

DAWN LANGAN TEELE



FORGING THE FRANCHISE

The Political Origins of the Women's Vote

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1

Introduction

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 sexes. But once upon a time, albeit not very long ago, the rights and privileges associated with political membership applied only to men. 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 marching on the Bastille, and invaluable supporters in the supply chains of revolution, women played significant roles in democracy's origins.¹ 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 1893.² Since then, though, voting rules across the world have shifted dramatically toward political equality of the sexes. 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?

¹ Women have played important roles in democratization and revolution. See Baldez 2002; Friedman 2000; Flexner 1995: ch1; Jayawardena 1986; Macías 1982; Montes-de-Oca-O'Reilly 2005.

² The Isle of Man, in 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 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 HMS *Bounty* mutiny. Numbering 194 in 1856, they maintained the female franchise upon their relocation to Norfolk Island.

The emergence of democratic governments and industrialization are background features in the story of women's political inclusion. As figure 1.1 shows, the pattern of women's enfranchisement mimics the pattern of democratization more generally, with distinctive spells surrounding the 1920s, 1940s, and 1960s.³ In the early period, 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 combinations of the other three appeared, often due to multiple transitions between political regimes (14 percent).⁴

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.⁵ Countries like Finland

³ The figure depicts the decade of the first major legislative reform that allowed most women to vote. In all, I was able to find and cross-check this information for 172 of today's countries. Existing literature on the granting of women's suffrage (Paxton and Hughes 2016; Przeworski 2009), almanacs (Martin 2000), and data handbooks (Nohlen 2005; Nohlen et al. 1991, 2001), provide conflicting dates of the female franchise. At times these inconsistencies are due to simple error (particularly in Przeworski 2009), or 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 as those regarding literacy, age, or, as in the case of Bulgaria, marital status (Hannam et al. 2000: 45). My coding tries to 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.

⁴ 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. (2013), Caramani (2004), Mackie and Rose (1991), and Colomer (2016). Dates of independence and colonial relations are from the CIA Factbook.

⁵ Loos 2004.

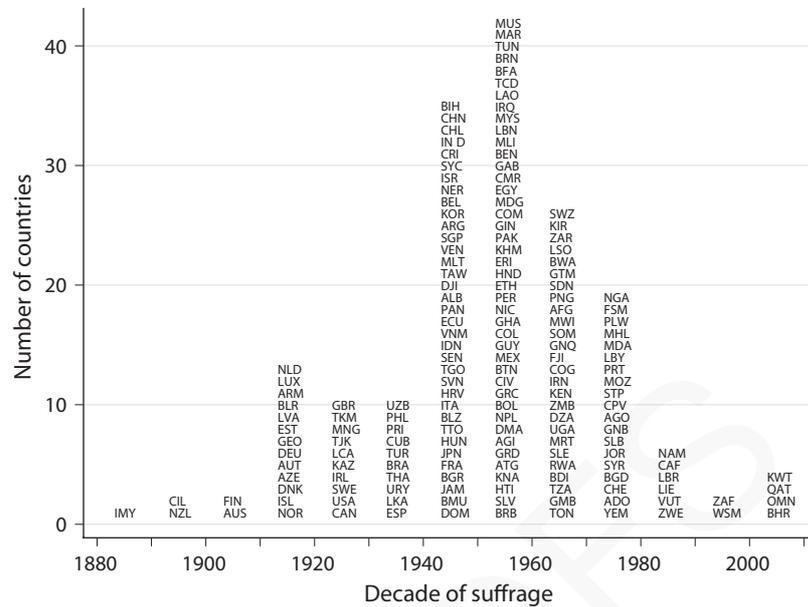


FIGURE 1.1. “Listogram” of Women’s Enfranchisement by Decade. The figure displays a three-letter code for each country and the decade in which women were enfranchised. The y-axis counts the number of such extensions per decade. The countries lower down in each column extended the vote earlier in the decade than those higher up.

in 1906, or several states in the Caucasus from 1917 to 1919, just prior to the emergence of the Soviet Union, also followed the universalist path.⁶ The *imposed route* to suffrage arose 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,

⁶ For a variety of reasons, founding moments that occurred after 1945 typically produced constitutions that included universal franchise rights for men and 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. Finally, see Marino (2018) on the Latin American origins of Pan-American feminism.

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.⁷ Examples of the gradualist path include Sweden, Mexico, and the United States.⁸ 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, after several bouts of manhood suffrage in the mid nineteenth century, successfully maintained it beginning in the 1870s but denied women the vote until the Fourth Republic was established, and Japan, which allowed men to vote in the early twentieth century, but where the United States, as an occupying power after the Second World War, pushed for the reform in its postwar 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.⁹ The universalist path is most often associated with having transitioned from authoritarian or monarchial 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

⁷ 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).

⁸ 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.

⁹ There are some documented reversals in women's right to participate. In the medieval 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 Québec) 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, chapter 2.

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.¹⁰ In contrast to non-democratic systems, in limited democracies a reorganization 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

¹⁰ 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 concept 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.

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 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 determined which forms of women's enfranchisement would have been considered legally and normatively feasible, and influenced the ideas that both suffragists and politicians had about the political ramifications of women's enfranchisement. Both suffragists and politicians were concerned with the impact of women's votes—suffragists because their interests along dimensions other than gender may have been better served by keeping other women from voting, and politicians because their very seats were at stake if the new voters were not natural allies. The uncertainty surrounding women's future loyalties drove a bias toward the status quo electoral rules that could only be overcome when competition was high or during a moment of political realignment. Competition and the threat of losing power inspired entrepreneurial thinking among elected leaders, as it put them in a situation where they needed more votes in order to win. But it was only if at least one political group thought it would have a mobilizational advantage among the new electorate that electoral reform became a political possibility.

The information that politicians had about women's future political loyalties depended 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 crosscutting 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 decided to pursue a broad movement and mobilize across political cleavages, this was a signal that elite women's preferences were 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 have been up for grabs. In this sense, suffrage mobilization was a demonstration of the potential voting power of the group, and when there was 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 used information generated by observing and interacting with the suffrage movement to inform their understanding of which women were likely to be politically active in the event of reform. In general, the conditions under which reform was likeliest was when politics was highly competitive and when a political group with enough power to change the laws believed it could capture the majority of women's votes. A key finding of this work is that parties rejected bills related to voting rights reform either because they did not think the disfranchised groups would support them, or because they did not need the extra votes in order to win.

These general arguments can help to shed light on 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.¹¹ 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.¹² Instead, women were included

¹¹ As Krook (2010: 208ff) suggests for the adoption of electoral gender quotas, there are arguably multiple causal pathways to women's suffrage.

¹² 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 a 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 a second reading. In 1904 a suffrage rally in Helsinki drew 1,000 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

because of their ties to the anti-imperial movement before 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.¹³

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)—which were first-wave adopters of the franchise.¹⁴ Moreover, Catholic women in Switzerland tended to be 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

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 Empire. See Anthony et al. 1969 volume VI: ch. LIII; Collier 1999: 35; Ray 1918.

¹³ 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 for certain political parties of including women, 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.

¹⁴ 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 2000: 34; Cook 2002: 88.

cross-cantonal strategy with large-scale mobilization and direct action tactics helped most Swiss women gain political rights.¹⁵

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 that women would vote for the Conservative Party.¹⁶ 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 Québécois suffragist convinced the ousted Liberal leaders that women's suffrage, and the votes of women, would benefit their party in the coming elections.¹⁷ Thus, after two decades of voting in federal elections, in 1940 Québécois 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.¹⁸ In 1900, all three countries

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

¹⁶ Dupont 1972: 415. Dumas 2016.

¹⁷ Genest 1996: 112. The suffragists may have been mistaken, as that was the last election the Liberals would win until 1960.

¹⁸ Offen 2000 is the major text on feminist political thought in Europe. 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 rostrum" (Hause and Kenney 1984: 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* (1989, original 1869), long thought to have been influenced through his relationship with the able Harriet Taylor (see Holton 1986: ch 1). Finally, the

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 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 1944.¹⁹ A central project of this book is explaining these divergent outcomes.

Any expert on the US, France, or the UK might aver that these distinctive 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 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, and 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. That France fell behind might be attributed to Catholic ideology and the relegation of women to the

famous 1848 Women's Rights Convention, which took place at Seneca Falls, New York, produced a second *Declaration of the Rights of Woman*, spurring the formation of the world's first organized movement for women's suffrage (see Flexner 1995: ch. X).

¹⁹ 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.

“private” sphere. And indeed, at the dawn of the twentieth century, given the legacy of the Catholic Church and Napoléon 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 pregnant French women were not easy to force out of their jobs.²⁰ Moreover, women’s overall level of economic participation in France was quite high, including by married French women, who were two times more likely to work outside the home than married women in the other two countries.²¹ 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.²² 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 suffragists’ strategies. In other Catholic countries such as Austria, where the church and state were initially aligned, women won national level voting rights in 1918.²³ In other words, political cleavages influenced popular perceptions 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

²⁰ See Morgan 2006: 43. See Goldin (1994: 160ff) on “marriage bars,” policies that effectively kicked women out of companies when they married. These practices did not decline in the US until the 1950s, and eventually became illegal.

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

²² See Pedersen 2014: 38 and Clark 1984: table 1.

²³ 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, as does Htun (2003) for understanding the complex politics of divorce, abortion, and women’s civil rights in Latin America.

power in the upper chamber of the legislature throughout the 1920s and 1930s, 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.²⁴ I rely, finally, on several rich texts on women and politics that have theorized the conditions under which women's movements can best

²⁴ These insights come from three waves of historical scholarship on women's suffrage. 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 Holton (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), McConnaughy (2013), McDonagh and

contest exclusion to describe the way in which political competition and women's mobilization together form a logic of suffrage reform.²⁵

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. These chapters suggest that the confluence of a targeted movement strategy and 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 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.

Price 1985, McDonagh (1989, 2002), 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.

²⁵ E.g., Baldez 2002, Htun 2003, Beckwith 2014, and Friedman 2000.

4

Remember the Ladies: Competition and Mobilization in the United States

In a well-known letter written to her husband, then a delegate to the 1776 Continental Congress, Abigail Adams implored the future president to “remember the ladies and be more favorable and generous to them than your ancestors.”¹ She meant, by this, that the congressional delegates should remember the many sacrifices that women had made for the sake of their country’s independence, and therefore reward women with more freedom under the new regime than they had enjoyed under the old.

Despite Abigail Adams’s exhortation, the constitution written down by the founders after the Revolutionary War was won made only two provisions for the electoral franchise, neither of which made full citizens of American women. Article I, Section 2 established that whoever was eligible to vote for the “most numerous” office in each federal state would be allowed to vote for the national House of Representatives;² and Article II, Section 1 established that state legislatures had the power to choose the president’s electors. After the founding, nearly 144 years passed before an amendment was ratified by the federal government that declared that voting rights could not be withheld on the basis of sex.

Decentralized authority over voting rights in the states prompted early activists to pursue a multi-faceted strategy: from school boards and municipal councils to state legislatures and branches of the judiciary, suffragists sought the right to vote at all levels of government.³ Carrie Chapman Catt, the architect of the successful push for the Nineteenth

¹ 31 March 1776. Quoted in Butterfield et al. 2002: 121.

² Under the state legislature’s discretion a person who could vote for the state House could vote for the national House. Until the Seventeenth Amendment provided for “direct” election in 1913, national senators were chosen by state legislatures.

³ Note that the term “suffragist” refers to movement activists who used legal means to pursue reform, while “suffragette” is generally reserved to describe militant activists. Over time, specific organizations and members could cross or straddle these boundaries.

Amendment, recalled that to get the word “male” out of the US constitution required:

fifty-six campaigns of referenda to male voters; 480 campaigns to urge Legislatures to submit suffrage amendments to voters; 47 campaigns to induce State constitutional conventions to write woman suffrage into State constitutions; 277 campaigns to persuade State party conventions to include woman suffrage planks; 30 campaigns to urge presidential party conventions to adopt woman suffrage planks in party platforms, and 19 campaigns with 19 successive Congresses.⁴

These thousands of appeals for suffrage at the state level gave policymakers ample opportunity to reform or to resist voting rights expansion. Along with many other suffragists, Catt saw political parties as a key obstacle to women’s inclusion. She continued, “During this long stretch of time, the dominant political parties, pitted against each other since 1860, used their enormous organized power to block every move on behalf of woman suffrage.”⁵ In other words, the dominant parties did everything in their power to prevent changes to the status quo.⁶ In addition to resistance by political parties, a vibrant anti-suffrage movement worked to prevent women’s political inclusion.⁷

It is tempting to think that state leaders were either for or against women’s enfranchisement, and that this stance applied in all realms of participation. But in fact the landscape of suffrage expansion for women in the United States is as diverse as the country’s terrain. Many of the states that denied women voting rights at the national level gave women lower forms of voting rights, such as the school board franchise. The timeline in figure 4.1 sets out these state level patterns. For every five-year interval from 1840 to 1920, the timeline indicates whether women could vote in school board elections, municipal elections, presidential elections, or had full suffrage rights. If two types of right were granted in the same year, the timeline depicts the highest level granted. When a state joined the union after 1870, figure 4.1 presents the year of statehood.

⁴ Catt and Shuler 1923: 107.

⁵ *Ibid.*: 108.

⁶ Not one of the national parties took suffrage on its platform until both did in 1916.

⁷ Work on anti-suffrage mobilization includes Camhi 1994 and Marshall 1997. Due to foot-dragging, complicated registration procedures, and Jim Crow laws, American women in some states did not get to vote in the 1920 election.

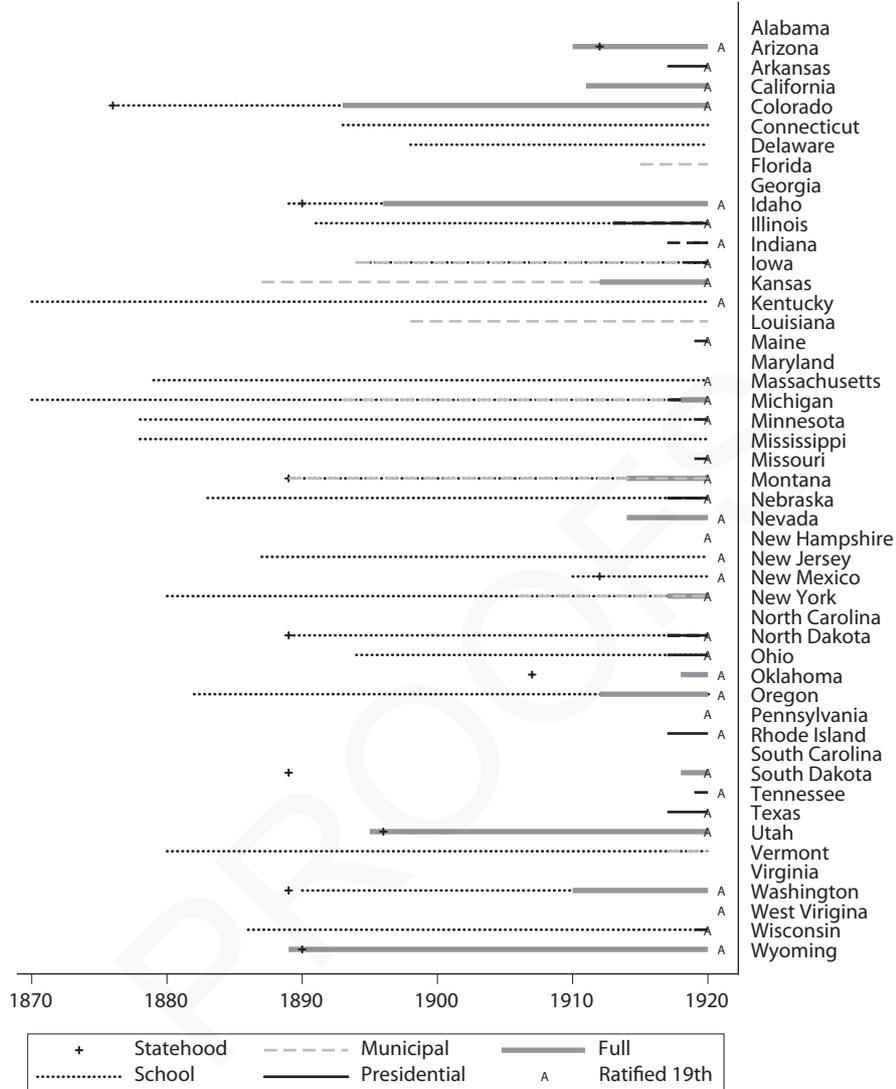


FIGURE 4.1. Timeline of Suffrage Rights Expansion in the United States.

As the timeline in figure 4.1 shows, a mere ten states withheld all forms of voting from women before the Nineteenth Amendment. In the North-east, only New Hampshire and Pennsylvania showed such reluctance; the other eight holdouts were in the South. Occupying a middle ground between states that extended no franchise rights to women and places

on equal terms as men, there is considerable variation: the Wyoming territory admitted women as early as 1869, while California, Oregon, and Washington followed nearly forty years later.⁹ Early enfranchisement in western states and the lack of voting rights in many forms in the South provokes a question as to why women in the United States were successful at gaining access to voting rights in some states and unsuccessful in other states. Is the regional pattern in figure 4.2 reducible to things like political culture on the frontier? To male resistance to temperance politics? To partisanship? To suffrage mobilization? This chapter takes up these themes by exploring the articulation of the women's suffrage plank and the political forces that gave way to suffrage within and across states.

The American "woman suffrage" movement, as it was called by contemporaries, is arguably the most studied women's movement of all time. To understand the breadth of historical work on which this book draws, interested readers can look to the footnotes for histories of the movement as a whole, for regional analyses, and for state-specific treatments.¹⁰ In addition to the extensive work by historians, a robust social science literature has long debated why the movement was more successful in some contexts than in others. Explanations have focused on the difficulty of overcoming state amendment procedures, the "gendered" opportunity structure that made men in some states more receptive to suffragists' arguments, the direct-action tactics adopted by movement leaders in some states but not in others, and the importance of male constituents' preferences in providing a justification for parties to support suffrage.¹¹

⁹ In a first hand account of the passage of suffrage reform in Wyoming, one Justice Kingman wrote that the author of the Wyoming suffrage bill persuaded Democratic representatives to vote for the bill by claiming the governor would veto it, "insisting at the same time, that it would give the Democrats an advantage in future elections" by burnishing their liberal bona fides and bringing notoriety to the state. Quoted in Grimes 1967: 57; and "The Woman Voter of the West," *The Westerner*, Aug. 1912: 4. Also see Morgan 1972.

¹⁰ First is a rich historiography of the women's suffrage movement that includes the writings of suffragists themselves as documented in the *History of Women's Suffrage* (HWS), Carrie Chapman Catt's memoirs of the movement, and the pioneering work of suffrage historians such as Eleanor Flexner (1995) and Ellen Carol Dubois (1987, 1998). The historiography includes, too, excellent state- and city-level accounts of suffrage mobilization, accounts of suffragists' relations to the Democratic and Republican parties, details on Woodrow Wilson's initial resistance to and later advocacy for suffrage, and a new wave of work on the role of race and anti-suffrage mobilization in stalling (white) women's political inclusion. On the western suffrage movement, see Mead 2004; on interactions between suffragists and parties: Morgan 1972, Gustafson 2001; on Wilson: Morgan 1972, Behn 2012; on race: Davis 2001, Free 2015, Green 1997; on anti-suffrage: Camhi 1974 and Marshall 1997.

¹¹ State-level electoral reform generally required a state constitutional amendment, which, in every state but Delaware, was subject to passage by a popular referendum. To further

Although most suffrage scholars see women's activism as critical for the state and national level reforms, quantitative relationships between the strength of the movement and women's enfranchisement have not always been detected, and there are questions about whether suffragists mattered more for setting the political agenda or for actually seeing legislation through to the end.¹²

Ultimately, much of the social scientific work comes to two important conclusions about suffrage across the states. First, although suffrage politics were deeply partisan in any given state, suffrage itself could not be attributed to any single party.¹³ Across all of the US states, there were seventy legislative sessions in which a bill for women's suffrage on equal terms as men passed both houses of a state legislature.¹⁴ Among these, the Democrats had control of both houses in 11 percent of cases and the Republicans were in power in 64 percent of cases. Although there are more instances in which Republicans passed suffrage bills, they were also more likely to be in power and thus had more opportunities to pass such legislation.¹⁵ In addition, partisanship has been found to be a weak predictor of support for suffrage in national congressional roll-call votes and in patterns of referendum voting in the states.¹⁶ This does not mean that partisan logic was unimportant, but rather that the electoral conditions that drive an incentive to extend the franchise, and popular conceptions of women's future behavior may have been different in different states.¹⁷

complicate the matter, through what became known as the "Illinois" loophole—because it was first implemented in Illinois—state legislatures could bypass the referendum process and enfranchise women as presidential electors. McCammon et al. 2001; McCammon and Campbell 2001; Banaszak 1996b; 1998; McConnaughy 2013. Marilley 1996.

¹² Banaszak (1996b: table 4) finds that in the US, movement strength is correlated with some but not all measures of women's suffrage at the state level, while McConnaughy (2013: tables 6.5 and 6.7) finds quantitatively small, but statistically significant, relationships between state membership in the largest suffrage organization and suffrage reform. See, too, King et al. (2005) on the efficacy of the movement in different stages of the legislative process.

¹³ There is, in addition, an argument that urban male residents were less receptive to suffrage in referendum voting. McDonagh and Price 1985: 431.

¹⁴ These calculations are all my own using the King et al. (2005) database described herein.

¹⁵ Republicans held power in 42 percent of the state sessions in the relevant period of suffrage reforms, while the Democrats held power in 31 percent of state sessions.

¹⁶ McDonagh 1989; Teele 2018; McDonagh and Price 1985.

¹⁷ This echoes the discussion in a recent book on women's political behavior after the Nineteenth Amendment in which Corder and Wolbrecht (2016) argue that women in any given state (like men) tended to vote with the dominant party in that state. Since regional patterns of partisanship are important for understanding women's actual vote choice, we might suspect that parties would have made different predictions about women's likely votes in different regions.

The second major finding among social scientists is that third parties played an important role in galvanizing suffrage, particularly in the western states.¹⁸ Although third parties only controlled the legislature in 4 percent of cases where an equal suffrage bill passed both houses, the electoral threat that they posed may have driven the Republicans or Democrats to sponsor electoral reform.¹⁹ What has been less emphasized is the fact that in 20 percent of cases where a full suffrage bill passed both state legislative houses, a different party controlled each branch. This is remarkable given that supermajorities were often necessary to change state electoral laws. The varied basis of party support for suffrage across the states suggests that something more than partisan identification or ideologies related to women's role in society was at work in driving women's enfranchisement in the US.

As in the book as a whole, I contend that suffragists' ability to form a broad movement influenced their success in states that were more competitive. Under the US's winner-takes-all electoral rules, which often produces two-party competition, a threat from a third party or a divided legislature is a strong indication that the political landscape is competitive. In most states, politicians initially resisted reform, claiming there was not enough evidence that women actually wanted the vote. Suffragists responded to this criticism first by trying to rally more middle-class women to the movement and then, after 1910, by reaching out to working classes in key urban areas such as New York City and San Francisco. The formation of a broad coalition of women, symbolized by growing membership in a large non-partisan suffrage organization, in combination with competitive conditions in state legislatures, was crucial to securing politicians' support for women's suffrage in the states.

This chapter substantiates the book's central argument in three ways. first, it gives a broad overview of the phases of the US suffrage movement, arguing that the salience of political cleavages related to race, ethnicity, nativity, and class influenced the type of movement suffragists sought to build. After many losses and with the infusion of new ideas, especially about class, in the early twentieth century, the movement expanded to

¹⁸ Grimes 1967; Mead 2004. McConaughy (2013: 215, 257ff.), also shows that electoral vulnerability often rose just prior to women's enfranchisement in the states. King et al. (2005) show that the number of parties is positively correlated with the introduction of suffrage bills and passage in at least one legislative chamber. However, cf. McCammon and Campbell (2001), who do not find a correlation between third-party presence and final date of state enfranchisement in their event history analyses.

¹⁹ McConaughy 2013: 257ff.

include women from the working classes and adopted new strategies of raising awareness and new forms of organization that proved critical to state legislative change. After charting this history I turn to describing the political geography of the Gilded Age, showing how the diversity of political competition and party organization that characterized the several regions mirrors the pattern of women's enfranchisement across the states.

Although many social scientists have theorized that the local electoral context mattered for women's suffrage, I develop a multifaceted approach to measuring competition—both by drawing on old data to construct new measures and by creating new data related to the presence of political machines in the states over time. Political machines, which presided over urban politics from Trenton to San Francisco, were run by bosses and subscribed to by clients under a currency of patronage. An indicator of machine strength in the states is useful because, as several historians and political scientists have argued, machines sought political monopolies based on the lower-class male vote, and often strenuously resisted women's enfranchisement.²⁰ After describing these measures, I turn to a quantitative analysis of the relationship between the suffrage movement's strength, the level and form of political competition, and support for women's suffrage in state legislatures. In combination with women's mobilization, low competition (conceptualized by large majorities and political machines) is associated with a lower probability of enfranchisement, while high competition (conceptualized by a close runner-up) is associated with a higher probability of reform. The quantitative section also investigates the interaction between competition and mobilization—that is, whether the probability of supporting suffrage, which is higher when women's mobilization is higher, rises even more when competition is more robust. I argue that such an interaction does exist at the highest levels of competition.

Finally I construct a number of indicators that can be thought of as forming "alternative" hypotheses about the expansion of the franchise to women in the United States, including measures of progressive political reforms; indicators of gender egalitarianism within the states; and a battery of measures related to temperance politics within states, including an original measure of membership in the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). None of these alternative measures explain

²⁰ Women's organizations often claimed that female voters would help to clean up politics, giving political machines specific reasons to resist women's enfranchisement (Buenker 1971; Flexner 1995: 309).

more of the variation in state level enfranchisement than the competition and mobilization variables, and including them in the analysis does not overturn the main findings. Hence there is good evidence that political competition and women's mobilization were important in the moments that led to women's suffrage in the states.

State-level politics mattered, not only to women within the states, but also because the federal structure of US political system meant that state legislative change was paramount for passing the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. Article V of the US Constitution requires that constitutional amendments receive two-thirds support in both the House and the Senate or, alternatively, that two-thirds of the states call a convention. Thereafter, three-quarters of the states have to ratify the amendment. This high hurdle meant that it would have been nearly impossible to get a national suffrage amendment without considerable support in the states and without support of national congressmen. Thus state delegations to the national chambers needed some incentive to support reform. As more states adopted suffrage, national representatives' fates were chosen, in part, by female voters. The increased pressure from suffragists within states, as well as the national parties' concerns that they would lose women's votes in the states with suffrage if they failed to support an amendment, paved the way to the national reform.

THE SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT IN FOUR ACTS

Reading the early writings of suffragists themselves, newspaper accounts, Carrie Chapman Catt's papers, classic accounts of the movement, newer local histories of mobilization, and recent studies on the anti-suffrage movement suggests that the US suffrage movement can be periodized by four moments. The years after 1848 mark an early phase in which a very small segment of bourgeois women, many of whom were part of the abolition movement, drew heavily on natural rights discourse to argue for women's inclusion.²¹ Second is the post-Reconstruction phase in which racist, xenophobic, and classist arguments were more

²¹ There is a big historiographical debate about Aileen Kraditor's early claim that natural rights discourse was fully replaced by racialized discourse after the Civil War. Most historians now think that both strains were prevalent in different periods, but that as the character of the movement changed and it grew, the strategic deployment of racialized arguments became more common before 1900 and less common thereafter. See Green 1997, Kraditor 1981, Wheeler 1995, Mead 2004.

prominent, but where sectional splits among bourgeois suffragists produced different strategies of reform—with one organization focusing on a national amendment and another focusing on a “states rights” approach to suffrage.²² During the third period, beginning in the mid-1880s, a broader, but still exclusionary, coalition was formed using “expediency” arguments—that politics itself would benefit from women’s input—to draw more middle-class women into the fold. This period also marked the growth in the elite anti-suffrage movement. Finally, after 1900, and especially after 1910, mobilization of the working class became an explicit part of suffrage strategy through which important victories in California and eventually New York were achieved through assiduous mobilization of the working classes in the major cities.

As in American history more generally, race, nativity, and region, and ideas about the proper role of these elements in politics, were dividing forces in the suffrage movement. After Reconstruction, white bourgeois suffragists, even those who had been staunch abolitionists, focused their energy on mobilizing women that were educated and relatively well-off into their ranks. Hoping to prove to the public that the majority of women did want the vote, suffragists generally formed non-partisan organizations. Their recruitment became more successful when they began appealing to ideas about “republican motherhood” and “municipal housekeeping.” While anti-suffragists argued that voting would put an undue burden on women without having any obvious social benefit, suffragists claimed that society needed educated women to vote because these women would be the antidote to the poison of popular participation and immigrant, poor white, and black male voting rights. The suffragists’ line of reasoning was so powerful that by the 1890s, even those women not particularly keen for the vote admitted that they would do their duty to cancel out the votes of the ignorant and unworthy groups. In forming such a coalition, and by maintaining a non-partisan stance, suffragists were able to claim that women were not mere partisan actors, and to hint thereby that the vote choice of women was not a foregone conclusion. The flexibility afforded by this strategy allowed suffragists to seek alliances with parties where they saw advantage: from the populists in Colorado, Democrats in Kansas, socialists in New York, and Republicans in midwestern states, suffragists put their weight behind

²² Dubois (1998) is one authoritative account of the split in the suffrage movement after reconstruction.

whichever group seemed the most supportive of suffragist demands. This proved particularly effective in states that were more competitive.

Race, Class, and the Suffrage Coalition

In the popular imagination, a woman's convention held in 1848 in Seneca Falls galvanized the struggle for the female franchise. In the tiny town in upstate New York, a group of precocious white female activists, many of whom had cut their teeth as Garrisonian abolitionists, came together to proclaim women's rights. The conference delegates were involved in several days' debate which culminated in a proclamation, *The Declaration of Sentiments*, that promulgated rights for women by documenting the "repeated injuries and usurpation" by men toward women. The list of injuries is long, and includes women's lack of the vote, lack of voice in the laws that they must obey, their legal dependency (particularly after marriage), their unequal access to education, and psychological subjection associated with women's inferior status.²³ But if Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Quaker minister Lucretia Mott, and Susan B. Anthony, among others, ultimately won the day with a resolution for women's suffrage, the decision was highly contentious, hardly unanimous, and failed to catalyze a major movement for suffrage in the convention's aftermath. For that moment we must fast-forward about twenty years, to the Reconstruction debates after the Civil War.

As the country began to recover from devastating internecine conflict, Radical Republicans in Congress argued for provisions for a black franchise in the decimated South. Having worked for abolition and stumped around the country with the likes of Frederick Douglass, suffragists including Susan B. Anthony were hopeful that whatever decision was reached on the black franchise would include provisions for the female franchise. But the women's hopes were dashed in the name of the "negro's hour"—the idea that in that particular moment the only essential reform entailed enfranchising black men—and so by law (if not in fact thereafter), black men attained the vote and white women did not.²⁴ Anger and indignation followed for many of the suffragists. All arguments made in defense of the black franchise, they countered, could just as easily apply to women's suffrage. Like black men, women had distinct interests that

²³ For a first-hand account, see Anthony et al. 1969: 70–71.

²⁴ See Flexner (1995: chapter 8), and Keyssar (2000: 180ff), who writes: "nowhere did the enfranchisement of women seem likely to vest Republicans or Democrats with any discernible partisan advantage," hence the parties had no incentive to reform.

could not be represented by the current government; like black men, many women had provided invaluable service during the civil war; like black men, the enfranchisement of women boiled down to a matter of justice.²⁵ These arguments fell on deaf ears. Ultimately, what Anthony and others failed to grasp, or, more likely, refused to accept, was the political—rather than solely moral—basis of the Radical Republicans' decision to emphasize the negro's hour instead of the woman's hour.

Politicians in the national legislature, however, understood well the electoral implications of extending the vote to black men while simultaneously excluding white women. In December of 1867, as the United States Senate debated the introduction of the franchise for black men in the District of Columbia, the issue of women's suffrage was raised in Congress for the first time. The debate is instructive, as its blunt and fine points highlight all the issues of the day, including whether women could reason (many thought they could), whether they could exercise the vote responsibly (yes), whether they wanted the vote (less clear), and whether it was just. On this latter point, a few thought the justice apparent and would vote for suffrage on that alone, while others claimed justice was beside the point entirely. Virtue and political interest should determine the scope of the franchise.²⁶

Although the bill on debate was primarily about the black male franchise, Senator Edgar Cowan (R-PA), in what was perceived to be an attempt to sink the black male vote, proposed an amendment that would strike the word "male" out of the original bill and thereby grant women in the District voting rights. Cowan faced considerable opposition within the chamber, and the amendment ultimately failed, but he proclaimed that the outcome would have been different if it were electorally expedient: "If [women's enfranchisement] became necessary in order to elect a dozen Senators to this body this winter, ... then I should have great hopes of carrying my amendment." Looking toward future elections and the composition of southern delegations, abolitionists and southern Republicans purposefully wanted to restrict the reform to black men

²⁵ Chapter 6 in Free (2015) does an excellent job of recounting the history and arguments made by suffragists against the reconstruction amendments. See especially p. 160ff for the point here.

²⁶ *Congressional Globe*, 39th Congress, 2nd Session, 11 Dec. 1867: 58. In the lengthy debate, some senators, like George Williams (R-OR) argued that women did not need the vote because they were not slaves and did not constitute a distinct class, but that in order to protect black men he would support that group's enfranchisement (p. 56). Henry Anthony (R-RI) countered that although the time had not yet come for enfranchisement, it would be coming soon and he would therefore vote for it (p. 56).

and exclude white women. They “had their eyes fixed on a windfall of 2,000,000 potential male Negro voters in the South, which they had no intention of jeopardizing by stirring up an unnecessary tempest over woman suffrage.”²⁷

Several disgruntled suffragists, including the eminent Stanton and Anthony, refused to concede a greater urgency for black men and the vote, and turned toward protesting the Reconstruction amendments.²⁸ In 1867, Stanton and Anthony broke with the Equal Rights Association (a group that had worked for black and female suffrage rights) and founded the National Women’s Suffrage Association (NWSA). In the same year, southerners Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell formed the American Women’s Suffrage Association (AWSA).²⁹ Stanton and Anthony’s National Women’s Suffrage Association advocated for many causes related to women’s well-being, but it worked foremost for a national amendment. Stone and Blackwell’s American Women’s Suffrage Association, on the other hand, eschewed a broad women’s rights agenda and instead set its sights on pursuing suffrage at the state level.³⁰ The distinction between the national approach and the state-based approach within these two organizations was not only one of strategy—it was in part whether going for states first was the best route to the national amendment—but also of tension regarding the ultimate reform.

Many advocates for the strategy of state-led suffrage reform were patently against pursuing a national suffrage amendment. A prominent argument was that unlike a federal amendment, which would theoretically enfranchise all women regardless of race and nativity, state laws could be written in such a way as to enfranchise white women while still preventing women from other groups from voting.³¹ The social concerns that drove the southern exclusionary strategy can be understood in the terms laid out in chapter 2—that the challenge of forming a broad feminist consciousness rises in the presence of extreme levels of inter-group inequality.³² The social distance that existed in the South between

²⁷ Flexner 1995: 145–146.

²⁸ *Ibid.*: 148.

²⁹ *Ibid.*: 155.

³⁰ *Ibid.*: 156.

³¹ Green 1997; Behn 2012: 191.

³² Kraditor (1981) and Wheeler (1995) both stress the importance of white supremacy in the southern movement. Green (1997) gives a thorough treatment of race and class in both the suffrage and anti-suffrage movements in the South. Susan Marshall (1997) has described this as the “gendered class” privilege of some white women, and argues that this is the basis of women’s activism against suffrage.

formerly enslaved people and whites led southern Democrats (the majority party across the south) to resist expansion of the franchise to black men, and formed a barrier between white suffragists and black women. Many white women benefited from the racial hierarchy in the South, and so aligning along the dimension of race could emerge for some as more important than aligning on the dimension of gender.

As evidenced by the state-based strategy of the American Women's Suffrage Association, the racial hierarchy led southern suffragists to articulate the demand for reform in a narrow way. Some southern white women wanted the vote, but only if they could avoid enfranchising black women and thereby dodge the subsidiary effects of a broad reform. An illustrative passage comes from Elna Green's comprehensive treatment of suffrage and anti-suffrage movements in the South. Kate Gordon, a vehement states' rights suffragist, remarked "if Louisiana employs an understanding clause to preserve white supremacy and will grant woman suffrage, then I will not have a word to say against it."³³ Gordon did believe in suffrage for women like herself in the south, but when the national amendment was on the horizon, Gordon and others worked to try to defeat the federal amendment: "white supremacy is going to be maintained by the South by fair or foul means."

Statistical rationales were trotted out to bolster southern suffragists' narrow delineation of the suffrage demand. First piloted by Stone and Blackwell, the argument that white women would "cancel out" the votes of the newly enfranchised blacks because whites were statistically more numerous became a recurring theme in suffrage debates in the press and on floors of legislatures. In 1867, Blackwell penned what is now a famous pamphlet, entitled "What the South Can Do," which entreated southern Democrats to recognize that the votes of emancipated men could be overcome by the ballots of "your four million Southern white women."³⁴ Specifically, Blackwell argued that since the Radicals of the North were fixed on "negro suffrage," and since another civil war should be avoided, a compromise should be reached on the adjustment of the franchise that was "acceptable to both sections." He estimated that of the 12 million inhabitants of the slave states, there would be 1.6 million white male voters, 1.6 million white female voters, and 800 thousand black voters of each sex. The way to bolster southern white power, at the same time as gaining more representation in national politics (as black people would

³³ Green 1997: 131.

³⁴ Quoted in Free 2015: 149.

no longer count as three-fifths of a person), would be to give women the vote at the same time. "Suppose all the negroes vote one way and all the whites the other, your white majority would be 1,600,000—equal to your present total vote."³⁵

The statistical argument and its implications were perceived to be important for convincing white women to join the movement. Not only would women's suffrage reinforce white hegemony in the South, but also would end the question of regional fanaticism and push the North out of southern politics. Widely circulated around the 1870s, the statistical argument was also repeatedly invoked as a reason that legislators should agree to women's inclusion in the moments leading up to the national amendment.³⁶ But for a party that already considered itself secure, which could suffer defections of all black men and still win, there was little need to include women. What is more, including women might actually have impinged on the southern Democrats' electoral strategy. Said a Mississippi senator in the 1880s, "We are not afraid to maul a black man over the head if he dares to vote, but we can't treat women, even black women, that way. No, we'll allow no woman suffrage. It may be right, but we won't have it."³⁷ In other words, because black men's votes could be suppressed violently, Democrats could win a bigger share of the vote with just black men voting than if all men and women could cast ballots.

Shifting Suffrage Alliances

That many southern suffragists wanted state control of voting rights so that they could continue to exclude black voters is well known, and that southern white women's political consciousness would hew to the racial cleavage instead of the gender dimension is perhaps obvious. But what is remarkable about the post-Reconstruction period is that it marks the beginning of a moment in which even northern and former abolitionist suffragists employed racist, xenophobic, and classist rhetoric to argue that poor, ignorant, and black people were less deserving of political

³⁵ The pamphlet is reproduced in HWS, volume II, ch. XIX.

³⁶ For example, in the discussion surrounding the Nineteenth Amendment, Senator James Phelan (D-CA) assured his southern comrades, "So by extending the suffrage to women you do not change the present condition, deplorable as it may be in the eyes of the men of the South. You simply increase the electorate by the addition of women; and if they are less literate than the men, or if they hold no property . . . there is very little likelihood of their ever exercising the suffrage . . . The amendment, I am told, will increase by 20 per cent the voting white population in the South as a whole. So the South will be stronger. Where, then, is the danger?" Quoted in Behn 2012: 241.

³⁷ Quoted in Morgan 1972: 84.

rights than wealthy, educated, white women. The dark underbelly of suffragist history has been given good treatment as a normative issue and historical phenomenon in many works, including by Angela Davis and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn.³⁸ But the racist, nativist turn in the northern suffrage movement also deserves study as an example of how suffrage organizations could strategically employ exclusionary rhetoric to attempt to form a coalition across white cleavages.³⁹

As historian Laura Free's recent book recounts, in the wake of Reconstruction, Stanton and Anthony were desperate to find an inroad to press the suffrage claim. Although their ultimate goal was a national amendment, they attempted to form coalitions with Democratic leaders in states where suffrage was up for discussion. After their abandonment by the Republican Party, Stanton later reflected, "We saw that our only chance was in getting the Democratic vote."⁴⁰ In 1868 they found a backer in George Francis Train, a Democrat, who gave them enough money to start a new suffrage paper, *The Revolution*. In an early issue, Stanton describes a possible reasoning behind a newfound alliance with Democrats: "the party out of power is always in a position to carry principles to their logical conclusions, while the party in power thinks only of what it can afford to do; hence, you can reason with minorities, while majorities are moved only by votes."⁴¹

Here, Stanton hints at the logic of women's enfranchisement: those in power are constrained by what they can afford to do—what I have called the need for additional voters. Those out of power, on the other hand, may be convinced to sign on to the movement if they think the issue through logically. The "logical conclusions" that she alludes to are about the effect of including black men but not women in the franchise. By being reminded of the potential benefits of women's enfranchisement—for electoral fortunes, white supremacy, and policy—an out-of-power party can come to support suffrage. In truth, the Republicans were aware of the logical conclusion of including white women. In the Northeast and Midwest, early suffragists hailed from the groups—native, white, Protestant—that formed the key Republican constituencies. Giving women the vote in those places may not have threatened the Republican Party, but it might added some uncertainty into elections because not all white women

³⁸ Davis 2011: chs. 4 and 7; Terborg-Penn 1998; Free 2015; Green 1997.

³⁹ This argument echoes those made about Margaret Sanger's adoption of eugenicist rhetoric to bring white men around to the idea of birth control. See Roberts 1994: ch. 2.

⁴⁰ Free 2015: 150.

⁴¹ Stanton writing in *The Revolution* in 1868, as quoted in Free 2015: 156.

in the Northeast and Midwest were Republicans. Moreover, since the Democratic Party was dominating the South with a white supremacist platform, the only place where the Republicans could conceivably lose the majority of white women's votes was the South. Hence convincing the Republicans to support suffrage was a non-starter at the national level. This presented the suffragists with a double bind: Republicans could not be convinced to undermine their interests in the South, and Democrats in the rest of the country could not be convinced that women outside the South would vote for them in large enough numbers to support reform.

In the 1870s, then, suffragists and politicians faced one another in a stalemate. Many politicians claimed that women simply did not want the vote, and balked at the idea of including women without some evidence of support for suffrage within the various states. In order for the suffrage demand to move from parlors to the sphere of practical politics, suffragists had to form a mass movement and get some political backing for the cause. After few successes, in the 1880s the suffragists began to employ two forms of argument: that women's domestic role gave them unique moral positions on political matters, and that moral women voters would provide the antidote to the poison of certain types of male participation. Seeking a broad constituency, they strategically adopted racist, classist, and nativist language that became prominent in public conversations about the impact of the women's vote. The shift from natural-rights based arguments to what historian Aileen Kraditor called "expediency" arguments was a key innovation that transformed suffrage from a fledgling idea to a broad movement.⁴² As McCammon and Campbell have shown, invocation of expediency arguments was highly correlated with women's suffrage success in the West.⁴³

Elite Women as Antidote to the Country's Ills

In the early days of suffrage activism, opponents of women's inclusion made two big claims: first, that women simply did not want the vote—so why should they get the right in a national amendment?—and second, that without one single state adopting the reform, there was no evidence that national leaders would support it. This much was said on the floor of Congress, in the popular press, and by anti-suffragists.⁴⁴ To combat

⁴² See footnote 21 in this chapter.

⁴³ McCammon and Campbell 2001.

⁴⁴ The claims that women did not want the vote were pervasive. For example, in a Democratic convention in South Dakota in 1890, a congressional candidate named Miller

these two ideas, suffragists sought to form a broad (white) coalition for voting rights and to secure support for the female franchise among state legislators.

Several histories describe well the elitism of suffrage rhetoric and the importance of exclusionary arguments for the advancement of the movement. Recently these ideas have been interpreted in a strategic light, with authors arguing that gendered class interests drove both suffrage and anti-suffrage strategy.⁴⁵ What is important to note is that the twin ideas—that women would be a salve to the nation’s ills and that women’s vote could be used to counteract the baser elements of politics—were circulated both among those women specifically interested in politics, as well as those who were less keen on formal political rights. Take, for example, a lengthy segment published in the *Indianapolis Journal* in 1888 called “Would the Women Vote?” in which more than twenty “prominent” women wrote to discuss plans for electoral participation.⁴⁶ The article is instructive both because of the range of opinions it displays and because of how the writers’ constructions of arguments against or in favor of the vote displays the exclusionary logic forwarded by suffragists.

Among the respondents, only two women suggested they would not vote under any circumstances, but about half of the writers claimed that although they had not personally seen the need nor agitated for suffrage, they would consider it a duty to participate if given the vote. Several women cited an aversion to being mixed up “in mere machine politics,” “wrangling and wrestling” at the polls, or mingling in the “political cauldron,” and some suggested that their hesitance sprang from deeper misgivings about popular voting more generally. One Jenny June wrote, “I have never worked for suffrage because I do not believe in it for all men any more than for all women,” and Sarah Orne Jewett claimed, “I believe it would have been better to carefully restrict the voting of men by high educational and certain property qualifications.” June intimated that she would vote so as not to be debased vis-à-vis men in the republic—the “brutal and ignorant” to whom the country opens its arms—while Jewett claimed that women would not increase the “ignorant” vote but that “there will be a larger proportion of conscientious and unpartisan votes

declared that no decent women wanted the suffrage (25 July 1890, *Wessington Springs Herald*, South Dakota p. 1). Note that in this same year, under a Republican legislature, the South Dakotan legislature did pass a suffrage bill in both chambers but a referendum in that year failed.

⁴⁵ Free 2015; Marshall 1997; Green 1997.

⁴⁶ Kate Sanborn “Would the Women Vote?” *The Indianapolis Journal*, 28 Oct. 1888.

than are cast now." Similarly, Adeline Whitney did not want women to lose their essential, external place in society, but "might vote if pressed into the necessity by the voting of all sorts of other women." And finally, as Olive Thorne Miller wrote:

Whatever my opinions as to the importance of desirability to women of the ballot, if the polls were opened to them I should feel obligated to vote, for the same reason that I insist every man should vote now; namely, that the intelligence of the country shall be represented as well as its ignorance.

Among those women who did not explicitly want the vote, the arguments suggest a balancing mentality was at work that specifically accounted for the impact of their votes relative to the votes of other groups. Many of these women voiced concern that the male franchise was already too expansive, but since they could not control that, if women were to be included, they would consider it a duty to vote in order to cancel out the bad effects of other voters.

On the other hand, those female writers who were more explicit in their desire for the vote had positive instead of negative reasons for wanting to vote. They cited "the justice of equal pay for equal work," for the sake of "women who have wrongs to right," and because women would "introduce a refining influence into politics." Departing from many anti-suffragists, the suffragists believed that women had political interests that were separate from interests of male relatives. Mary Booth argued that "facts show that voters alone have their interests properly guarded," while Frances Willard suggested that "for one-half the race to be wholly governed by laws made and administered by the other half is not fair play." Further, suffragists often argued that women's unique role in society—as mothers and carers—would be an important moral force in politics.

From these accounts we can glean distinctive political philosophies among women. Suffragists argued that women have unique interests that make women's participation in politics necessary and just. Non-suffragists did not have the same view of women's interests, but many would begrudgingly vote as their duty commanded. Both, however, referred to the female vote as a way to cancel out the bad effects instantiated by the choices of undesirable voters.

Women as an antidote to the poison of mass politics was invoked not only by the large suffrage organizations, but also by the Women's Christian Temperance Union. The WCTU, led by Frances Willard,

emerged in the 1880s as a big (if potentially damaging) agitator for suffrage.⁴⁷ Willard believed that the many broad social goals of the organization related to education, health care, and food quality, among others, would be easier to gain if women had the vote. But she drew many women into the organization by explicitly wielding the moral valence of temperance.⁴⁸ For example, at the South Dakota state convention of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the president of that chapter, a Mrs. Parker, claimed that women could help the government kitchen by "cleansing its pollution and putting to rights its disorder, ere the constantly increasing tide of filth, brought in from foreign lands shall render such a step necessary as our only hope of governmental salvation."⁴⁹ The path toward respectable suffrage politics was paved by fear of the "ignorant" votes. It was in light of these ideas that a mass constituency was formed.

The Growth of the Movement

The National and the American Suffrage Associations, after decades of division and failure, merged in 1890 to form the NAWSA. In that same year, the Women's Christian Temperance Union adopted a suffrage plank. Both organizations saw tremendous growth in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Figure 4.3 shows membership information for these two organizations. The top panel plots the evolution of NAWSA membership in the US using data from Banaszak (1996b). The data summarize the number of members, per thousand residents in a given state, averaged by region. The bottom panel presents data that represent membership in the WCTU, and looks at the average value of dues paid per capita in a given region. The data were collected using minutes of the WCTU from various years. Although a raw membership figure was present in the organization's minutes in some years, this was often missing, and so dues, which were supposed to be allocated to a state based on membership, are used instead.

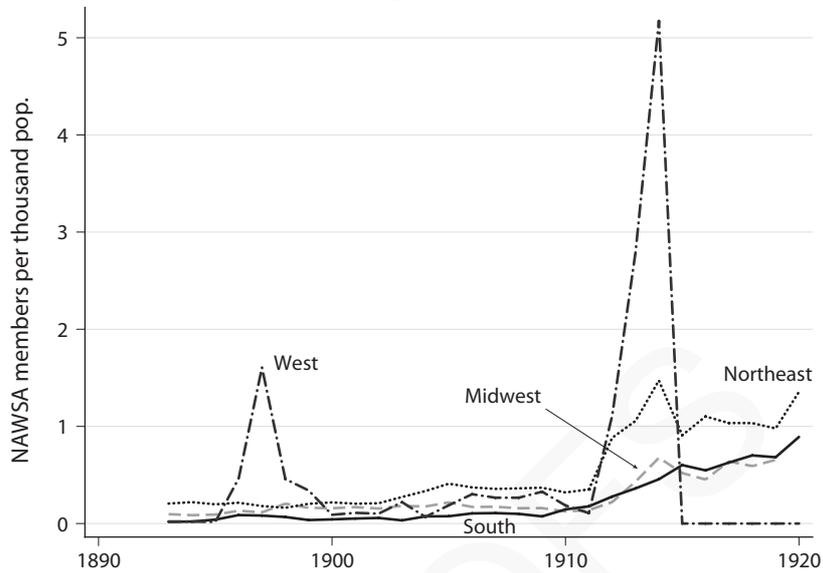
In both organizations, membership was generally highest in the Northeast and lowest in the South. However, for the NAWSA, there were

⁴⁷ The worry for non-WCTU suffragists was that women and women's votes would be rejected because of the temperance issue. This was the assessment of Abigail Scott Duniway, the pioneer suffragist from Oregon, who pinned an early Oregon loss on the temperance issue (Flexner 1995: 187).

⁴⁸ Willard believed that ordinary women could become more receptive to a women's rights agenda if they became involved with her organization. Early on, she argued that women could really only achieve their goals if they had the right to vote.

⁴⁹ *Wessington Springs Herald*, 25 July 1890, South Dakota, p. 1.

(a) National American Women's Suffrage Association membership



(b) Women's Christian Temperance Union dues

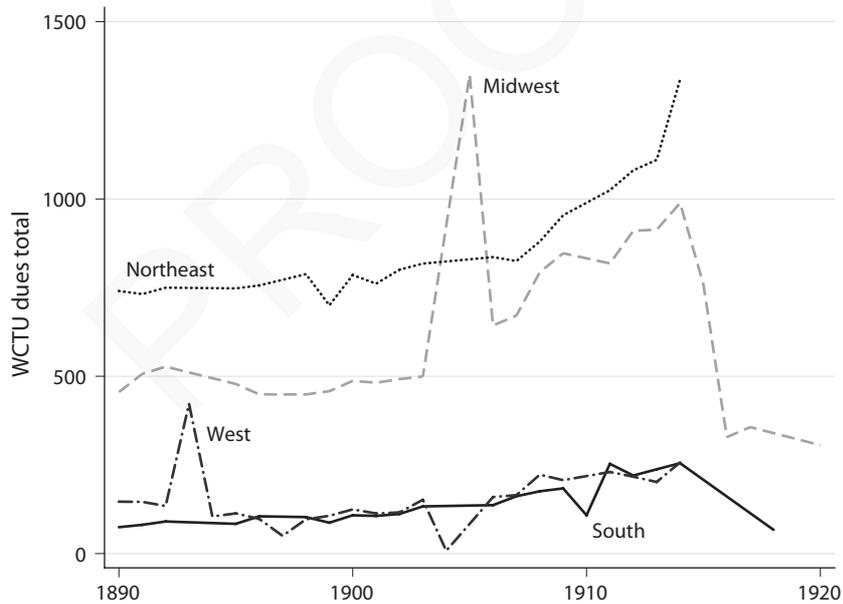


FIGURE 4.3. Membership in Two Major Suffragist Organizations. Source: Banaszak 1996b and WCTU, various years.

several moments of heightened activity in the West vis-à-vis the other regions.⁵⁰ Midwestern women were the second most mobilized group in each organization. These patterns in membership are mirrored in legislative activity related to suffrage. Figure 4.4 displays the entire history of suffrage bills in state legislative chambers across the period. Using data from King et al. (2005), I have coded suffrage bills into four broad categories of extension, which are depicted on the graph: full suffrage (F), municipal voting rights (M), school board suffrage (S), and presidential elector suffrage (P). The number of bills of each type are aggregated for the previous decade. In other words, a point corresponding to 1889 on the x-axis adds all proposals in a given category from 1880 to 1889.

Figure 4.4 shows a takeoff in the number of full suffrage proposals after 1870. Bills that would extend municipal and school-suffrage rights began to grow after 1880. Presidential suffrage bills gained steam after 1900, and, when Illinois became the first state to extend this form of right in 1913, suffragists in the National Association of Women's Suffrage Societies began to push for this type of bill elsewhere. In the universe of 1,124 suffrage bills, 514 were for limited suffrage and 610 were for full suffrage. "Partial" suffrage bills were more likely to restrict which women would have the vote than bills that would have allowed women to vote in all realms. Overall, though, exclusionary clauses in the bill language were rare—fifty three partial suffrage bills had one exclusion (10.3 percent), and only thirteen of the full suffrage bills had one exclusion (2.1 percent).⁵¹ The most common form of restriction for limited suffrage constrained the eligible electorate to taxpayers or property owners only. Aliens were excluded in only one bill, and non-whites were excluded in five bills. The decades surrounding the Civil War and Reconstruction, from 1860 to 1880, marks the greatest exclusionary period. In that period, around 68 percent of all partial suffrage bills proposed that only taxpaying women should be included. This, in spite of the fact that taxpaying had been eliminated from white male franchise requirements after the 1840s. The necessity of exclusions likely fell once Reconstruction collapsed and Jim Crow laws were in force. Thus, although early on many of the partial

⁵⁰ For example, Nevada saw membership surge just prior to a bill's passage by a third party legislature in 1895, and again after 1910 when two consecutive sessions of a split legislature finally passed and referred the bill. The referendum, the state's first, succeeded in 1914.

⁵¹ For detailed breakdowns, an online appendix to Teele (2018) is available at doi:10.7910/DVN/EVYI2H.

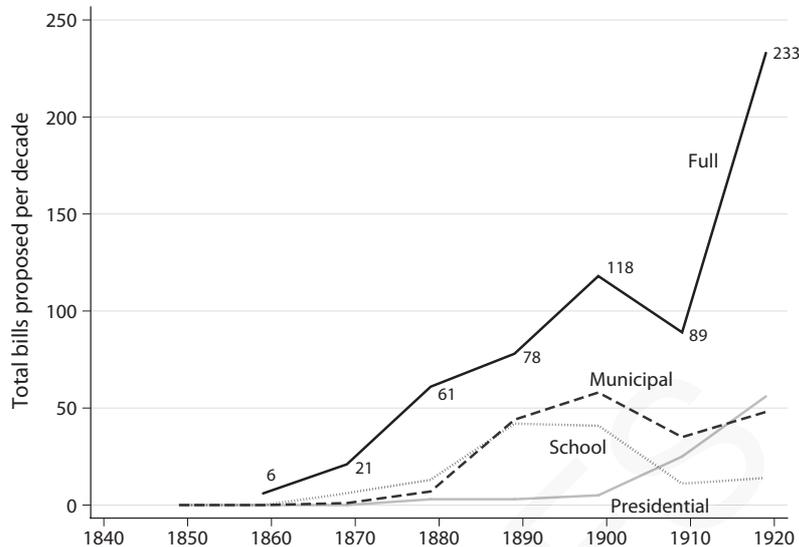


FIGURE 4.4. Suffrage Bill Proposals in State Legislatures in Previous Decade, 1840–1920.

suffrage proposals would have restricted the vote to only some women, the presence of these restrictions fell throughout the era.

Generally speaking, full suffrage proposals did not carry restrictions on the types of women that would be included. There are two intuitions for why this is so. First, suffragists may actually have supported universal suffrage but simply used exclusionary rhetoric to try to grow their coalition.⁵² Second, since there were, in the late nineteenth century, few restrictions on men's right to vote in state and national legislative elections, exclusions for women in this realm may have been difficult to justify and write. Writing a partial suffrage law, on the other hand, which would exclude women from particular elections, may have squared better with excluding some women at the same time.

The rise of more inclusive proposals for women's suffrage beginning around 1910 reflected a transformation in the suffragists' strategy described above. In 1909 the National American Women's Suffrage Association circulated a pamphlet arguing that "the people who are

⁵² Lerner (1981) makes this argument about NAWSA propaganda and interpretation of the New York win in 1917, where the leaders knew they had to mobilize the Italian garment workers and the Upper West Side Jews to get the referendum through, but where they gave credit to the Upper East Side WASPS.

fighting for industrial freedom who will be our vital force at the finish.” The “daughters” of the suffrage movement, which metaphorically included a younger generation of suffragists and literally included the daughter of Elizabeth Cady Stanton—Harriet Stanton Blatch—were responsible for ushering in this new ideology of suffragism after the turn of the century. Ellen Dubois credits Blatch with the shift in suffragism that opened organizations up to working-class women by integrating concerns of these women (including wages and working conditions) into their mobilization strategy. Having studied under the Pankhursts in England, Blatch introduced more “militant” street tactics, including open air meetings and boisterous rallies. She also worked “insider” channels to put more pressure on politicians.⁵³ Blatch believed that there were common interests that could unite the rising professional class of female workers and industrial workers, and she worked to mobilize garment workers and their husbands in the push for the New York State referendum.

Though the suffrage movement in New York had been active for more than sixty years, a re-organization by Blatch, Carrie Chapman Catt, and others after 1914 sought not only to mobilize new women, but also to get men on board with women’s votes.⁵⁴ The much-anticipated New York state referendum in 1915 failed, but the tireless activity and a precinct-by-precinct grass-roots strategy that was set into motion around that time pushed the 1917 referendum to victory with the help of working-class male voters. Precinct-level returns showed the importance of immigrant votes in securing the New York state victory. The Italian workers on the Lower East side and the Jewish workers in Harlem and the Upper West side came out for suffrage, while the predominantly Irish Greenwich Village and Anglo-Saxon precincts of Upper East side, along with the Germans and Slavic immigrants in Yorkville, voted against.⁵⁵

As we have seen, the suffrage movement grew tremendously after the 1890s and especially after 1910, but suffragists were not as successful in all states as they were in some. The work of historians, which has documented the changing social bases of the suffrage movement, has

⁵³ See Dubois 1987: 36, 38, 50. Quote on p. 52.

⁵⁴ Lerner 1981: 23.

⁵⁵ Lerner 1981: 142–43. In spite of the obvious role played by working-class women and working class men in the big city victories, mainstream suffrage propaganda attributed the victory to the conversion of men of the white-anglo variety. Although Lerner (1981: ch. 3) does not use the expression “respectability politics,” her argument is that this type of narrative was strategically employed by the NAWSA so as not to disturb the coalitions being built for suffrage in the Midwest. See Neuman (2017) on the role played by New York’s fashionable socialites after the turn of the century.

been complemented by the work of social scientists, which shows how diversity and divisiveness in the movement led to tactical innovations that drew more people to the movement.⁵⁶ Broad mobilization was crucial for securing some states, but did not work as well in others. Consider the difference between California and Massachusetts. In California, after a failed referendum in 1896, sometimes credited to the urban machines in Sacramento and San Francisco, the movement re-grouped, gained working-class support, and won the 1911 referendum.⁵⁷ In Massachusetts, on the other hand, despite a fourfold growth in the number of suffragists from 1900 to 1914, reform was not forthcoming. Members of the Women's Trade Union League who were suffragists argued that women would support progressive candidates to bolster factory legislation.⁵⁸ But the entrenched Republican Party, which had defeated factory regulation, child labor, and temperance, also successfully resisted suffrage. Thus the Massachusetts referendum was defeated in 1915 and was not resuscitated thereafter. To understand why strong movements, which were a feature of both of these states, led to victory in one but not the other, we must turn to how politicians responded to women's entreaties for the vote.

POLITICIANS AND THE WOMEN'S VOTE

Why were suffragists successful in some states but not in others? In the following section I will explore quantitative sources that record support for suffrage reform at the state level, and show that suffrage support was higher in states where power was less entrenched and competition was more robust. But first, drawing on qualitative sources, I document the strategic nature of the conversation about suffrage by providing evidence that politicians were concerned with the nature of the women's vote. Often, political support for suffrage depended on individuals or party actors, suggesting that suffrage would help their group politically. Although few thought that women would vote as a bloc, both party elites and suffragists expected the female vote to tilt toward the Republican Party.⁵⁹ In fact, it was often the anti-suffragists who argued that women's

⁵⁶ McCammon 2003: 805.

⁵⁷ Englander 1992.

⁵⁸ Strom 1975: 304.

⁵⁹ Gustafson 2001: 133–4; Corder and Wolbrecht 2016: 131–135. This argument goes against some previous claims about women's enfranchisement—made in passing by Acemoglu and Robinson (2000: 1186), but in greater depth by McConaughy (2013)—that politicians expected women's votes would not matter at all for electoral outcomes.

votes would merely double support for each party because, they claimed, women and men shared the same interests. If this were the case, the long denial of this right to women does not make much sense. It is precisely because politicians were concerned that women and men had different interests, and that women were not a sure bet for their party, that they resisted reform.

Expectations for Women's Votes

To understand whether elites expected women's votes to merely replicate men's, it is important to put the suffrage movement—or more precisely, the suffrage movements—into context. Women's moral purity and their positions as mothers were often claimed to give women unique purchase on political problems and justified women's enfranchisement. This moral argument was capitalized on by suffragists—as described above—and was successful in drawing adherents to the movement. It was bolstered by women's prolific civic activism on social issues, such as temperance, compulsory education, child welfare, the eradication of child labor, and labor protection for women. In the words of one advocate who was "Interested in all topics of the time: education, religion, politics, the liquor questions, social purity," she would gladly go to the polls "to exert an influence in the direction of progress and reform."⁶⁰ In the late nineteenth century, the female vote was often thought to be anti-saloon, verging on prohibitionist, and therefore closely linked to the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Republican Party.⁶¹

The fear that women were more likely than men to support prohibition caused the liquor lobby to mobilize against women's inclusion in many states.⁶² At a Democratic convention in South Dakota in 1890, where certain women urged the party to support suffrage, anti-suffrage protestors won the day with signs that read "we are against prohibition and Susan B. Anthony. We want our beer, and the men do the voting."⁶³ Suffrage history is rife with organized liquor's attempts to forestall reform: in 1895 in California the Wholesale Liquor Dealers' League beseeched saloonkeepers, hotels, and grocers to vote against suffrage claiming, "It is in your interest and ours to vote against this amendment. We request and urge you to vote and work against it and do all you can to

⁶⁰ Kate Sanborn, "Would the Women Vote?" *The Indianapolis Journal*, 28 Oct. 1888.

⁶¹ Grimes 1967: 68; McDonagh and Price 1985: 418.

⁶² Catt and Shuler 1923: ch. 10.

⁶³ *Wessington Springs Herald*, 25 July 1890, South Dakota, p. 1.

defeat it.”⁶⁴ And, fearing that women represented the “dry” vote, the head of the United Liquor Dealers personally went to fight against suffrage in Illinois in 1913.⁶⁵ Even on the eve of the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in Tennessee (after the prohibition amendment was in force), liquor companies plied state legislators with whiskey in an attempt to sway the decision against suffrage.⁶⁶ Because women were often linked to temperance, and the temperance issue was so closely linked to the Republicans, women were often expected to lean Republican.⁶⁷

Nevertheless, the association of women with the Republican Party does not necessarily hold up across regions, or throughout the seventy year period during which the suffrage battle was waged. In the South, the expectation was that white women would vote Democratic to preserve racial hegemony. In fact, Southern suffragists notoriously argued that they should be enfranchised precisely because adding their numbers to the electorate would shore up the white majority.⁶⁸ Yet it was not only in the South where Democrats may have seen some potential advantage in the women’s vote. In the early twentieth century, as nativist fears were sparked by a large influx of immigrants, women’s votes, even among immigrant groups, were hailed as a salve to the votes of the less scrupulous men. In a House judiciary committee on suffrage in 1908, progressive Senator Robert Owen (D-OK) said he would have been willing to give the ballot to lower-class immigrant women “because the vote of the male immigrants is largely dominated by the saloon and brothel influences and the vote of the women would counteract the votes of this class of males.”⁶⁹ As we will see with the debate over the Nineteenth Amendment below, many progressive Democrats claimed that they came around to the issue of suffrage because of the supposedly moral force women were to exercise on politics.

In addition to harboring an intuition that women would vote distinctively, politicians debating whether to enfranchise women often hinted at the strategic considerations that sustained their choice, and at times

⁶⁴ Grimes 1967: 86.

⁶⁵ NAWSA 1940: 87.

⁶⁶ Catt and Shuler 1923: ch 10.

⁶⁷ As Corder and Wolbrecht (2016: 131–135) argue, although in 1920 the Democratic platform contained more planks advocated by the League of Women voters and did reach out to women, Republicans are seen to have had a stronger pro-suffrage claim in that election.

⁶⁸ Morgan 1972: 15–16.

⁶⁹ “Woman’s Suffrage Discussed Universal Suffrage Advocated by Senator Owen of Oklahoma,” *The Idaho Statesman*, 4 March 1908.

suggested that enfranchising women would help (or hurt) them in particular ways. In a firsthand account of the passage of suffrage reform in Wyoming, one Justice John W. Kingman wrote that the author of the Wyoming suffrage bill persuaded Democratic representatives to vote for the unlikely bill by insisting “that it would give the Democrats an advantage in future elections” by burnishing their liberal bona fides and bringing notoriety to the state.⁷⁰

Depending on the state being considered, contemporary observers had different intuitions about the fate of the female vote. Many thought women would vote for the issues espoused by the emerging progressive movement. In this sense, women’s enfranchisement was not expected to merely double the electorate for each party, but to operate in particular ways in different states. This meant that state-specific political environments would be crucial to determining which parties would support women’s suffrage.

Electoral Politics in American Political Development

In what is known as the Gilded Age, the regions of the United States had distinctive political landscapes. Whereas voters in the North exhibited strong partisanship and were unlikely to switch parties (only 3.2 percent of voters switched parties from 1876 to 1900), voters in the West were more likely to do so (10.7 percent switched parties in the same period).⁷¹ Westerners were also much more comfortable splitting their votes to support members of different parties in the same election than their northeastern counterparts. In the West, 12.1 percent of all ballots were “split” tickets, contrasted with 1.7 percent in the East.⁷² Parties also had different lifespans across the regions, with southern Democrats maintaining power much longer than any one party out west. Moreover, minor parties were especially featured in the Midwest, West, and parts of the South.⁷³ The existence of minor parties is relevant under plurality rules because it can be an indication that competition is not so tight as to preclude entry by new groups and because these parties’ electoral strategy was often premised on mobilizing those who were not already committed to the major organizations.⁷⁴ As Shortridge (1978: 34) emphasizes, minor

⁷⁰ Quoted in Grimes 1967: 57; and “The Woman Voter of the West,” *The Westerner* Aug. 1912: 4. Kingman suggested that most people expected the governor to veto the bill.

⁷¹ Kleppner 1983.

⁷² See Gimpel 1993: table 1.

⁷³ Goodwyn 1978; Postel 2007.

⁷⁴ Rosenstone et al. 1996; Shortridge 1978.

parties often sought to gain entry into legislatures by courting new and unattached constituencies.

Finally, there is the issue of party organization. As several scholars have pointed out, political “machines” were a distinctive feature of urban politics in many cities around the turn of the twentieth century. Machines are a type of traditional party organization run by bosses and subscribed to by clients under a currency of patronage, and which would have generated disincentives to reform. Women’s organizations often claimed that female voters would help to cleanup politics, giving political machines specific reasons to resist women’s enfranchisement.⁷⁵ In most accounts of referendum voting, urban men were less amenable toward suffrage than their rural counterparts.⁷⁶ A placard from the era perfectly captures these tensions, claiming “Machine politicians do not want equal suffrage for *woman*, too much *truth, honesty* and *purity* applied to *the machine* would demolish it.”⁷⁷ Because political machines sought to create and maintain political monopolies through tight control of the electorate, their presence should signal a heightened resistance to women’s enfranchisement.⁷⁸ All of the studies cited describe a distinctive politics in the western US that may have driven women’s early enfranchisement.

DID MOBILIZATION AND COMPETITION DRIVE SUFFRAGE EXPANSION?

To evaluate the correlations between competition, mobilization, and suffrage expansion, I constructed a panel dataset that contains state level decisions related to franchise extension, women’s mobilization into the National American Women’s Suffrage Association, and the several indicators of political competition described above. My analysis will begin in 1893, the first year for which data on mobilization into the NAWSA are available, and end in 1920, when the Nineteenth Amendment enfranchised women nationally.⁷⁹ Overall, there are forty-five states

⁷⁵ Buenker 1971; Flexner 1995: 309; Scott and Scott 1982: 26.

⁷⁶ McDonagh and Price 1985: 431.

⁷⁷ <http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/exhibits/fifty/suffrage.html>.

⁷⁸ See Trounstein (2009) on machines as monopolies.

⁷⁹ If a state joins the union after 1893, its observations begin in the year of statehood. The observation period for a state ends if full suffrage is adopted for women, typically after a public referendum.

under consideration, fifteen of which fully enfranchised women ahead of the Nineteenth Amendment.⁸⁰

The unit of analysis in this dataset is the state legislative session. This means that every time a legislature gets replaced (which happens after an election), a new row appears in the dataset for the new legislative session. Because each state legislature was bicameral in this period, each competition variable is measured as the average level across both houses in a given state legislative session.⁸¹ On average, the data contain almost eight legislative sessions per state, with a minimum of four for earlier enfranchisers like New Mexico and Arizona, and a maximum of twenty-seven sessions for late enfranchisers like New York or non-enfranchisers like Massachusetts and New Jersey. Using the legislative session instead of an individual year as the unit of analysis sets this study apart from others that consider women's suffrage. Although a bill may pass in a specific year, the partisan composition of the legislature often does not change. So if the question is how changes in the composition of the legislature affects support for suffrage, then it is important that the unit of analysis reflects the possibility of change. Since measures of legislative power do not change between elections, the only logical possibility is using each session.

Measuring Suffrage Support

The dependent variable—the outcome I am trying to explain—is suffrage support in state legislatures. I operationalize this concept as the passage of a bill for “full suffrage” in both houses of a state legislature. Full suffrage is defined here as voting rights granted to women on the same terms as men, meaning that any age, literacy, and property requirements are not distinguished by gender. Since all state legislatures

⁸⁰ Although there were 48 states in this period, Arizona, Wyoming, and Utah entered the union as franchise states and so do not appear in the dataset.

⁸¹ Data from Burnham (1986) do not incorporate special elections, so competition data does not change between elections. All state legislatures were bicameral in this period (Moschos and Katsky 1965), so a state's legislative sessions incorporated information across two chambers. By 1890, most states had adopted an early November election schedule (see state entries in Dubin 2007). Most legislature data in Burnham (1986) begin on even-numbered years, which I infer is the election year. Since most elections were in November, I assume that the newly elected do not take office until January in the odd year. Thus if a state had elections in 1880 and 1882, the years 1881 and 1882 would represent one legislative session and hence a single row of the dataset, and the years 1883 and 1884 would similarly constitute another row. In the collapsed dataset, 98 percent of the state sessions cover a period of one or two years.

were bicameral, suffrage support takes the value of one in each state session in which both houses pass a full suffrage bill. The dependent variable is zero in all other session years.

Importantly, the dependent variable can take on the value of one in several session years because a state might have had to pass a bill several times before it became law.⁸² There are four reasons for this. First, because all US states except Delaware required a referendum vote after the legislature approved of a constitutional amendment, if the referendum failed, the legislature would have had to re-pass and re-refer the amendment. Idiosyncratic legislative rules could also prompt legislatures to pass suffrage bills multiple times. Nevada, for example, required proposed constitutional amendments to pass in two consecutive legislative sessions (McCammon et al. 2001: 65). Others, such as Arkansas, only allowed three amendments to be referred per year.⁸³ Finally, a governor's veto could drive the process to begin again. Governors vetoed full suffrage bills in North Dakota (1885), California (1893), Arizona (1903), and Wisconsin (1913). Although we might worry that politicians could approve suffrage bills knowing the bill would fail down the line, this strategy would have been risky because four of the first states to grant women voting rights—Wyoming, Utah, Idaho, and Arizona—did so in their first referendum. Events in the state legislature mattered, then, because they might stick.

Defining the outcome of interest in this way has several benefits. Banaszak (1996b), McCammon and Campbell (2001), and McConaughy (2013) conduct analyses of the final date of enfranchisement, which, for all states but Delaware, occurred in the year a referendum was approved by the voting public.⁸⁴ This is less than ideal analytically and theoretically because of the small sample size, and because the values of the independent variables related to competition, if measured in the year of final passage, may not reflect the composition of the legislature that actually approved the change prior to the referendum. The measurement strategy I use instead provides the closest link between the argument—which focuses on the incentives of politicians in legislatures—and the dependent variable. Among the forty five states in the sample, the average number of times a full-suffrage bill passed both houses is 1.29 with a standard

⁸² This variable comes from King et al.'s (2005) *Database on Women's Suffrage*. Complete details on the coding process are in the online appendix to Teele (2018), available at doi:10.7910/DVN/EVYI2H.

⁸³ Arkansas's HJR 7 passed both houses in 1915 but was not referred for this reason.

⁸⁴ Vote tallies on state referenda were notoriously fraudulent (Catt and Shuler 1923: chs. X, XIV, XV).

deviation of 1.49.⁸⁵ The maximum number of times a single state passed a full suffrage bill in both houses is four. The minimum is zero.

Measuring Competition

Figure 4.5 presents the average values for three measures of political competition for each geographical region. The variables are ordered from indicators of low competition in the top to indicators of high competition in the bottom. Indicators of low competition include a measure of *majority surplus*, defined as the fraction of seats that the largest party holds over 50 percent. When majority surplus is high, the dominant party is less vulnerable (David 1972). If the party with the largest share of seats holds a plurality instead of a majority, majority surplus can take on negative values. To construct this measure I took the average over both houses. In the dataset, the average value of majority surplus is 0.27 with a standard deviation of 0.14. At the mean, the largest party controls 77 percent of the seats. A 1 standard deviation increase would give the largest party 91 percent of seats. Over the whole period, as seen in figure 4.5, majorities had the largest margins in the South and the lowest in the West.

Population under machines (%) is another indicator of low competition. This measure divides the total population living in machine-dominated large cities within a state by the state's total population to construct an annual measure of the intensity of machine politics in urban areas.⁸⁶ Drawing on the large literature on Gilded Age urban politics, each large American city has been coded annually based on whether or not it was run by a political machine. Large cities are considered to be those with

⁸⁵ From 1848 to 1920, there were 560 full suffrage bills introduced in state legislatures, and 71 instances in which a suffrage bill passed both houses of the state legislature. The empirical portion of this analysis looks only after 1893, when movement data become available. In this window there are 56 instances where a full suffrage bill passed both houses of the state legislature. Note that the published version of King et al. (2005) studies 67 instances in which a full suffrage bill passed both state legislatures. They begin their study only in 1860, thereby dropping a few cases.

⁸⁶ The online appendix to Teele (2018: 4–8) has full details of this variable's construction. To generate this longitudinal measure of machine presence in US states, I, along with a research assistant "blind" to the question in this book, independently coded the rise and fall of urban machines in US cities from 1850 to 1950. My coding hews closely to the definition of "Traditional Party Organization" developed by David Mayhew (1986), which measures hierarchical party and non-party organizations that attempt to get preferred candidates on the ballot and that use patronage as a way to reward constituents. A political machine, by my definition, has the following four characteristics: 1) Is a patronage-based organization with an identifiable political boss. 2) Must be active for at least two election cycles. 3) Must be in a city with a population greater than 25,000 in 1900. 4) Local bosses could promise to deliver large blocks of votes.

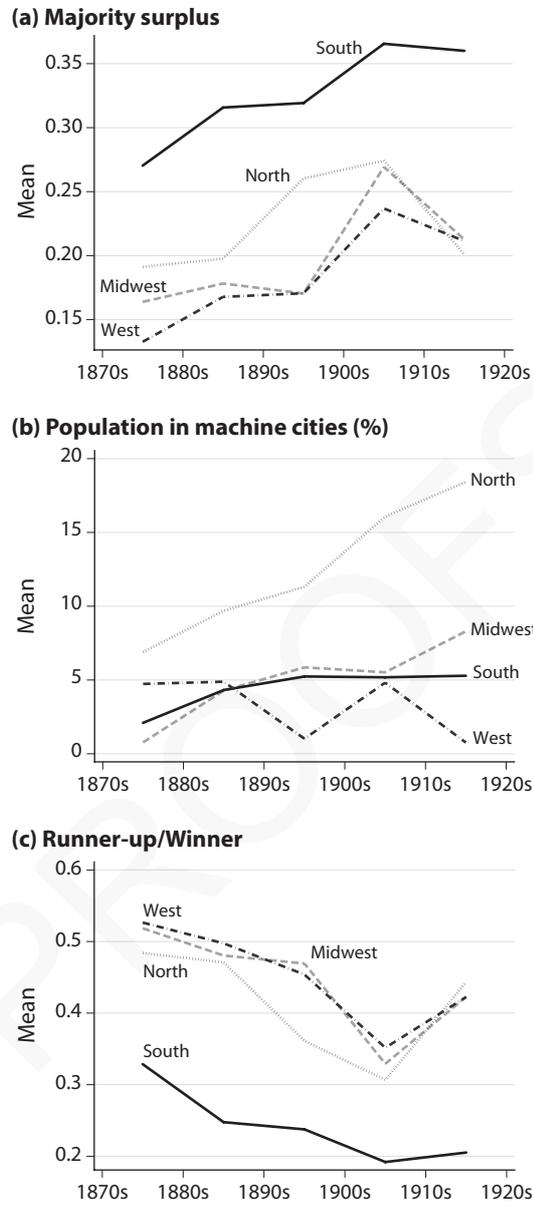


FIGURE 4.5. Regional Variation in Political Competition, US.

more than 25 thousand residents circa 1900. In 1900, 160 cities had more than 25 thousand residents. Overall, 38 of the then 48 states had a city this large, and the average number of cities of this size in the states which had at least 1 was 4.21. Within the group of 160 cities, 30 had a machine circa 1900. The machine data have been collected from 1850 to 1950, but only the years in the sample (1893–1920) are used herein.

Finally, the *ratio of runner-up to winner* is an indicator of high competition. This indicator measures the fraction of the winner's seats held by the next closest party, averaged over both houses. A ratio closer to one indicates that the ruling party is vulnerable to a competitor, making suffrage reform more likely. Note that when third parties have seats in the legislature, the runner-up-to-winner ratio and majority surplus are not generally linear transformations of each other. Overall, the runner-up is farthest from the winner in the South.

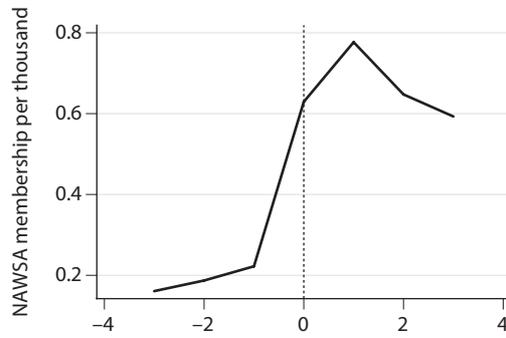
As can be seen in figure 4.5 there was significant regional variation in political competition in the era of women's suffrage. Parties had the longest lives in the Northeast and the South, and the Southern parties had much larger winning margins than parties in the rest of the country. In population terms, the Midwest and the Northeast had larger shares of their residents living in machine-dominated cities. The West stands out as a place where power was more likely to be split across houses and where third parties gained more access. On the other hand, the South had larger runner-up-to-winner margins. Overall, most of these statistics conform to prior knowledge of party politics in the Gilded Age. More importantly, the various measures of competition exhibit regional variation consistent with the pattern of women's enfranchisement in the US. Given the variation in political competition and suffrage mobilization across the US, what evidence do we have that these factors mattered for women's suffrage?

Plots of Changes

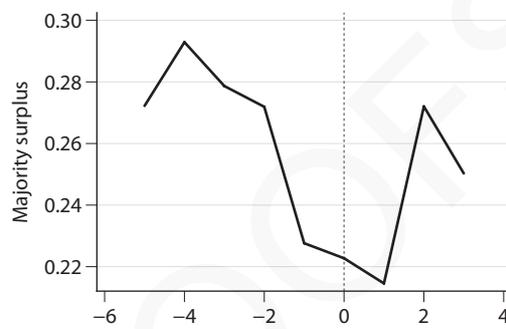
As a first step in exploring whether competition and mobilization are correlated with women's enfranchisement, consider figure 4.6 which plots the average level of mobilization, the average level of majority surplus, and the average ratio of runner-up to winner for all states that enfranchised women ahead of the Nineteenth Amendment. These graphs center their averages around the date of suffrage, demarcated by zero on the x-axis. The averages are measured at the number of legislative sessions before and after suffrage.

The top panel in figure 4.6 plots the average growth of the suffrage movement prior to state legislative passage of a suffrage bill. On average,

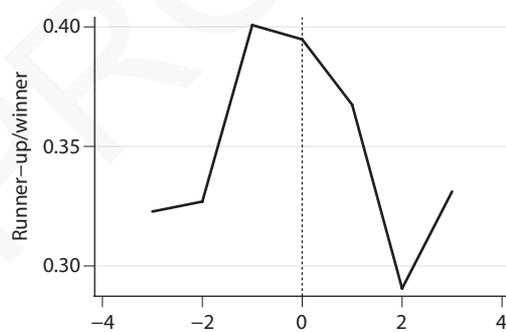
(a) NAWSA Membership



(b) Majority Surplus



(c) Runner-up/winner



Legislative sessions before and after suffrage passes legislature

FIGURE 4.6. Trends in Mobilization and Competition Surrounding US Suffrage.

there is an almost two-fold growth in the size of the movement from two legislative sessions prior to the year of passage. Note that the size of the movement continues to grow thereafter likely because, as described above, all states but Delaware required a legislative referendum to approve the electoral reform. Suffragists might therefore have pushed for more members ahead of referendum campaigns.

The middle panel looks at the trends in majority surplus for all states that passed a suffrage bill in both houses of the state legislature. Here we see that several legislative sessions prior to the bill's passage, majority surplus was much higher, and hence competition much lower, on average. Notably, there appears to be a decline in majority surplus, and hence an increase in competition, one session before passage, and then a jump up in the year of passage. In figure 4.6 the average majority surplus in the year of passage is 0.23—more competitive than average—which would have given the largest party about 73 percent of seats.

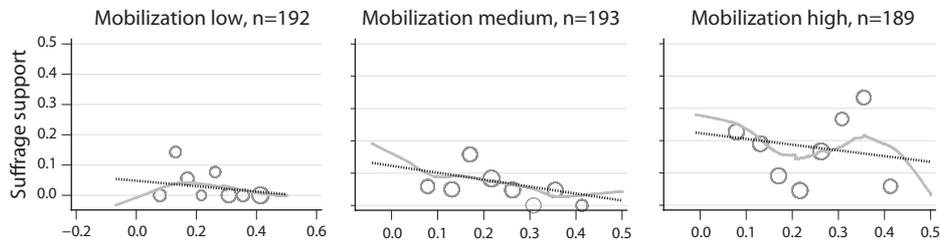
The bottom panel of figure 4.6 plots the ratio of runner-up to winner in the years before and after suffrage bills passed in state legislatures. Here we see that it was about 0.44 two sessions before suffrage—ten points higher than the average value in the dataset as a whole. At this level, in a two-party system, the winner has just less than 70 percent of seats. The graphs of changes suggest that the movement was growing, and competition was higher on average, in the years just prior to suffrage passage.

Plots of Interactions

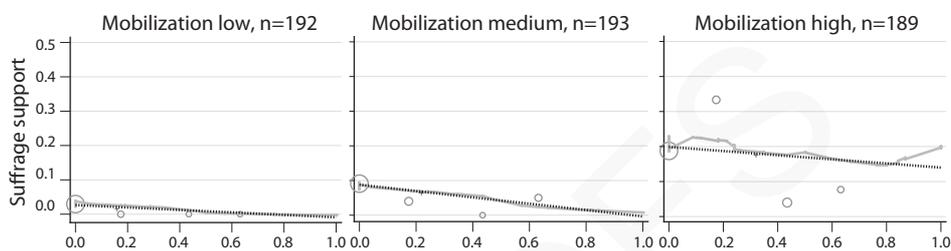
To investigate the interaction between competition, mobilization, and suffrage, first I outline theoretical predictions for the direction of correlation, and second present raw data plots of the average level of suffrage support conditional on different levels of political competition and women's mobilization. The theoretical argument in chapter 2 suggests that no matter the level of women's mobilization, if a party is completely secure in its power, it should not support reform. Hence when competition is very low, women across the range of mobilization levels should be unlikely to get the vote. On the other hand, if competition is high, women's mobilization should increase the probability of reform. If there are diminishing returns to the information politicians gather when women mobilize, we should not necessarily expect that the relationship between competition and suffrage support increases at an increasing rate.

The raw data plots in figure 4.7 provide a useful way to look at the three-way correlations between competition, suffrage mobilization, and

(a) Majority surplus



(b) Population in machine cities, frac.



(c) Runner-up/Winner

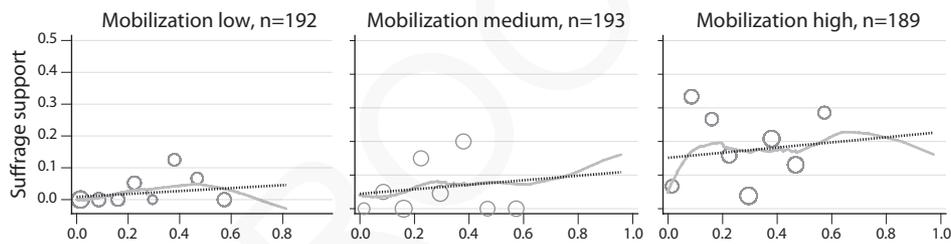


FIGURE 4.7. Raw Data Plots of the Interaction between Competition and Mobilization Surrounding Suffrage Expansion. The figures show the relationship between the average level of suffrage support (y-axis) across deciles of the competition variable (x-axis) for terciles of mobilization. The markers are proportional to the number of observations for a competition decile in the whole sample at that level of mobilization. A linear fit and Lowess curve also appear on each graph.

legislative decisions, and they can help to detect potential interaction effects which might be present if, for example, mobilization has a larger effect when competition is high.⁸⁷ When the competition variable is continuous, the raw data plots will present the average level of suffrage support along the y-axis against different levels of the competition

⁸⁷ Here I am following a technique recommended by Hainmueller et al. (2017).

variable on the x-axis at different levels of mobilization, as depicted in separate graphs. Practically speaking, the measure of suffrage support is the average number of times legislatures at a given level of competition and a given level of mobilization pass a bill that would give women “full suffrage.” The levels of competition are sliced into ten evenly sized groupings (deciles), and the mobilization variable is sliced into three evenly sized groupings (terciles). The mobilization variable is labeled “Low,” “Medium,” and “High” for the terciles beginning at the 33rd, 66th, and 99th percentiles.⁸⁸ When the competition variable in question is binary, the raw data plot will present the average support for suffrage in state legislatures (y-axis) against decile bins of women’s mobilization for each level of competition.

Theoretically, I expect that the interaction coefficient on longevity of the ruling party and mobilization is zero.⁸⁹ This is because longer rule is associated with less incentive to reform, independent of the level of mobilization. On the other hand, as the runner-up to winner grows, we should expect this to positively interact with suffrage as competition is increasing. I find that there is no interaction between the longevity of the ruling party and suffrage mobilization. Also as expected, there is a positive interaction between the strength of the runner-up to winner and mobilization, but only at the highest levels of mobilization. These graphs and associated analyses in Teele (2018) provide evidence that the probability of women winning the vote when a party had been in power for a very long time was low even when mobilization of women was high. Thus even a strong suffrage movement was unlikely to see returns if the party in control was entrenched. On the other hand, when the runner-up was close on the heels of the incumbent, suffrage became more likely if the movement was larger.

⁸⁸ The mobilization variable is right-skewed: the 25th percentile still contains zeros while the 76th to 99th percentile contains extreme values (which include states with 2.23 to 9.97 members per thousand in the NAWSA).

⁸⁹ In general, the Lowess curves seem to be quite close to the linear fit, suggesting that the worries of Hainmueller et al. (2017) regarding non-linear interaction effects are not a huge problem here. Using the kernel density estimator suggested by Hainmueller et al. (2017), as expected I find that there is no interaction between the longevity of the ruling party and suffrage mobilization. Also as expected, there is a positive interaction between runner-up to winner and mobilization, but only from the 95th to 99th percentiles of mobilization. (The online appendix to Teele (2018) contains the full set of results.)

CULTURE, EGALITARIANISM, AND TEMPERANCE

In addition to competition and mobilization, can other features explain women's enfranchisement in the United States? The study of women's suffrage benefits from a long tradition of historical and theoretical work that can inform this question. In unpacking why western states enfranchised women first, some scholars have pointed to the culture of the West—a pioneer society which, because its economy required its women to toil alongside their men, tended to think of women as equals and rendered distinctions between the sexes less salient.⁹⁰ Others have similarly argued that the western states had a unique “gendered” opportunity structure that was more amenable to the arguments made by suffragists of the day.⁹¹ And still others have contended that because women were scarce in the West, policies favorable to women might encourage their westward migration, which was seen as beneficial to marriage and thereby society at large.⁹² I take up each of these themes in turn.

Gender Egalitarian Policies. If pioneer culture or attempts to attract settlers to the frontier promoted a culture of equality for women, this should be visible in the package of rights offered to western women. But the data do not exhibit the dramatic differences in policy that we should expect to see if the West were courting women by offering them a better package of rights.⁹³ Table 4.1 tabulates three policies by region: *Property Rights* are state-level provisions for the right of a married woman to own property; *Earnings Laws* likewise provide for women the ability to retain subsequent wages; and *Sole Trader Laws* allow women to be the sole proprietors of businesses.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Flexner 1995: 160; Larson 1970; Beeton 1986; Mead 2004; Postel 2007.

⁹¹ Kraditor 1981. McCammon and Campbell (2001: 63) find that the western states were particularly amenable to what they call “expediency arguments”: when suffragists argued that women have special skills that could temper corruption, increase humanitarian activities, and improve public education, women were more likely to win the vote.

⁹² Grimes 1967. Note that while Braun and Kvasnicka (2013) find evidence that a male-heavy gender ratio is correlated with early adoption in the US, as I show in figure 2.4, this pattern is not as strong on the world scale.

⁹³ Specific policies to woo migrants, such as the Oregon Land Donation Act of 1850, which gave 320 acres to women and 640 to married couples, would have been difficult for women to capitalize on without a partner, typically male. Flexner (1995: 164).

⁹⁴ Property rights, earnings laws, and sole trader dates come from Khan (1996) and Hoff (1991). Georgia's secret ballot date comes from Novotny (2007). Mothers' pensions do not appear in table 4.1 because the first state that implemented such a policy did so only in 1911 (Skocpol 1992: table 10).

TABLE 4.1. Regional Differences in Women's Rights before Suffrage.

	<i>Property Rights</i>		<i>Earnings Laws</i>		<i>Sole Trader</i>	
	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>
Midwest	0	100	16.67	83.33	33.33	66.67
Northeast	0	100	11.11	88.89	11.11	88.89
South	18.75	81.25	56.25	43.75	37.5	62.5
West	18.18	81.82	27.27	72.73	9.09	90.91
<i>Total</i>	<i>10.42</i>	<i>89.58</i>	<i>31.25</i>	<i>68.75</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>75</i>
Pearson χ^2 (<i>p</i> -value)	3.34	(0.23)	7.62	(0.05)	4.19	(0.24)
First State	ME	1844	ME	1857	OH	1811
Last State	UT	1895	GA	1943	UT	1895

The cells in table 4.1 list the fraction of states in each region that had implemented each policy prior to the date in which it extended voting rights to women. The table also includes information on the first and last state to grant such a law and the year that this occurred. In general, the table does not provide evidence that policies were more favorable to women in the West.

Progressive Political Culture. Another alternative explanation of women's enfranchisement, advanced in both the political economy literature and in American political development, theorizes that would-be political reformers push to extend voting rights to the disfranchised because those groups will support their preferred policies. More generally, progressive reformers want to include the masses in the electorate because the masses will support the progressive policy agenda.

This idea finds a close analog in the literature that describes US regions' differential tendencies toward reform, sometimes described as a region's "receptivity" to reformist agendas.⁹⁵ A host of policies were considered progressive reforms around the turn of the century, including the adoption of the *Australian ballot*, where votes are secretly cast; the shift to *direct primaries*, where citizens and not party elites decide which candidate will represent the party in the general election; and the adoption of *initiative rights*, which allows specific legislative proposals to be put to vote by plebiscite.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Bridges 1997 and Shefter 1994. Note that Trounstein (2009) locates reform coalitions in American cities where the poor were a minority, while machine coalitions operated in cities where the poor were a majority.

⁹⁶ Harvey and Mukherjee (2006) study the introduction of the secret ballot. And Smith and Fridkin (2008) study initiative rights. Data for the Australian ballot come from Katz

TABLE 4.2. Regional Differences in Progressive Reform before Suffrage.

	<i>Australian Ballot</i>		<i>Direct Primary</i>		<i>Initiative Rights</i>	
	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>
Midwest	0	100	8.33	91.67	50	50
Northeast	11.11	88.89	44.44	55.56	77.78	22.22
South	18.75	81.25	43.75	56.25	81.25	18.75
West	36.36	63.64	63.64	36.36	63.64	36.36
<i>Total</i>	<i>16.68</i>	<i>83.88</i>	<i>39.58</i>	<i>60.42</i>	<i>68.75</i>	<i>31.25</i>
Pearson χ^2 (<i>p</i> -value)	5.72	0.126	7.77	0.051	3.6026	0.308
First State	MA	1888	MS	1902	SD	1898
Last State	SC	1950	UT, AR, NM	1921	MA	1918

Table 4.2 shows that there are no statistically significant regional differences in the adoption of the Australian ballot or initiative rights before suffrage was extended to women.⁹⁷ There are statistical differences in the move to direct primaries: the West exhibits a *lower* propensity to have adopted this reform prior to the date of enfranchisement. Yet this is a specious comparison, as the first state to extend initiative rights did so in 1902, after several of the states in the West gave women voting rights.

It is worth pointing out, finally, that the progressive movements themselves were not necessarily the origin of gender egalitarian policies. Intuition might suggest that the ideologies of progressive organizations should point to more support for women's freedom, but, for the most part, women were still subordinated to men within these movements. For example, women were invited to participate in particular activities within the populist movement, but they were not allowed to be dues-paying members like their husbands. Often, their sole responsibilities consisted in coordinating the luncheons that accompanied the meetings.⁹⁸

and Sala (1996). Other reforms popular around the turn of the century, such as the move to non-partisan city governments, have been revealed to be quite anti-democratic, rather than progressive. See Bridges (1997) and Shefter (1994).

⁹⁷ Banaszak (1998) finds no relationship between the existence of initiative rights in a state and successful petitions for women's suffrage.

⁹⁸ Leaders of The Grange took a "separate spheres" approach to women's involvement, creating segregated positions for participants of different genders. On the other hand, the Farmers' Alliance allowed women to speak and hold office just like men. Yet the Farmers' Alliance supported suffrage only within the bounds of a traditional view of women, supporting school board voting rights but never taking suffrage on its platform. Postel 2007: ch. 3.

In summary, while the West may have been earlier adopters of progressive reforms, these reforms came *after* the key moments of suffrage in those states. Moreover, the reform movements themselves were not necessarily drivers of the egalitarian changes. In my view, progressive reforms, and the acceptance of women in states where progressivism was stronger, may themselves stem from the factors that drove franchise reform, namely, increased political competition vis-à-vis the other regions.⁹⁹

Temperance Forces. Finally, we might consider one specific reform proposal which may have divided electoral groups on the suffrage question: the issue of temperance. Citing the role of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) in pursuing both prohibition and suffrage, many scholars have suggested a link between resistance to prohibition policy and resistance to suffrage reform. To the extent that women's enfranchisement might bring temperance to a state, "wet" interest groups and voting blocs are believed to have resisted the suffragists.

In the Gilded Age the largest organization of American women was the WCTU. It was established in order to promote temperance in both the private and the legislative realms, and its members sought the vote as a means to this end. Figure 4.3, presented at the beginning of the chapter, arrays *per capita dues* paid to the organization from 1884 to 1914.¹⁰⁰ It is clear from the figure that per capita contributions were highest in the Northeast, followed by the Midwest, West, and finally the South. While the higher payments in the Northeast may explain the resistance to suffrage in that region, the low contributions of the South do not explain why those states avoided franchise reform. The same can be said for the Midwest, whose states began to extend voting rights around the time that WCTU contributions were on the rise.

Probing the issue further, the *fraction of dry counties* in a given state, averaged over region, does not exhibit variation that is consistent with explaining franchise extension as a reaction to temperance.¹⁰¹ In the era before suffrage rights were extended, the West and Northeastern states were "wetter" than those in the Midwest and the South.¹⁰² Thus regional

⁹⁹ There is, further, the possibility that early enfranchisement of women supported these reforms. See Miller (2008) with reference to public health policies.

¹⁰⁰ Dues, which were regularly recorded in the minutes of the organization's annual meetings, provide one indicator of the WCTU's size.

¹⁰¹ Sechrist 2012.

¹⁰² In the country as a whole, on average 33 percent of counties in each state were "dry." In the West this figure was 24 percent, in the Northeast 31 percent, in the Midwest 38 percent, and in the South 40 percent.

variation in prohibition policy does not exhibit a correlation consistent with the pattern of franchise reform for US women.

This correlation might be explained by arguing that northeastern men feared their states becoming drier still, but why would it have been different for men in the West? Since the western states enfranchised women earlier than others, it is possible that anti-prohibition forces in the other regions saw that temperance policies sprung up after suffrage, and as a result resisted such reform in their own locales. But I do not find evidence that enfranchising women actually did lead to more pro-temperance policies.

Figure 4.8 plots the fraction of dry counties in states that extended early voting rights to women, along with a vertical line indicating the date of suffrage. There is no consistent pattern between suffrage reform and prohibitionist policy in the States. Just after suffrage passed, both California and Washington saw slight increases in the fraction of dry counties, but in Oregon and Montana the fraction of dry counties fell. There were no discernible changes in the fraction of dry counties in Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Nevada, and Utah after women won the vote.¹⁰³ Hence men had little reason to suspect that temperance policy would change dramatically as a result of women's enfranchisement.¹⁰⁴

Overall, the alternative explanations for the early expansion of women's suffrage in western states explored here, including political progressivity, gender egalitarianism, and the fear of prohibition, do not appear to be a better fit for the question at hand.¹⁰⁵ Rather than focusing solely on what is unique about the West, my analysis provides an explanation for the differential timing of franchise reform both across and within regions: the competitive landscape and the scope of women's mobilization for the vote were crucial to securing state level reform. This translated into the federal amendment through a similar process of forceful strategizing by suffragists, politicians' strategic calculations about the reform, and a propitious national condition in which Wilson feared losing Congress without supporting reform.

¹⁰³ Carrie Chapman Catt details the efforts of the liquor lobby to prevent suffrage all over the country, including the West (Catt and Shuler 1923: ch. X), though she does not think that the liquor interests were strong sources of resistance in New York State.

¹⁰⁴ See, too, García-Jimeno (2012: supplementary appendix), who does not find a relationship between suffrage and temperance.

¹⁰⁵ A thorough quantitative treatment that examines these potentially confounding variables in time-series cross-sectional regression analysis is available in Teele 2018 and the associated online appendix.

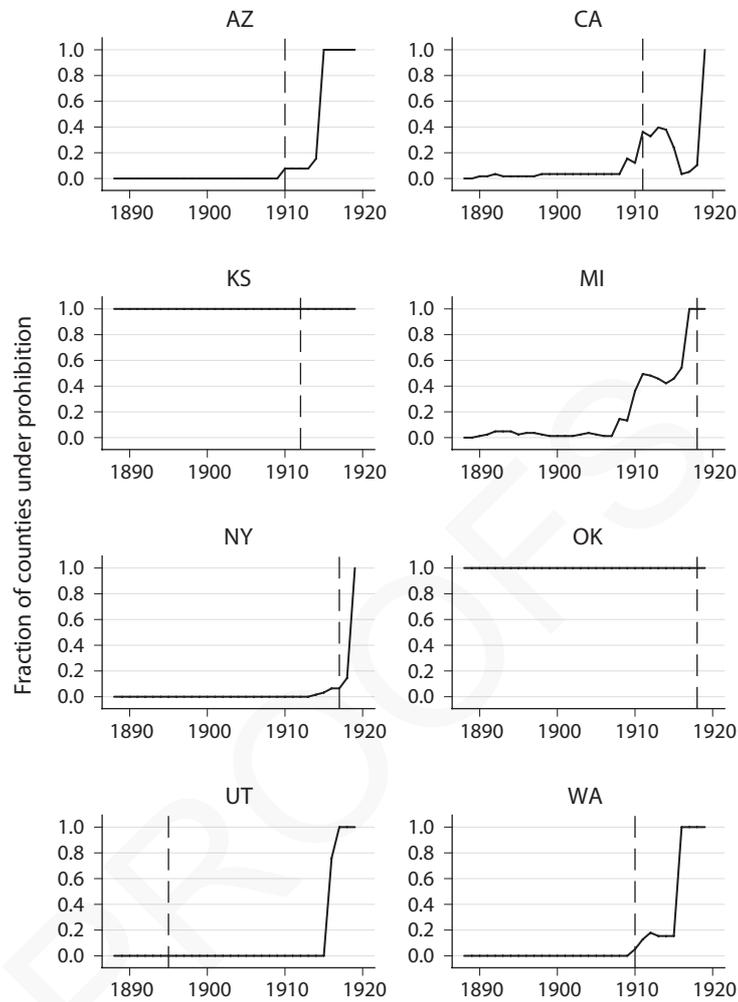


FIGURE 4.8. Prohibition and State Suffrage. The pictured states gave women national voting rights ahead of the Nineteenth Amendment (the suffrage year is indicated by the vertical line). The graphs show the fraction of counties that had adopted temperance laws, i.e., “dry counties” in each state before and after franchise extension.

THE NINETEENTH AMENDMENT

What has come to be known as the “Anthony Amendment,” for the relentless female activist Susan B. Anthony, who first imagined women’s suffrage as a possible political outcome, was proposed and debated

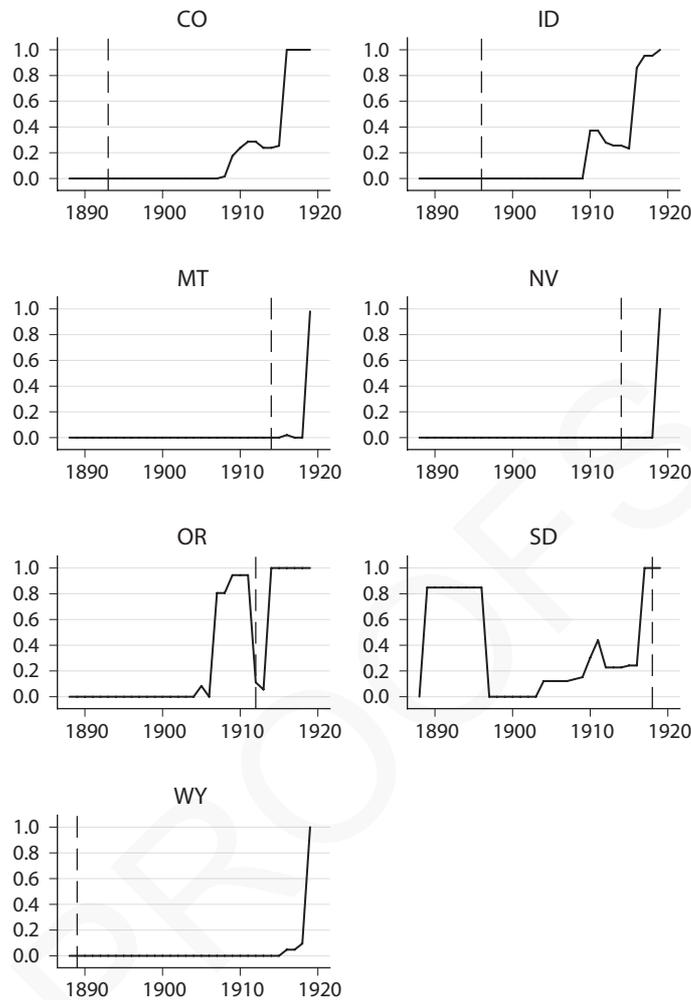


FIGURE 4.8. (Cont.)

numerous times in Congress before it was sent to the states for ratification in 1919.¹⁰⁶ Anthony's vision always entailed a federal amendment as the Holy Grail for women's political rights, but many women who believed

¹⁰⁶ See Flexner 1995. The first senator to propose a suffrage amendment was S. C. Pomeroy of Kansas in December 1868. The "Anthony Amendment" proposed by Senator A. A. Sargent of California in 1878 held: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex." This language was later incorporated into the Nineteenth Amendment. In 1882 both houses had committees on woman suffrage, which they reported on favorably. In 1886 Henry W. Blair of New

in the justice and utility of the female franchise simultaneously argued that election law was best left to the states. The strategies of the major organizations that fought for the female franchise reflected this division, with some organizations advocating and pursuing a state-based approach to suffrage laws, while others set their sights on the national amendment. Although an umbrella organization was formed in 1890 to encompass all of these organizations, at every single stage of the battle over the Nineteenth Amendment there was a vociferous group that argued against the federal path. Resistance to suffrage was often clothed in the rhetoric of states' rights, but partisanship, exclusionary racial politics, and a preference for the status quo ultimately provided the largest barriers to reform. Yet buried within the federal system was also a contradiction: federal legislators could exclude women writ large from voting, but they could not stop the women in suffrage states from casting ballots for the House, Senate, and the presidency.

In light of the growing number of suffrage states, the partisan benefits of enfranchising women were on the minds of progressive Democrats as the country geared up for the 1916 election. Woodrow Wilson, a longtime opponent of women's suffrage, underwent a political "conversion" on the issue that began with his decision to vote for the New Jersey suffrage referendum in 1915. Judge Bledsoe of the Los Angeles district court wrote to congratulate Wilson on his change of heart: "Your declaration at this time will serve to win support for us in the suffrage states whose 62 electoral votes...will be most helpful to us in 1916."¹⁰⁷ Wilson thereafter worked hard to secure suffrage, often stressing the strategic benefits it would bring the Democratic Party. In May 1917, he urged Representative Edward Pou (D-NC) to appoint a committee on the subject, suggesting that "it would be a very wise act of public policy" to consider the issue in the House.¹⁰⁸ In August 1918, when Wilson was struggling to get the last votes in the Senate necessary to pass the suffrage amendment, he wrote to Kentucky Governor Augustus Stanley regarding a recently vacated Senate seat, stating "It would be of great advantage to the party and to the country if his successor entertained views favorable to the pending

Hampshire called a suffrage bill, which failed thanks to solid southern opposition, 16 to 34, with 26 absent, in a 25 January 1887 vote. This amendment was continually reintroduced with each congressional session until 1896, then fell out of discussion until 1913 (p. 176–178).

¹⁰⁷ 5 Oct. 1915, quoted in Morgan 1972: 81.

¹⁰⁸ Carrie Chapman Catt Papers, Box1/3/14-May-1917, New York Public Library.

constitutional amendment."¹⁰⁹ Similar calls were made from the floor of the House of Representatives: Representative Jouett Shouse (KS-D) called on Wilson to make a public statement to urge Democratic senators to vote for suffrage, arguing that a defeat of the bill in the Senate would harm the re-election bids of Democrats in suffrage states.¹¹⁰

To learn about the political preferences of the newly or soon-to-be enfranchised women in America, politicians kept a close eye on women's organizations. In a letter to a newspaper editor penned by US Representative J. T. G. Crawford (D-FL) in 1919 to defend a vote taken in his name in support of the suffrage resolution, he wrote:

I do not know where you obtained the figures you use in your statement that "less than 5 percent of the women of Florida are actually in favor of the suffrage amendment to the federal constitution," as the Federation of Women's Clubs, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, the State Teachers' Association, and other organizations composed largely or wholly of women, have endorsed the amendment. [Even] if there were no other reason for endorsing the amendment, common sense dictates that course to any one desiring to see the Democratic party saved alive, and as the representative of that party in Florida I consider it my duty to at least render what assistance I can to continue the party's existence as a political factor in the nation.¹¹¹

Crawford was well aware of which women were mobilized for the vote, and believed that to reject them at this stage would be a disaster for the party. Contrary to the standard narratives which argue that women's enfranchisement would have led to a doubling of the electorate or which argues for ideational as opposed to strategic reasons for enfranchisement, the evidence presented above suggests that elites in several states and over time voiced opinions that women would exercise their votes in a distinctive manner, and it shows that politicians did think strategically about how women were going to vote.

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in Behn 2012: 236.

¹¹⁰ Quoted in Behn 2012: 231.

¹¹¹ "Equal Suffrage Department: Mr. Crawford Explains," *Ocala Evening Star*, Florida, 15 March 1919.

CONCLUSION

In response to his wife's appeal for ample rights for women in the new republic, John Adam's response was unequivocal: "We know better than to repeal our Masculine systems ... which would completely subject Us to the Despotism of the Petticoat."¹¹² Whatever fears that Adams or later politicians may have had about petticoated despots, there were, in time, political conditions in which they were willing to try their luck with female electors.

This chapter shows that the interaction between political competition and the strength of the reform movement is key to understanding the pattern of women's enfranchisement both across and within the US states. Parties in western states were more vulnerable to new entrants and were more likely to split power across the legislative branches than parties elsewhere. This made politicians in the West open to the entrepreneurial task of recruiting new supporters, including women. In this context, a small number of mobilized women were able to successfully press for their demands, and received voting rights earlier than women elsewhere in the US. On the other side of the country, single-party rule in the South translated into large legislative majorities and little need for new constituents to bolster Democratic control. Southern women could lobby day and night without making a difference until something in the political winds indicated a changing of fortunes. Finally, though the northeastern states had higher levels of competition than states in the South, the dominance of certain parties within states allowed leaders to ignore, for nearly seventy years, the pleas of the well-funded and highly subscribed women's suffrage movement. As new political groups began to mount viable challenges to the Republican and Democratic strongholds around 1910, the women's movement searched for a broader coalition of women, and was at last able to capitalize on decades of groundwork and bring victory to a few of the northeastern states.

The answer to the puzzle at the heart of this chapter about why western states enfranchised women earlier than states in the East is because their political landscape was more competitive. Although most suffrage scholars have assumed that this pattern was curious because women's mobilization was relatively lower in the West, the data actually show that western suffragists were able to galvanize membership during key moments just prior to reform. Across the states, when higher mobilization

¹¹² Adams 1776. Quoted in Butterfield et al. 2002.

and competition occurred together, suffrage support in state legislatures rose. Given the logic of enfranchisement articulated in the second chapter, this interaction suggests that heightened mobilization can lead one party or another (or possibly multiple parties) to believe they would have an advantage in mobilizing women in future elections. In other contexts, where competition was high but powerful groups perceived a real threat should women vote, we would expect that politicians would be less inclined to extend the vote. As we will see, this is exactly what happened in the French Third Republic.

PROOFS