in which members perceived a deep contradiction in their continued exclusion from a purportedly inclusive governmental system. At times, leaders of these groups contrived methods to change the rules in ways both more congruent with democratic ideals, as well as in line with their own economic and political interests.

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<sup>1</sup>The Socialist and the Suffragist, 1911

There are three big lessons that have emerged while writing this book. The first is that women's inclusion was not an a-political gift from elected leaders who knew its time had come. Many politicians and anti-suffragists of all genders were wary of the consequences of expanding voting rights, and only capitulated when they saw no other option for their own survival, or when another party with entrepreneurial hopes could push it through. Second, although this book studies women's suffrage more or less separately from other reforms, in the future we should think of innovations such as the adoption of proportional electoral rules, the move toward the secret ballot, and the enfranchisement women and men, as substitute strategies for stacking a state. Finally, as we move toward a greater understanding of the impact of suffrage, we have to ask whether and how the coalitions that were formed in the course of the movements, and the victories suffragists won along the way, impacted different groups of women systematically. The cleavages that divided suffragists from one another likely influenced the efficacy of the coalition in the years after the vote was won.

In the ten years of this book's making I have benefited from the encouragement, critique, and camaraderie of so many people. Frances Rosenbluth and Susan Stokes, my guiding lights at Yale, always reminded me that good work requires writing what one loves. Alexandre Debs and Thad Dunning were both supportive and exacting throughout this process. Along with official graduate advisors, I am grateful to Elisabeth Wood, Naomi Lamoreaux, David Mayhew, and Rogers Smith, who each provided early guidance on the project, and to my first mentors at Reed, Kimberly Clausing and Casiano Hacker-Cordón, who sparked my love of research.

This book has been scrutinized by nearly every new friend I've made. A book conference in the spring of 2016, in which Lisa Baldez,

Gary Cox, and Carles Boix commented on the entire manuscript was both humbling and inspiring. Additionally, I would like to thank Kimberly Morgan (my guardian scholar), Kathleen Thelen, and Peter Hall for their guidance and support. Thanks, too to Daniel Ziblatt, Isabella Mares, Steven Wilkinson, Dan Kelemen, Mark Pollock, Phillip Ayoub, Marcus Kreuzer, Tom Pepinsky, Jim Mahoney, and Mala Htun. My friends and colleagues have allowed this project to be infinitely more fun and undoubtedly more rigorous. Michael Weaver, Rory Truex, Kristin Plys, Erin Pineda, Mona Morgan-Collins, Anna Jurkevics, Alexandra Hartman, Allison Sovey Carnegie, and Jessica Stanton are all on this list. Huge shout-outs, too, to my colleagues at Penn, especially Yue Hou, Dorothy Kronick, Tulia Falletti, for generously reading everything, including the footnotes, multiple times, and the singular Julie Lynch, for their multifaceted support.

On the United States chapter I would like to thank Stephen Skrowneck, Des King, and Andy Eggers, who each made suggestions that are reflected herein. The work on Great Britain was the first and benefited tremendously from the input from others. Initial conversations with Adam Tooze, Jay Winter, Iain MacLean, and David Soskice were especially helpful. Thanks too to the editors of *Politics & Society*, especially Mary Ann Twist and Molly Nolan, for their enthusiasm and thoughtful feedback on a segment published in their journal. Special thanks to Brendan O'Leary, whose detailed comments taught me a good deal about Ireland as well. On the study of France I am indebted to John Merriman, Steven Hause, Timothy Tackett, and Paul Smith. Grey Anderson and Alexandra Cirone also deserve thanks as reliable first stops before the reference section for all matters related to French politics in the Third Republic.

It heartens me to acknowledge the many sources of funding and the many contributions of friends, family, and colleagues to this process.

Yale, the LSE, and Penn have all been generous institutions, and I am so grateful for their progressive parental leave policies. A prize from the Carrie Chapman Catt Foundation and the National Science Foundation's doctoral dissertation research improvement grant gave much needed provisions during graduate school. These grants allowed me to do research abroad for long stretches of time, and to employ a few excellent people to help with my data collection efforts, including Katie Rader, Shira Pindyk, Joshua Kalla, Michelle Fogarty, Stephanie Gustafson, Mohamed Gamal, Casey Libonate, Daniel Almedia, Julia Hug, Samira Noronha, and Èvelyne Brie. Thanks are due, too to Marie Cornwall, Erik Engstrom, Lee Ann Banaszak, and Alexandra Cirone for generously sharing with me datasets which they labored to build.

At several points I relied on advice from archivists at the New York Public Library, and Yale's own collections. I also spent many months in England at the Women's Library, the People's Library, Manchester Local Studies, the Cumbria Archive Center, the British Parliamentary Archives, and at Oxford's Bodleian Library. In France I had help at the Bibliothèque nationale, and from Jean-Antonin Caheric at the archives of the Assemblée nationale. I am thankful to all of those involved in making this assistance possible.

The support of my family has been no less important for this project even though most of its members thought they were cheering me on for a career in politics. The fieldwork, conferences, and two transatlantic moves would not have been possible without Emmy, Aunt E, Amy, LaLa, Maw, Dad and Suzy, and Pops, who have each stepped in as child minders during crucial career moments. At last I must shower praise on my husband Josh Simon, who has scrutinized my writing and thoughts since our early days at Reed. This book is a product of years of arguments during walks around the well trod

paths of West Rock, the Heath, the Woodlands, and Oswald West. A constant companion in this life of scholarship makes it harder, but also better.

## INTRODUCTION

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The masculine nouns that describe belonging to a nation, such as citizen, citizen, ciudadano, and Bürger, are often vested with universal meaning: in constitutions and jurisprudence, many of the duties of a citizen apply equally to both the sexes. But once upon a time, albeit not very long ago, the rights and privileges associated with political membership applied only to men.<sup>1</sup> This was the case even in the world's first democracies, and it was true in spite of the fact that as organizers of tea boycotts, white-clad rabble-rousers march-

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<sup>1</sup>There are some documented reversals in women's right to participate. In the mediaeval period, societies in which communal right rested on a material basis (such as property ownership) sometimes included propertied women in communal suffrage, so the transition to absolutism and then later to representative institutions may have taken rights away from women with material resources. Ostrogorski 1891: 679-680, 684. After 1868 in post-Meiji Japan, women exercised the vote in some local elections until legal loopholes were closed in 1888. Hannam et al. 2000: 156; Molony 2004. The Clergy Endowments Act in "Lower Canada" (present day Quebec) allowed all landlords, regardless of sex, the right to vote. Although only 2 percent of eligible women used this right, it was taken away by the Parliament of the Province of Canada in the mid-nineteenth century. Darsigny 1990: 2. Many feminist scholars argue that the transition to industrialization actually brought diminished rights for women that had to be wrested back through social movements. See footnote 9.

ing on the Bastille, and invaluable supporters in the supply chains of revolution, women played significant roles in democracy's origins.<sup>2</sup> One hundred years passed before the first declaration of universal manhood suffrage in France gave way to a truly universal suffrage in New Zealand in 1893.<sup>3</sup> Since then, though, voting rules across the world have shifted dramatically toward political equality of the sexes.

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<sup>2</sup>Several scholars have suggested that women have played more important roles in revolutions, especially during early moments, than is realized (Friedman 2000). For a discussion of women's role in the American Revolution, see Flexner (1995 [1959]: ch1, p.12); on Mexico see Montes-de-Oca-O'Rilley (2005). Jayawardena (1986) links the struggle for women's emancipation in Asia to movements for national liberation from empire.

<sup>3</sup>The Isle of Man, which is part of the British Isles, extended voting rights to women via its independent legislature, the Tynwald, as early as 1881. New Zealand was the first of today's advanced industrial economies to extend the franchise in 1893. Unlike Australia, which formed a federal commonwealth in 1901 and excluded aboriginals in its initial constitution, New Zealand's colonists included Maori voters among their electorate. Norway was the first independent country to enfranchise women in its founding constitution in 1906. But by some accounts, the first place where women were given the vote was the Pitcairn Islands in 1838. Markoff (2003: 102-103) recounts the tale of the British Captain Elliott, who, passing through the Tahitian archipelago, took a moment to provide a few regulations for the island which included a provision for equal suffrage. The Pitcairn settlers were the survivors of the H.M.S Bounty mutiny. Numbering 194 in 1856, they maintained the female franchise upon their relocation to Norfolk Island.

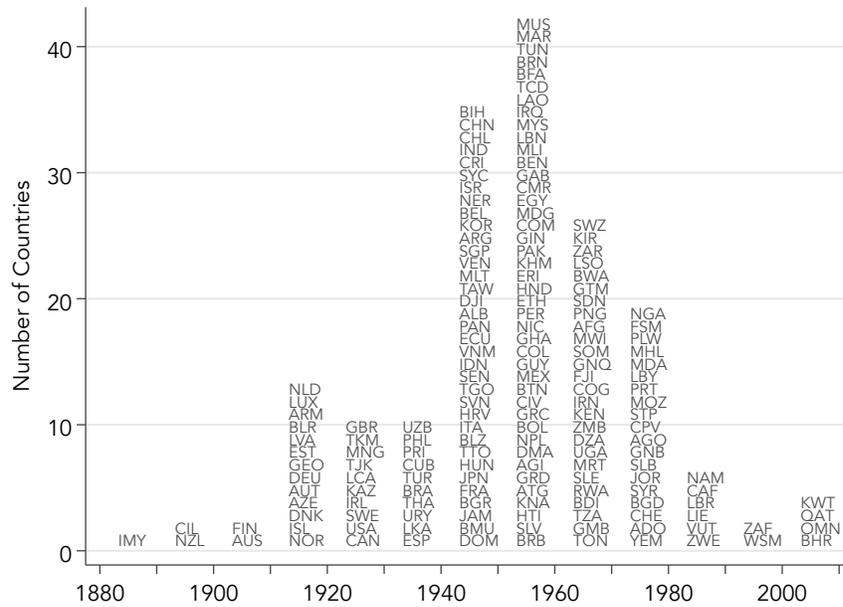


Figure 1: “Listogram” of Women’s Enfranchisement by Decade. The figure displays a three-letter code for each country and the decade in which women were enfranchised. The y-axis counts the number of such extensions per decade. The countries lower down in each column extended the vote earlier in the decade than those higher up. The three shades represent the three waves of democratization. For coding see table ??.

Almost without exception, the very first petition for reform in any given national legislature was rejected. Yet without exception, democratic countries eventually gave women voting rights. What caused this shift? That is to say, why did male politicians agree to extend the vote to women?

{figure 1 about here}

The emergence of democratic governments and industrialization are background features in the story of women’s political inclusion. As figure 1 shows, the pattern of women’s enfranchisement mimics the pattern of democratization more generally, with distinctive spells surrounding the 1920s, 1940s, and 1960s.<sup>4</sup> In the early period,

<sup>4</sup>The figure depicts the decade of the first major legislative reform would have allowed most women to vote. In all, I was able to find and cross-check this information for 172 of today’s countries. For

women's changing social and economic roles may have opened up a space in which their public presence was up for debate. In the later period, women's enfranchisement peaked in the 1950s, a decade in which many colonial territories won independence for the first time. Over the course of this history, there were four primary settings in which women gained national voting rights: as part of a universal franchise bill (14 percent of today's countries), as a result of external imposition (30 percent), gradually, after some men had already gained political voice (42 percent), and a hybrid category where com-

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this information we are not able to rely solely on existing literature on the granting of women's suffrage (Paxton and Hughes 2016; Przeworski 2009) or solely on broader almanacs (Martin 2000), data handbooks (Nohlen 2005), and encyclopedias (Hannam, Auchterlonie, and Holden 2000) as they provide conflicting dates of female franchise. At times these inconsistencies are due to simple error (particularly in Przeworski 2009), or to different coding rules, which, for example, might record suffrage as occurring in the year it passed the legislature, or was finally signed into law by executive or monarch, or the first election in which women voted, or the date can refer to the year in which universal suffrage – the right to vote regardless of race, social status, belief, or gender – was granted. A potentially bigger problem, though, stems from different interpretations of what it means for “women” to gain voting rights, for example, when women gain the right to vote with certain restrictions, such those regarding literacy, age, or, as in the case of Bulgaria, marital status (Hannam et al. 2000: 45). My coding tries reflect 1.) the first major reform that would have included most women and 2.) the year the relevant enfranchising bill passed in the national legislature. See appendix I for further details. Pitcairn Islands are not pictured here.

binations of the other three appeared, often due to multiple transitions between political regimes (14 percent).<sup>5</sup>

In the *universalist path*, all adults won the right to vote at the same time. This generally occurred during a “founding” moment when a new constitution sought to establish representative institutions for all citizens. For example, following the elimination of an absolute monarchy, the Thai Constitution of 1932 established a constitutional monarchy and enfranchised all Thai people regardless of sex.<sup>6</sup> Countries like Finland in 1906, or several of the Caucases between 1917 and 1919, just prior to the emergence of the Soviet Union, also followed the universalist path.<sup>7</sup> The *imposed route* to suffrage arose

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<sup>5</sup>Classification of countries into paths was done based on the dataset described in the previous footnote, cross-referenced with information on universal and manhood suffrage extension from Boix et al. (2012), Caramani (2000), Mackie and Rose (1991) and Colomer (2016). Dates of independence and colonial relations are from the CIA Factbook.

<sup>6</sup>Loos 2004.

<sup>7</sup>For a variety of reasons, founding moments that occurred after 1945 typically produced constitutions that included universal franchise rights for men and for women. After 1950, every newly independent state included women in the franchise. Ramirez et al. 1997. Today, in the words of Schedler, 2002, formal disfranchisement is uncommon “even in the most hard-boiled electoral autocracies”. And international influences have been a large factor in more recent democratizations. Geddes 2007, 330. See Towns 2010a and 2010b on the importance of global norms and international organizations, in particular the Inter-American Council of Women, for transforming suffrage into a reality in Latin America.

when an occupying power or a colonial metropole required entities under its influence to extend the franchise. Examples of this path include many of the French colonies, such as Cameroon, Madagascar, and Malta, where the *Loi Cadre* promulgated in 1956 extended voting rights to women in the colonies. Typically, a country that had the vote imposed by an external power would keep equal franchise laws after independence. Third comes the *gradualist path* wherein many, though not necessarily all, men enjoyed voting rights before women won the vote.<sup>8</sup> Examples of the gradualist path include Sweden, Mexico, and the United States.<sup>9</sup> Finally, in the remaining countries, a hybrid path to women's suffrage arose, often because of new rules following regime transitions. Examples include France, which had extended manhood suffrage in the 1870s but denied women the vote until the Fourth Republic was established, and Japan, which allowed men to vote in the early 20th century, but where the United States,

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<sup>8</sup>The complexity does not end here. Many countries that gradually extended the vote initially used restrictions that were different than men's such as age differences (e.g. the UK 1918-1928, Chile 1934-1949), specific income requirements (e.g. Bolivia 1938-1952), educational requirements (e.g. Kenya 1956-1963), racial distinctions (e.g. Australia 1902-1962, South Africa 1930-1994), differences within federal entities (e.g. Canada 1916-1920, US 1893-1920, Switzerland 1959-1971), and even based on distinctions related to husbands, such as whether he had served in the military (Canada 1917-1920, Romania 1929-1946), or if they were widows (e.g. Bulgaria 1937-1944).

<sup>9</sup>In several countries, such as Venezuela in 1947 and Guatemala in 1945, men could vote in earlier periods, but constitutions that followed episodes of autocratic rule ultimately included women as voters. Towns 2010b: 785 and footnote 19.

as an occupying power after the Second World War, pushed for the reform in its post-war constitution.

The path that a country took toward women's enfranchisement depended, in an important sense, on the institutional arrangements in place during the past 130 years. The universalist path is most often associated with having transitioned from authoritarian or monarchical institutions in the twentieth century; the imposed path with colonial subordination or, less commonly, defeat in war; the gradualist path with having established minimally representative electoral institutions in the nineteenth century; and the hybrid path with multiple regime transitions in the twentieth century. Given the diverse institutional and historical conditions that gave rise to women's voting rights, it is unlikely that a single set of actors and interests can help to explain why women won the vote when they did. But within each path, the distinctive political features that sparked debates about suffrage may share commonalities with other cases in the same group.

This book is about the politics of women's enfranchisement in countries that extended voting rights gradually, under institutional arrangements that I term 'limited' democracy. A limited democracy is a regime that uses elections as a decision rule for appointing rulers, and where turnover of leaders is possible, but which may lack many features that are considered essential to full democracy today including, but not limited to, freedom of the press, secret voting, direct-election of all legislative houses, and voting rights for all citizens.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Building on Dahl's concepts of "competitive oligarchy" and "inclusive hegemony", and O'Donnell and Schmitter's concept "democradura", a political community can be described as a limited democracy if an elected body has the power to legislate, if elections are held regularly, and if there is some potential for turnover of office. Dahl 1971; O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986. Note that the con-

In contrast to non-democratic systems, in limited democracies a re-organization of the laws that govern political participation can have quite substantial effects on electoral politics and programmatic policies. These potential effects shape the incentives politicians face and their ultimate decisions over whether to reform the law. They also constrain the set of options available to identity groups that are mobilized for reform.

In the cross-national context there are several issues that must be attended to for a clear picture of women's enfranchisement in limited democracies to materialize. One is the fact that suffrage movements did not emerge in every country, nor did suffragists always seek a mass basis. Why did women who wanted to vote strive for a large movement in some countries but remain satisfied with a small movement in others? This is a particularly intriguing question in places where suffrage reform was debated but failed to produce reform, in spite of a strong women's movement. Second is a puzzle of why Leftist parties supported reform in some countries while Conservative parties were the first to propose the change in others, and why in

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cept of limited democracy is somewhere between Przeworski's 1999, "minimalist" binary and Dahl's richer definition of polyarchy which requires regimes to be highly liberal – in that they accept public contestation as a core principle, and highly inclusive – in that they put few restrictions on political participation. Writing about the pre-WWII democracies, Geddes states the idea of a limited democracy succinctly: "legislatures existed, elite parties or proto-parties competed for office, and struggles by legislatures to limit the power of monarchs or executives had played an important role in determining the shape of political institutions." Geddes 2007: 331. She calls them non-democracies.

many countries the longest standing resistance to women's inclusion came from centrists. Last is the issue of timing – why did some legislatures enfranchise women shortly after the first demand for reform, while others clung to the status quo for decades? Why were some legislatures the site of short-term reversals, passing reform just a year or two after refusing to do so?

#### THE ARGUMENT, IN BRIEF

The answer I provide for all of these questions is a strategic one: winning the vote depends on the alignment of interests between elected politicians and suffragists. The institutional legacies that followed the transition to representative institutions and the nature of political cleavages in a given country determine which forms of women's enfranchisement would be considered legally and normatively feasible, and influence the ideas that both suffragists and politicians have about the political ramifications of women's enfranchisement. Both suffragists and politicians are concerned with the impact of women's votes – suffragists because their interests along dimensions other than gender may be better served by keeping other women from voting, and politicians because their very seats are at stake if the new voters are not natural allies. The uncertainty surrounding women's future loyalties drives a bias toward the status quo electoral rules that can only be overcome when competition is high or during a moment of political realignment. Competition and the threat of losing power inspires entrepreneurial thinking among elected leaders as it puts them in a situation where they need more votes in order to win. But it is only if at least one political group thinks it will have a mobilizational advantage among the new electorate that electoral reform becomes a political possibility.

The information that politicians have about women's future political loyalties depends in large part on the activities of the suffragists themselves. Suffragists were concerned with the impact of women's enfranchisement, and could deliberately choose to keep the movement small, or to grow it, depending on their expectations about what women's votes would do for their broader programmatic agendas. Because gender is, arguably, the ultimate cross-cutting cleavage, even women who wanted rights in theory may have been willing, in highly stratified societies, to set this desire aside so as not to undermine other political priorities. But, in contexts where suffragists decide to pursue a broad movement and mobilize across political cleavages, this is a signal that elite women's preferences are not so far removed from the preferences of other groups, and gives a clue that the votes of women in the middle of the distribution may actually be up for grabs. In this sense, suffrage mobilization is a demonstration of the potential voting power of the group, and when there is some degree of ambiguity about women's preferences, parties subject to high levels of political competition become open to the challenge of fighting over the women in the middle.

On the electoral side, politicians use information generated by observing and interacting with the suffrage movement to inform their understanding of which women are likely to be politically active in the event of reform. In general, the conditions under which reform is likeliest is when politics is highly competitive, and when a political group with enough power to change the laws believes it can capture the majority of women's votes. A key finding of this work is that bills related to voting rights reform fail either because the party in power does not think the disfranchised group will support it, or because it does not need the extra votes in order to win.

These general arguments can help to shed light the pattern of political inclusion for many groups both within and between countries. The argument applies best, I believe, to the set of cases where women sought the right to vote in limited democratic systems.<sup>11</sup> The strategic account might not explain universalist reforms in places such as Finland, which gave both men and women voting rights in its founding constitution in 1906. Although there was substantial mobilization by Finnish women for the vote, the immediate concerns of electoral politics may not have driven their enfranchisement.<sup>12</sup> Instead, women were included because of their ties to the anti-imperial movement be-

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<sup>11</sup>As Krook 2009: 208ff has argued for the adoption of electoral gender quotas, there are arguably multiple causal pathways to women's suffrage.

<sup>12</sup>Prior to 1906 Finland had been a "Grand Duchy" of Russia. Between 1886 and 1899 the Finnish Diet had some independent legislative authority, but a maximum of 8 percent of the male population would have been allowed to participate in elections. Taxpaying women were given municipal franchise in the countryside in 1863, and in the towns in 1872. In 1897 the Finnish "Women's Association" brought a petition for full suffrage to Diet which did not reach second reading. In 1904 a suffrage rally in Helsingfors drew 1000 protestors, which was followed by another mass meeting of suffragists in December 1905. On the tails of a general strike in 1905 (which included male and female leaders), the radical Social Democratic party came into power. The party overhauled the structure of the legislature and the electoral laws, extending universal suffrage to men and women in 1906. In 1907 the first election took place under the new laws, and brought 19 women into national office. These women constituted the world's first female legislators. The universal franchise law was reaffirmed in 1919, after the fall of the Russian

fore the constitution was established. Nor will it provide a complete story for many moments of reform after WWII, for thereafter suffrage appears to have become a global norm, enshrined in international organizations and peace negotiations thanks in part to the advocacy of transnational women's movements.<sup>13</sup>

But the strategic account of enfranchisement can help us make sense of the long road to suffrage in places like Switzerland and Québec. Switzerland adopted a limited set of democratic principles in 1848 but kept women from the polls until the 1970s. Although one might surmise that the late extension in both had to do with Catholicism, it is important to stress that there were several Catholic countries – Austria, Ireland, Poland, and Belgium (to a lesser extent)

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Empire. See Anthony et al. 1969 [1881] volume VI: Ch. LIII; Collier 1999: 35; Ray 1918.

<sup>13</sup>See Towns 2010a and 2010b. This is not to say that norms were irrelevant in the earlier period. In 1931 Sri Lankan women were enfranchised on the same terms as men, meaning that whatever educational and property requirements applied to men would also apply to women. The documentation on this extension points not to the electoral advantage to certain political parties of including females, but rather to the desire of local parliamentarians, both indigenous Sri Lankans and Creole colonists, to modernize in line with the British metropole. Female enfranchisement in Sri Lanka came after a report called the “Donoughmore Commission” mentioned it favorably, though Jayawardena (1986: 122ff) does mention limited calls for the measure by bourgeois Sri Lankan women, both national and Creole.

– which were first wave adopters of the franchise.<sup>14</sup> An alternative argument is that Catholic women in Switzerland resisted the vote, but in fact it was mostly Catholic women in Switzerland who were the leaders of the movement for the vote, while socialist women were more or less uninvolved in the issue until 1957. This, despite the fact that the Social Democrats were in power long before that late date. With very little turnover in national elections, the Swiss parties did not need women's votes to maintain political power, and thus had little incentive to pursue reform. Divided by the cultural and political cleavages across cantons, Swiss suffragists were initially more concerned with the implications of organizing across cantons than with challenging the status quo legal framework. After a resurgence of political competition and a re-grouping of the suffrage movement in the 1960s, an innovative cross-cantonal strategy with large-scale mobilization and direct action tactics helped most Swiss women gain political rights.<sup>15</sup>

A similar argument might also apply to Québec, where the Liberal Party, which held power for four decades after the 1920s, had little need for more votes and, what is more, operated with the assumption

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<sup>14</sup>Belgium, another Catholic country, extended some national level voting rights in the first wave. The law of 1919 gave the right to vote in national elections to the widows and mothers of servicemen killed in WWI, to the widows and mothers of citizens shot or killed by the enemy, and to female political prisoners who had been held by the enemy. The majority were enfranchised in 1948. Martin 34; Cook 88.

<sup>15</sup>I am interpreting evidence on the Swiss suffrage movement by Banaszak 1996b: 218.

that women would vote for the Conservative Party.<sup>16</sup> After the party was ousted from power by the conservative National Union party in 1936, the Liberals put suffrage on their platform, formed a coalition with suffrage organizations, and were re-elected. Both a federal MP and a well-known Quebecois suffragist convinced the ousted Liberal leaders that women's suffrage, and the votes of women, would benefit their party in the coming elections.<sup>17</sup> Thus, after two decades of voting in federal elections, in 1940 Québécoise women could finally vote at the province level. In both Switzerland and Québec, the incentives of political leaders stalled reform, but when the political tides shifted, suffragists were able to exploit the opening to win the vote.

SUFFRAGE POLITICS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, THE UNITED STATES,  
AND FRANCE

Although I will present evidence from many countries along the way, the present text is primarily concerned with showing how political competition and the alignment of interests between suffragists and politicians helps explain women's enfranchisement in the United States, France, and the United Kingdom. These three countries are apt for comparison: they were among the first to experiment on a large scale with representative institutions, and they produced some of the earliest and most vociferous feminist political thought.<sup>18</sup> In

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<sup>16</sup>Dupont 1972: 415. Dumas 2016.

<sup>17</sup>Genest 1996: 112. The suffragists may have been mistaken, as that was the last election the Liberals would win for 40 more years.

<sup>18</sup>In 1791, during the French Revolution, Olympe de Gouges authored a *Declaration of the Rights of Women* proclaiming that "Woman has the right to mount the scaffold; she must have the right to mount the

1900, all three countries had well-established and growing suffrage movements, and all were on the winning side of the First World War. Shortly after the war, all three had high levels of electoral contestation, and at least one chamber in each country's national legislature passed a woman's suffrage bill. Although they are by no means identical, the similarities across these three countries them make the difference in suffrage expansion curious: by 1920 both the United States and the United Kingdom had agreed to let women into polling stations; but France, which was always the boldest in its institutional reforms, had many opportunities to extend the franchise in the 1920s, but refused women until the late date of 1944.<sup>19</sup> A central project of this book is explaining these divergent outcomes.

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rostrum," (Hause and Kenney 1985: 5; Offen 1994: 152). Her calls were not heeded. Instead, de Gouge was guillotined. In Britain, Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* reverberated through British "salons" after 1792, followed, in 1869, by J.S. Mill's *The Subjection of Women*, long thought to have been influenced through his relationship with the able Harriet Taylor (see Holton 1986: ch 1). Finally the famous 1848 Women's Rights Convention, which took place at Seneca Falls, New York, produced a second *Declaration of the Rights of Woman*, spurred the formation of the world's first organized movement for women's suffrage (see Flexner 1995 [1959]: ch X).

<sup>19</sup>Sociologists of the US suffrage movement often stress that the ease of amendment influenced whether suffrage laws passed. France would have been the easiest on this front – all that was required was "a change of wording in a regime of textual law", Offen 1994: 156.

Any country expert on the US, France, or the UK might aver that these outcomes are due to each country's singular politics – a fact that might render any comparison fraught. And indeed, the sectional conflict in the United States, which divided north from south, slave state from “free” state, and primary product markets from finished goods markets, make the racial and regional divides seem particularly fractious. But of course the Irish question – that is, what should be done about the Catholic Southern Irish that were eager for and rebelling in the name of self government – set British Liberals and Conservatives, not to mention the Irish themselves, in an existential conflict that threatened the stability of the state. So too did the French republicans' concerns about church involvement in national affairs, which far from having been superseded in the Third Republic, set the lines of contestation throughout the period, giving way to the Vichy regime during World War II. The legacies of institutions such as the church in France, slavery in the United States, or empire in the UK informed suffrage politics insofar as they created the political cleavages that influenced incentives, beliefs, and therefore the strategic interactions between suffrage movements and elected politicians.

What each of these different, but nevertheless major conflicts did was to draw the battle lines in clear ways. The lagging France might be attributed to Catholic ideology and the relegation of women to the “private” sphere. And indeed, at the dawn of the twentieth century, given the legacy of the Catholic church and Napoleon Bonaparte's civil code, French women may have had fewer civil rights than their counterparts across the English channel and the Atlantic ocean. But other stubborn facts complicate this argument: married French women had easier access to divorce by consent than women in the US and the UK, and unlike women in the US, married or preg-

nant French women were not easy to force out of their jobs.<sup>20</sup> And indeed, women's overall level of economic participation in France was quite high, and married French women were two times more likely to work outside the home than in the other two countries.<sup>21</sup> Instead of Catholicism per se, the religious cleavage impacted suffrage in France because French women's education remained under the Church's auspices long after republican men were educated in public schools. This led to a popular perception that French women would side with the Church on political matters – a belief that influenced both political parties' decisions and for suffragists' strategies. In other Catholic countries such as Austria, where the church and state were initially aligned, women won national level voting rights in 1918.<sup>22</sup> In other words, political cleavages influenced popular per-

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<sup>20</sup>See Morgan 2006: 43. Goldin 1990:160ff on “marriage bars”, policies that effectively kicked women out of companies when they married. These practice did not decline until the 1950s, and eventually became illegal.

<sup>21</sup>Moreover, we should not overstate women's civil rights in the United States or the UK. In 1907, the US federal Congress passed the Expatriation Act which denaturalized – i.e. stripped citizenship from – any American woman who married a foreign man. See Gunter 2017:6.

<sup>22</sup>Many scholars of gender complicate the relationship between religious institutions and ideology on the formation of progressive gender policies, arguing that it is the relationship between the church and the state, not just the existence of a strong state, that is important. Morgan (2006) makes this point with regard to maternalist welfare state policies in Europe, and Htun (2003) studies divorce, abortion, and women's civil rights in Latin America.

ceptions of women's future political loyalties, and these expectations influenced the groups that believed they would win or lose from franchise reform.

Beliefs about women's political preferences became politically salient during moments of heightened competition. The postwar realignment of power in the UK, and the threat of realignment in the US, brought several parties that hoped to benefit from women's votes into a position to fight for reform. Although the French political system was similarly in flux, prominent members of the Radical party expressed fears that women would not support their republican agenda. Since the Radicals had veto power in the upper chamber of the legislature throughout the 1920s, they were able to block women's suffrage for two decades. Leading French suffragists also expressed similar reservations – that the majority of French women would vote as the clerics told them – and so they did not build a coalition across the dominant cleavage – of the sort that proved crucial in the US and the UK – to fight for reform. In each country, an analysis of periods in which successive legislative debates failed, and ultimately were successful, reveals the conditions under which an alignment of interests between elected politicians and the organized women's movement promoted women's suffrage. Together, these within-case analyses illuminate the broader cross-country questions.

#### READING THIS BOOK

This book can be read in several ways. For those primarily interested in understanding the actual dynamics of suffrage politics, any of the case studies should be fine to read on their own. Chapter 2 provides a longer discussion of different social scientific arguments about women's enfranchisement, and describes the theoretical claims

forwarded in the text in detail. It evaluates several alternative explanations of women's enfranchisement such as economic modernization, growth in women's labor force participation, sex ratios, and warfare, that have been generated from scholarship on male democratization. It lays out an alternative argument that links political cleavages and electoral competition to politicians' and suffragists' strategies surrounding suffrage. Drawing on the massive literature on suffrage movements, which has historical and social scientific branches, the theory forms insights into the tensions among suffragists and between suffrage organizations, and outlines the political hurdles that suffragists must overcome to make suffrage bills become law.<sup>23</sup> I

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<sup>23</sup>These insights come from three waves of historical scholarship on women's suffrage since the 1960s. The first wave began with histories of bourgeois movement leaders; the second moved toward revisionist accounts of suffrage movements which stressed the importance of "militant" activism; and the final wave settled into new political histories and social scientific accounts of the women's movements. Writings from all three of these schools appear in the footnotes of this text, but the recent political accounts are given more weight in the book as a whole. The work by political historians such as Bolton (1986, 1996), Pugh (1974, 1985, 2000), Hause and Kenney (1981, 1984), Morgan (1972, 1975) and Smith (1996) and that of social scientists, such as Banaszak (1996a,b, 1998), McConaughy (2013), McDonagh (1985, 1989, 2002) and McCammon and Campbell (2001) and McCammon et al. (2001), are explicitly concerned with understanding relationships between suffrage activists and legislative politics. In other words, they provide insight into the strategic interactions that, I argue, are key to understanding the political origins of the female franchise.

rely, finally, on several rich texts on women and politics that have theorized the conditions under which women's movements can best contest exclusion to describe the way in which political competition and women's mobilization together form a logic of suffrage reform.<sup>24</sup>

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 substantiate these arguments through case studies of the UK, the US, and France. They attend specifically to three puzzles: why the Liberal government in the United Kingdom refused to support a women's franchise bill from 1906 to 1914, but ultimately included women on the Reform Act of 1918; why the Western United States were early adopters of women's suffrage when, by conventional accounts, the movement was stronger in the East; and, finally, why a successful suffrage measure that was passed by the French Chamber of Deputies in 1919 received no hearing in the Senate throughout the 1920s. The confluence of a targeted movement strategy and a shifts in political power allowed American and British women to vote much earlier than their French counterparts, as in France the party with veto power expected to lose women's votes.

Some readers may be curious about the bigger picture – what these three countries reveal, theoretically and empirically about the women's suffrage in a larger set of countries. For this, turn to the conclusion, which delves into a discussion of what thinking about women's suffrage can teach us about the comparative politics of democratization, and about the study of gender and political development more generally.

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<sup>24</sup>E.g. Baldez 2002; Htun 2003; Beckwith 2014; Friedman 2010.

DEMOCRATIZATION AND THE CASE OF WOMEN

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In most of the world's first democracies, the lag between the initial extension of voting rights to men and later laws that brought women to the polls was quite long. Nearly 144 years passed from America's democratic founding until 1920, when the Nineteenth Amendment enfranchised women nationally. In the Southern hemisphere, women in Argentina, Uruguay and Chile waited, respectively, 94, 102, and 119 years between when the first men could vote and women's political inclusion. Similar gulfs materialized all over Europe, where, in the most extreme case, many Swiss women were prevented from voting until 1971.<sup>1</sup> The majority of these countries gave women the vote after they had already begun to experiment with elections as a way of choosing leaders.

The story of women's enfranchisement in limited democracies is fundamentally one of democratization. It is about changing electoral institutions to increase the political voice of an historically marginalized group, and about enhancing contestation for political power based on the new issues and ideas favored by female voters. These themes are all in the purview of comparative politics, but for the most part the field has considered women to be "outside history" during the first key era of democratic transitions.<sup>2</sup> In seminal works on de-

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<sup>1</sup>Even the federal reform in 1971 did not guarantee women the vote in all elections: in some cantons they had to wait until the 1980s.

<sup>2</sup>The work of the work of Göran Therborn is perhaps an exception that proves the rule. Therborn (1977) conceded that many of the

mocratization women, either as political actors who have taken part in the process, or as beneficiaries of the fruits of democracy, have rarely been given center stage.<sup>3</sup> This is true even though mass mobilization by women was a striking feature of the early twentieth century in several countries – prior to 1950 women in more than 29 countries mobilized for the vote – and the omission exists even when scholars have focused on episodes of reform where women won the vote at the same time as men.<sup>4</sup>

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world's democracies in earlier periods would be more accurately labeled "male democracies". The phrase "outside history" comes from Eric Hobsbawm, an august marxist historian who has written important economic and political histories of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He is quite candid: women did not make the politics, wars or revolutions that defined the Age of Empires, and so are irrelevant to its telling. Hobsbawm [1989] 2010: 196.

<sup>3</sup>In the classic texts written, for example, by Barrington Moore, Samuel Huntington, and Seymour Lipset, there is scarcely a mention of women, let alone as actors relevant to the process of democratization. Moore (1966) mentions women nine times in the tome. Almost all of these references are to a feudal lord's rights over women in his demesne. Huntington (1993) does not mention the big surge of women's enfranchisement in the "second" wave; nor does he consider women's role in the decolonization struggles that demarcate democracy's "third" wave after 1974. For an account of women's role in decolonization struggles, see Jayawardena 1986.

<sup>4</sup>E.g. Collier 1999. Women got the vote during several of the "joint project" episodes she studies in depth, including Finland (1906), Germany (1918) and the U.K. (1918). The omission of women from her

To be sure, there is a rich literature on gender and politics which theorizes the conditions under which women protest against political regimes, the efficacy of women's movements when they align with different types of political party, and the way that moments of rupture and state reconfiguration influence women's access to institutions and political power.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, as several feminist scholars have pointed out, in game-theoretic accounts of regime transition and in almost all quantitative studies of democratization, women are missing. In statistical studies, it is common for scholars to label a country democratic if fifty percent of its male citizens have the right to vote, implying that countries can completely exclude women but nevertheless be considered fully democratic.<sup>6</sup> The study of democratization is therefore most accurately described as the study of democracy for men.

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text is especially curious in the U.K. because it was women, rather than men, who had mobilized extensively for the 1918 reform.

<sup>5</sup>E.g. Baldez 2002; Beckwith 2000; Banaszak 1996; Alvarez 1990; Chowdhury et al. 1994; Friedman 2000; Rucht 2000.

<sup>6</sup>Caraway 2004; Ferree and Mueller 2004, 577. Paxton's (2000) article on measurement validity in democratization studies brilliantly shows how, despite having a conception of democracy that features universal inclusion, most studies in practice utilize a "50 percent male" benchmark as an operational measure. In spite of these criticisms, more recent operationalizations continue to use 50 percent male enfranchisement as the benchmark for democracy, e.g. Boix et al. (2013), Ansell and Samuels 2014. Cf. Therborn (1977) who adopts rigorous standards of full inclusion for countries to be labeled democratic. See too the new initiatives toward a feminist institutionalism in Krook and Mackay 2010.

To justify the focus on male democratization many scholars simply assume, with Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, that there is nothing mysterious about the politics of women's inclusion, so that "when the roles began to change as women entered the workforce, women also obtained voting rights."<sup>7</sup> Or they agree with Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John Stephens that the "dynamics of [women's] struggle follow quite different principles from the inclusion of subordinate classes or ethnic groups and would require a whole separate analysis."<sup>8</sup> Statements like these, which are used to define the theoretical scope of a particular study, convey the impression that there is either no puzzle surrounding why women gained entry into the body politic, or, if there is one, its solution is distinct from most other instances of political inclusion. Let us reserve for the book's conclusion the question of whether the politics of women's enfranchisement does require a completely separate analysis from the inclusion of other groups, and begin instead by exploring the relevance of several general hypotheses about democratization for the case of women.

#### THEORIES OF FRANCHISE REFORM

There are three general forms of explanation of women's enfranchisement: those that focus on macro-historical processes like economic modernization, warfare, and sex ratios; those that have micro-behavioral roots where suffrage is seen as the outcome of bargaining or elite incentives; and arguments that focus on the role of suffragists and women's movements in forging reform. I examine whether these

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<sup>7</sup>Acemoglu and Robinson 2006: 8.

<sup>8</sup>Rueschemeyer et al. 1992: 301.

ideas are consistent, more or less, with the pattern of enfranchisement around the world. Presenting comparative historical data over the last century, I find that countries that enfranchised women earlier tended to be among the first to industrialize, but there is not convincing evidence that women's labor force participation grew dramatically prior to reform. Nor do sex-ratios or warfare evince strong connections to enfranchisement. Instead, I argue that more direct political factors are likely to account for suffrage, such as the level of political competition, politicians' beliefs about the women's vote, and the degree of mobilization by women.

*Macro-historical processes and women's suffrage*

*The Modernization Thesis.* The first potential explanation for the global pattern of women's enfranchisement is a form of "modernization" thesis, the notion that economic development drives democratization and, by extension, women's enfranchisement. Since industrializing countries were among the first to experiment with democratic governments, the emergence of industrialization is undoubtedly a background feature in the story of women's political inclusion.<sup>9</sup> With technological innovation, mass migration, and falling birthrates, the industrial revolution produced new orderings of society and the economy. In the nineteenth century, many of the traditional rules of "coverture" – in which fathers and husbands were the public representatives of women – were upended as women became better educated,

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<sup>9</sup>It should be noted, though, that many marxist political economists suggest that the division of labor in capitalism gave rise to *greater* gender inequality than existed in agricultural societies. See Hartmann 1976, Folbre 1982, and Engels (2010 [1884]).

and delayed marriage in order to work. These changes set the stage for transformations in the legal environment, so that women eventually gained enhanced rights to property, inheritance, earnings, and custody in the case of divorce.<sup>10</sup>

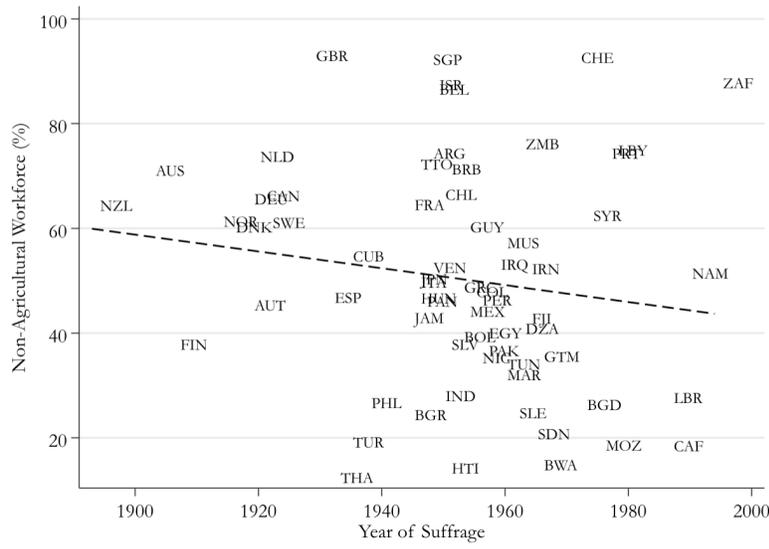
{figure 2 about here}

Figure 2 presents a snapshot of the sectoral composition of economies around the time of suffrage in 64 countries for which data are available.<sup>11</sup> The top panel shows the percentage of the workforce en-

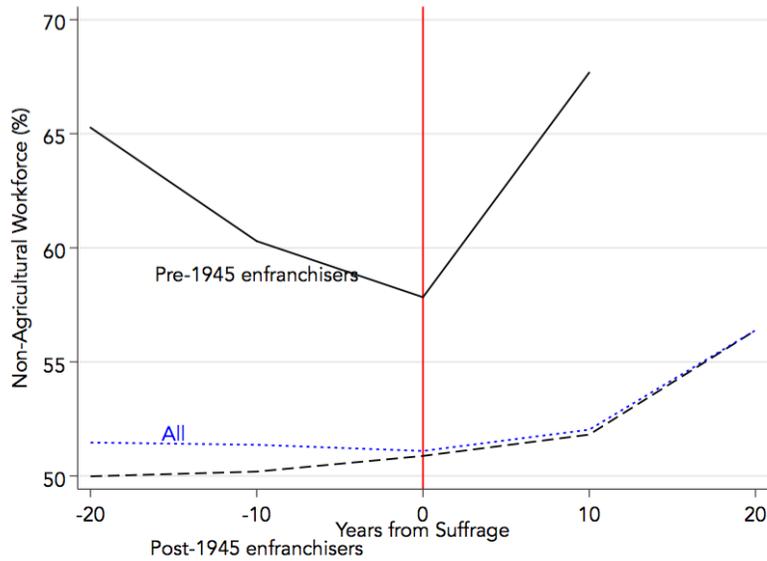
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<sup>10</sup>The question of whether women were citizens, and whether, by virtue of being citizens, they had the right to vote, was adjudicated in several countries. In *Minor v. Happersett* (1874) the U.S. Supreme Court held that the Constitution did not confer voting rights on citizens, that suffrage was not a right of citizenship, and that the States had the right to withhold voting rights from certain groups of citizens (see Flexner 1995 [1959]: 161ff.). In the 1880s, French feminists appealed to various ministries and the courts for a decision as to whether the words *citoyen* and *Français*, used in constitutions to confer political and civil liberties, applied to women. Several rulings implied that these words had different meanings in different contexts: that women did not fulfill all the legal conditions to make them French citizens, but that tax law could apply to women so long as a qualification for taxpaying did not require enjoying full civil rights (Hause and Kenney 1984: 11-12; Offen 1994: 156).

<sup>11</sup>The country-level data on economic sectors, women's labor force participation, and population that appear herein have been digitized from Mitchell 2003, 2007a, 2007b. Mitchell used national level censuses which are admittedly more complete for the advanced industrial economies, and as we get into the late twentieth century. I used his categories of manufacturing and service employment, which he intended to be comparable, but there are undoubtedly mistakes and



(a) Non-Agricultural Labor Force in Year of Suffrage



(b) Changes in Non-Agricultural Employment

Figure 2: **Economic Development and Women’s Suffrage.** Panel (a) presents a cross-section of the year of enfranchisement and the non-agricultural workforce as a fraction of all laborers, marked with a country code (n=64). Panel (b) presents the average of non-agricultural workforce before and after suffrage was extended, centered around the year of suffrage, for countries that enfranchised women before and after 1945, (n=64).

gaged in non-agricultural activity in the year that women's suffrage was extended. Overall, as with democratization more generally, the economies where a greater proportion of workers were involved in non-agricultural work were earlier on the road to women's political inclusion.<sup>12</sup> This does not imply, however, that rapid changes in the composition of the economy precipitated women's suffrage. Panel (b) looks at changes in the the economy surrounding suffrage in 64 countries after separating countries by whether they enfranchised women before or after 1945.<sup>13</sup> Data are available for 14 countries that enfranchised women before 1945 and 50 countries that did so after the Second World War. Each line is constructed by taking average level of non-agricultural employment for all countries in a given group after centering the data around time "zero" – the year of women's enfranchisement in each country. The lines of averages show that countries in group that enfranchised women before 1945 had higher levels of non-agricultural participation prior to the extension of the franchise to women than countries that enfranchised women after 1945. But note that within the early enfranchising group, the average increase in non-agricultural labor in the 10 years prior to suffrage was small, around three percentage points. Countries in the later group for which data were available had lower levels of economic devel-

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inconsistencies in definitions across countries and even across censuses within countries. Since census data is typically recorded every 10 years, I linearly interpolate values in the intercensal years using Stata's "ipolate" command.

<sup>12</sup>See, e.g. Boix et al. 2013.

<sup>13</sup>Many scholars think that the suffrage became a global norm after 1945, and so suffrage and the economy may have had different relationships over time. Ramirez et al. 1997. Towns 2010a, b.

opment prior to enfranchisement, with little change in the ten years prior to reform. At the same time that early enfranchisers tended to have higher levels of industrial workers, these figures do not show rapid growth in the industrial workforce prior to suffrage in either the early or later group.

*Women in the Workforce.* A second variant of the modernization thesis suggests that women's rights emerged after women entered the workforce in larger numbers.<sup>14</sup> Is women's economic participation, or growth therein, directly correlated with women's enfranchisement? Using data compiled from historical censuses, I was able to locate information on the share of adult women engaged in economic activity for 47 countries in the years surrounding suffrage.<sup>15</sup> The top panel of figure 3 plots the year of enfranchisement along the x-axis against the share of women that were economically active in the year the vote was extended on the y-axis. Surprisingly, the bivariate relationship between suffrage and women's labor force participation shows that several of the first countries to extend the electoral franchise to women, such as New Zealand and Australia, had quite low female labor force participation when women won the vote, while several of the later cases – like France – had much higher labor force participation overall.

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<sup>14</sup>Acemoglu and Robinson 2006: 8. Doepke and Tertilt 2009. Bertocchi 2011.

<sup>15</sup>Labor force participation includes economic activity in manufacturing, agriculture, and the service sector. The figures have been coded from Mitchell, 2003, 2007a, 2007b, various pages. Generally the census data is recorded once per decade, but sometimes there are two measures in a decade. I linearly interpolate the intercensal data, and take the average value in the decade of suffrage.

{figure 3 about here}

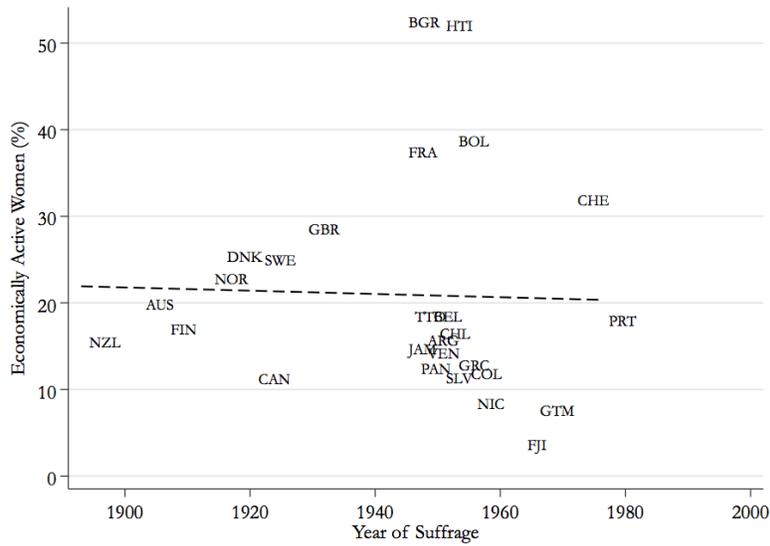
The bottom panel of figure 3 can shed light on whether there were major changes in women's labor force participation prior to electoral reform. It groups 31 countries for which a longer series of data is available surrounding enfranchisement by whether they enfranchised women before 1945 (14 countries) or after (17 countries). The graph, which is centered on the year of suffrage, takes the average of women's labor force participation in each group for twenty years before and after suffrage. Although the earlier enfranchisers did have higher labor force participation surrounding suffrage on average – 24 percent instead of 19 percent of women were economically active in the earlier cases around the time of suffrage – there is no obvious increase in women's labor force participation surrounding the reform. Some countries saw growth in women's economic activity while others saw declines, but mainly the lines appear to be flat. Together, these figures cast doubt on the existence of a simple association between changes in women's economic activity and suffrage reform.

*Wars Bring Enfranchisement.* A third potential explanation for women's suffrage is that war set the stage for women's political inclusion as it did for democratization more generally.<sup>16</sup> Two different camps link warfare to democratization – the pessimists argue that war reduced the political costs of enfranchisement because it elevated a global elite above the threat of expropriation by the masses – while the optimists argue that because mass warfare requires society-wide cooperation, it allows ordinary people to extract concessions from leaders.<sup>17</sup>

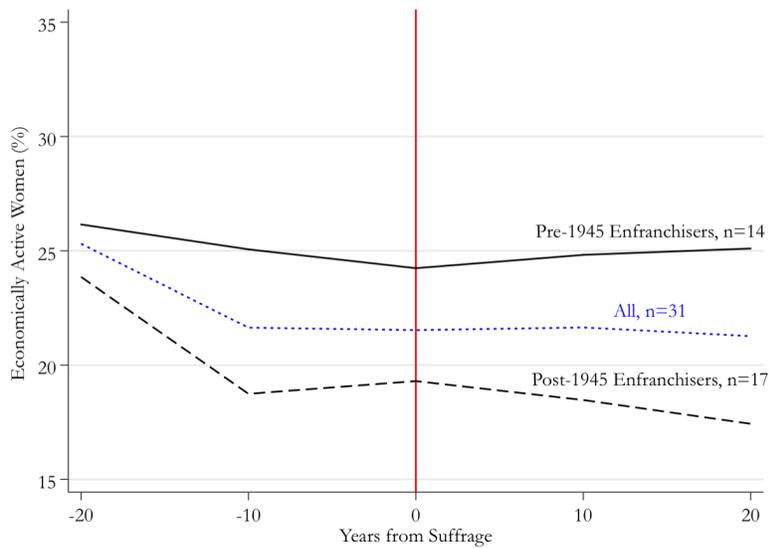
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<sup>16</sup>See Bermeo 2003 on war and democratization. On suffrage and war see Adams 2014, Therborn 1977, Dangerfield 2011 [1935].

<sup>17</sup>The pessimists include Therborn (1977) and Boix 2003. The optimists include Scheve and Stasavage (2011), who find that mobilization for war is associated with higher pressure on governments



(a) Women’s economic activity in year of suffrage



(b) Changes in Economic Activity by Suffrage Group

Figure 3: **Women’s labor force participation in the year of suffrage.** Panel (a) the three-letter country code marker appears in the year suffrage was extended (n=47). Panel (b) plots the average percent of women who were economically active over time for countries that enfranchised before and after the Second World War (n=31). The graphs are centered on the year of suffrage.

Warfare enters the politics of women's suffrage in some interesting ways. Elite women often pointed to a seeming contradiction when the "masses" of men were allowed to vote while they could not. While politicians in these places might justify women's continued exclusion from political participation on the grounds that men were called to make greater bodily sacrifices for the state in times of war. Suffragists learned to counter this argument, especially during and after wars, by pointing to the very real contributions they made to their countries in the course of conflict.<sup>18</sup> War could extract high tolls from women

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for progressive taxation, and Adams (2014) who attributes the first wave of suffrage to the first world war.

<sup>18</sup>While admitting that suffragists saw war as opening up new possibilities for change, I want to stress that this type of hope was not confined to World War I. In an address to Congress in 1866, just after the Civil War, Susan B. Anthony used the war to argue persuasively that women were deserving of equality:

With you we have just passed through the agony of death, the resurrection and triumph of another revolution, doing all in our power to mitigate its horrors and gild its glories. And now think you, we have no souls to fire, no brains to weigh your arguments; that after education such as this, we can stand silent witnesses while you sell our birthright of liberty? [...] Our demand must ever be: 'No compromise of human rights. No admission in the constitution of inequality of rights, or disfranchisement on account of color or sex.' Quoted in Catt and Shuler (1923: 39).

Shortly after Anthony's plea, the Republican party decided to support a variation of the Fourteenth Amendment which stated that vot-

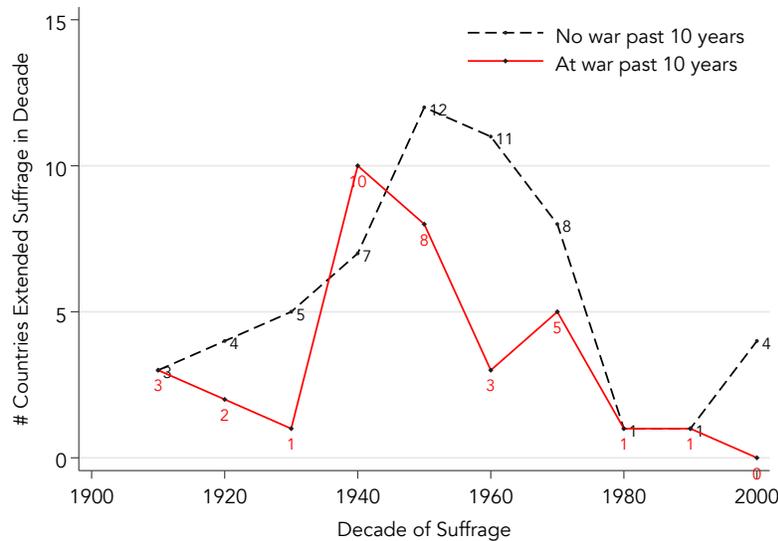


Figure 4: **Warfare in the decade before suffrage.** The figure presents the number of countries that extended the vote in a given decade based on whether or not they had been at war in the prior 10 years. The marker labels are the number in each group.

insofar as they would be left childless or widowed, and if the necessary economic preparations brought them into new daily roles. And indeed, women often entered the workforce in large numbers when men were at the front. Because of their wartime sacrifices, war may have given women leverage over leaders to secure the vote.

{figure 4 about here}

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ing rights could not be abridged on the basis of race, but which did not include sex as a protected category. This, in spite of the fact that earlier drafts of the amendment had included women. When questioned by Elizabeth Cady Stanton as to why the same arguments made on behalf of black men would not also apply to women's enfranchisement, Congressman John Bingham, a principal architect of the Fourteenth Amendment, quipped that "he was not the puppet of logic but the slave of practical politics." Catt and Shuler (1923) see this move in entirely strategic terms. See chs. III and IV.

There are 90 countries for which I was able to gather information on warfare (interstate, civil, or extra state war) prior to suffrage.<sup>19</sup> In the sample as a whole, 20 out of 90 countries (22 percent) were involved in some form of war in the year that the majority of women gained the right to vote, and 34 out of 90 (37 percent) were involved in some form of warfare in the ten years prior to women's suffrage. Figure 4 presents aggregate information on countries' involvement in war in the 10 years prior to the extension of the franchise to women. The x-axis represents the decade of suffrage, and the y-axis represents the number of countries that extended the vote in that decade by whether or not they were involved in a war. As the figure shows, nearly 60 percent of countries that extended suffrage in the 1940s had been involved in a war in the 10 years prior to reform. But generally speaking, from 1900 to 2000 the majority of countries that gave women voting rights had not been at war in the previous 10 years.

Looking within the first wave of women's enfranchisement, there is not a clear connection between wartime mobilization in World War I and franchise extension. Germany and Austria, two mobilized, belligerent states, extended voting rights right before the war ended. But some of the earliest countries to enfranchise women in the period remained neutral throughout the conflict, including the Netherlands and several countries in Scandinavia.<sup>20</sup> Levels of wartime mobilization also do not present an obvious pattern for the allies. The U.K., France, and Italy were highly mobilized for the war, yet only the U.K. extended the vote at its close. Across the Atlantic, Canada and the

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<sup>19</sup>The warfare data are modified from the Correlates of War database thanks to my colleague Alex Weisigar.

<sup>20</sup>Hause and Kenney 1984: 202.

United States each extended suffrage in some form around this time, yet neither was highly mobilized in the war effort. These diverse outcomes do not provide support for a deterministic model of warfare and women's enfranchisement.

What I want to suggest, instead, is that to the extent that war and electoral reform are related, it is because war sets the stage for major contests in the domestic political arena. New issues emerge as salient in the public sphere, and, because even a war won will have many detractors, it heightens the level of competition at home. War can even affect politics in neutral countries if some citizens question the decision to stay neutral, and if others see the need to protect interests in a new world-wide realignment. As we will see in later chapters, the suffrage legislation that was adopted after the war in the US and the UK was on the docket well before conflict broke out, but the unfreezing of old political alliances and the desire to forge new ones once the war ended opened up avenues for entrepreneurial activity along the lines of electoral reform.

*Women's Scarcity.* A fourth idea that has been used to explain women's enfranchisement theorizes that women are more likely to gain voting rights when there are fewer of them. Scarcity increases bargaining power, allowing women to ask for more and better rights, and it might also make female voters less of a threat to men because their smaller numbers reduce the risks associated with reform.<sup>21</sup> This argument has been used to explain the pattern of adoption in the United States, where the male-packed Western states gave women

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<sup>21</sup>Braun and Kvasnicka 2013. In some sense the scarcity argument and the war thesis are mutually exclusive, as wartime mobilization which reduced the male population actually made women more numerous.

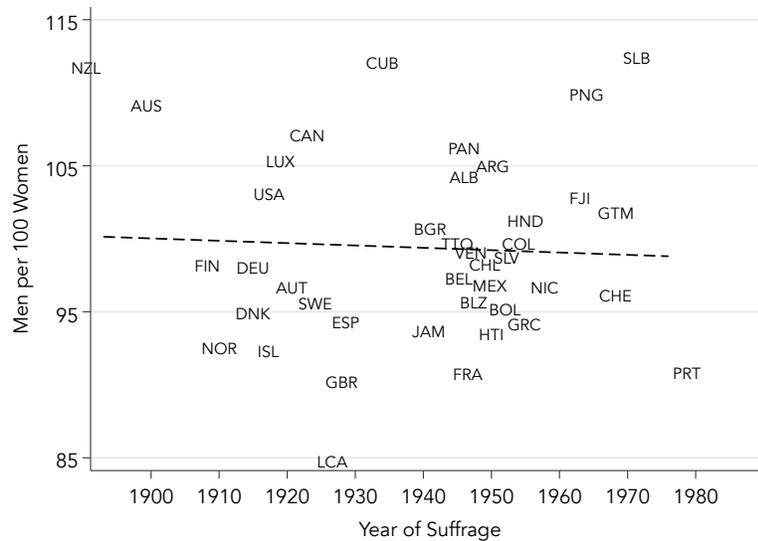


Figure 5: Male to Female Sex Ratio and Women's Suffrage

voting rights before states in the East.<sup>22</sup> But, as figure 5 shows, the negative correlation between sex ratios and enfranchisement is rather weak: within the set of countries that gave women the vote prior to 1920, there were as many with a low ratio of men to women as with a high sex ratio. As with women's economic activity, the pattern of sex-ratios were relatively stable before and after enfranchisement.

{figure 5 about here}

#### *Micro-behavioral accounts of enfranchisement*

*Men's Preferences.* Moving from sweeping theories of suffrage to arguments that focus on individual level incentives is an idea that women won the vote when it was politically expedient for men. There are several variations on this theme. Political economists have used models

<sup>22</sup>Although see Teele 2018 on the United States, which shows that Western states did not offer women a better package of rights prior to enfranchisement than states in the East.

of household production to argue that men will begin to advocate for women's rights because their shared preferences will be amplified in government if both partners can vote.<sup>23</sup> Alternatively, as the fertility transition in the nineteenth century reduced the average number of children born into households, fathers may have desired more rights (to inherit, to go to school, to vote) for their daughters and hence advocated for women's inclusion.<sup>24</sup> Both the bargaining models and the models of household production usefully point to the incentives that men may face when confronted with demands for women's voting rights, but the reality that the vast majority of suffrage organization members were women does not suggest that *mass* male advocacy was key to reform. Moreover, these models do not consider the crucial political actors – elected politicians – who have both the actual power to change the laws and stand to become the immediate winners or losers after women start to vote. In this sense, the bargaining models neglect the importance of elite incentives.

*Elite Incentives.* The incentives that underlie politicians' choices about whether to extend the franchise are the subject of a great body of work on male democratization. There are three prominent arguments about elite incentives: politicians may support reform when elites are split and driven into party competition based on divergent sectoral interests or programmatic preferences;<sup>25</sup> elites may concede the vote when they are already powerful or have such well-insulated economic interests that they do not fear popular participation in poli-

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<sup>23</sup>Bertocci 2010.

<sup>24</sup>Doepke and Tertilt 2009.

<sup>25</sup>Ansell and Samuels 2014; Collier 1999; Lizzeri and Persico 2004; Llavador and Oxoby 2005.

tics;<sup>26</sup> lastly, many scholars are drawn to the idea that “revolutionary mobilization” – public displays of discontent against the regime that signal a willingness to use violence to achieve political ends – plays a key role in democratic reforms.<sup>27</sup> Models of the first sort conceive of different partisan agendas as fundamentally linked to economic interests – such as urban versus rural political conflicts – and they generally presume that politicians know *ex-ante* which parties will win the votes of the poor. Because women are situated among all the classes and have incomes that draw from all sectors, these models would not produce an obvious political winner based on gender. Models of the second sort assume that the vote comes when electoral politics have become irrelevant to power. But of course, there are many instances where the laws were carved with obvious partisan and strategic interests in mind, such as when the UK conservatives conceded to let wealthy older women vote at the same time that the other parties won manhood suffrage; or when Canadian women were not allowed to vote in province-level elections in Quebec at the same time that they won the federal vote. If elections did not matter, then it makes little sense for countries to allow men of the working

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<sup>26</sup>Boix 2003; Therborn 1977.

<sup>27</sup>The model’s intuitive appeal is hard to deny. We need only recall the England’s Glorious Revolution (1688), the French and American revolutions (1789), the Russian Revolution (1917) or the Chinese Revolution (1949), to agree that revolutionary unrest has existed and likely caused many momentous instances of regime change. This is true even though the revolutionary mechanism was not present in nineteenth century male franchise reform in the U.K. or the U.S. For example, Collier 1999; Haggard and Kaufmann 2012; Himmelfarb 1966; Keyssar 2000.

classes to vote but not allow women the same rights, especially in places where women were actually demanding the vote.

Finally there is the prominent argument that revolutionary unrest leads to enfranchisement. Because many of the world's revolutions have led to major changes in the electoral franchise, scholars have been right to focus on the importance of revolutionary unrest as one key driver of democratization.<sup>28</sup> But revolutionary unrest was not, strictly speaking, the major force behind women's enfranchisement. To begin, "militancy" as such did not exist at all in most countries in the world, including the early enfranchisers like New Zealand and Australia, any countries in Latin America, or the late enfranchisers like Portugal (1974) and Switzerland (1971).<sup>29</sup> In France, too, there

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<sup>28</sup>The usage of "revolutionary unrest" in the democratization literature definitely signals violent contestation. But there is an alternative account of what revolution means. Following McAdam et al., revolution is "a rapid, forcible, durable shift in collective control over a state that includes a passage through openly contested sovereignty," (1996: 24). Note that violence is neither necessary nor sufficient for revolution. Revolution, rather, is a re-ordering of the way that decisions are taken for the body politic. Pincus 2007: 398. In this sense, suffrage historians' treatment of militancy can fit a conception of revolutionary behavior, but it would not match the intonation of most of the democratization literature. For a treatment of non-violent revolutions in the late twentieth century, see Nepstad 2011.

<sup>29</sup>The "militant" wing of the suffrage movement – led by the famous Pankhurst family and the *Women's Social and Political Union* in the United Kingdom, and by Alice Paul and the Women's Freedom League in the United States – have been celebrated in recent popular movies about the suffrage movement. Thus it may come as a

was virtually no militant movement.<sup>30</sup> More importantly, even in suffrage movements with militant flanks, the actions of “suffragettes” were not revolutionary in the sense used by the literature on male enfranchisement. Instead, the militant suffragettes selectively used vio-

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surprise to some readers that militancy, as a form of revolutionary unrest, does not get credit for winning women the vote. For example *Iron Jawed Angels* (2004) about the United States and *Suffragette* (2015) about the militant movement in the United Kingdom.

<sup>30</sup>The few militants in France include Hubertine Auclert and Madeleine Pelletier. In 1876 Auclert formed the first sustaining French suffrage league, *Suffrage des femmes*, which was militant (in the sense of uncompromising) from the first. She encouraged women to stop paying taxes and organized public marches – which were uncommon in the French suffrage movement – and publicly burned pages of the *Code Napoleon*. Auclert’s violent actions began in 1908 with an attempt to knock down urns containing ballots filled out by men, but her organization had no more than 20 active followers, reaching 50 at most. Hause and Kenney 1984: 9, 47, 76, 102. In the United States militancy emerged after 1913 when Alice Paul returned from a study trip with the British militants and formed the Congressional Union, which later became the National Woman’s Party (Flexner 1995 [1959]: 276ff.) But the majority of states in the US gave women the vote prior to the founding of the NWP. In the United Kingdom, where the militant Women’s Social and Political Union gained 4,000 adherents by 1913, it is perhaps more difficult to discount the importance of militancy in driving suffrage reform. We can get part of the way by pointing out that in the same year the mainstream movement, lead by Millicent Garrett Fawcett and the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies, was, with 53,000

lence to gain inclusion in an established regime, albeit with substantive changes in political culture and the rules of the game. I return to the issue of revolutionary unrest in more depth in the book's conclusion. For now, I submit that to theorize elite incentives and the ultimate outcome of debates about women's enfranchisement requires thinking about how ordinary, non-violent mechanisms of contestation can play a role in democratizing reforms.<sup>31</sup> There are two questions: first, how do politicians make predictions about how a group as diverse and diffuse as women will behave politically? Second, under what conditions do the choices made by organized women influence the ultimate outcome of suffrage reform?

#### THE LOGIC OF WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

Electoral reforms can have many possible consequences. Adopting the secret ballot may embolden peasants to vote against their Lord's favored parties; adopting majoritarian electoral rules can drive people to vote strategically for larger parties that have a greater likelihood of winning; and allowing citizens to vote by mail can increase voter turnout in places where participation was previously low. The extension of the franchise is similar to these other electoral reforms insofar as it marks a change in the rules of the game that has the potential to upset the bases of political power in approaching elections. There is also a chance that longer-term changes will be set into motion, some

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members over 380 branches, vastly larger than the militant wing. Pugh 2000: table 8.4.

<sup>31</sup>See Teele 2014.

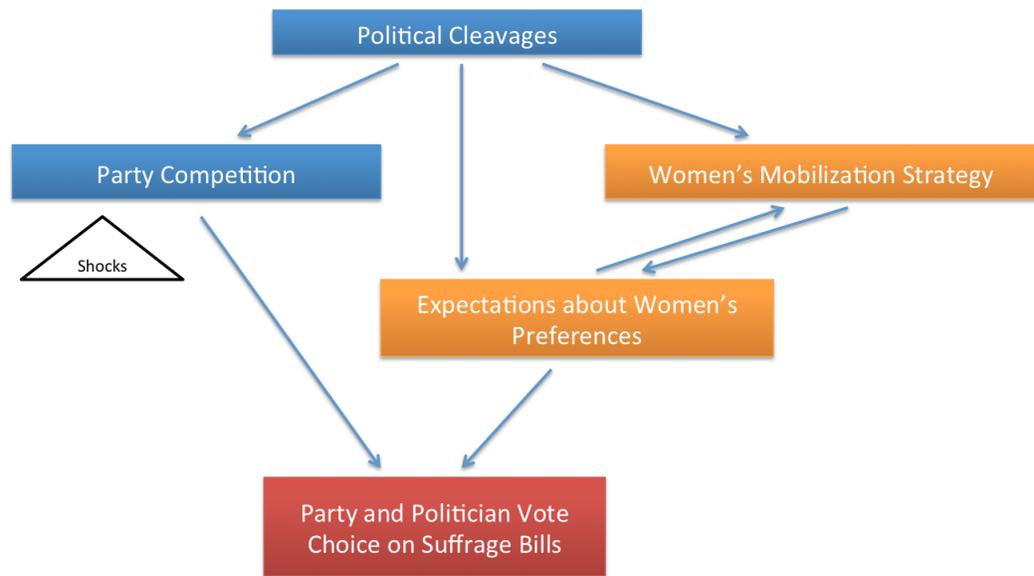


Figure 6: **The Logic of Suffrage.**

of which may be unpredictable *ex ante*.<sup>32</sup> Politicians will have some sense of uncertainty inherent in electoral reforms, and those that are satisfied with status quo policies will be much more likely to balk at reform. Suffragists, too, care about the uncertainty. Members of these groups voice explicit and implicit opinions and fears about the potential consequences of women's enfranchisement, and I contend that both groups' actions are consistent with trying to minimize their own uncertainty about politics after the vote is won. The conditions that ultimately produce or hinder reform stem from an *alignment of interests* between elected leaders and organized suffragists.

{figure 6 about here}

The basic outcome that I seek to explain is the extension, or the rejection, of voting rights to women in any given context. Countries that elect leaders tend to have many levels of franchise, and often women have been given local level participatory rights prior to na-

<sup>32</sup>Acemoglu and Robinson (2006) describe this as giving the people *de jure* and *de facto* power into the future.

tional rights, such as in school board elections, or at the municipal level. But even at the national level, which is the focus of this book, there are many examples of partial enfranchisement in limited democracies, such as in Norway in (1906) when only wealthy women were given the vote, or Chile in (1934) when the franchise was extended to literate women. In this sense, the explanandum is not only whether the vote was extended, but along what lines. To understand women's suffrage, we must consider which women are included and the basis of the law.

Figure 6 presents a schematic of the logic of women's suffrage. Political cleavages and party competition are two important background features in the politics of suffrage. Cleavages are deep-seated political conflicts that shape the lines of competition and ideational discourse about reform. [...] While competition describes the level of uncertainty in the electoral arena. In the long term, both cleavages and competition can be influenced by suffrage politics, but in any given year (or when studying any given suffrage bill) it is useful to think of the structure of political cleavages and the levels of competition as being determined "outside" the system. They are the crucial inputs that set the terms of debate and that influence the incentives of elected leaders and suffragists at any moment in time.

In what follows I describe the logic of the argument working from the bottom of the schematic in figure 6 to the top. Beginning with the preferences of parties and politicians, I theorize that electoral competition and expectations about how women will vote are the primary criteria that condition choices on reform bills. Expectations about how women will vote are themselves related to political cleavages, but they are also formed with reference to the strategies of mobilization employed by suffragists. Knowing about the big political cleavages – the issue areas, the partisan groupings that emerge around these issues,

and the geographic distribution of partisan support – tells politicians something about the distribution of women within groups defined by the extant cleavages. That is, how many new voters are associated with each group. But the old cleavages do not perfectly convey information about the new cleavage that emerges along with suffrage demands, namely the gender cleavage. The strategy of the suffragists can serve to reveal this information; the women that mobilize, and the issues they are fighting for can inform expectations about the preferences of women that are the most likely to be politically active once suffrage is extended. Mobilization can also establish gendered policy priorities that are not defined solely with reference to the old cleavage, allowing new coalitions to emerge between women across different groupings. The strategy of suffragists is, finally, related to female leaders' own concerns about the implications of voting rights for all women.

*Politician and Party Vote Choice on Suffrage*

In limited democracies – countries that have representative institutions but are far from mature electoral democracies – reform of electoral laws will sometimes require an amendment to the constitution, but will almost always require a bill to pass in the legislature, often in two chambers. Legislatures are comprised of elected leaders and, generally speaking, elected leaders will affiliate with specific political parties. All members of a given party may vote together on suffrage, or individual leaders may vote independently depending on the strength and cohesion of parties within the system.<sup>33</sup> To under-

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<sup>33</sup>I am not assuming that parties are mere aggregators of preferences, as the responsible party government model of E.E. Schattschneider (1942) would hold, nor do I agree fully with Joseph Schumpeter

stand suffrage expansion, both the overall position taken by political parties on the issue, as well as the choices made by individual members, are potentially of interest.

Strategic enfranchisement by elected leaders has two components: the electoral landscape in a given polity, and politicians' beliefs about the preferences of the new group of voters. Most theories of enfranchisement take for granted the idea that politicians will reform the law so long as they will win more votes under the new rules than they won under the old. But I propose that incumbents will be reluctant to enlarge the set of electors if they already have enough support to maintain power and to push their preferred policies through; politicians will only support reform, then, when they *need* new voters in order to win. As suggested by Carles Boix's discussion of the adoption of Proportional Representation in today's advanced democracies, parties can reform the nature of electoral institutions to insulate themselves from losses.<sup>34</sup> This is especially true because electoral reform has high costs: it can take precious legislative time away from other political priorities, and, because even sophisticated polling does not predict elections very well, reform is shrouded in a good deal of un-

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([1942] 1950: 263) who claimed that "the will of the people is the product and not the motive of power in the political process", but instead I lean toward the perspective that in the course of politics and over time, both party platforms and voters' preferences are subject to change, often based on how elites and identity groups interact with one another.

<sup>34</sup>As suggested by Carles Boix's discussion of the adoption of Proportional Representation in today's advanced democracies, parties can reform the nature of electoral institutions to insulate themselves from losses. Boix 1999, 2010.

Table 1: Electoral Incentives and Enfranchisement.

Leader/Party thinks it can mobilize women		Political Competition	
		Low	High
Yes		do nothing	<b>support</b>
No		resist	resist

Note: cells describe the action of any given legislator, which, when aggregated, will produce the average position on suffrage by a given party.

certainty. Thus politicians must face a real threat of losing power (or, if out of power, must have a chance to win it) to produce enough momentum for reform. In this sense, it is only when politicians are, or become, vulnerable to challengers that they might be willing to take a chance on enlarging the electorate. In addition, they will not support reform if they think the new group of voters will vote against their party.<sup>35</sup>

The schematic in table 1 helps to clarify the argument by specifying when individual legislators will support suffrage. The horizontal axis of table 1 displays the level of competition. When competition is high, incumbent leaders are insecure in their power, likely facing a real threat in the next election. Conversely, when competition is low, leaders may believe their position to be secure now and into the future. Arrayed on the vertical axis of table 1 are leaders' expectations about whether they will be able to mobilize women in coming elections. Inside the cells are predictions about a legislator's actions when the issue of franchise extension is brought to a debate.

{table 1 about here}

Basic rationality suggests that a legislator will always "resist" enfranchisement when he thinks he cannot win women's votes. This is

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<sup>35</sup>More specifically, they must perceive a net gain of votes, so that whatever new voters come to their party will not be washed out by the departure of current constituents.

the bottom row of the matrix. On the other hand, garnering support from female voters alone is not enough to prompt him to support enfranchisement. In the top left cell, when political competition is low, a leader will “do nothing” to change franchise rights because he is already secure in his position and perceives he will continue to hold power in the future. Because the leader is already winning, he has no reason to change the rules of the game; he will not play a card before he needs to. The only time a leader supports enfranchisement is when the top right cell is reached – that is, when he faces a high degree of competition and thinks he can court the new group of voters.

Because the electoral logic applies to individual legislators, and legislators tend to be members of parties, an aggregation of choices by individual members of parties can be interpreted as a given party’s overall choice. Party leaders will provide their members with a framework for thinking about the impact of suffrage reform, and when parties are strong and cohesive most members will vote the party line.<sup>36</sup> But even if party leaders believe that the party will, in general, benefit from reform, some individual legislators may not see it that way. In an environment where deviations from the party are common, that is, when parties are weaker and less cohesive, individual legislators may deviate from the party position based on values, or

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<sup>36</sup>There is a healthy debate about the influence of strong versus weak party systems on the quality of democracy. See Stokes (2001, ch. 4) for a review of the debate. In an analysis of policy switching, Stokes finds longevity, a proxy for strength, to be negatively related to renegeing on campaign promises once elected. In this sense strong parties may be good for democracy.

based on the distinctive incentives they face in their own districts.<sup>37</sup> Although there are examples of legislators refusing suffrage on moral grounds, and examples of politicians that supported suffrage because they believed in the justice no matter the effect, I contend, and hope to convince in the empirical chapters, that the majority of legislators with less extreme normative commitments voted based on partisan and individual-level incentives. In this sense, both party-level choices as well as individual politicians' decisions about suffrage should be conceived of as reflecting strategic calculations.<sup>38</sup>

The proposition that emerges from this discussion is that *political change should be unlikely when competition is low, but it becomes likelier*

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<sup>37</sup>Politicians' preferences do not perfectly overlap with the general position of the party, but party can trump preferences in key decisions (Ansolabehere et al. 2001). Deviation from the average party position may be more common in some legislative arenas, such as social policies, than in other arenas, like economic policy (Washington 2006).

<sup>38</sup>The logic can be as easily applied in cases when there are two parties as when they are three or more. Finally, legislative rules, which may make electoral reform more difficult if, for example, reform requires support by a "super"-majority. In this case, support for reform may be very high, and located in the expected places, but there may not be enough votes to see the bill passed. For example, amendments to New Mexico's state constitution were nearly impossible as they required three-fourths of the vote in both state legislative houses, three-fourths of the vote in a public referendum, and a two-thirds majority in each county. McConnaughy 2013, 196. McCammon and Campbell 2001 measure the ease of the amendment process in the United States but did not share their data with me.

*when competition is high. In high competition environments, the legislators and parties that think they can mobilize women will be more supportive of reform.*

#### *Expectations About Women's Votes*

The preceding discussion suggests that in contexts where political competition is robust, politicians are more likely to extend the franchise to women when they believe women can be mobilized for their group. There are scholarly debates about strategies of mobilization: whether parties target voters that comprise their “core” constituencies, or “swing” voters that can be swayed to vote for them, and whether they do this in safe districts or in swing districts.<sup>39</sup> These debates assume that parties already have a sense of the distribution of preferences across districts, possibly because they have observed voters’ behavior in previous elections. But a key issue with franchise extension is the prior question: what are the excluded group’s preferences?<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>In Gary Cox’s (2009) language, entrepreneurial politicians can “mobilize” supporters by increasing the turnout of those who are entitled to the vote but do not generally participate in politics, or they can try to “persuade” voters with weak political loyalties to join their cause. When none of these possibilities seem strategically appealing, politicians can also reform the rules governing who has the right to vote. In some situations, as Trounstein (2009) has shown for municipal reform movements in America after 1950, this means selectively *disenfranchising* certain groups.

<sup>40</sup>Ahmed 2013: 17ff contends that parties debating whether to adopt proportional electoral rules or majoritarian rules also worked to an-

In many accounts of enfranchisement it is assumed that men's preferences follow a known distribution. Studies that employ an "economic" model voting assume that people vote with their pocketbooks: those with high incomes will prefer a lower level of taxation and less redistribution, while those with lower incomes will prefer higher rates of taxation and more redistribution. When considering the enfranchisement of lower class men in this framework, the Meltzer-Richards theory suggests that working class voters will be more sympathetic to leftist parties. A corollary of this preference would hold that leftist parties should be more supportive of universal franchise reform. This simple but powerful idea has spurred an enormous amount of scholarship that debates whether working classes do naturally prefer parties with redistributive platforms.<sup>41</sup> If we assume men are economic voters, the question is whether women's preferences hew to the same distribution. Clearly, parties and politicians debating suffrage reform will care about both the average and the variance of the distribution of women's preferences. But the issues that define women's preference distribution may or may not be the same as the issues that define male political preferences.

Since women are located in all households, and they are members of all classes, races, and ethnic groups, we might imagine that their preferences map directly onto the preferences of the already existing electorate. That is, that female voters would merely double the vote for each party. On the other hand, if women are deemed more socially conservative or religious than men on average, then their votes might tilt toward the conservative end of the spectrum. Finally, it is

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ticipate the electoral outcomes associated with these different systems.

<sup>41</sup>Roemer.

also possible that women would be more supportive, on average, of leftist parties. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women were often restricted in making economic transactions, they could not necessarily retain or manage the wealth they brought to marriage, and were legally not in control their earnings once married. For these reasons, women's class positions may not be directly related to the class position of men in their households. Their economic vulnerability might drive them to support a more generous social safety net and parties on the left. Politicians in many countries voiced each of these concerns – that women are the same as men, that they are more conservative, or that they are more liberal. Each prediction is potentially viable.

Depending on contemporaries' views about women's political preferences, that is, which view is the most prominent, strategic enfranchisement will entail distinctive predictions about the parties that support reform. Thinking through predictions about women's future behavior also helps to set bounds on the conditions under which we can expect reform to materialize. My contention is that if politicians think women will double the vote, they will not extend the franchise when competition is fierce because there is no clear benefit to reform and a good deal of uncertainty. If the vote is extended in high competition environments, this undermines the very idea that women would double the vote.

This argument deserves unpacking, as it provides a key theoretical tension between the strategic account here and the most recent major book in political science on women's enfranchisement. In an expansive text on state-level suffrage in the United States, Corinne McConaughy argues, first, that many politicians expected women to replicate their husband's votes. And second, that in light of this belief women would not have been a solid bloc of voters for any

party. Under these conditions, suffrage would not have mattered for electoral politics and hence suffrage extension could not have been “strategic.”<sup>42</sup> It is true, as McConnaughy suggests, that plenty of contemporaries espoused the double-the-vote theory. Many also, as she states, voiced the idea that women would be distinctive voters. In

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<sup>42</sup>E.g. McConnaughy (2013: 262). The argument is nuanced – while McConnaughy presents evidence that some politicians did hope to strategically enfranchise women, she finds that these arguments were not ultimately what won the day. Thus women’s enfranchisement could be forestalled by fears about the women’s vote going for the other party, but it could not be propelled by the prospect of winning women’s favor alone. McConnaughy thus draws a firm line between her articulated “programmatically” explanation of women’s suffrage against a more “strategic” account. But her version of a “strategic” account is unnecessarily stringent. It requires only one party, with the capacity to change the laws, to believe it can win women’s votes. But in weak party systems, like the Western US states that she studies, individual legislators can vote against the party position to suit their own purposes. Hence a single party need not have all the power to change the law for reform to work. McConnaughy’s theory further requires that the information parties have about women’s preferences is credible, i.e. close to the truth. Finally her argument is designed for a two-party system. Although there were two dominant parties in most of the US in that period, similarly in the UK, the challenge posed by outsider parties are key to the story in all the countries that I study, and third parties are in fact crucial to McConnaughy’s argument as well as many other historians’ accounts of the United States, e.g. Mead 2004, Snider 2008.

the historiography of the United States, most scholars who describe the double-the-vote argument attribute this claim to anti-suffragists, people who decried the need for women's suffrage because women would vote just like men.<sup>43</sup> The fact that both arguments were present suggests that there was much more uncertainty about women's preferences than McConnaughy's model allows for. But certainty is a steep requirement, especially in a setting like the early twentieth century when sophisticated polling had not been developed. If we make the more realistic assumption that there was some degree of uncertainty about whether women really would double the vote, a competitive environment should only produce reform if one or another party believes it has a better chance of mobilizing women. The evidence in McConnaughy's book that competition often precedes reform therefore undermines the very idea that women would double the vote: if it is the case that politicians are more likely to extend the vote when politics are competitive, a logical prior belief is that they could not have expected women to vote exactly like men. Otherwise, there would have been no benefit at all and a considerable amount of risk in the action; a reform which will *probably* double the vote will likely introduce too much uncertainty for the risk to be worth taking. On the other hand, if parties think that the distribution of women's preferences does not perfectly mirror men's, then the party that thinks it can capture a larger share of women's votes should, under conditions of high competition, support electoral reform.

In the comparative context, there is ample evidence that party elites and suffragists expected the female vote to be different from the male

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<sup>43</sup>Schuyler 2008: 28-9. Alpern and Baum 1985: 47 suggest that prior to women's enfranchisement in the US many contemporaries believed women would vote differently than men, but then afterwards this was reversed people thought wives voted like their husbands.

vote. It was, moreover, precisely because suffragists felt that women had political priorities that could not be represented by men that they desired the vote in the first place.<sup>44</sup> Looking beyond the boundaries of the United States, there are many instances in which politicians voiced concern with the direction of the female vote. One telling example comes from communication between Lord Onslow, the British Governor of New Zealand, and Minister Hall, a creole representative in the New Zealand legislature.<sup>45</sup> Before the first election that included women Onslow wrote, “It will of course very largely affect the attitude which we in the Conservative party [in the UK] may take in respect to women’s suffrage when we learn in what matter it operates in N.Z.”<sup>46</sup> In other words, British MPs prepared to look at women’s voting behavior in New Zealand to draw inferences about how women would vote in the UK, and use this assessment to guide their own thoughts about allowing women to vote.<sup>47</sup> And male politicians went to great lengths to pronounce upon what the votes of women would be, some seeing promise for themselves – the Liberals in New Zealand were sure women would champion liberal causes

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<sup>44</sup>Gustafson 2001: 133-4. Corder and Wolbrecht 2016: 131-135.

<sup>45</sup>‘Creole’ is used here to mean a person of European descent born in a colonial periphery. The term is borrowed from Benedict Anderson and Simon (2017).

<sup>46</sup>Grimshaw (1972: quoted on p. 104).

<sup>47</sup>Of course, the comparison between New Zealand and the UK seems rather problematic given the more compressed political- and class-structure in New Zealand than in the UK, which made the Conservatives in the colony closer to the Liberals in the Metropole, and the Liberals in the colony closer to the British Radicals (Grimshaw 1972: 47).

and improve charity and welfare – and others seeing doom – Radical party members in both France and Mexico were sure that women would be swayed by the low murmurs of the confessional and give rise to a clerical constitutionalism, or worse, a return to absolutism. In the United States there were great fears that women would vote for prohibition, and politicians whose coffers were routinely filled by the liquor lobby were concerned for their own political fortunes if they supported extending the franchise.<sup>48</sup>

The fact that politicians expected women to vote distinctively, but in some places thought women would be more conservative, while in others thought women would be more liberal, raises the possibility of strategic enfranchisement based on local expectations about how women would vote. This argument does not require that party actors have *correct* information to have strong beliefs. And, multiple parties can incorrectly believe that they will have an advantage in mobilizing women's votes. The important point for strategic enfranchisement is simply that party actors make the best choices they can given whatever beliefs they have.

It follows that *in places where a common view is that women are more conservative, right parties that are vulnerable to competition should promote women's inclusion, while in places where women are deemed more progressive should produce support for reform by left groups when competition is high.*

#### *Women's Mobilization Strategy*

The schematic in figure 6 suggests that expectations about women's votes are generated in relation to political cleavages and women's

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<sup>48</sup>See chapter 4.

strategies of mobilization. Political cleavages inform beliefs both because actors have intuitions about how these cleavages are translated into electoral politics, and because they have some sense of the geography and density of political groups across these cleavages. Women's mobilizational efforts can help shape expectations about women's political preferences by revealing which women are likely to be politically active once the vote is extended, and by increasing awareness about the issues that pertain to women in the public sphere. These efforts influence suffrage politics through two channels: by generating information about women's future political loyalties, and by creating opportunities for alliances with other political actors.

Although this book is primarily concerned with how mobilization on behalf of the right to vote influenced politicians' decisions about whether to extend the vote, the use in the schematic of "women's mobilization strategies" instead of "suffragist mobilization strategies" serves as an important reminder that not all women who organized around the issue of suffrage were suffragists. In fact, there were many women who were prominent leaders in the anti-suffrage camp, a seeming irony that has been the subject of several great books.<sup>49</sup> The phenomenon of female anti-suffragism, which Susan Marshall explains by reference to the "gender class position" of elite women, is actually quite useful for thinking about the tensions that emerge among women who do want to vote. Put simply, some women may want *to* vote, even if they do not want *the* vote.

For women who want to vote, their mobilization strategy will be influenced by political cleavages and by their expectations about the policy preferences of the average woman that would be included as a result of electoral reform. In countries where the male franchise was limited, elite women might be prefer to argue for a narrow reform on

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<sup>49</sup>Camhi 1994; Marshall 1997.

the same terms as men. Kenya and South Africa are both examples where white women and, in Kenya, Asian women, were given voting privileges long before the majority African population, male or female, was enfranchised. But in countries where the male franchise was expansive, suffragists may not have been able to justify a narrow reform. Legal and normative barriers might preclude an extension of the vote that was subject to restrictions along the line of class, race, literacy, and so on. In places where restrictions were infeasible, the vote would have to be extended to all women, or to none. Here, the informational problem involved in understanding women's preferences would loom larger, especially if very deep group and gender cleavages separated social groups and women within them. Political actors could not look only to elite women's preferences to learn about the future female vote; instead, they must try to get a sense of what all women want.

In manhood franchise cases, politicians would have to learn about the full distribution of women's preferences in order to be able to make well-informed decisions, a requirement, in other words, that the suffrage movement be big. But the formation of a broad movement is no easy task. First because the cultivation of a feminist consciousness is undermined by "cross-cutting" nature of the gender cleavage. And second is the fact that enfranchisement is not a single reform, but instead brings with it many potential changes in the nature of politics thereafter.

#### *Cross-Cutting Cleavages and Group Consciousness*

In a seminal book on political development, Seymour Lipset and Stein Rokkan (1967) famously argued party systems and electoral institutions are influenced by the nature of political cleavages in a given country. Partisan power and group representation emerge based

on whether and how social movements can harness groups that fall within society's various cleavages. Harmonious political development can be undermined by cleavages that cut across group members such as ethnic and linguistic heritage, nationality, and other sources of political identity. Although their focus was not on gender, we can think of the difficulty of women's collective identification and collective action as similarly related to the cross-cutting nature of gender. Gender cross-cuts all other cleavages because, given the nature of human reproduction hitherto, and historical patterns of household formation, women exist within all of a society's groups. As Erving Goffman writes, what is curious about women as a "sex-class" is that because of their deep ties to non-women, they are "separated from one another by the stake they acquire in the very organization which divides them."<sup>50</sup> Loyalty to one's menfolk may lead a woman to see herself as a person whose grievances are linked to the marginalization of her religion, or to her linguistic traditions, rather than as a Dutch speaker whose gender inhibits her free movement.

It is generally thought that group consciousness – a politicized awareness of membership and commitment to collective action – requires a non-trivial number of people to identify with the group.<sup>51</sup> Because women do not automatically identify primarily with other women, as the vast literature on intersectionality reminds us, it takes considerable work to cultivate a form of group consciousness that can be translated into collective action.<sup>52</sup> As with other social cleavages, if

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<sup>50</sup>Goffman 1977: 308.

<sup>51</sup>Conover 1988, 53.

<sup>52</sup>Intersectionality invokes the idea that women are not a unified group, but have unique experiences of the social and institutional world depending on multiple ascriptive identities (among others, see Crenshaw 1989). Women's intersectionality has implications not

women's social networks are highly stratified, then this might reduce any given woman's sense that she has things in common with women from other groups, and limit her ability to conceive of their shared commonalities as grievances against patriarchy, firms, or the state. In this sense, the problem of organizing women is not simply one of finding selective incentives to dole out to group members, as Mancur Olson might see it, but rather that the very idea that women form a group at all is questionable. In fact, women may be fundamentally difficult to mobilize for feminist initiatives precisely because gender may well be *the* most cross-cutting cleavage.<sup>53</sup>

*Women as future voters*

At the same time that cleavages impinge on women's identification with other women, ideas about women's future political preferences

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only for suffrage politics, but also for inquiries into institutional design such as how to increase women's representation in politics (Htun 2004, 441).

<sup>53</sup>A feminist identity emerges when people come to see their primary aim as contesting women's social and economic subordination to men. Although women's movements can take on feminist aims, and feminist movements can alter goals toward reconciling other social injustices, we can distinguish women's movements more generally from those with specifically feminist aims. Ferree and Mueller (2004, 577). This distinction recognizes that women have historically been mobilized as women in order to contest any number of social ills, such as health, child care, education, sanitation, and spiritual issues, while specifying that feminist movements are specifically concerned with contesting injustices that relate to gendered divisions of institutions, resource allocations, and status.

will also influence women's mobilization strategy. In countries with an expansive male franchise, an activist's decision over whether to mobilize for voting rights reform requires that she think through the potential political consequences of including all women – many of whom will not share her same values or policy priorities – in the electorate. To choose to mobilize for a broad reform (for example, one which included all women) would require activists to prioritize contesting patriarchy over pursuing other social reforms. Activists would have to see and argue that the issues that lie along the intersecting line of “women's interests” are more important than those that lie in the other planes of identity that the women occupy.

We see these tensions at play in the organization of women both against and for their own inclusion. In her book on the anti-suffrage campaign in the United States, Susan Marshall argues that the anti-suffrage ideology was driven by a desire of upper class women to preserve their positions of privilege. “Close to the centers of power, they perceived no need of the ballot for themselves, and, like many men of their class, regarded a mass electorate as a threat to their way of life.”<sup>54</sup> The impulse toward class preservation was so strong that by 1920 the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage boasted of 700,000 members countrywide. But as Marshall notes, and as we will see in the chapter on the United States, elitism and other pernicious ideologies were also keystones of the pro-suffrage campaign. Ellen Carol DuBois, one of the premier historians of the US suffrage movement, agrees: “The problem for elite suffragists was that woman suffrage meant the enfranchisement of working-class, as well as elite, women,” (1987: 38). Suffrage mobilization was therefore constrained by the very factors that gave rise to anti-suffragism amongst women,

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<sup>54</sup>Marshall 1997:5.

namely whether the potential costs of enfranchising a diverse group of women was worth the vote.

This idea is put succinctly by 1908 article in the *New Ireland Review*:

[T]here are first the women who want to vote at any price; there are second the women who don't want the vote at any price; and third the women who want the vote but are prepared to pay only a certain price for it.<sup>55</sup>

A sense of the 'price' of suffrage would influence whether suffrage leaders would mobilize narrowly for their cause and risk non-reform, or mobilize broadly and risk the down-stream political effects of the reform. Even women who believe that they share some common interests with women from other cleavage groups, and who want the right to vote in theory, may not want voting rights at the expense of other political priorities. That is, gendered-class positions, or gendered-racial positions, can generate strong incentives against collective action even among people who think that they should have the right to vote. Concretely, *diversity among women can influence the size of the women's movement. In political contexts with deep group cleavages, elite women may a narrow movement and seek limited reform. In circumstances where a broad reform is the only option, a larger movement will be necessary for reform to emerge.*

#### *Ordinary Democratization*

Expectations about women as future voters shape women's mobilization for suffrage and the incentives that politicians face when confronting a bill for women's suffrage. When a movement's demands match politicians' interests in a moment of heightened competition,

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<sup>55</sup>Quoted in Kelly (1996: 34).

an alignment of interests between these two groups can produce suffrage reform. The conditions under which interests align – when the suffrage movement has mobilized enough members to provide a good sense of women’s political preferences, and when the preferences that are revealed by these efforts appeal to a party or parties that are vulnerable to electoral competition – are possibly quite rare. This, then, can help to explain the often long separation between an early demand for voting rights by a small group of women in country with a relatively expansive male franchise, and a much later date final date of reform.

This account is designed to explain the actual historical unfolding of women’s suffrage in limited democracies, both within countries and also across them. The argument is congruent with much of what we know about democratization of lower class men and with many accounts of how women’s movements make strides within states. Within limited democracies, political parties are often seen as key barriers to the advancement of women’s interests, but women’s movements that take strictly “outsider” positions – that do not attempt to lobby or form alliances with political insiders – fail.<sup>56</sup> Parties act as gatekeepers insofar as they want all successful candidates to emerge from within their ranks, and because they want to determine and get credit for both distributive and programmatic disbursements. To succeed in producing gender-related policy reform, then, networks of feminists have to find partisan actors with whom their priorities “fit”, a difficult task if feminist demands run counter to the interests of major political institutions such as political parties or religious bodies.<sup>57</sup> In many contexts, feminists forge easier alliances with progressive

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<sup>56</sup>Beckwith 2000: 493; Chowdhury et al. 1994: 18; Friedman 2000: 20; Rucht 2000: 29.

<sup>57</sup>Htun 2003.

opposition parties, and they tend to gain concessions from these parties in moments when the political opportunity structure shifts, such as during a political realignment.<sup>58</sup>

Ultimately, change could only come when three things happened. First, women had to mobilize outside of parlors and exert pressure beyond sharply worded editorials and letters to political leaders. That is, they had to form a core cadre of suffragists that applied insider tactics. They did so this by utilizing an elitist argument that courted privileged women from across the parties. This was crucial for convincing politicians that women actually wanted the vote, but also for communicating information about the political desires of the group. Second, they had to accrue some successes. As we will see, they had the greatest impact in places where the partisan loyalties and party power itself was in greater flux. In places where power was entrenched, the risk of enfranchising women far outweighed the benefits for dominant parties. Finally, they had to coalesce around a push for a national level reform instead of settling on local level enfranchisement.

The dynamic I describe between the competitive landscape and women's mobilization finds parallels in other major works on gender and politics. In her study of Chilean women's movements, Lisa Baldez (2002) shows that the political opportunity afforded by a period of partisan realignment allowed both conservative and progressive women's organizations to coalesce into mass mobilization. In a similar vein, Anna Harvey (1996) demonstrates that the realignment of American parties in the late 1960s provided new avenues for independent women's organizations to press for reforms, resulting in several policy concessions that the women's movement was unable to secure in the previously stable party environment. As both of

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<sup>58</sup>Alvarez 1990; Baldez 2002: 7; Beckwith 2003: 200.

these studies highlight, the competitive conditions that led to partisan realignment provided fertile ground for organized segments of women's movements to press for political demands. By these lights, women's mobilization can become a more effective tool to secure voting rights reform when competition is robust. Though not revolutionary in character, the logic of women's suffrage will likely resonate with other ordinary forms of democratic transformation.

### *Methodological Approach*

Empirically, the argument outlined above leads to several logical implications that should be borne out in actual struggles for the equal franchise. On the most basic level, concerns about women as political actors should appear in the conversations of suffragists and politicians alike. Second, enfranchisement of women should become likelier in conditions of marked political competition. Third, party-level support for suffrage should be traceable to overall perceptions about how women would vote. And finally, the strategies of organized movements should reflect these strategic considerations. We should see movements responding to barriers in the electoral realm by working to changing perceptions and beliefs, and by forming alliances that can help to bolster the power of allies.

Casting the argument in this way allows for it to be corroborated (or discredited) at several levels of relief. On the micro-level, we should find evidence that suffragists and politicians were thinking about and concerned with the electoral implications of women's votes. Exploring, on the meso-level, the behavior of individual parties, we should find support for reform coming from parties that believe they will benefit from the additional voters, whereas parties that do not foresee such advantage should resist extending the franchise. Finally, on

the macro-level, that is, through large-n there should be evidence that higher competition and larger movements combined to produce suffrage reform.

The following chapters, on the United Kingdom, the United States, and France, respectively, provide evidence for the logic of women's suffrage on both the micro- and the meso-level. The chapter on the United States also provides macro-level evidence through an analysis of the link between political competition and women's mobilization across the states over a period of 40 years. Each chapter considers a country on its own, and dedicates substantial space to explaining the institutional context in which suffrage reform was debated took place, and lays out the landscape of policy options being debated in each country.<sup>59</sup> The exploration of feminist mobilization will be discursive, drawing on the tools of process tracing to reconstruct key moments in women's mobilization utilizing primary and secondary sources on the suffrage movement. The link between mobilization and politicians' decisions on when to reform will be made both with reference to actual debates, but also using quantitative data on suffrage reform. Although some of the inferences that I draw stem from techniques of regression analysis, a thorough presentation of these results is confined to the online appendix and a previously published article on the United States.<sup>60</sup> The dynamics of suffrage are then explored during potential episodes of reform, that is, moments in which

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<sup>59</sup>Here I take up Kreuzer's (2010) call for a more thorough dialogue between qualitative and quantitative research and historical knowledge.

<sup>60</sup>See Teele 2018.

Table 2: **Argument and the Cases.**

	Incumbent Strength	
	Strong	Weak
Incumbent thinks it can mobilize women	US Southern Democrats (resist)	<b>US West Parties (support)</b> <b>UK Labor 1918 (support)</b>
Incumbent does not think it can mobilize women	US North (resist)	French Radicals III Republic (resist) UK Liberals 1906 (resist)

suffrage bill has the potential to become law.<sup>61</sup> As much emphasis is given to episodes in which suffrage fails as to those when suffrage passes, as each give us insight into how mobilization strategies and expectations about women’s political preferences inform politicians’ decisions.

{table 2 about here}

The logical implications of the theory correspond to the qualitative and quantitative evidence that I provide through case studies of the United States, France, and Great Britain. Figure 2 gives a rough guide to how the theory fits with the evidence. The study of the United States provides ample evidence in a large-n investigation for the importance of robust political competition in allowing for voting rights reform. Democrats in the US south were invulnerable to external challengers, and so the fact that southern white women would support their party was irrelevant. They would resist reform and support the status quo. In the Northeast US, political parties and machines believed women to have preferences different from their base constituents, and resisted reform as a result. In the Western US, on the other hand, parties were much more competitive and the movement, though smaller than in the East, was able to capitalize on shifts in political power to win the vote.

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<sup>61</sup>For a discussion of “episode” analysis, see Capoccia and Ziblatt (2010).

Moving eastward across the Atlantic, an analysis of French legislative politics shows how, in a context of political weakness, an incumbent will fight against reform when it believes the disfranchised are not natural political allies. Though the Radical party was vulnerable in the Chamber of Deputies, it had enough power in the Senate to block women's enfranchisement. Finally, the chapter on the United Kingdom gives very detailed evidence about why and how a suffrage movement decides to intervene in the electoral arena, arguing that Liberal suffrage leaders decided that victory was worth the cost of aligning with the Labour party to secure reform. Through a clever cross-cleavage electoral strategy, the movement expanded its base and made credible its commitment to helping Labour win. Together, the political circumstances of women's enfranchisement in these three countries demonstrate the importance of political cleavages, party competition and women's mobilization in catalyzing voting rights reform.