"They Ought to Wear Petticoats!": Male Support of Women's Suffrage in America, 1840 to 1920

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“THEY OUGHT TO WEAR PETTICOATS!”: MALE SUPPORT OF WOMEN’S SUFFRAGE IN AMERICA, 1840 TO 1920

by

KRISTINA GRAVES
Under the Direction of Wendy Venet, PhD

ABSTRACT

Graves discusses the important role that men played in the women’s suffrage movement in America in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Historians have viewed the women’s suffrage movement as a woman only movement. Graves addresses this misconception with a case study of twelve male suffragists who were critical to the movement. She explores the motivations and influences, the arguments they used to gain broader national support, the written activism of their letters and published writings, and the in-person activism through political parties and suffrage organizations. Graves also examines the perceptions of American and British female suffragists regarding male support. Graves uses a plethora of primary resource materials from the suffrage movement and scholarly materials previously written about the movement and the men to make her case that women’s rights and suffrage would not have succeeded without key male support.

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by

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Office of Graduate Studies
College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University
August 2018
DEDICATION

For Dad, who taught me the true meaning of unconditional male support.

Your love, friendship, humor, and guidance mean everything to me.

For Mom, who is a survivor, champion, teacher, voice of reason, personal chef, financial contributor, proof reader, travel buddy, shopping partner, counselor, critic, research assistant, and everyday shero. You are a woman who wears many hats exceedingly well but none more important than that of friend. This would not have been possible without you.

In Memory of Uncle Millard, a very good man.

You will be missed.
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<td>AASS</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Woman Suffrage Association</td>
<td>AWSA</td>
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<tr>
<td>International Men’s League for Women’s Suffrage</td>
<td>IMLWS</td>
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<tr>
<td>International Woman Suffrage Alliance</td>
<td>IWSA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Men’s League for Women’s Suffrage</td>
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1 “UNWAIVERING ALLEGIANCE TO A CAUSE NOT THEIR OWN”

In 1930, the Woman’s Journal reported on a convention in Louisville, Kentucky that was convened to remember the tenth anniversary of the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, granting the vote to American women. In addition to celebrating the accomplishment of the federal amendment, the article also paid tribute to the activism of James Lees Laidlaw, former president of the National Men’s League for Women’s Suffrage, who was suffering from Parkinson’s disease at the time. “His name stood not only for his own telling work and loyalty,” stated the Woman’s Journal, “but for the many, many men who had given generous and unwaivering allegiance to a cause not their own.” Laidlaw’s activism, and by extension the efforts of the Men’s League, was one component of the critical role played by men throughout the struggle for women’s rights and suffrage in America. While men and women collaborated within a number of social reforms during this time period, historians have not fully explored the roles and necessity of male support in the American women’s rights and suffrage movement.¹

From 1840 to 1920, male reformers used their time, their talents, and their visibility as public figures to advocate for greater social, political, and economic rights for women. Despite the ridicule they often received for supporting such an unpopular cause, men helped to shape women’s rights and suffrage from its earliest stages. They were distinct in their individual motivations, inspirations, and gendered views of the world, as well as their approaches for how to gain the right to vote for American women. As the movement shifted from one of women’s rights to suffrage, male involvement continued to be critical to the ultimate goal of the

¹ Harriet Burton Laidlaw, Memorial: James Lees Laidlaw, 1868-1932 (Whitefish: Literary Licensing, 2013), 94; in 1932, Harriet Burton Laidlaw had a memorial published in honor of her late husband, James Lees Laidlaw, which she distributed to family and friends. The original copy of this memorial is part of the Laidlaw Papers located at the Schlesinger Library Women’s Studies Collection at Radcliffe College. For convenience, I used the published version. Original spelling has been preserved for quotations.
movement: the ratification of a federal amendment granting women the right to vote. While suffrage historians have long recognized individual men who supported women’s rights, they have failed to analyze men’s roles fully.

My work will address the following questions: Why were men needed for a movement centered around women’s rights and suffrage? Were there specific men who had greater impact on the movement than others? What were the motivations and influences that caused key men to join the movement? What forms did their activism take and how did male support transform during the eighty years of struggle for voting rights? What role did organizations like the Men’s League for Women’s Suffrage play in the movement? Finally, how did female reformers, domestic and international, perceive male involvement in America? Each of these questions will be answered to make the case that male involvement in women’s rights and suffrage was not ancillary but an integral and necessary component to the success of the movement. Furthermore, the nature of male involvement changed from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, from a movement of theoretical ideas about women’s rights to one of activism and mobilization built upon the ideas of the previous generation.

Women could not politically emancipate themselves when they did not have direct access to the system that created their disfranchisement. Just as the civil rights movement of the late twentieth century needed broad national white support to gain greater access to education and political rights, so too did the women’s rights and suffrage movement need male support to gain a federal amendment. Furthermore, it was necessary to have key individuals who could act as brokers to power for the movement and serve as a public face for male support. It is impossible to survey the entirety of male suffrage support in American history. Therefore, this dissertation focuses on twelve specific men who supported women’s rights and suffrage. The twelve men
selected are excellent case studies for examining the broader themes of male support within the movement. Case studies have traditionally been a method reserved for social sciences but provide a good tool for analyzing the past by allowing historians to look at complex themes through the lens of individual actions and words. Furthermore, the use of case studies as a method for studying male support of women’s suffrage demonstrates the unique contributions of the individual men as well as their strength of their collective support for the movement.

The nineteenth century reformers include William Lloyd Garrison, leader of the American Anti-Slavery Society and editor of the *The Liberator*; Wendell Phillips, Quaker minister and abolitionist lecturer; Frederick Douglass, former slave and one of the most visible political activists of the nineteenth century; Henry Browne Blackwell, husband of reformer Lucy Stone, co-founder of American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA), and editor of the *Woman’s Journal*; and Thomas Wentworth Higginson, military hero, co-founder of AWSA, and writer for the *Woman’s Journal*. The twentieth century reformers include James Lees Laidlaw, financier, husband of suffragist Harriet Burton Laidlaw, and President of the New York and National Men’s Leagues; George Peabody, writer, campaigner, and President of the National Men’s League; Ben Lindsey, juvenile court judge in Colorado and prolific writer of various Progressive-era reforms; George Creel, Progressive reformer and the propaganda chief in the wartime administration of Woodrow Wilson; William Edward Burghhardt Du Bois, African-American writer and intellectual, prominent leader of the Niagara Movement, and co-founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); Max Eastman, Greenwich Village bohemian, socialist, editor of the periodical *The Masses*, and founder of the Men’s League for Woman Suffrage in the United States; and, finally, Theodore Roosevelt.

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President of the United States, military hero, Progressive reformer, and cultural icon. Each of these men made unique contributions to the movement for women’s rights and suffrage, but they are also emblematic of the broader pattern of male support for the movement in America. Though each of them supported women’s rights and suffrage, they were diverse in their motivations, influences, activism, and beliefs about how to achieve the goal of emancipation for women and how to make the issue more palatable for the American public. For this reason, these twelve men make excellent case studies for understanding the necessity of male support in the women’s rights and suffrage movement in America.3

These twelve men were critical to the women’s rights and suffrage movement because they were all public men who were active on the local, state, and national levels and were critical to suffrage success. These individuals cover the time period of the movement and lived through the key eras that influenced the growth, development, and sustainability of women’s rights: antebellum, Civil War, Reconstruction, Gilded Age, and Progressive era. They represent different socio-economic backgrounds, races, education, and religion and embody a variety of perspectives on reform and the rule of law. They were active in four diverse political parties, including Republicans, Democrats, Progressives, and Socialists and show the diversity of the individuals who supported women’s voting rights. Furthermore, they originate from every geographic region within the United States and demonstrate that the movement grew from a localized issue into a nationwide mobilization for political participation. Finally, these men were not the only male supporters of women’s rights and suffrage, but they were the most important

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3 Since the Revolutionary period, women have had access to politics through petitions, party politics, and social reform. However, the most women could hope to achieve through these processes was to influence male voters and lawmakers. I argue that voting rights created a direct access to political power that these other activities could not provide. For more on this topic, refer to Susan Zaeske’s Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, and Women’s Political Identity; Laura Free, Suffrage Reconstructed: Gender, Race, and Voting Rights in the Civil War Era (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 6.
because of the pivotal roles they played in the movement and the public face they gave to women’s rights.

This scholarship fills in the gap of women’s rights and suffrage history by exploring the motivations and influences of key men significant to the movement, their individual roles, how male activism within the movement shifted over time, and female suffragists’ perceptions of male involvement. This dissertation will show that male involvement in the movement has been largely overlooked by suffrage historians; that, in response to the growing public debate and political strength of women, male involvement in the movement dramatically altered from the nineteenth to the twentieth century; and that, without male support, the American women’s rights and suffrage movement would have failed. An examination of both the history and the historiography of women’s rights and suffrage will reveal why men’s roles have been long overlooked and why recovering them is necessary for a holistic understanding of the movement.

1.1 History of the Movement

Despite the overwhelming historical evidence that demonstrates that men were active participants in the movement, suffrage historians, until recently, have either overlooked or been dismissive of male involvement in the movement. This is not surprising considering that Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, both of whom argued for limited male influence in the movement, wrote the first comprehensive history of the women’s rights movement, *History of Woman Suffrage*, first published in 1887. Stanton strongly believed that the suffrage movement was meant to be a woman only movement, stating that “woman herself must do this work - for woman alone can understand the height and the depth, the length and the breadth of her own degradation and woe. Man cannot speak for us.” Both Stanton and Anthony worked
diligently to construct a master narrative of the suffrage movement that placed themselves at the center of the movement’s political power. In the post-Reconstruction era, Stanton and Anthony tirelessly promoted their vision of the movement’s history as one that began with the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848. As a result, these “activist historians” created a “rigid chronology” of the movement that centered suffrage activism around the experiences of middle-class white women like Stanton and Anthony and omitted the contributions of others. Escaping this narrative is problematic for suffrage historians because so much of the scholarship that followed was based upon Stanton and Anthony’s published work. Some historians have made recent efforts to revise the traditional chronology of American suffrage, most notably by Lisa Tetrault in *The Myth of Seneca Falls*, but many suffrage historians continue to use 1848 as a watershed for the movement’s history because it is so entrenched in the collective memory of America.⁴

Tetrault is not the first suffrage historian to question the 1848 watershed. In 1959, Eleanor Flexner wrote *Century of Struggle: The Women’s Rights Movement in the United States*, which is one of the first suffrage histories written by a historian rather than an activist involved in the movement. Flexner examined the movement as a “century of struggle” from 1820 to 1920 and connected the issue of suffrage to growing education and work opportunities for women in the early and mid-nineteenth century. Flexner also argued that the 1840 Anti-Slavery Convention in London, England, marked the true beginning of an organized movement for women’s rights and suffrage, for it was “where the seed was planted.”⁵

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Similarly, this project begins the suffrage movement within the context of its abolitionist roots at the 1840 Anti-Slavery Convention in London, England. As previously stated, male reformers arguing for women’s rights was not a new concept. Since the 1830s, radical abolitionists argued for women to have greater opportunities for education as well as access to political and legal equality. Much to the chagrin of more conservative abolitionists who feared the political ramifications of linking abolition with the controversial women’s rights platform, these radicals, nicknamed Garrisonians after the fiery William Lloyd Garrison, encouraged female abolitionists like Sarah and Angelina Grimke, Abby Kelley Foster, Maria Stewart, and Sojourner Truth to write and, when necessary, to speak publicly on the issues, something that was considered scandalous in nineteenth century America. Lucretia Mott, a Quaker minister, and Lucy Stone, a graduate of Oberlin College and fierce advocate for women’s rights, also contributed to the joint platform of abolition and women’s rights.\(^6\)

Despite the attention that radical abolitionists gave to women’s rights, ending slavery remained the critical concern of the movement. This began to change in 1840 when an American delegation of men and women traveled to London for a worldwide antislavery meeting and the women were denied a seat at the convention. Garrison and Wendell Phillips were outraged by the slight given their colleagues and refused to participate in the convention proceedings unless the women were given equal access and allowed to sit with the rest of the American delegation. When historians reference the 1840 conference, it is often used as a way to introduce Stanton as the leader of women’s rights. Stanton, a young bride, was attending the convention for her honeymoon with her new husband, abolitionist Henry Stanton. She would later describe the meeting of Mott at the convention as the beginning of the women’s rights

\(^6\) For an excellent discussion on the difference between militant Garrisonians and moderate abolitionists, see Bruce Laurie’s *Beyond Garrison: Antislavery and Social Reform* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
movement. In reality, 1840 is significant for women’s rights and suffrage but not because of the chance, unplanned meeting of Stanton and Mott. Rather, this should be considered the more accurate beginning of the women’s rights movement in America because it is the moment when two prominent male abolitionists demonstrated the extent of their commitment to women’s rights. Garrison and Phillips’ actions confirmed that women’s rights should be considered on par with abolition and not just an idea to give occasional lip service to women.7

From 1840 to 1865, the women’s rights movement grew in the northeastern region of the United States. Cities like Seneca Falls, Worcester, Rochester, Boston, and New York played a key role in the formation of a diverse women’s rights movement. The most famous of these conventions took place in Seneca Falls, a small town built along the Erie Canal that was becoming “a hotbed of abolition reform” and home to Elizabeth Cady Stanton. While Seneca Falls’ origins as the beginning of a women’s rights movement are questionable, less arguable is the idea that it was the first women’s rights convention in the world. Historian Sally McMillen refers to this convention as an “obscure event” in history that later became associated with a strong movement. Women and men gathered at the convention to discuss women’s access to educational and economic opportunities, legal rights in marriage and motherhood, and society’s overall treatment of women. The most controversial aspect of the meeting was Stanton’s insistence that voting rights should be included as part of the “Declaration of Sentiments.” Frederick Douglass spoke in favor of adding voting rights to the measure by stating that he could not argue for his own political rights by denying women the same rights. In the end, sixty-eight

7 Gerda Lerner, The Grimke Sisters From South Carolina: Pioneers for Women’s Rights and Abolition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 11, 91, 125. International conferences like the 1840 convention were not uncommon and both abolition and women’s rights were transatlantic movements. For more information, see Bonnie Anderson, Joyous Greetings: The First International Women’s Movement, 1830-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Christine Stansell, The Feminist Promise: 1792 to Present (New York: Modern Library, 2010), 49.
women and thirty-two men signed the declaration proclaiming the necessity of women’s rights in America.  

The arguments for women’s rights prior to the Civil War were largely focused on the notion of egalitarianism espoused by the growing Christian denominations in the Second Great Awakening. Reformers, male and female, argued that women deserved voting rights because the “Declaration of Independence” declared, that “all men (and by default, women) were created equal.” The Garrisonians, who were making similar arguments that African-Americans were equal to whites, influenced this tactic greatly. Eventually, these arguments would evolve into a more nuanced approach that claimed women were more virtuous to appeal to a broader masculine audience. The convention period between 1848 and 1860 provided opportunities for prominent men and women to demonstrate why women needed greater rights. Lucy Stone was a passionate speaker for women’s rights at these national conventions, where she would eventually attract the attention of a young aspiring activist named Henry Browne Blackwell. In 1852, women’s rights would gain another advocate, one who would dedicate the entirety of her life to gaining the right to vote for women: Susan B. Anthony. A Quaker, Anthony was not new to reform and had spent years working for temperance and teaching. Stanton and Anthony’s fifty-year friendship and collaboration would last until Stanton’s death in 1902. Upon hearing of her friend’s death, Anthony remarked, “It seems impossible . . . [Stanton] forged the thunderbolts and I fired them.” Women’s rights and suffrage activism stopped with the onslaught of the American Civil War. From 1861 to 1865, reformers focused their efforts and energies to supporting the war effort. Stanton and Anthony believed that, by contributing to the success of

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the Union, women would be rewarded with voting rights and allowed to participate in the
democratic process. They did not realize that it would take sixty more years to achieve their
goals and neither one of them would live to see their hard work reach its fruition.9

The post-war years of activism were drastically different from the unity of the pre-war
movement. The women’s rights movement transformed into a more specific demand for voting
rights as the national conversation about citizenship and participatory democracy emerged
surrounding the emancipation of slaves. More people became involved in suffrage activism,
including Henry Browne Blackwell, husband of reformer Lucy Stone; Clara Barton, Civil War
nurse and founder of the American Red Cross; and Mary Livermore, reformer and member of the
United States Sanitary Commission. However, as the reformers began to pick up where they left
prior to the war, the debate surrounding the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments fractured the
movement into factions. Women like Stanton and Anthony wanted white women to have voting
rights immediately, even at the expense of black men who they considered to be uneducated and
ignorant in comparison. More conventional suffragists like Stone, Livermore, Blackwell,
Garrison, Phillips, Higginson, and Douglass believed it was necessary to gain voting rights for
black men first as protection against possible Southern backlash to the emancipation of slaves.
Stanton and Anthony felt betrayed by their actions and, in 1869, formed the National Woman
Suffrage Association (NWSA) in New York to advocate for a constitutional amendment granting
women the right to vote. They aligned with George Francis Train, a Democrat and supporter of
white supremacy, and argued that white women should be given voting rights to counter the
effects of the black male vote in the South. In contrast, Stone, Blackwell, Garrison, Phillips,
Douglass, and Livermore formed the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) in

9 “Famous Advocate of Woman’s Rights Dead,” Washington Times, 27 October 1902, reprinted in Tetrault, The
Myth of Seneca Falls, 184; Stansell, Feminist Promise, 83.
Boston. This organization was more conservative in nature but nonetheless fully committed to women’s suffrage. AWSA argued that state-by-state campaigns were necessary and more pragmatic than waiting for a congressional amendment. The activists associated with AWSA were appalled by the racism espoused by the NWSA campaigners and sought to remove themselves from Stanton and Anthony as much as possible.\(^{10}\)

From 1865 to 1890, there were very few suffrage victories even though Wyoming became the first territory to allow women’s suffrage in 1869, but this time period saw the birth of the *Woman’s Journal*. Created by Blackwell, Stone, and their daughter Alice Stone Blackwell, it would become the most successful and longest-running suffrage periodicals in America. Another victory is that women’s capabilities and voting rights became part of a nation-wide conversation from coast-to-coast, but with NWSA and AWSA fighting each other on strategies and tactics, it became difficult for the movement to achieve any kind of substantial success. Stanton and Anthony continued to argue on the basis of equality, supporters of AWSA sought to make their arguments for suffrage more palatable to society as a whole by suggesting that women would clean up society just as they cleaned up the home. Furthermore, suffrage became part of a broader conversation in southern and western states about the role of citizenship and race. In the American South, suffragists argued that white women should be granted voting rights to prevent black men from voting. Women like Kate and Jean Gordon of Louisiana and Rebecca Latimer Felton of Georgia were strong supporters of white supremacy. Likewise, in the American West, suffrage became tied to issues of immigration, Native American rights, and imperialism. In 1890, NWSA and AWSA merged, in part because a younger generation of suffrage leaders rejected “the politics of their mothers” and sought to create a cohesive

organization for women’s suffrage in the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA).\textsuperscript{11}

Suffrage historians frequently refer to the period between 1890 and 1912 as the period of “suffrage doldrums.” This term is used to describe the lack of mobilization for suffrage that existed in the turn of the century. Gustafson argues that women became heavily involved in the party politics of the period, specifically the Republican Party, and sought to create change in other movements since suffrage was stagnant. Sneider and Stansell both describe this period of suffrage history as a chaotic, fractured movement despite the existence of a singular organization and argue that the problem with NAWSA was that it inherited the problems of the previous generation. Though some suffragists wanted a national amendment, NAWSA’s official policy supported state-by-state campaigns because it was the most pragmatic way to achieve suffrage. In the 1890s, several western states granted voting rights to women: Colorado, Idaho, and Utah. However, after that initial good fortune, suffrage activists became frustrated at the lack of success for gaining suffrage support on the state or federal level. NAWSA fell under the leadership of Anna Howard Shaw and, later, Carrie Chapman Catt. Lunardini describes Shaw as a likeable but ineffective leader for suffrage and attributes her inability to create a coalition as one of the primary reasons for the “suffrage doldrums.”\textsuperscript{12}

In 1912, Alice Paul and Lucy Burns took control of NAWSA’s Congressional Committee to create a sustained effort to mobilize support for a federal amendment. Paul and Burns were


\textsuperscript{12} Gustafson, \textit{Women and the Republican Party}, 61; Sneider’s \textit{Suffragists in an Imperial Age} demonstrates that the time period referred to as “doldrums” was active as suffragists became imperialists in American expansion; Stansell, \textit{The Feminist Promise}, 121-146; Christine Lunardini, \textit{From Equal Suffrage to Equal Rights: Alice Paul and the National Woman’s Party, 1910-1928} (New York: toExcel Press, 2000), xii.
products of the militant suffragette movement in Great Britain and had learned tactics from Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst, founders of the Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU). The arrival of Paul and Burns would give the movement a much-needed shot of militancy that was required for success. In contrast to historians who argued that the militant movement hurt more than helped the movement, Christine Lunardini describes Paul as a strong, organized, effective leader who was able to gain broad support for the movement. Paul and Burns were a dynamic team and believed in the concept of spectacle for gaining momentum for suffrage. In 1913, they staged a parade in Washington D.C. on the day before Woodrow Wilson’s presidential inauguration. NAWSA viewed the event as a disaster because the spectacle turned to violence and the police refused to prevent spectators from attacking the women and men in the parade. However, suffrage historians agree that the parade was a success in gaining the support of public opinion horrified by images of men beating women in public and police standing by on the sidelines. The parade was one of many issues that divided the leadership of the Congressional Committee and the head of NAWSA. Eventually, Paul and Burns split from NAWSA to form the Congressional Union, which was later named the National Woman’s Party (NWP). Furthermore, the NWP took Stanton and Anthony’s approach and argued for suffrage based on the equality of women, while NAWSA used the Progressive era ideas that women would clean up society. The militancy of Paul and Burns continued when the United States entered World War I. In 1917, Paul and Burns began a series of pickets outside the White House, which Stansell claims was the first time Americans had ever picketed the presidential seat. The pickets landed many suffragists of the NWP in jail, including Paul and Burns, and caused outrage among the members of the NAWSA.13

13 Lunardini, From Equal Suffrage to Equal Rights, 19, 34, 54, 84; Stansell, The Feminist Promise, 168-169.
While Paul and Burns continued their militant campaign supporters of the NAWSA continued to advocate for suffrage on a state-by-state basis. In contrast to the NWP, which held the party in power responsible for failures to ratify suffrage, the NAWSA remained politically neutral regarding party and was outraged that members of the NWP targeted a sitting president and alienated key male supporters. NAWSA maintained the importance of male support by forming alliances with organizations like the Men’s League for Women’s Suffrage, formed in 1909, and key men like Ben Lindsey, a Colorado judge; George Creel, leader of Woodrow Wilson’s wartime propaganda machine; and James Lees Laidlaw, investment banker and president of the New York and National Men’s League. Eventually, Shaw would step down as president of NAWSA, and Carrie Chapman Catt would take over the helm. Catt’s “winning plan” created a strategy for gaining a congressional amendment by targeting key states that could swing national lawmakers. Catt also made use of southern suffragists who believed the NWP was too radical to promote NAWSA’s plan. Stansell argues that Catt was largely responsible for the success of suffrage, but my argument is that the growth of broad-based male support like Laidlaw, Creel, Lindsey, and Theodore Roosevelt helped to make suffrage possible. Lunardini credits Paul and Burns for the success of suffrage, but ultimately the movement worked best when it was not split on issues of tactics and arguments. Paul’s militancy pushed society to accept Catt’s “winning plan,” and the visible presence of key male support made suffrage a cause that was able to gain enough votes in Congress and the support of Woodrow Wilson, to be passed in 1919.14

If the origins of suffrage elicit controversy among historians, so, too, does the culmination. In August of 1920, a young statesman named Harry Burn cast his vote in the

14 Lunardini, From Equal Suffrage to Equal Rights, 82-83; Wheeler, New Women of the New South, 39; Stansell, The Feminist Promise, 160; Lunardini, From Equal Suffrage to Equal Rights, xv.
Tennessee legislature on the issue of woman suffrage. Initially opposed to suffrage, Burn changed his vote in support of suffrage after receiving a letter from his pro-suffrage mother, urging him to “Be a good boy” and vote “yes” on the issue of enfranchisement. Burn’s single vote was responsible for the final ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. The passage of the amendment is often framed as the successful end of a long-fought eighty year campaign for women’s suffrage across the nation. However, this view is a problematic one for historians. Just as beginning the movement with Seneca Falls in 1848 labels women’s rights and suffrage as a white, middle-class, women-only movement, using the Nineteenth Amendment as the endpoint ignores the contributions of others both before and after the ratification process. The watershed of 1920 does not take into account the fact that black, Asian, Native American, and Latina women were frequently prevented from exercising their constitutional rights to the vote until the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965. It also ignores the contributions of black activists for women’s rights and suffrage, such as Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, and Mary Church Terrell. Finally, historians like myself are addressing the long-held misconception that the movement for women’s rights and suffrage was solely the domain of women. Men played significant roles in the movement and were equally responsible for the successful ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. By examining male involvement, historians can gain a better understanding of the complex gender roles and social dynamics that influenced one of the longest-lasting social movements in American history.15

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15 Febb Ensminger Burns to Harry T. Burns, 17 August 1920, Harry Burns Papers, Calvin McClung Historical Collection, Knox County Public Library; Tetrault, *The Myth of Seneca Falls*, 192.
1.2 Literature Review

Historians have studied and written about male advocacy of women’s rights and suffrage before, but surprisingly they have failed to connect male support to the overall success of the movement in America. This is unsurprising when one realizes that the majority of the historiography is based on Stanton and Anthony’s *History of Woman Suffrage* as its foundational text. As a result, historians often perpetuate Stanton and Anthony’s tendency to overlook or be outright dismissive of male involvement in their own histories of the movement. Historians who discuss male support of women’s rights and suffrage typically fall into one of three categories: broad contextual narratives of the movement that include references to male contributions; biographies of female and male reformers, which provide limited insights into male involvement in the movement; and, finally, scholarship that has examined men’s roles within international movements, usually the British movement. Each category of scholarship is briefly examined to demonstrate why a comprehensive study of male involvement in the American women’s rights and suffrage movement is needed to broaden the historiography.

Broad suffrage narratives represent the bulk of women’s rights and suffrage historiography. While there are many books on the movement, some of the key works that discuss limited male support in a broad context include Ellen Carol DuBois’ *Feminism and Suffrage*, Eleanor Flexner’s *Century of Struggle*, Aileen Kraditor’s *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920*, Sally McMillen’s *Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Women’s Rights Movement*, Christine Stansell’s *The Feminist Promise*, Alison Sneider’s *Suffragists in an Imperial Age*, Lisa Tetrault’s *The Myth of Seneca Falls*, Laura Free’s *Suffrage Reconstructed*, Nancy Cott’s *Grounding of Modern Feminism*, and Christine Lunardini’s *From Equal Suffrage to Equal Rights*. Within their historical analyses, these scholars provide ample evidence that men
contributed to women’s rights and suffrage in the United States. Each scholar differs in her interpretation of the significance of men’s participation, but, ultimately, they fail to recognize that men were much more than an ancillary minority in the movement. Furthermore, none of the works discuss the importance of having the support of specific men serve as public advocates, what their support brought to the cause, or what it contributed to the overall goal of the movement. These works represent some of the most significant work in the field and draw attention to the need for greater exploration of the roles that men played in the movement.¹⁶

In *Feminism and Suffrage*, Ellen Carol DuBois argues that, between 1848 and 1869, a women’s movement emerged in America that was independent from the abolitionist movement and would become the activist predecessor to second-wave feminism. Published in 1978, DuBois’ work is reflective of the activist-scholar model that became popular during the women’s liberation movement in which activists entered academia to create a separate women’s history that would counter the masculinist narrative of traditional history. In doing so, DuBois overlooks men’s roles in the women’s rights and suffrage movement and argues that male abolitionists were “hostile” to women’s rights because they believed that the issue deflected energy from the antislavery movement. However, there is historical evidence that a number of abolitionists, such as Garrison, Douglass, Blackwell, Phillips, and Higginson, were instrumental in the early years of the movement and their commitment to women’s rights and suffrage only strengthened over time. Like DuBois, Eleanor Flexner’s *Century of Struggle* and Aileen Kraditor’s *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920* omit the key roles that men played in the movement and choose to focus on the political activism of the female reformers. In

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¹⁶ These works are the primary historiographical works that I use in my research, while also pulling from other articles and scholarship to substantiate my argument about the necessity of male support and to illustrate specific points in my dissertation.
The Grounding of Modern Feminism, Nancy Cott states that the women’s movement “allowed men to join” but they were not key players. Cott believes that men were on the periphery of the movement if not outright opposed on the basis that it interfered with other movements like socialism. She argues that women reluctantly allowed men to join the movement but were fearful that men would attempt to take over the leadership roles. In reality, many female reformers openly campaigned to gain greater male support for women’s rights and suffrage, because they recognized the need for broad male support to change public opinion on the issue.\(^\text{17}\)

Writing thirty years later, Sally McMillen does not rid the women’s rights movement of its abolitionist roots nor seek to eradicate men from the narrative. Rather, she acknowledges that “many of those who would lead women’s rights . . . were ardent abolitionists [and men].” McMillen states that male supporters served a “critical role” in the movement from the very beginning and their presence demonstrated an openness and genuine interest in women’s rights. She discusses both the activism of male and female reformers for women’s rights and suffrage. In spite of the numerous examples presented by McMillen that establish men were equal partners in the movement, she still claims that the male reformers were a fringe element rather than an integral part of the leadership.\(^\text{18}\)

Similar to McMillen, Christine Stansell does not attempt to divorce women’s rights and suffrage from either abolitionism or male involvement. In fact, she believes that nineteenth century activism was explicitly tied to a mutual relationship between the sexes, one focused on “friendship between a man and a woman” and one that “came out of a sensibility that bestowed

\(^{17}\) The activist-scholar model is what historian Lisa Tetrault uses to describe Stanton and Anthony’s efforts to rewrite suffrage history. I use this term to refer to both Stanton and Anthony’s legacy as historian activists, but also to historians that emerged from the post-World War II women’s liberation movement, such as DuBois, Flexner, Kraditor, and Cott; Ellen Carol DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women’s Movement in America, 1848-1869* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 8, 24; Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987) 5, 29.

meaning and purpose on ties between the sex.” This viewpoint explains the connection between the two movements and the ways that the presence of men “made things possible” for women’s rights. However, like DuBois, Cott, and McMillen, Stansell suggests that male reformers were lackluster in their commitment to women’s rights, suffrage, and the development of feminism despite her claim that men were the public face of early feminism. Stansell uses the men’s personal imperfections and deficiencies to conclude that they were less committed to the cause. Henry Blackwell’s infidelities are one example that Stansell uses to demonstrate his unsuitability as a suffrage man. She does not make a similar argument regarding the imperfect female reformers. Historic figures are not paragons of virtue and historians should be careful not to judge individuals in the past solely by the sum of their sins and vices. Sneider makes a comparable argument: that suffrage was part of a broader conversation about immigration and citizenship. Therefore, it follows, according to Sneider, that male involvement and support were less about supporting women and more about preventing other groups, such as African-Americans in the South, Native Americans and Chinese immigrants in the West, and polygamists in Utah, from voting. While racism was indeed prevalent among both male and female reformers in the women’s rights and suffrage movement, it is problematic to suggest that a person’s commitment to a cause was not strong simply because his or her reasons for supporting that cause are not palatable to modern sensibilities. Reformers, male and female, were imperfect human beings, but that does not lessen their commitment to the women’s rights and suffrage cause, nor does it make what they achieved any less significant.19

19 Stansell, Feminist Promise, 33, 100, 59, 100; Sneider, Suffragists in an Imperial Age, 54. Books about the southern suffrage movement were not included because they typically portray the men as anti-suffragists and rarely mention male support for women’s rights and suffrage in the South.
In recent years, suffrage historians have attempted to incorporate discussions of gender roles into the broader historical narratives of the movement. In addition to adding notions of femininity and masculinity as cultural constructs, this approach has allowed historians to deconstruct the traditional approach to women’s rights and suffrage created by Stanton and Anthony, thus providing room for alternative narratives. In *The Myth of Seneca Falls*, Lisa Tetrault draws attention to the ways that these two “activist historians” created the existing chronology of women’s rights and suffrage. She asserts that origin stories like Seneca Falls make it possible to remove people from the narrative and allow for “the forgetting of struggles within the struggle, the debates and rivalries within the movement itself.” This demonstrates how male participation in the movement came to be a long-ignored part of the movement’s history. If history is as much a construct of understanding as a series of events that occurs, then it stands to reason that this history can be deconstructed and restored into a more inclusive narrative. Like Tetrault, Laura Free reframes the existing narrative of women’s rights and suffrage through the lens of gendered language surrounding the debate on the passing of the Fourteenth Amendment. Similar to Stanton and Anthony, Free blames male reformers like Wendell Phillips for the use of gendered language to argue for voting rights for black men during Reconstruction, stating that it created a “gendered political right” associated with masculinity. Both Tetrault and Free suggest that the men were more assistants in the movement rather than equal partners, demonstrating that the need for a more comprehensive understanding of the roles that men played in the women’s rights and suffrage movement is more important than ever.20

The second category that addresses male support in women’s rights and suffrage is the biographies of female and male reformers in the movement. There are numerous biographies

written about female suffragists but very few that mention men’s participation in the movement. Most of the biographies that do include information about male reformers tend to be written about the nineteenth century movement leaders, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Lucy Stone. Nineteenth century reformers like Stanton and Stone were related to or married to fellow reformers, while twentieth century reformers like Paul and Burns were single and more independent in their activism. Furthermore, nineteenth century reformers relied more heavily on equal partnerships with key male reformers than the women of the twentieth century, who worked with men but in segregated organizations. Lori Ginsberg’s *Elizabeth Cady Stanton: An American Life* explores Stanton as a radical philosopher who challenged “men’s exclusive control over politics.” In her exploration of Stanton’s life and activism, she also mentions key men who influenced the movement: Garrison, Phillips, Higginson, Douglass, and Blackwell. Myra McPherson’s *The Scarlet Sisters: Sex, Suffrage, and Scandal in the Gilded Age* explores the legacies of “improper Victorians [and] infamous feminists,” Tennessee Claflin and Victoria Woodhull. Wendy Venet’s *A Strong Minded Woman: The Life of Mary Livermore* looks at Mary Livermore, who was part of AWSA and worked with Blackwell, Higginson, Phillips, Garrison, and Douglass after the Civil War. Jean Baker’s *Sisters: The Lives of America’s Suffragists* discusses the lives of Frances Willard, Lucy Stone, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Alice Paul. All of these monographs reference the interactions that these women had with key men in the movement. However, the biographies of Lucy Stone, such as Andrea Kerr’s *Lucy Stone: Speaking Out for Equality* and Sally McMillen’s *Lucy Stone: An Unapologetic Life*, prove to be most useful when studying male involvement in the movement. This is not surprising because Stone worked closely with men in the abolition movement and the formation of AWSA but also had a “marriage of true equals” with reformer Henry Blackwell. In
contrast to Stanton and Anthony, who viewed men as necessary evils to the women’s movement, Stone recognized that women’s rights and suffrage would not survive without men as partners and collaborators.21

Unlike the biographies of nineteenth century women, twentieth century biographies of female reformers contain very few references to men involved in the movement. Ellen Carol DuBois’ *Harriot Stanton Blatch and the Winning of Woman Suffrage* mentions Blackwell, Garrison, Phillips, Du Bois, Eastman, and Roosevelt but only as secondary characters. Furthermore, she describes Roosevelt’s support of suffrage as “embarrassing” in the face of his masculinist persona in public. Trisha Franzen’s *Anna Howard Shaw: The Work of Woman Suffrage* also mentions men (Blackwell, Douglass, Garrison, Laidlaw, Du Bois, Eastman, Phillips, Roosevelt) but does not go into detail about these men and role they played in the movement. Biographies written about Alice Paul are more disappointing. Both Christine Lunardini’s *Alice Paul: Equality for Women* and J.D. Zahniser and Amelia Fry’s *Alice Paul: Claiming Power* fail to mention male involvement to such an extent that they reinforce the premise that women’s rights and suffrage were solely to province of women. Mary Walton’s *A Woman’s Crusade: Alice Paul and the Battle for the Ballot* provides limited information about Paul’s view of men in the movement (“This is a woman’s movement.”), but that is where men’s presence ends. The purpose of biography is to provide insight into the life of a specific individual rather than a broad narrative. Therefore, it is problematic to expect biographies to provide as much information about male involvement as the comprehensive narratives. Nevertheless, biographies play a crucial role in understanding the roles of men. While suffrage

biographies can perpetuate the notion that all female reformers regarded men as necessary evils, they can also demonstrate the perceptions of female reformers who actively campaigned to gain male support.  

The biographies of male reformers are both a blessing and a curse for historians when it comes to examining the roles they played in the women’s rights and suffrage movement. For one, historians have not examined all of the men chosen for this study. To date, Blackwell, Laidlaw, and Creel have not been made the subjects of biographies. Biographies on Phillips, Higginson, Lindsey, and Peabody are rare and often extremely outdated. By comparison, biographies that discuss Garrison, Du Bois, Eastman, Roosevelt, and Douglass are plentiful and offer wide interpretations of their lives and activism. However, these works typically focus on activism other than women’s rights. For example, in All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery, Henry Mayer mentions Garrison’s support of women’s rights as an afterthought rather than an integral part of his personal philosophy of equality. This is also troubling considering that Garrisonians were controversial because they were so radical as to support women’s rights and abolition in the same platform.

Another example are biographies about Max Eastman, founder of the Men’s League for Woman Suffrage in the United States. Books such as Milton Cantor’s Max Eastman, William O’Neill’s The Last Romantic: A Life of Max Eastman, and the more recent work by Christopher Irmscher, Max Eastman: A Life, all mention his role in the creation of the Men’s League but focus the bulk of their analysis on his significant role as a socialist and editor of The Masses. Similarly, monographs written about W.E.B. Du Bois, such as Gary Dorrien’s The New

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22 Ellen Carol DuBois’ Harriot Stanton Blatch and the Winning of Woman Suffrage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 144; Mary Walton, A Woman’s Crusade: Alice Paul and the Battle for the Ballot (New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2010), 65. It should also be noted that the biographies mentioned here are a sample of the field. It would be impossible to account for every biography written about these women, nineteenth or twentieth century.
Abolition: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Black Social Gospel and Shawn Lee Alexander’s W.E.B. Du Bois: An American Intellectual and Activist provide little evidence of Du Bois’ views on women’s suffrage. The majority of the books on Du Bois focus on his pivotal role as an African-American intellectual. One exception is Gary Lemon’s Womanist Forefathers: Frederick Douglass and W.E.B. Du Bois, which addresses both Du Bois and Douglass’ views on women’s rights and suffrage. Books on Theodore Roosevelt explore his roles as progressive reformer, president, military hero, conservationist, explorer, and public speaker but rarely address his views of women’s rights and suffrage in any great detail. When historians do address Roosevelt’s contribution to the movement, they reference his selection of Jane Addams to second his nomination as presidential candidate of the Progressive Party in 1912 or write that he was a halfhearted supporter of suffrage. Scholarly work that helps understand Roosevelt’s transformation into a supporter of women’s rights and suffrage are biographies written about the women in Roosevelt’s life, such as Sylvia Jukes Morris’ Edith Kermit Roosevelt: Portrait of a First Lady and Betty Boyd Caroli’s The Roosevelt Women.23

Biographies about Douglass are a different story altogether. Works that examine the life and career of Douglass almost always contain references to women’s rights and suffrage. In every book that mentions his name, Douglass is paired with Seneca Falls, discussions of the Fourteenth Amendment, and the racial tensions surrounding Reconstruction-era women’s rights and suffrage. This demonstrates that, for African-American male reformers, concepts of equality were not limited to a single race or gender but were intertwined in ways that white reformers

23 There is a plethora of Roosevelt biographies and no way to fully address each one. John Milton Cooper’s The Warrior and the Priest: Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt, Doris Kearns Goodwin’s The Bully Pulpit: Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and the Golden Age of Journalism, and Edmund Morris’ series on Theodore Roosevelt that includes The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt, Theodore Rex, and Colonel Roosevelt are excellent works that were helpful in the construction of Roosevelt’s personal and professional timeline.
might not grasp. As a result, Gary Lemon’s *Womanist Forefathers: Frederick Douglass and W.E.B. Du Bois*, James Oakes’ *The Radical and the Republican*, Philip Foner’s edited volume *Frederick Douglass on Women’s Rights*, and Leigh Fought’s *Women in the World of Frederick Douglass* are all excellent resources for exploring the concept of intersectionality within African-American rights and women’s rights that influenced the lives of Douglass.24

Finally, the literature that focuses solely on the activism of male reformers in women’s rights and suffrage takes several approaches. First, the literature focuses solely on the men who played a key role in the British women’s rights movement, such as Claire Eustance and Angela John’s *The Men’s Share: Masculinities, Male Support and Woman Suffrage in Britain, 1890-1920* and Ben Griffin’s *The Politics of Gender in Victorian Britain: Masculinity, Political Culture and the Struggle for Women’s Rights*. Historians interested in male support have long focused on the British movement because of the large number of public men who supported women’s rights and suffrage in Great Britain than in the United States, such as John Stuart Mill, Laurence Housman, Frederick Pethick-Lawrence, George Bernard Shaw, and Israel Zangwill. Both of these works suggest that the British movement had a larger number of male public supporters because it was more needed in aristocratic Britain where gender roles were more entrenched.25

The second aspect of literature that focuses on men’s involvement in the movement claims to offer comparative studies between Great Britain and the United States. In reality,

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much of the research actually focuses on the British movement, such as Christine Bolt’s *Feminist Ferment: “The Woman Question” in the USA and England, 1870-1940*, Sylvia Strauss’ *Traitor’s to the Masculine Cause: The Men’s Campaign for Women’s Rights* and Kevin White’s *Men Supporting Women*. When these works do compare the British movement to the American movement, the historians make the assumption that the two countries were similar enough to warrant comparison. This is frequently done because of the transatlantic relationship shared between reformers in Britain and America. However, this is a problematic approach because there were significant cultural differences between British and American societies and analyzing male support in one country has limited significance on male support in another country. Despite the cultural differences, this dissertation occasionally draws from the British and comparative historiography in order to understand how the women in the British movements understood the significance of American male support and how they communicated those understandings across the Atlantic to their fellow American reformers.26

In recent years, growing interest in gender studies has influenced the scholarship of women’s rights and suffrage. As a result, more historians are deconstructing the traditional narrative and re-examining men’s roles in the American movement. Michael Kimmel and Thomas Mosmiller’s *Against the Tide: Pro-Feminist Men in America*, Brooke Kroeger’s *Suffragents: How Women Used Men to Get the Vote*, and Johanna Neuman’s “Who Won Women’s Suffrage? A Case for ‘Mere Men’” are three examples of this scholarship. Kimmel and Mosmiller examine male involvement in women’s rights and suffrage as part of a broader exploration of “male feminism” in American history. They stress that, while men did support suffrage, there is little evidence to show motivations and influences. Kroeger’s work explores

26 I discuss these differences in greater detail in my aforementioned published article “Transatlantic Suffragism.”
the New York State Men’s League for Women’s Suffrage and how the women’s rights movement “used” men to gain voting rights during the 1917 campaign in New York. Neuman’s work follows this predictable pattern of focusing solely on the Men’s League in New York City. Kimmel, Mosmiller, and Kroeger argue that men contributed to the women’s rights and suffrage movement, but they differ when it comes to discussing the significance of male support. Kimmel and Mosmiller believe that the men had very little influence on the movement beyond the occasional contribution. Kroeger and Neuman believe that men played an important role but were not equal contributors. They both argue that men were still on the periphery of the movement, limited to the radicalism of New York City politics, and were only utilized by the women reformers when necessary to achieve their goals.27

In contrast to the existing historiography, my research sheds new light on male involvement. First, I demonstrate that men were necessary to the success and growing popularity of the women’s rights and suffrage movement. Next, I focus on the influence of specific men like the ones selected for this study, who were even more significant because they gave the movement greater legitimacy. This often-neglected part of the past should be given new attention in the scholarship. This dissertation will add to the field of suffrage scholarship by establishing that the women’s rights and suffrage movement was most successful when men and women collaborated to achieve voting rights in America.

1.3 Methodology

Gerda Lerner once stated that “All human beings are practicing historians . . . We live our lives; we tell our stories. It is as natural as breathing.” Since the women’s liberation movements of the late twentieth century and the growing interest in the history of women and gender within the university system, historians have begun to look beyond the traditional inclusion narratives of women’s history and have constructed a broader feminist epistemological framework that shapes our collective understanding of the past. Despite the patriarchal, neo-positivist, and hegemonic constructs that have traditionally defined the history discipline since the nineteenth century, feminist historians continue to deconstruct and reframe the past through the lens of race, class, and gender. Feminist historians frequently “position themselves at the intersection of several fields” and can utilize gender as a “substantively and methodologically” constructive discourse within the discipline of history. My research will be constructed through a similar feminist historiographical lens that follows an ontology based upon the works of Gerda Lerner, Joan Scott, and Laurel Thatcher Ulrich. Ulrich’s view that “Historians don’t own history” reflects my own belief that historians are simply the tools by which the past is presented and have a responsibility to honor the stories, voices, and lives of those who made history and to educate those who are responsible for the future.28

In studying male involvement in women’s rights and suffrage, this dissertation follows Scott’s model and utilizes gender as a discursive analysis through which to explore an understanding of the relationships between men and women within the context of a social movement and the broad scope of American history. By focusing on a part of history that has

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been previously overlooked by scholars, I hope to “render historical what has hitherto been hidden from history” and recreate the history of women’s rights and suffrage from a singular narrative of *history* into a multiplicity of narratives or *histories* that include the experiences of the men in the movement. Furthermore, I will recognize that, as a “historian-storyteller [I am] part of a chain of storytellers, an intermediary, perhaps a midwife, who understands [I am] bringing forth something that did not originate with [me].” In the context of feminist historiography, objectivity is heavily debated. Neo-positivists support the concepts of total objectivity and believe that discussions of historical context are irrelevant. In contrast, relativists articulate that total objectivity is unachievable and that all “knowledge is historically situated, contingent, and shaped by social power.” While recognizing that knowledge is historically constructed and that objectivity is a problematic concept, I still believe that it is important for historians to make the attempt at objectivity in their research.  

Like Ulrich, I find it liberating to “study a world seemingly disconnected” from my own and hope the distance in time will allow me to present an accurate reflection and analysis of the roles that men played in the movement. I recognize the strengths and limitations of my own situated identity as a white, heterosexual, middle-class, woman of privilege and education living in the twenty-first century and recognize the role that my identity plays in the construction of knowledge. The goal of this project is not to overthrow the master narrative of women’s rights and suffrage but to educate the public about the multiplicity of experiences, narratives, and identities that have existed within the movement and to bring these stories into clearer focus for

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interpretation and analysis. While my identity as a historian, feminist, and woman certainly contributes to my interest in the role men played in women’s rights and suffrage, I will not place my own experience within the historical narrative, for to do so would create “epistemic questions” that have political and ethical repercussions. I have a vastly different world-view than a late nineteenth and early twentieth century man who is navigating the questions of gender within a charged political climate.30

In researching the men of the movement rather than the women, this topic is, at first glance, a masculinist project because it is not traditionally “woman centered.” However, by using “the analytical methods and insights” of feminism, this dissertation explores issues of gender, race, and class without “abandoning the political project of women’s history.” In short, analyzing male involvement in the women’s rights and suffrage movement is a feminist project. My intention is to understand better the influences, motivations, and views of the key men selected for this study and also to demonstrate that men were not outliers. They were active, dedicated, and important members that contributed to the movement’s success. My goal is neither to remove the women from their own movement nor to suggest that the men themselves were solely responsible for the success of the movement. It was, after all, a movement for women’s rights and women’s suffrage. Rather, this dissertation will demonstrate the power of a successful social movement where collaboration between men and women altered the course of history. Social movements have emerged and disappeared in America, but it is only when different groups come together to advocate for change that those movements are successful and long-lasting effects. It is problematic to suggest that women were able to enfranchise themselves

at a time when many women lacked access to political power. In order for women to have “a history of their own,” the experiences of all parties must be examined and explored, even the men.31

Terminology is important when striving for accuracy and authenticity in writing about the past. Scholars often use the term *women’s rights* to distinguish the nineteenth century reformers from the twentieth century reformers. I use *women’s rights* to describe the nineteenth century reformers prior to the Civil War because voting rights were not the sole focus of the movement. However, this changed after the war and suffrage, both for African-Americans and women, became a national issue during Reconstruction. Therefore, for my discussion of the activism that occurred between 1840 and 1865, I use *women’s rights* for both the period and the men involved in the movement. For nineteenth century reformers active during the post-war era and also for twentieth century reformers, I use *suffragist* or *male suffragist* because voting rights was the primary focus of the movement from 1865 to 1920. Also, I refer to the movement during this time period as the *suffrage movement* and the *women’s suffrage movement* because it was ultimately a movement to gain voting rights for women. Some scholars use *feminist* and *suffragist* interchangeably, but I disagree with this approach. I use the term *feminist* only to denote the politics of twentieth century reformers associated with the growing feminist movement of New York City’s Greenwich Village. Though the term *suffragette* is recognized as one specific to the militant British movement, occasionally it appears in the periodicals, letters, and writings of the American suffragists or in derogatory depictions of the movement. Therefore, when this term is used in archival material, I preserve it to maintain authenticity and

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accuracy in the narrative. Finally, I refer to the women’s rights and suffrage movement as a singular movement that developed over time. While the platforms for women’s rights and women’s suffrage were very different, I do this to show continuity between the male activism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Chapter Two explores the motivations and influences of key men involved in the women’s rights and women’s suffrage movement in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In this chapter, I demonstrate how family ties to strong women, marriage to fellow reformers, ethical and religious influences, and political or pragmatic reasons all motivated men to support women’s rights and suffrage. Chapter Three investigates the written activism of the male suffragists and shows how these twelve activists used letters and published works to encourage reformers, critique radicals, and construct arguments necessary for gaining broader support. Chapter Four focuses on the organizational activism of suffrage men through political parties and suffrage organizations like the Men’s League. The final chapter explores female suffragists’ perceptions of these twelve men and show that male support was considered important despite the anti-male rhetoric used by some female suffragists.

My hope is that this dissertation will become an important part of the historical research on women’s rights and suffrage. There is a need for a greater understanding of these individual men, their motivations and influences, and their contributions to the movement. The story of a movement cannot focus solely on half of the participants. Using gender as a tool for analysis, historians can reclaim stories that have been lost, forgotten, or outright ignored. The ways that men and women collaborated to advocate for women’s rights and suffrage is deserving of historic scholarship. Ulrich once stated, “Well-behaved women seldom make history.” It could also be said that the well-behaved scholar seldom writes history, for to include the displaced, the
forgotten, and the maligned is to break boundaries, tear down walls, and create a new mold large enough to hold the entirety of human experiences and reveal a universal truth for humankind.  

2 “NEVER ASHAMED TO BE A WOMAN’S RIGHTS MAN”

In 1881, Frederick Douglass observed that his “favorable attention to the subject of what is called ‘woman’s rights’ [has] caused me to be denominated a woman’s rights man. I am glad to say that I have never been ashamed to be thus designated.” Throughout American history, men have supported feminism in a plethora of ways: from the discreet advocates whom historians have few historical records of their support to the more vocal, visible, and well-documented proponents of women’s equality. What motivates or influences some men to support women’s rights? What causes individuals with inherent societal privilege because of gender or race to support an unpopular cause, often at their own ridicule and detriment? Suffrage historians have written about male involvement and activism in the women’s rights and suffrage movement and the twelve men selected for this case study left behind extensive written records on their opinions of women’s rights and suffrage. However, neither historians nor the individuals in question have written about what motivated these men to champion the cause of women.

In researching the lives of these male reformers, several themes emerged as potential motivations and influences for their support of women’s rights and suffrage: familial ties and friendships with strong women, marriages and love connections with female reformers involved

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in the cause, religious views or personal ethics based upon previous life experiences, and, finally, political ideology or pragmatism. These themes are present in both nineteenth century and twentieth century reformers but to varying degrees. Male supporters of women’s rights and suffrage were much fewer in number during the nineteenth century; therefore, their influences tended to be more personal in nature, such as religion, family, friendship, and love. Men such as Henry Browne Blackwell, Wendell Phillips, William Lloyd Garrison, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, and Frederick Douglass primarily became supporters of women’s rights because of their personal beliefs, whether religious or ethical systems, or the presence of strong women in their lives. Garrison, Blackwell, Higginson, and Douglass all had strong familial ties to female role models in their mothers, sisters, and friends. Blackwell, Phillips, and Douglass were married to women who participated in the movement for women’s rights. Douglass supported women’s rights because of his own experience as a slave in need of emancipation and the recognition that women were also considered to be second-class citizens in the United States, while Garrison, Higginson, and Phillips all had religious and ethical convictions that impacted the way they viewed the equality of humanity.  

As the twentieth century brought about a shift in understandings about gender roles, the number of men willing to speak out for women’s suffrage grew, as evident in the rise of Progressive era reform movements where men and women worked together to better society. Unlike the nineteenth century reformers whose attitudes towards women’s rights were atypical, the twentieth century reformers were part of a broader societal argument about citizenship and social responsibility that took place in America at the turn of the twentieth century. Furthermore, the men of the twentieth century were more inclined to argue pragmatically for enfranchising

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women whereas their nineteenth century counterparts were more idealistic about women’s rights. Men like Max Eastman, James Lees Laidlaw, Ben Lindsey, George Foster Peabody, George Creel, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Theodore Roosevelt represented the Progressive era ethos that enabled a growing popularity of women’s rights and women’s suffrage to spread throughout the nation and gain male support. In contrast to the nineteenth century reformers, the men of the twentieth century were more willing to support women’s rights and suffrage as individuals, regardless of family or marriage connections. For example, both Roosevelt and Creel came to women’s rights and suffrage despite the women in their families being more traditional on the subject. Additionally, some reformers aligned themselves with radical ideologies like socialism, anarchism, and feminism while others were active in mainstream party politics. Both Eastman, founder of the Men’s League for Women’s Suffrage in the United States, and Du Bois, co-founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, were affiliated with American branches of the Socialist Party and Communist Party. Laidlaw served as President of the New York and National Chapters of the Men’s League. Peabody was President of the National Chapter of the Men’s League and a southerner with strong ties to the Democratic Party and philanthropic efforts to promote the education of African-Americans. Roosevelt was a United States President, member of the Republican Party, and founder of the Progressive Party as well as a symbol of American masculinity. Lindsey was a juvenile court judge, and Creel was a muckraker and member of Woodrow Wilson’s administration.35

Despite their individual differences, these twelve men had a common connection to women’s rights and suffrage and contributed to the growing roles of women in American society. What motivated them to become part of this movement provides a beginning place for

understanding how “the personal is political” for both men and women. Their life experiences shaped their views of gender and women’s abilities, thus influencing them to support a cause that American society would not legally approve until 1920. Rather than detract from the women’s rights and suffrage movement, these vast experiences made the men’s participation more significant. The voices and opinions, grown out of life experiences, contributed and helped strengthen arguments for women’s rights and shaped the understandings of women’s abilities in a world that was acutely divided into gendered spheres of femininity and masculinity, domestic and public, personal and political.

2.1 Religion and Ethics

From 1840 to 1920, the construction and definition of gender roles changed dramatically in America. The “woman question,” as women’s rights and suffrage was called, became synonymous with shifting meanings of masculinity and femininity. Gender was “a central organizing concept of . . . individual identity” for men and women, but these ideas rarely existed in a historical vacuum and were often influenced by outside sources. Nineteenth century reformers were heavily influenced by the version of Christianity that emerged during the religious revival of the Second Great Awakening. This interpretation of Christianity, embraced by Quakers, Unitarians, and utopian communities, provided an “ideology of sex differences” that also influenced movements for temperance, abolition, and women’s rights. In the beginning, this “language for coequal relationship” espoused by Christianity was the closest thing to an official ideology of women’s rights that would exist until after the Civil War. Therefore, it follows that

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men like Garrison, Phillips, Higginson, and Douglass who supported women’s rights were acting out of deep-seated convictions that God created men and women to be equals.  

A passionate abolitionist, Garrison in particular believed in a “vision of spiritual warfare” that heightened his determination to “transform the world by liberating the inner moral force of every human being.” This foundation of faith caused Garrison to believe fully in the equality of whites and blacks, as well as men and women. In a letter to Blackwell, Garrison quoted scripture as evidence for his support for women’s rights: “God created them in his own image, male and female . . . but [did] not [give] man dominion over the woman, nor the woman over the man.” Influenced by a “doctrine of perfectionism” and the ideas of utopian philosopher John Humphrey Noyes on the equality of the sexes, Garrison and his followers formed the militant branch of the abolitionist movement, one that supported both women’s rights and the abolition of slavery in America.  Garrison had a long history of supporting women’s rights before an organized movement even existed. He encouraged the participation of female abolitionists, such as Sarah and Angelina Grimké, Abby Kelley, and Maria Stewart, which helped solidify the reputation of the Garrisonians as radical zealots who wanted to promote miscegenation and degrade white womanhood. This platform incurred no end of ridicule and anger from moderate abolitionists and pro-slavery advocates.


Garrisonian support of women’s rights frequently threatened the more conservative members of the abolitionist movement. In 1840, both William Lloyd Garrison and fellow abolitionist Wendell Phillips made their advocacy of women’s rights the focal point of the worldwide abolition debate when, because women were denied seating in the proceedings, they refused to participate in the Anti-Slavery Convention in London. Garrison gave a passionate speech before the proceedings, insisting that he “could take no part in a convention that strikes down the most sacred rights of all women.” Furthermore, Garrison refused to take a seat at the convention and watched the proceedings from the gallery with the women while Phillips gave an impassioned speech imploring the convention to change its mind. In large part, Garrison’s personal religious and ethical convictions were influenced by a belief in common humanity that was prevalent in evangelical Protestant communities during the Second Great Awakening. Garrison also rejected the argument that women needed rights and suffrage due to being considered more morally superior than men. In a letter to reformer Armenia White, Garrison claimed that objections to women’s suffrage were “trite and shallow” and that proclaiming the “superiority of woman over man in purity” was problematic. Throughout his life, Garrison remained steadfast to his personal convictions by insisting that equality was the basis for which women should be granted rights, even as more pragmatic arguments about women’s moral goodness would eventually become the calling card of the movement.\footnote{Mayer, \textit{All on Fire}, 294; William Lloyd Garrison, “Anti-Slavery Convention Remarks,” 1840, in Kimmel and Mosmiller, \textit{Against the Tide}, 18; Mayer, \textit{All on Fire}, 390; DuBois, \textit{Feminism and Suffrage}, 32-35; William Lloyd Garrison to Armenia White, December 21, 1868, in Merrill and Ruchames, eds., \textit{To Rouse the Slumbering Land}, 88-91.}

Though one of the earliest advocates of women’s rights, Garrison was not the only nineteenth century reformer to support the cause because of religious and ethical convictions. Phillips believed firmly that God created whites and blacks, as well as men and women, to be
equals. He was described as “the embodiment of Christian conscience on questions of humanitarian ethics.” Phillips gave up a promising law practice to dedicate himself to the abolitionist movement. He became one of the most famous orators of the movement, and his speeches and writings reflected the heavy influence of the religious ethos that came out of the Second Great Awakening. In 1851, Phillips spoke at the Worcester Convention for Women’s Rights and proclaimed that “woman ought to choose for herself what sphere she will fill, what education she will seek, and what employment she will follow; and not be held bound to accept the sphere men thinks proper to allow her.” Phillips’ understanding of gender was directly connected to an evangelical Protestant belief that equality of women was a necessary “precursor” to changing social conditions. In 1879, Phillips wrote “The Other Side of the Woman Question” as a response to anti-suffrage arguments regarding the appropriateness of women voting. He stated that “woman is man’s equal though unlike him” and “woman is no better than man, but man and woman together are the highest moral force.” Like Garrison, Phillips did not subscribe to the contemporary definitions of roles for men and women but embraced a spiritually based understanding of masculinity and femininity that influenced his activism in the women’s rights movement.40

Similarly, Higginson’s advocacy of women’s rights was the result of religious influence at an early age. Higginson was a graduate of Harvard Divinity School and though less well known today he was one of the most prominent reformers of the nineteenth century. Involved not just in women’s rights but also in abolition and temperance, Higginson believed that “Christlike love requires capacity for moral indignation at social wrongs.” Higginson was

influenced by the radical reformist preachers of the time, including Henry Channing, James Freeman Clarke, and Theodore Parker. “During all this time,” Higginson wrote in his 1898 retrospective, *Cheerful Yesterdays*, “I was growing more, not less radical.” In 1847, Higginson served as a minister at the Unitarian Church in Newburyport but was asked to resign two years later because his ideas regarding abolition and women’s rights were considered too radical for the congregation. He became a minister at the Worcester Free Church in 1852, where he gained support for his spiritual activism. During this time, he became more involved in the women’s rights movement and frequently published writings and sermons on issues of reform. Higginson also officiated at the marriage vows of Lucy Stone and Henry Browne Blackwell, also endorsing the “marriage protest” they created to draw attention to married women’s position under the law. Years later, Higginson reminded Stone and Blackwell of their vows and warned them not to enslave themselves to property and “exclude every visitor so that she and her husband might do nothing but keep house.” Higginson became known as one of the most successful advocates of women’s rights and suffrage of the nineteenth century in large part because of his standing as a minister and orator. His direct connection to organized religion gave his arguments and support of women’s rights an added legitimacy.41

Of all the nineteenth century men selected for this case study, Douglass is also the most interesting example of how a man’s personal convictions encouraged him to support women’s rights. Unlike the other reformers, Douglass’ support was not grounded in religion but in his personal ethics founded upon his experiences as a former slave. These convictions gave Douglass critical insights into the experience of women as second-class citizens because he knew

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what it meant to be relegated to this status in American society. According to Douglass, “When I stood up for the rights of woman, self was out of the question, and I found a little nobility in the act.” Douglass also believed that the women’s rights movement was not solely a woman’s cause but one of “human brotherhood as well as the cause of human sisterhood” in which one sex could not be elevated or subjugated without impacting the other. The intersection of race and gender that overlaps the social movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is best exemplified in Douglass’ support for women’s rights. In 1850, he warned other activists against the tendency to dress women’s rights under the guise of moral womanhood. “Chivalry that worships womanhood,” Douglass reminded those attending the Women’s Rights Convention in Worcester, “also enslaves it.” Throughout his lifetime and despite heavy criticism from supporters and detractors of suffrage, Douglass would remain steadfast to the movement and to his personal belief that equality was the basis for which women should be granted rights.42

Unlike the nineteenth century reformers, twentieth century advocates for women’s rights were less individually influenced by religion. However, this is not to suggest that religion did not play a key role in the cultural development of the “long Progressive era.” Many of the social reform efforts during the twentieth century were focused on “saving souls for Christ,” but the focus shifted from saving individuals to saving society as a whole. The idea of doing the work of Christ by focusing on problems that impacted society at large was known as Social Gospel Christianity, and it was prevalent in every part of the Progressive era. The key difference between the religious nature of the reformers influenced by the Second Great Awakening and the

Social Gospel was a rejection of “individualism” in favor of “ending . . . the other problems of industrial capitalism.” As disparities between the rich and the middle and working classes grew because of industrialization and urbanization, so, too, did the conversation about who should be allowed to participate in the political system. Likewise, the common understandings of femininity and masculinity based upon Biblical interpretations underwent dramatic changes. As a result, women’s suffrage became synonymous with the shifting meaning of what it meant to be a woman and a man in America, and new justifications, less explicitly religious, had to be used for arguing for women’s voting rights. Social reformers during this time leaned more towards political arguments than religious ones, even though many Progressives saw a direct correlation between the teachings of Jesus Christ and the ideology of socialism.\(^{43}\)

However, religion continued to be a direct influence for some Progressive reformers, and women’s suffrage was viewed as a tool for the elevation of other social ills. It was believed that granting women voting rights would help contribute to the eradication of other social concerns, such as prison reform, ending prostitution, temperance, and eliminating white slavery. At the same time, a renewed focus on masculinity emerged in response to the growing presence of women in the public and private spheres. From 1900 to 1920, a religious movement aimed at reclaiming Jesus Christ as an example of violent masculinity represented the growing emphasis of “manly” pursuits that influenced the early part of the twentieth century. To combat fears that progressivism would create a generation of effeminate men, advocates of suffrage had to find new ways to influence the debate. This explains why twentieth century reformers rarely used

subtler religious reasoning to argue for women’s rights and suffrage than their nineteenth century predecessors.\textsuperscript{44}

Two twentieth century men who were directly influenced by personal religious beliefs were Ben Lindsey and George Foster Peabody. Born in Jackson, Tennessee, Lindsey was raised in the Catholic Church and attended a parish school for his education. In his autobiography, \textit{The Dangerous Life}, Lindsey recalled that his childhood “did not give [him] a very good impression of orthodox religion” and that he “saw that the thing [religion] that was supposed to promote peace and happiness was having quite the contrary effect.” Later in life, Lindsey became a Colorado judge and the founder of the modern juvenile court system. He spent his life focused on improving the lives of women and children, and he viewed suffrage as a way to improve their status under the law. “The long fight has brought me light, a richer consciousness of life, a hope for a better future,” wrote Lindsey, stating that his faith led to self-reflection and caused him to question what he had to offer the world. Lindsey’s religious views influenced his advocacy of women’s suffrage, for he believed that women “are human, just like the men, and have their faults and frailties; but if that is any reason for depriving women of suffrage, I have always contended it was just as much and more reason for depriving men.” Lindsey was viewed by fellow Progressives as a man doing God’s work. “If Christ came to Denver,” wrote fellow reformer Reverend Henry Augustus Buchtel, “He would go straight to your court; for there you are doing the Master’s work.”\textsuperscript{45}

Like Lindsey, Peabody was also one of the men in this case study who was directly influenced by religion. Born in Columbus, Georgia, in 1852, Peabody was raised in the

Presbyterian Church. After moving to Brooklyn, New York, he eventually transferred to the Episcopal Church in 1880 because of its more progressive views on race and gender. Peabody witnessed the inequities of Jim Crow as well as the second-class status of women during his childhood and became committed to social reform. His career as a successful banker and investor made it possible for him to donate money to causes that he passionately supported. By 1906, Peabody was so active in national social reform movements that he became “one of the most widely known laymen in the Episcopal Church” and “one of the most influential.” Peabody was not alone in his philanthropy, for the Progressive era was a time period in which “many rich men were turning over large sums for humanitarian causes.” Though some wealthy philanthropists donated to save public face in a time when the disparity between rich and poor was so great, Peabody lived out his religious views in other ways. In 1917, James Lees Laidlaw wrote to Peabody, thanking him for his involvement in the Men’s League, stating that “there are not many men, even good suffragists, who are willing to take the trouble, and I appreciate your attitude all the more for that reason.” The Social Gospel Christianity of the Progressive era influenced Peabody’s belief that the church needed a “more liberal” interpretation of Biblical scripture as it applied to any number of issues but most significantly the status of women.46

Unlike Lindsey and Peabody, Du Bois did not support women’s suffrage out of religious reasons, but for personal ethics. Du Bois stands out among the Progressive era men who supported the movement, for his activism was based upon his own experiences as an African-American and the belief that women were considered second-class citizens in the United States. Du Bois’ early experiences with racism awakened his political awareness of difference. Whites

46 Louisa Ware, George Foster Peabody: Banker, Philanthropist, Publicist (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1951), 5, 31, 120, 141; James Lees Laidlaw to George Foster Peabody, 13 September 1917, George Foster Peabody Papers, Library of Congress; Ware, George Foster Peabody, 130.
and blacks equally ridiculed him for his “proper airs” and efforts to continue his education when “no Burghardt had ever gone beyond an elementary education.” These racial dynamics created within Du Bois an understanding of the position of outsider that men like Eastman, Laidlaw, Roosevelt, Creel, and Peabody would never experience and allowed Du Bois the ability to create unique arguments for women’s suffrage on the basis of equality. Furthermore, Du Bois’ primary motivation for advocating women’s suffrage was to elevate the status of African-American women so that they could successfully battle the rising plague of racial violence in the Progressive-era South. He firmly believed that black women were the safeguards of the black community and suffrage would help them improve the quality of life for all African-Americans. “All womanhood is hampered today,” wrote Du Bois, “Yet the world must heed these daughters of sorrow, from the primal black All-Mother of men down through the ghostly throng of mighty womanhood.”

2.2 Family and Friendship

The second theme that motivated men to support women’s rights and women’s suffrage was the influence of strong female role models during the formative years of their lives. Family and friendships with independent, educated female reformers influenced the reformers of both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, family and friendships had more direct impact on the men of the nineteenth century than on the men of the twentieth century, who were more likely to support women’s rights and suffrage on their own accord or even in contrast to the opinions of the women in their familial and social circles. The men of the nineteenth century

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needed that direct connection to strong women especially in a time in which “the cult of domesticity” was considered to be the “national morality” that defined women’s place in American society. By coming in contact with women who defied the notion of “separate spheres,” nineteenth century male supporters of women’s rights gained a better appreciation of women’s capabilities and recognition of the political, social, and economic restrictions of women’s lives. As the nineteenth century evolved into the twentieth century, understandings of women’s abilities had shifted enough that Progressive era reformers did not need to come into contact with independent women to have ideas about women’s suffrage. However, the more outspoken advocates of suffrage tended to retain those personal connections. In essence, the political became the personal because the first-hand interaction with trailblazing women made it possible to see the benefits of women’s rights in society.48

Garrison was “no stranger to strong-willed women,” for his mother, Fanny Garrison, influenced much of his ethical consciousness discussed in the previous section. Garrison’s father, Abijah, was a failure at most of his work endeavors and spent much of his time in saloons or passed out drunk at home. When Garrison was very young, Abijah abandoned his family altogether, leaving Garrison to be raised completely by his mother, who “gave her son lessons in relentless but cheerful combat” with the sin of the world. Despite the many hardships and temporary separations that occurred between them when Fanny relocated in search of work, she remained strong in her faith and encouraged her son to attend prayer meetings, learn hymns, and memorize Biblical scriptures. In 1823, after a lifetime of hard labor and poverty, Fanny Garrison died from tuberculosis at forty-five years old. Garrison would spend the rest of his life engaging

in social reform that modeled an “evangelical consciousness” that had been fostered by his mother. 49

Like Garrison, Blackwell was brought to the cause of women’s rights and suffrage through interaction with strong female role models during his formative years. “If you wonder that I am an advocate of woman suffrage,” he stated before a convention audience in 1895, “let me tell you that all I am in the world that is worthy of esteem is due to my mother, my sisters, and my wife.” The fifth of nine children, he was raised in a household where the norm was a belief that “girls should be educated equally with boys.” Marked by the early death of his father, Blackwell was primarily educated by his mother and sisters. As a result, he grew to develop a strong empathy for women’s experiences and respect for their abilities, but it also left him with a feeling of being “unworthy” to fill his father’s shoes in the Blackwell household. He would spend the rest of his life compensating for his father’s death through his activism for women’s rights. Blackwell often stated that he identified as the “son of a Woman and the brother of Women” and that he was born into the women’s movement because of these relationships. His close connection with his sister, Elizabeth Blackwell, is well documented and shows his support of women’s efforts from an early age. Elizabeth Blackwell was the first women in the United States to earn a medical degree, and, in an 1899 letter to her brother, she reminisced about his support of her work by stating that she “remembered your brotherly sympathy which was so precious to me.” 50

49 Mayer, All on Fire, 7, 13, 70.
Higginson was also raised and educated by the women in his family. At the age of eleven, his father, Stephen, died, and he was left behind with his mother, his aunt, and his two younger sisters. Higginson’s mother, Louisa, was instrumental in his early education, for she began tutoring him before he attended school. Louisa Higginson loved books and taught her children to love books too. Furthermore, she educated the girls equally with Higginson. Later in life, Higginson would write an essay entitled “The Woman Who Most Influenced Me” and would dedicate it to his mother. Higginson often stated that his mother was his greatest influence in life, particularly in the “love of personal liberty, of religious freedom, and of the equality of the sexes.” He gained support from his sisters as well. His sister Anna helped him to write his commencement speech for Harvard College, and it was her sections “that received the most applause.” His extended family of women was a testament to Higginson that “there was no distinction of sex in intellect.”

For Higginson, family members were not the only influences on his views of women’s rights and equality. While Higginson’s relationship with the famous poet Emily Dickinson and his role in the posthumous publication of her work is fairly well known, his correspondence with other women of the time period is less discussed. Throughout his lifetime, Higginson maintained strong female friendships with individuals who shared his passion for reform, such as Lucy Stone, Lydia Maria Child, Lucretia Mott, Mary Livermore, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. However, it was Stone that Higginson considered to be his “dearest friend,” for he had “strong interest and admiration” in her. Higginson once wrote that Stone was, “Queen of us all . . . the eloquence and power which have been developed in her; she is one of the great Providences of

Throughout their lives, Higginson corresponded with Stone and worked with her on the issue of women’s rights and suffrage, including the formation of the American Woman Suffrage Association and the publication of the *Woman’s Journal*. In his journal, Higginson remarked that Stone “called out [his] chivalry” with her willingness to engage in the important issues of the time. “Without the personal knowledge & influence of such women,” Higginson wrote to Isabella Beecher Hooker in 1859, “I should be nothing.”

In the same vein, Douglass’ personal experiences with strong female role models shaped him into a well-known advocate of women’s rights. Born into slavery in 1818, Douglass was removed from his mother, Harriet Bailey, and raised by his grandmother, Betsey Bailey, who taught him how to “survive slavery” by fishing, farming, and developing a trade. Under the slave system, black family members were brutally separated from one another, leaving extended matrilineal kin networks in which “women acted as mediators” between slaves and slave owners. Because of this experience, Douglass spent much of his formative years with his white mistress, Lucretia Auld, who became a “substitute for an absent mother and grandmother.” Eventually, Douglass was moved to Baltimore to live with Lucretia’s sister-in-law, Sophia. Despite the fact that Maryland law prohibited slaves from being taught literacy, Sophia Auld instructed Douglass how to read and write. This experience inspired Douglass to continue his education in spite of the “violent opposition” of Sophia’s husband.

When Douglass finally freed himself by escaping to New York, he became involved in the abolitionist movement in the North. His friendships with Lydia Maria Child, Sarah Forten

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Purvis, Maria Weston Chapman, Abby Kelley, Lucretia Mott, and Sojourner Truth would expose him to women who were willing to “brazenly called attention to themselves” for the cause. However, the person who most impressed Douglass was Abby Kelley, who defied his personal expectations of a white woman. Touring the abolition lecture circuit with Kelley and escaping the angry mobs that protested a black man and a white woman sharing a stage solidified Douglass’ appreciation for women in the antislavery movement. During a tour of Great Britain in 1847, Douglass’ legal freedom from the Aulds was purchased for him by a group of British abolitionist women. As a result of these experiences, Douglass developed a strong appreciation for the work of women abolitionists in American and Great Britain and used his position as a public speaker and creator of newspaper *The North Star* to advocate for women’s rights. The masthead of the inaugural issue in December of 1847 would read “Right is of no sex—Truth is of no color.”

The nineteenth century reformers were not alone in being influenced by familial ties to strong, independent women. Laidlaw, Eastman, Peabody, Creel, Du Bois, and Roosevelt each had connections with strong, independent female role models who greatly impacted their views on women and women’s suffrage. Laidlaw grew up in a conventional family. His father, Henry, was a founder of a New York City banking firm, Laidlaw and Company, and his mother, Elizabeth was a wife and mother involved in the local community. Despite this traditional upbringing, Laidlaw and his three sisters were expected to become educated and active in society. In addition to going to college, the Laidlaw women were active members of social organizations and amateur theatre troupes that frequently performed in the boroughs of New York City. However, Laidlaw was no gender radical like the more infamous Men’s League

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member, Max Eastman. Though Laidlaw was an outspoken supporter of women’s rights and women’s suffrage, he and his fellow Progressive reformers used traditional rhetoric to question women’s lack of voting rights. “Why train women to be better mothers and housekeepers,” Laidlaw stated in a speech before the National American Woman Suffrage Convention, “and refuse them the right to say what laws shall be passed to protect their children and homes?”\textsuperscript{55}

In his autobiography, \textit{The Enjoyment of Living}, Eastman described his mother as “heroic” and her death as the darkest moment of his life. Bertha Eastman was a feminist, minister, teacher, and community leader in West Bloomfield, New York and was a woman of strong intellect who was the primary breadwinner of the family. Eastman grew up to develop a strong empathy for women’s experiences and respect for their abilities and describe himself as a man with a “mamma’s-boy complex” who had to learn to stand up and be counted in society. In addition to a close relationship with his mother, Eastman’s sister, Crystal, influenced his support of the suffrage movement. Crystal was also a feminist, studied law at New York University when few American women had access to graduate level education, and became a leading figure in the suffrage movement. After the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, Crystal would go on to form the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and become a key author of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) along with Alice Paul. Eastman described his sister as an “incorrigible reformer” and one of his greatest supporters. Due to the influences of his mother and sister, Eastman gained a pro-feminist outlook, one that would contribute to his understanding

of the need for women’s equality. Years later, while living in New York City, Eastman created the American chapter of the Men’s League for Women’s Suffrage in 1909.\textsuperscript{56}

Peabody’s mother, Elvira, did not have an easy life in her marriage to his father, George Henry. She took responsibility for the family’s finances and well-being after her husband returned from the Civil War as a broken man, plagued by health problems and personal failures. Elvira was not originally from the South and never acclimated to being around slaves while living in Georgia. This dislike of slavery influenced Peabody’s views on race at an early age, for he felt there needed to be an “arousing of the conscience of great number of the white citizens of the South” in order to advance “the Negro race.” Likewise, his mother also was central to his views on education, having homeschooled him until the age of ten before sending him to a school run primarily to educate girls. The experience of being educated alongside girls would reinforce the notion that women could be equal to men in intellect and therefore needed to be equal in voting and political participation. Peabody’s interest in humanitarian causes was the direct result of his own mother’s “educational and philanthropic work” in both Georgia and, later, New York. Furthermore, many of his arguments for suffrage were based upon “Christ’s reverence for woman’s nature as shown by His treatment of His Mother.” Peabody did not marry until late in life and his mother was his “constant companion” until her death in 1903. His mother’s death had a profound impact on Peabody, who threw himself into social reform with renewed vigor in the years that followed.\textsuperscript{57}


\textsuperscript{57} Ware, \textit{George Foster Peabody}, 87; George Foster Peabody to Woodrow Wilson, 20 October 1917, George Foster Peabody Papers, Library of Congress; Ware, \textit{George Foster Peabody}, 5; George Foster Peabody to Franklin Carter, Jr., 17 February 1917, George Foster Peabody Papers, Library of Congress; Ware, \textit{George Foster Peabody}, 87.
Born in Reconstruction-era Massachusetts, Du Bois was raised with his mother’s family. He had a strong relationship with his mother, Mary Silvinia Burghardt Du Bois, and was even given her maiden family name as a middle name. As a boy, Du Bois spent much of his time studying to impress his mother, who he often described as being his “good chum.” Like Eastman, the early death of his mother had a tremendous impact on him. Du Bois would spend the rest of his life working to raise the status of black women who he believed “existed not for themselves, but for men.” Du Bois’ commitment to women’s suffrage was also the product of interaction with black female reformers during the Progressive era, such as Mary McLeod Bethune, founder of Bethune-Cookman College and the National Association of Colored Women; “militant suffragette” Josephine Ruffin, who founded The Woman’s Era, the first periodical published by and for African-American women; Ida. B. Wells, anti-lynching advocate and co-founder of the NAACP; as well as prominent white suffragists Jane Addams, Inez Milholland, Florence Kelley, and Lillian Wald. As a result, Du Bois’ understanding of gender was influenced by his personal network.58

In 1947, Creel wrote in his autobiography, Rebel at Large, “If I came to voting age with a passionate belief in equal suffrage, it was because I knew my mother had more character, brains, and competence than any man that ever lived.” Creel was raised in Missouri after the Civil War almost exclusively by his mother, Virginia, for his father, Henry, was an alcoholic and failed to provide for his family. Creel spent his childhood watching his father become an increasing burden to his mother as she worked countless jobs to provide for her three sons. “My mother lived through days that were never without terror and danger,” reminisced Creel. Despite the

hardships of his youth, Creel rose to prominence as a successful journalist, reformer, and member of Woodrow Wilson’s propaganda machine, the Committee on Public Information, during World War I. Creel’s support of women’s voting rights was directly connected to watching his mother struggle. “My favorite crusade,” he wrote, “was against the moldy tradition that woman’s one and only proper place was the home . . . out of love and admiration for my mother, I resented it . . . women had just as much right as men to be regarded as people.” However, despite Creel’s assertion that his mother’s influence was responsible for his support of women’s suffrage, Virginia was never a supporter of suffrage and believed women had no place in politics.59

Similarly, Roosevelt was connected to strong opinionated women. However, like Creel, the women in Roosevelt’s life did not support women’s suffrage. His mother, Martha Bulloch Roosevelt, was a traditional Southern woman who focused on marriage and motherhood and did not believe that women needed to be involved in politics. Likewise, Roosevelt’s sisters, Anna and Corinne, believed giving women the right to vote would only increase the number of uneducated voters in the country. The two women also disliked suffragists because of the public perception that suffragists were ugly, militant women who wanted to abandon their roles as wives and mothers in order to act like men. As a result, Roosevelt’s support of suffrage prior to 1912 was lukewarm, and, in a letter to reformer, Harriet Taylor Upton, he remarked, “I am a believer in woman suffrage, but I am not an enthusiastic advocate of it.” Roosevelt was traditional in his interpretation of gender roles, not just because of his mother and sisters, but because he himself became a popular symbol of American masculinity. His understanding of gender roles as specific duties assigned to men and women greatly influenced his reticence for

suffrage, and he was quick to state that his support was predicated on women and men remaining in traditional roles.60

2.3 Love and Marriage

The third theme that motivated men to support women’s rights and women’s suffrage was the marriage and love connections with fellow social reformers. More than religion and family connections, marriage and romantic love had equal influence on both the nineteenth and twentieth century male reformers. For both generations, the religious beliefs and personal experiences with strong women in their childhood served as a catalyst to seek out similar women for romantic connection. Likewise, the women reformers had a profound impact on the consciousness of their husbands because love cannot “flourish” when women are subject to men’s will and privilege. The idealism and romanticism of the nineteenth century shifted attitudes about marriage from one that emphasized matrimony as a business to “the ultimate expression of the romantic self.” In contrast to views of the Victorians as sexual prudes, nineteenth century individuals enjoyed the physical pleasures despite the notion that “sex outside of wedlock was supposed to be shocking, and respectable women [were considered] too pure to feel any sexual desire.” Just as ideas about marriage were transforming, so, too, were concerns about the institution itself as a danger to women. This was evident in the movement for women’s rights but also in birth control, temperance, and utopian communities. All of these movements were efforts to create “sweeping campaigns to protect women and children” from the

dangers of bad marriages. All of these factors, as well as the religious and familial influences previously mentioned, would have a profound impact on the nineteenth century men who either sought out reformers to marry or fell in love with them by chance. The twentieth century reformers’ focus on addressing institutions that were bad for society, specifically women and children, would continue the idea of the “companionate marriage” and represented a new view of women as equal partners in eradicating societal problems. Issues of marriage reform, divorce, sexuality, birth control, and family planning were heavily debated, but they all coalesced to create an environment in which reformers, both male and female, would alter their ideas of marriage and use the institution to “regulate pleasure and alter masculine behavior.”

Blackwell was not just influenced by strong female role models to support women’s rights. His courtship and marriage to women’s rights reformer Lucy Stone greatly impacted his own support of the cause. Five years her junior, Blackwell was impressed with Stone from the beginning of their association and viewed her as worthy of the strong women in his family. For two years, Blackwell attempted to court Stone, who was determined to remain single. He continuously tried to persuade her to marry him, claiming that they would form a marriage of “perfect equality.” Despite Stone’s initial qualms about marriage, Blackwell eventually succeeded in his efforts to win her hand, and they married in 1855. Three years later, Blackwell wrote to his mother-in-law expressing the opinion that he owed her for giving him such a wonderful wife and that he “should not value that much [in life] without Lucy.” The youngest of the nineteenth century reformers and the last to join the suffrage cause, Blackwell was often described as a passionate “missionary” for women’s rights, and Stone frequently acknowledged that few men could have been as integral to the women’s rights movement as he. The

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relationship between Blackwell and Stone was not a perfect one, plagued by his infidelity and struggles to balance marriage with a life of reform, but their lasting connection demonstrates how marriage to a reformer caused Blackwell to spend much of his own life dedicated to women’s rights. Throughout their marriage, Blackwell and Stone exchanged over three hundred letters on issues of love, family, marriage reform, and women’ rights. In these letters and his other writings, Blackwell shows that his greatest influence for supporting women’s rights was his wife, for he once lovingly wrote to Stone, “I know I have tried you in a thousand ways, but most of all by not being able to show you the sincere good will I have had. If it had been necessary I would have died for you at any time.”

Blackwell was not the only women’s rights man to be influenced by companionate marriage. Phillips was also influenced by his marriage to a women’s rights supporter. Ann Phillips suffered from a debilitating illness that limited her ability to be an important presence in the movement, but she never wavered in her intellectual and emotional commitment to women’s rights and the abolition movement. This experience influenced Phillips to join his wife’s efforts in social reform. In an article published in the *Woman’s Tribune* in 1890, Phillips reminded husbands that, “if you want [your wife] to submit to your judgment, never ask her to submit to your selfishness.” This philosophy summed up his relationship with Ann, who was unable to engage in physical intimacy with her husband. Rather than reject her, Phillips channeled his

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energies into a cause that his wife passionately supported. Like Blackwell, Phillips became a missionary for the cause of women’s rights because of the influence of love.63

Douglass’ first marriage to Anna Murray, a free black woman from Baltimore, was not a love connection but a pragmatic one in which the “common ground [of emancipation] became the foundation for their union.” Like Douglass, she had a distaste for hypocrisy and helped him run away from his owner in 1838. Murray followed him to New York, where they were married in 1853 and had five children. Upon her death in 1882, Douglass remarked that he “shouldered one part of our baggage, and Anna took up the other.” Though not an activist herself, Murray was “the woman behind the great man,” and her work in the background made his activism possible. In a letter to fellow reformer Sarah Logan, Douglass remarked that Anna “was the post in the center of my house and held us together.”64

Though his first marriage was the foundation of his activism, it was Douglass’ connection with his second wife that was a true love match. In 1885, Douglass married Helen Pitts, a white abolitionist and suffragist from New York, something that Douglass realized would “set the world ablaze with indignation.” Douglass’ prediction was correct, for his connection to Pitts was incredibly controversial because even radical abolitionists tended to favor miscegenation laws. Pitts was well-known in the abolitionist circles, but she was also a teacher and women’s rights advocate. In large part because of their relationship, Douglass was considered too radical for many women’s rights supporters, particularly in the so-called New South where racial issues became a battleground for women’s suffrage. “Helen is a braver woman than I am a man,”

64 Fought, Women in the World of Frederick Douglass, 49; Douglass, Narrative in the Life of Frederick Douglass (Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1845), 76-77; Fought, Women in the World of Frederick Douglass, 205; Frederick Douglass to Sarah Logan, 12 August 1882 in Foner, ed., Frederick Douglass on Women’s Rights, 22.
Douglass wrote to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, “No sign or complain escapes here. She is steady firm and strong and meets the gaze of the world with a tranquil heart and unruffled brow.” His marriage to a white woman was especially problematic for both suffragists and anti-suffragists in the South, for it symbolized the fears white men had regarding black men as sexual predators of white women. “The thought of the public [reaction] to the question of a negro marrying a white woman!” wrote Anthony to Stanton in 1884, “[it is] shocking & repelling [to] the vast numbers of people who are just beginning to look kindly toward us.” Despite the backlash to his marriage, Douglass did not allow these struggles to change his opinion on women’s rights and continued to be “steadfast [and] unwavering” in his commitment to women’s rights. It is largely due to Pitts that historians have access to Douglass’ papers on abolition and women’s rights, for she endured a number of fierce legal battles with his children from Murray to ensure that “his work would be remembered” for future generations.65

Like nineteenth century reformers, the men of the twentieth century also married for love and were influenced by their relationships to advocate for women’s suffrage. Laidlaw is one such example of what happens when an open-minded man marries a social reformer in the twentieth century. In his marriage to Harriet Burton Laidlaw, he followed the examples set by Blackwell, Phillips, and Douglass. Harriet was a feminist and prominent suffragist in both the state level movement in New York and the national campaigns of both the National American Woman Suffrage Association and the National Woman’s Party. During their courtship, Laidlaw often wrote to Harriet of his affections, “I cannot go west without you. I cannot do anything. I

65 Frederick Douglass to Oliver Johnson, 24 January 1885, Frederick Douglass Papers, Library of Congress; Fought, Women in the World of Frederick Douglass, 230; Frederick Douglass to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, 20 May 1884 in Ann Gordon, ed., The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, 6 vols. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 4: 356-357; Susan B. Anthony to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, 27 January 1884 in Ibid., 4: 323-328; Foner, ed., Frederick Douglass on Women’s Rights, 40-41; McMillen, Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Women’s Rights Movement, 170, 199; Fought, Women in the World of Frederick Douglass, 291.
am distracted and unfit to even think of anything but you. My heart aches so now that it drives me crazy.” They married in 1906, and, for the remainder of their relationship, the Laidlaw family experienced stretches of time apart as one or the other traveled for a speaking engagement for the suffrage movement. For the most part, it was Harriet who did so while “Jamie” remained in New York and take care of their daughter, Louise. In 1916, Harriet lived in Washington D.C. to work with the NWP advocating for a federal amendment to the Constitution. Laidlaw wrote to his wife that he was proud to be “the husband of a suffragette.” His relationship to Harriet gave him credibility with the women of the movement while his ties to the business community gave him a social prominence that men would respect. Laidlaw’s marriage influenced his view of suffrage as a man’s fight as much as a woman’s and he was willing to accept “the risk of ridicule for the sake of a righteous principle.” As president of the Men’s League, Laidlaw would use both connections to gain broader male support for suffrage throughout the nation.66

In his 1931 autobiography, The Dangerous Life, Lindsey dedicates the book to his wife, Henrietta, with the inscription, “As a wife and comrade she has more than loved me. She has befriended and helped me. The most intelligent, beautiful and loveliest of women.” Married in 1913, Lindsey stated that Henrietta “shared with me all the dangers [of life]. It was her understanding and courage of spirit that strengthened and helped me time and again.” Indeed, Lindsey’s view of marriage is evident in his writings about marriage reform and the need for women’s suffrage. A devout Catholic, Lindsey opposed free love because he did not feel “it’s safe for women,” but he was a strong believer in giving women a voice and ways to remove

themselves from unhealthy and unhappy situations. Lindsey wrote an article called “The Companionate Marriage” that reflected the Progressive view of romantic love, but fundamentally differed from the official views of the Catholic Church. In it, he proposed programs that would legalize birth control, state sponsored sex education, uncontested divorce, and alimony payment for women. The article created a controversy in the Catholic Church, but Lindsey remained adamant that women needed a greater voice in marriage if it were to become an institution of equals. He attributed this belief to his wife. “It is the inspiration of her presence,” Lindsey wrote in 1931, “that has made possible most of the work that I have accomplished during our life together.” Whether Henrietta was a reformer in her own right is unclear, but what is clear is that she played a critical, albeit non-public, role in promoting Lindsey’s activism on behalf of women. Upon her husband’s death in 1943, Henrietta donated his personal papers and writings to the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. to be preserved for future generations. Like Pitts, Henrietta was dedicated to making certain that her husband’s activism was remembered. ⁶⁷

Despite her marriage to Spencer Trask in 1874, Kate Nichols Trask was “the center of Peabody’s life” and her influence played a pivotal role in his activism. Peabody remained friends with the Trasks for his entire life and put his energies into the promotion of political and social reform, both of which were of utmost importance to Kate and who was active in the causes. When the Trasks experienced a series of devastating losses, first with the death of two children followed by the death of Spencer’s mother, Peabody provided emotional support to the couple and would visit them for prolonged periods. When Spencer died in 1909, Peabody was named executor of the estate because Kate was blind and unable to attend to financial matters. For several years, Peabody balanced his activism with his need to be with Kate. Peabody asked

⁶⁷ Lindsey, The Dangerous Life, xiii, xiv, 363, xiv
Kate to marry him a number of times, but she refused because she “did not want him to have an invalid on his hands.” Peabody was persistent, and the couple was married in a quiet service with family and friends in 1921. However, not a full year after their marriage, Kate’s ill health would remove her from Peabody, who reveled in married life. Eventually, he resumed his activities, but he was a “sad and lonely figure” without the woman who had inspired him throughout the course of his life.68

In contrast to Laidlaw, Lindsey, and Peabody, Creel was not married to a social reformer. Blanche Bates was an actress and an anti-suffragist, who, “although she had been out in the world since girlhood, earning a living, was a vociferous anti.” Creel described being married to her as like “being married to an electric-light sign,” one in which his identity ceased to matter. His marriage to Bates gave him greater appreciation for the ways that women were treated when they married. “The minute a woman left the altar,” remarked Creel, “she ceased to be people, and took her place in the formless and faceless army of Wives.” He brought attention to women’s inequality under marriage law and the need for political voice by remarking that he “had no objection to my wife’ keeping her identity as Blanche Bates,” but he was also quick to acknowledge his own privilege by stating that “it never entered my head that I would cease to be George Creel.” When reporters asked Bates what Creel thought of her “reactionary” anti-suffrage views, Bates would remark saying, “Isn’t one feminist enough for a family? I do my part wearing the skirts . . . I don’t think [he] is a very rabid feminist. He’s only a stickler on suffrage.” Despite their different opinions, Creel would eventually have an influence on Bates’ views of women’s suffrage. Rather than the female suffrage reformer influencing the husband, Creel’s marriage to Bates is an example of a suffrage man converting his non-suffrage wife. In

68 Ware, George Foster Peabody, 197, 42, 155, 201, 197, 192, 204, 201.
an interview at the height of the suffrage movement, Bates stated that, prior to marrying Creel, “she never dreamed of making a political speech, but now it’s almost second nature.”

Roosevelt was the most traditional when it came to ideas of marriage. His position was that there was no greater institution between men and women than marriage and the highest goal a woman should have is to be a good wife and mother. In October of 1915, Roosevelt wrote to suffragists Ethel Eyre Valentine Dreier, stating that “the opponents of woman suffrage say that this will take women away from home. If this were so, I should certainly not favor it. I emphatically do not believe that between men and women there ever can be identity of function.”

Roosevelt’s first marriage was to Alice Hathaway Lee in 1880. He was “single-minded in his wooing” of “Sunshine” and Alice dedicated herself to becoming a political wife as Roosevelt ran for New York state assemblyman. In 1884, Alice gave birth to a daughter but suffered from complications and died two days later. Roosevelt rushed to her side, fighting a storm to be with her in the final moments. Eleven hours earlier, Roosevelt’s mother had died of typhoid fever. The date was February 14, 1884. His first wife’s death had a profound impact on the rest of his life, but it was his second marriage that would sustain him through his political career and influence his support of suffrage.

In 1886, Roosevelt “rekindled” his romance with former love Edith Kermit Carow. Roosevelt and Carow had known each other as children, but when Roosevelt married Alice, Edith remained friends with the couple. Two years after the death of Alice, Roosevelt married Edith in a small ceremony in London. Together, they raised six children, including the daughter

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Roosevelt had with his first wife named Alice in her honor. Alice was a confidante to Roosevelt during his presidency “talking over affairs of state and offering advice.” He liked to remark that Alice was the smartest woman he knew and Roosevelt valued her opinions and intelligence greatly. During his administration, Roosevelt sent Edith to be a “diplomatic go-between” in certain affairs of state, as well as regularly entertaining the wives of key members of Congress and the Presidential Cabinet. Despite the remarks of Roosevelt’s sister, Corinne Robinson, that Edith “was not born a Roosevelt,” Edith proved time and time again that she was “more Rooseveltian” than the other women in the family. Like her husband, Edith was ambivalent about suffrage. In 1910, Roosevelt wrote to Carrie Chapman Catt, stating that “Mrs. Roosevelt and I have always believed in the suffrage for woman, although we have not thought that the question was of great practical importance in America.” Despite this, Edith would encourage women to make the most of their rights once the Nineteenth Amendment was passed in 1920. One reason for Edith’s hesitancy to endorse women’s public activism was her own desire for privacy. Upon her husband’s death, Edith destroyed “her lifetime’s worth of love letters from Theodore” because she wanted to protect not only herself and her children but also her husband’s legacy.71

While marriage and romance were influences on many of the Progressive era men in this case study, it was less so for Eastman and Du Bois. Eastman lived in Greenwich Village, a community in New York City that was well known as a bastion of support for some of the more radical causes of the Progressive era, including free love, birth control advocacy, marriage

reform, and feminism. Eastman’s sister, Crystal, had moved to Greenwich while studying sociology at Columbia University. Max soon followed and took up residency in the thriving bohemian enclave. Eastman’s view of romantic relationships between men and women were largely formed by his years in this environment and he remained an “opponent of marriage as an institution” in theory if not practice. He married three times but engaged in a polyamorous lifestyle much to the chagrin of his more conventional wives. Du Bois also had a “romantic authoritarian impulse” that influenced his personal relationships with women. In 1896, Du Bois married Nina Gomer, a student of his at Fisk University and a school teacher in Baltimore. His relationship with Nina was more traditional than the Eastman’s lifestyle, but unlike the other reformers in this case study, Du Bois did not consider his wife to be a companion in reform efforts. This demonstrates that for some male supporters of women’s suffrage, their theoretical ideas of equality can often be at odds with their personal lifestyles. However, this does not negate the contributions made by these men nor does it suggest, as some historians have asserted, that their commitment to the cause was lacklustre.\cite{footnote}

2.4 Political Pragmatism

The fourth theme that motivated men to support women’s rights and suffrage is that of political pragmatism. Nineteenth century activists were idealistic at heart and more likely to support women’s rights based upon religious notions of equality and a utopian vision for society. Male reformers like the men in this case study recognized that women’s rights and voting rights required an altering of gender roles in society. This was a time period where female women’s

\footnote{Eastman, \textit{The Enjoyment of Living}, 266; Christopher Irmscher, \textit{Max Eastman: A Life} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 5, 7; Dorrien, \textit{The New Abolition}, 166; Lewis, \textit{W.E.B. Du Bois}, 120.}
rights advocates were considered “unsexed women” out to “overthrow the most sacred of our institutions” and most of the male advocates were considered weak, effeminate, or “hen-pecked husbands.” As a result, nineteenth century reformers would eventually see a greater need for pragmatism to secure women’s rights, generally, and voting rights, specifically. This became increasingly evident after the Civil War, when the debate surrounding the Fifteenth Amendment fractured the suffrage movement into factions on the issue of women’s voting rights. This was not the first time that reformers consciously shifted a debate for the purpose of gaining support for a political cause. The early abolitionists transformed the antislavery debate from one of economic expedience to one of equality and citizenship for African-Americans. Since the men in this case study were abolitionists prior to becoming women’s rights supporters, it makes sense that they would use similar strategies to gain support for women’s rights. NWSA would retain the idealistic approach that women’s rights could be achieved at the same time as African-American men, while AWSA would attempt to gain rights one law at a time. The balancing act between ideology and practical reality is one that activists and reformers have struggled to maintain throughout history. Though these nineteenth century reformers wrestled with how to balance their personal lives with their political views, historians should not dismiss their activism.

If nineteenth century reformers were able to initially center their arguments around the theoretical possibilities of women’s rights and how it could change society, then twentieth century reformers had to continue the pragmatic approach and demonstrate how suffrage did ultimately work and benefit both party politics and society. The idea of moral womanhood was not a new concept. It was a holdover from “republican motherhood” and argued that because

women differed from men physically, mentally, and emotionally, they brought something unique to society and American politics. The idea that women would bring something to the body politic of American government was a radical but more palatable one than insisting on women’s theoretical equality in the nineteenth century, but, by the twentieth century, it became the accepted norm. According to Melanie Gustafson, women had for years contributed politically through the act of petitioning and political parties, which slowly paved the way for women’s more substantial and public political involvement through voting. Furthermore, the Progressive era ethos of the early twentieth century built upon the idea that people could and should attempt to change society for the better, which paralleled nicely with the idea of women as virtuous citizens who could clean society like the home. The men of the twentieth century, like the abolitionist men of the nineteenth century, but were involved in party politics from their formative years. While Eastman and Du Bois remained political outsiders because of their connections to socialism, men such as Lindsey, Peabody, Creel, and Roosevelt were part of the traditional party politics that fueled an era of political pragmatism in American history, for they recognized that reform does not happen overnight, nor does it occur in isolation. Sometimes, concessions and compromises had to be made in order to achieve the higher goals. As a result, it would be the twentieth century reformers that would make the idea of women’s suffrage into a reality.  

“In the later years of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth,” wrote Lindsey, “the vital democracy of America was again stirring . . . I was part of that surge.”

Despite living most of his life in Denver, Lindsey’s political awareness began in the South. He

was born into a Democratic family in Tennessee. “I did not know that my own party – the party of Jefferson and Jackson- was not free,” Lindsey reminisced in his autobiography: “Like its sham opponent, the Republican Party, [it] was owned and controlled by the privilege seekers.”

Disillusioned with the Democrats, he switched to the Republican Party in an effort to create greater change from the inside of the party machine. Lindsey was the founder of the juvenile court system and worked as a judge in the juvenile court system in Denver for twenty years. He also served as a delegate to the state nominating convention in 1900 and was a candidate for governor of Colorado in 1906. Lindsey remarked to the *Colorado Post*, “whatever popularity may attach to my candidacy is not due so much to any personality of mine, but rather to the general approval of a cause I have merely helped to represent.” In his political activities, Lindsey recognized the importance of women in the political system, for he stated that “I have found that . . . it has been the . . . women who have championed every good law.” Lindsey, a proponent of child labor laws, believed that protective legislation was more likely to happen in states where women’s suffrage was the practice.75

“I took in [political] prejudices with my mother’s milk,” wrote Creel, “and was weaned on partisanship.” Like Lindsey, Creel was raised as a Democrat, but he willingly worked with the Progressive and Republican Parties. Creel also emulated his Progressive era brethren by exploring communism and socialism but eventually rejected them for the American system. “I came to the belief,” Creel stated in his autobiography, “that the American form of government is the best system ever devised by man. If evils persist, it is either the negligence or the indifference of the citizen, for the ballot is at hand as method of correction.” Creel’s view of

women’s suffrage is a direct result of his political experience. Like Lindsey, Creel believed that suffrage was a means to achieving greater social reform and that it was important to gain the vote by any means necessary. While Creel was pragmatic in his view of what suffrage could achieve, he was more idealistic in his approach to gaining suffrage. “I’d like to burn the antis alive,” he remarked to the press in 1912. “I used to have a prejudice against . . . the militants before I went to England . . . [now] the Congressional Union can’t go too far to please me.” To men like Creel, leaving women out of the political situations did not make sense or correlate with the Progressive view of women as virtuous citizen. “It is just as stupid to exclude women from this partnership as it would be to exclude men,” he proclaimed in a meeting of the Equal Suffrage Association.76

Peabody retained his ties to the Democratic Party for the entirety of his life. As a Southerner by birth, he also viewed women in politics as the pragmatic solution to society’s ills. In the 1880s, Peabody was a member of the Young Men’s Democratic Club. In 1894, he became a member of the Reform Democrats and served as President of the Brooklyn Democratic Club. Like Creel, he viewed the Republican Party as the party of privilege and big business and used his membership in the Democratic Party to be an “advocate of municipal reform” and “help rout machine politics.” In 1904, Peabody became Treasurer of the New York Democratic Party but disliked the experience of upper-level politics, preferring to focus on grassroots campaigns and reform. Peabody never hesitated to use his political connections to further the cause of women’s suffrage and frequently encouraged people to give their time and money to the movement, for he argued that “Women pay taxes and suffer the evils of government” just as men do. Peabody disagreed with militancy and favored a more practical approach, for he believed “it very

injurious to the Cause to seek to advance it by threats of political disaster to the individual members of Congress and the Legislature.”

Of all the twentieth century reformers, Roosevelt best exemplifies the political and pragmatic when it comes to women’s suffrage. Roosevelt embraced suffrage as a means of gaining political support for his third attempt to run for president of the United States in 1912. His ultimate motivations for supporting suffrage were less altruistic than the other reformers, but he was nonetheless an important suffrage man. Having gone on record early in his political career as being a lukewarm supporter, it is clear that a desire to win another election motivated his change of heart. In 1908, Roosevelt wrote to his son that he could see neither benefit nor detriment to allowing women the vote. Four years later, Roosevelt wrote eloquently about the role of women in government to Millicent Garrett Fawcett, a British constitutional suffragist, stating, “Progressives helped the suffrage cause by actually using the best women in the country on an exact equality with the men.” British suffragists were divided into two categories: constitutionalists who used conventional forms of advocacy to persuade male voters and politicians of the need for women’s enfranchisement and the militants who believed in direct action, both nonviolent and violent, to force Parliament’s hand. It is telling that Roosevelt communicated with a constitutionalist rather than a militant, because it demonstrates that, despite his change of opinion on suffrage, he still had very strong ideas on appropriate behavior for women. In 1912, he wrote to the suffragist Florence Kelley that, to become a passionate

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77 Ware, George Foster Peabody, 31, 60, 91, 126; George Foster Peabody to Henry Hayden, 9 April 1917, George Foster Peabody Papers, Library of Congress; George Foster Peabody to Crystal Eastman Benedict, 4 March 1914, Ibid.
supporter of suffrage, he needed convincing that women would “take an effective stand against male sexual viciousness.”

Like many Progressives, Roosevelt believed that the extension of women’s suffrage would return America to a “pure democracy” and reflected the broader Progressive era campaign to reform American politics, one that also included universal manhood suffrage and representation by directly electing United States senators in Congress. In a letter to William Russell Wilcox, Roosevelt wrote that he hoped that Republicans would support a federal amendment to the Constitution granting women the right to vote, stating that it was “a matter of both justice and common sense.” Furthermore, for Roosevelt and many reformers like him, women were considered the foundation of a “moral template for the new model citizen,” one that would serve as a balance of the aggressive manliness of American society. Roosevelt argued that women needed to exercise “a high idea of personal purity” that would benefit the political system.

2.5 Conclusion

The men in this case study, both the nineteenth and the twentieth century reformers, were significant and necessary contributors to the women’s rights and women’s suffrage movement. Through their personal experiences with religion, family, marriage and love, race, interactions with reform-minded women, and political parties, historians can gain a better understanding of

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the importance and significance these key men played in mobilizing broad support for suffrage.

There are some significant differences between the two groups of male supporters. Nineteenth century men were more likely to support suffrage out of an egalitarian or religious view while twentieth century men were tended to be more pragmatic and political in their motivations of the movement. Garrison, Phillips, Higginson, and Douglass argued for women’s rights influenced by the religious revival of the Second Great Awakening. Creel, Lindsey, Du Bois, Eastman, Peabody, and Roosevelt used the political machine of the Progressive reform movements to create support for women’s suffrage.

Male supporters across the “long suffrage movement” were influenced by strong female role models in their relationships with mothers, sisters, and friends. However, the nineteenth century men needed a more personal connection than those of the Progressive era, who often argued for suffrage in contradiction to family views. Garrison, Blackwell, Higginson, and Douglass were heavily influenced by the strong matriarchs and reformers with whom they came in to contact during their formative years. Each of the twentieth century male suffragists also benefitted from the independent women who raised them. Marriage and love relationships with fellow reformers proved to be one of the main motivations for a man to support suffrage. This is true in the case of Blackwell, Phillips, Douglass, Laidlaw, Peabody, and Lindsey, all of whom were married to reform-minded women. Even men such as Roosevelt and Creel, though not married to reformers, benefited from “companionate partnerships” that influenced how they viewed women. Regardless of their individual motivations, these men were critical to the success of the women’s rights and suffrage movement. It was necessary for suffragists to construct alliances with reformist men to achieve political success, for “women could not achieve their goals on their own” in those time periods. In fact, there were times in which these
men were greater advocates for suffrage than other women, something that many female suffragists often bemoaned. This is evident in their motivations and influences, but it is also evident in their activism, arguments, and the ways in which they were perceived by the female suffragists. In 1932, upon the death of Laidlaw, Carrie Chapman Catt, suffragist and former president of NAWSA, remarked, “I suffer over the passing of that great good man whom we have all loved and respected. He made the world better for having lived in it.” He was a “fearless champion of suffrage.”

3 “LABORS ON BEHALF OF WOMAN”

In 1870, following the contentious split of the organized suffrage movement into the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) and the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA), William Lloyd Garrison wrote a letter to fellow reformer and women’s rights advocate Theodore Tilton, proclaiming, “I join my labors on behalf of woman . . . whom I esteem and trust.” Garrison was committed to working with AWSA, the organization led by Lucy Stone who wanted both men and women to serve as leaders for the movement. Unlike NWSA, led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, which argued for woman-centered leadership, AWSA leaders recognized that a federal amendment was only possible when women and men collaborated together for the betterment of women’s condition in society. Garrison’s letter to Tilton is just one of many examples of male suffragists’ writings and demonstrates how key male

80 Stansell, The Feminist Promise, 164; Gustafson, Women and the Republican Party, 98; McMillen, Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Women’s Rights Movement, 102; Laidlaw, Memorial, 24.
supporters used letters, pamphlets, and other published writings to aid the eighty-year campaign for a federal suffrage amendment to the Constitution.

While historians have long recognized that male suffragists were contributors to women’s rights and suffrage, they have not explored the crucial role that their writings played in the success of the movement. The following questions provide the guiding framework for this chapter: What types of writing did male suffragists use and for what purpose? How did male suffragist writings, both personal and public, shape the movement? What arguments did these men make in their letters and published works? How did the written activism of male suffragists transform during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? Finally, what do the male suffragists’ writings reveal to historians about the necessity of key male support in the movement?

The twelve men selected for this case study contributed to the cause of women’s rights and suffrage from 1840 to 1920 via private and public correspondence, periodicals, pamphlets, and other published works. Prior to the Civil War, reformers focused on creating an awareness of women’s rights among their friends, families, and fellow reformers as well as arguing theoretically why women deserved equality. After the Civil War, the ideological arguments transformed into the more conservative and pragmatic approach that would be used in the latter half of the movement. Nineteenth century reformers contributed to the development of key arguments as well as the overall acceptance of suffrage through extensive letter writing, the establishment of pro-suffrage periodicals, and the publication of pro-suffrage pamphlets and essays that articulated their reasons for supporting the cause. Furthermore, nineteenth century men helped to frame the “woman question” for a hesitant American public by constructing the
arguments used to justify suffrage while twentieth century male suffragists expanded upon these arguments in their own writing to gain broader public support for the movement.\textsuperscript{82}

The arguments created by nineteenth century male suffragists took three key approaches: woman as an equal to man, woman as a virtuous citizen capable of positively influencing society with her vote, and woman voters as symbols of America’s commitment to the political ideas espoused in the Declaration of Independence and Constitution. Twentieth century reformers used these arguments to mobilize at the local, state, and national levels. Eventually, the growing involvement of women in politics and the rise of Progressivism contributed to a shift in gender roles and an increased need to justify suffrage at the turn of the century. This contributed to male supporters, privately idealistic about notions of gender equality, publicly embracing more conservative and socially acceptable arguments to gain a much-needed political win. Suffrage historians have often criticized male suffragists because of their pragmatism, but it was this very approach that led to the eventual success of the movement.\textsuperscript{83}

Historians have labeled the years from 1840 to 1920 with many monikers in attempts to understand and define this complex time period within American history. Rebecca Edwards argues in \textit{New Spirits: Americans in the Gilded Age, 1865 to 1905} that the Civil War redefined American society into one of endless negotiation between powers of corruption and efforts to

\textsuperscript{82} It is worth noting that not every man in this case study was an extensive writer in every category. Some of the male suffragists wrote a plethora of letters (Garrison, Higginson, Lindsey, and Roosevelt), while others were more likely to voice their opinions in the press or through published works (Phillips, Douglass, Eastman, Creel, Du Bois). Because of the sheer volume of written work produced by these men, I have chosen to place their written activism in the categories that I felt they were most beneficial to the suffrage movement. This is not to suggest that the letter writers did not write pamphlets or that the pamphlet writers never wrote a letter on suffrage. Finally, two of these men were not significant writers but are still very important because of their activism, which will be discussed in Chapter Four (Peabody, Laidlaw). I have still made an effort to incorporate them in this chapter, when it is warranted.; Michael Kimmel, \textit{Manhood in America: A Cultural History} (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 158.

\textsuperscript{83} Michael Kimmel and Thomas Mosmiller, eds., \textit{Against the Tide: Pro-Feminist Men in the United States, 1776-1990} (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 17; Kimmel, \textit{Manhood in America}, 158.
reform.\(^{84}\) In *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877 to 1920*, Jackson Lears describes the period between the Civil War and World War I as a “widespread yearning for regeneration” that influenced public life and gave rise to the birth of modern America. Michael McGerr examines 1865 to 1917 in his work, *A Fierce Discontent*, and suggests that this was a period in which reformers continually redefined what it meant to be an American and contained an optimistic spirit that had heretofore been lacking in the American psyche. However, each of these historians neglects to address a critical issue required to understand this time period. The reshaping of culture, the negotiation of corruption and reform, the redefinition of American nationalism, and sense of optimism previously mentioned did not begin with the Civil War but rather was a continuation of the pervasive political reform ethos of the pre-war era. The Civil War was a momentary pause button on the broader emergence of American social reform that began with abolition and continued until the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. This new understanding of American social reform is significant because it allows suffrage historians to make broad connections over time between pre-war women’s rights and post-war women’s suffrage.\(^{85}\)

The growth of social reform that the aforementioned historians attribute to the re-making of America into a modern nation was also part of an ongoing technological revolution that began much earlier in history. As historian Daniel Walker Howe explains, the expansion of communication and transportation technology in the nineteenth century allowed the world to be better informed and more engaged beyond boundaries and borders that had previously been in


place. If this period was indeed a “widespread revolution of communication,” as Howe suggests, then it is no surprise that the progress of women’s rights grew in correlation to the expansion of technology. Indeed, the new communications options allowed social critiques to taken on a “new urgency,” one that would have directly influenced the reformers in this case study. Since social movements do not exist in a vacuum, it would be problematic to ignore the pivotal role that changing technologies played in the evolution of the male suffragist activism. The growth in communications and transportation that enabled male suffragists to engage in correspondence and publish pamphlets, articles, and other writings had broad reach across the country. Just as the 2017 Women’s March on Washington D.C. began with personal conversations and collective outrage conveyed on social media and the internet in the wake of the 2016 election, the women’s rights and suffrage movement would not have been possible without the technological revolution that made it possible to reach a broader audience.  

3.1 Correspondence

Before the invention of the telegraph, telephone, and, later, the Internet, long distance communication existed solely in the form of written correspondence. According to historian Thomas Mallon, letters were significant forms of communication because they conveyed information, sentiment, and a specific connection to a time and place between two individuals. A letter could allow for limited interruptions and enabled the reader the ability to save the information for a later purpose. These advantages allowed male suffragists to use letter writing as a significant form of activism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However,

there were some key differences between the letters of the two cohorts. Before the Civil War, the reformers were more likely to limit their correspondence to a small circle of like-minded family, friends, and reformers rather than reach out to strangers and adversaries to engage them in a dialogue on the issue of women’s rights. These individuals were connected to other reform movements, most notably abolition, that also relied heavily on letter writing and networking through personal connections. These reformers attempted to engage with women’s rights in much the same manner. By contrast, the men of the twentieth century were more likely to write letters in support of suffrage to individuals outside of their personal sphere, including businessmen, lawmakers, movement leaders, and sometimes complete strangers. These male suffragists took the art of letter writing to new heights on behalf of the suffrage cause and were willing to extend their discussion on the subject beyond the limited reach of intimate and reform spheres.87

Another difference is that nineteenth century letters were hand-written while twentieth century letters were frequently typed. Invented in 1863, the typewriter would spread in popularity during the twentieth century, which allowed for increased legibility and production in correspondence. Paper consumption was also an issue for the nineteenth century and male suffragists regularly wrote letters in cross-style patterns to maximize the use of paper and writing space, a practice that humbles the historian seeking to translate them for a modern audience. Henry Browne Blackwell was a prolific writer who frequently wrote his letters in this style. “I want to send you some money to buy paper with,” complained his wife, Lucy Stone, “so that you need not cross write all your letters!!!” Deciphering a letter became an intimate and uniquely personal action between two people. This is one reason that letter-writing in the nineteenth

century tended to focus on personal correspondence. In contrast, the advent of cheaper, factory-produced, paper allowed twentieth century writers to generate mass letters to reach a greater, albeit, less personal, audience for the cause. Regardless of the format, the act of writing correspondence was both personal and political, but more importantly it was a critical one for women’s rights and suffrage in America.  

In both centuries, male suffragists wrote letters for three major purposes: to encourage the activism of female reformers, to critique behavior and ideas that threatened the movement, and to mobilize support across reform networks by articulating specific arguments for suffrage. The letters written and exchanged by the men in this case study demonstrate the arguments, evolution, and the necessity of male support in the movement. Nineteenth century activists established reform networks through their personal connections and created an initial rhetoric of idealism that gave way to pragmatism to gain greater support. Twentieth century activists expanded the existing reform networks and consciously altered their rhetoric to best fit a specific audience and the overall needs of the movement. Like their nineteenth century counterparts, male suffragists in the twentieth century used letters to communicate on a personal basis, but they also corresponded with potential supporters across a broad spectrum of political, economic, and social interests. As America grew in the early twentieth century and Progressives gained greater fame for their social contributions, each of the men in this case study became a household name from coast to coast. For the undecided constituents of the time period, receiving a letter from a much-admired man of the age gave the women’s suffrage movement greater legitimacy. Finally, the correspondence of the male suffragists demonstrates the importance of relationship

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and collaboration in social movements, for only when men and women worked together on suffrage did a federal amendment to the United States Constitution become a possibility.89

3.1.1 Encouraging Female Reformers

One of the key ways that male activists used letters was to encourage the participation of female activists in reform movements such as abolition and women’s rights. Each of the men in this case study developed strong epistolary connections with female reformers and used their masculinist privilege to advocate for greater opportunities for women. However, some male suffragists were more outspoken in their encouragement of female reformers than others. This was especially true for nineteenth century reformers, who broke barriers and challenged traditional gender norms to bring women into the public political sphere. According to historian Melanie Gustafson, women had contributed politically through the act of petitioning since the American Revolution. This was acceptable behavior that slowly paved the way for women’s more substantial and public political involvement. Despite the tradition of petitioning, many people had a difficult time adjusting to the overtly political nature of women in social reform movements, for deeply rooted ideas of masculinity and femininity were connected to more overt public political actions. Nineteenth century men not only supported women’s political presence, but they also created a new discussion about “the proprietary boundaries of women’s politics and the meaning of public womanhood.” By writing a letter to encourage female participation in social reform, nineteenth century male suffragists redefined acceptable gender roles and, in doing so, created an alternative masculinity for men who supported women’s rights. Furthermore, it is

89 Daniel Clark, Creating the College Man: American Mass Magazines and Middle-Class Manhood (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2010), 10.
important to recognize that the male reformers were not issuing un-solicited opinions to female reformers. Rather, the female reformers viewed their male collaborators as trusted and respected collaborators who were deeply engaged in the movement.90

William Lloyd Garrison was no stranger to controversy. Even among abolitionists, the radical activist was considered extreme because of his commitment to racial equality. Garrison garnered additional scorn when he encouraged women to publicly speak and write for the cause, including reformers like Abby Kelly Foster, Angelina and Sarah Grimké, and Lucy Stone. Stone was especially problematic because she promoted women’s rights alongside anti-slavery, recognizing the two issues as different aspects of the same struggle. In 1847, amid criticism for her decision to explicitly connect the two issues, Stone reminded her detractors that she “was a woman before [she] was an abolitionist.” Garrison encouraged Stone to become a full-time lecturer with the American Anti-Slavery Society. In 1854, he wrote to the young activist stating, “We need you more than ever.” Stone admired Garrison for supporting women’s rights and agreed to his proposition. Ten days later, Garrison followed up with Stone to confirm her appearance at an upcoming lecture, stating playfully that he believed a strong movement could be built with “the right kind of Stone.”91

Garrison’s letters to Stone reflect his high regard for her personally but also his belief that movements are more successful with collaboration between the sexes. Since the 1840 Anti-Slavery Convention in London, Garrison’s reputation as a woman’s rights advocate had been

long established, and his letters to female reformers demonstrate his strong commitment to this cause. One of the ways that Garrison used his letters was to convince reformers that women’s rights was an issue of equality. In a letter to fellow reformer Armenia White, Garrison proclaimed that the notion that women were “semi-angelic” was problematic. His rejection of moral womanhood arguments stemmed from his strong religious sensibility that women were equal to men in the eyes of God. As a result, Garrison believed that women were entitled to equal treatment under the law, a point he made in a letter to reformer Sarah Maria Parsons in 1877 when he encouraged her to argue that women “are entitled to equal justice.” Garrison understood that women needed to step out of their prescribed gender roles in order to enact true reform. In 1874, Abby Kelley Foster protested women’s treatment under the law by refusing to pay taxes. Garrison wrote to express his admiration for his long-time friend’s decision and proclaimed her actions as “the highest appreciation of the principles of liberty and equality.”

Another nineteenth century male activist who actively encouraged women’s participation in early social reform was Thomas Wentworth Higginson. Higginson was a minister and similar to Garrison, his religious experiences instilled a firm belief in both racial and gender equality. Furthermore, Higginson displayed a respect for women in general but also served as a private “instigator, inspiration, and impresario for individual women of talent.” This was a combination that made Higginson a preferred advisor on the issue of women’s rights to a number of well-known female reformers of the nineteenth century. One such reformer was Stone with whom Higginson corresponded regularly with to encourage her work for the “elevation of woman.” He believed that Stone’s work was significant to the cause of women’s rights, and, in an 1853

92 Stansell, The Feminist Promise, 48-49; William Lloyd Garrison to Armenia White, 21 December 1868, in Merrill and Ruchades, eds., To Rouse the Slumbering Land, 88-91; William Lloyd Garrison to Sarah Maria Parsons, 6 February 1877, in Ibid., 453-454; William Lloyd Garrison to Abby Kelley Foster, 16 February 1874, in Ibid., 298-299.
letter to the activist, Higginson proclaimed that the country had “strong interest and admiration
in [the work of] a little lady named Lucy Stone.”

Higginson offered his encouragement to female reformers by providing them with advice
for strengthening support of women’s rights and suffrage. In 1877, fellow women’s rights
advocate Lydia Maria Child wrote to Higginson, thanking the minister for providing her with
“sensible” arguments for speaking out on women’s rights. Mary Livermore, a temperance
worker and women’s rights supporter, worked closely with Higginson as a fellow member of
AWSA and also wrote to him for advice. In 1883, Livermore asked Higginson to explain his
“unwillingness” to support AWSA’s rival organization, NWSA. Higginson’s support was
equally in demand from suffragists across the Atlantic. In 1888, British suffragist Millicent
Garrett Fawcett wrote to Higginson for advice regarding a possible appointment to the Women’s
Council in Washington, which was affiliated with the International Congress of Women: “I want
to know if [you think they] are the sort of people with whom one could safely cooperate without
risk to women’s suffrage.”

Abolitionist Henry Browne Blackwell found his way to women’s rights out of a desire to
court a women’s rights reformer, Stone. In 1853, Blackwell, having heard the passionate female
reformer speak, asked Garrison to introduce him to Stone. Blackwell wrote to his future wife
asking her to “Let me be your friend & write to you occasionally” and formed a forty-year
partnership that consistently fought for women’s rights. From 1853 until Stone’s death in 1893,
the two activists wrote several hundred letters to one another, addressing issues like dress reform,

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93 Howard Meyer, ed., The Magnificent Activist: The Writings of Thomas Wentworth Higginson, 1823-1911
(Boston: Da Capo Press, 2000), 13; Thomas Wentworth Higginson to Lucy Stone, 13 April 1869, National
American Woman Suffrage Association Papers, Library of Congress; Thomas Wentworth Higginson to Lucy Stone,
26 May 1853, Ibid.
94 Thomas Wentworth Higginson to Lydia Maria Child, 24 June 1877, Thomas Wentworth Higginson Papers,
Boston Public Library; Thomas Wentworth Higginson to Mary Livermore, 24 March 1883, Ibid; Millicent Garrett
Fawcett to Thomas Wentworth Higginson, June 1888, Ibid.
property rights, free love, and, most importantly, voting rights. Blackwell’s encouragement of Stone as a women’s rights reformer was evident from the beginning. “I want only to help you, as best I can [with the cause],” wrote Blackwell in 1854, “I want you also to help me to do the same.” On behalf of his wife, Blackwell committed himself fully to suffrage activism and wrote to Stone that he would “do the best I can to advocate Woman Suffrage in your stead.”

Despite being one of the most important male suffragists, historians have largely overlooked Blackwell’s influence. Though he entered the movement at a time in which female involvement in social reform was becoming commonplace and was no longer necessary for men to recruit women for the movement, Blackwell continued to act as a permanent and significant advocate of female reformers. Because Blackwell’s activism spans both centuries of suffrage work, his correspondence is a good example of how letters written by male suffragists evolved from encouraging women to become involved in social reform to providing encouragement through the articulation of arguments.

In 1890, NWSA and AWSA merged to form NAWSA, thus eliminating a rivalry within the suffrage movement. Blackwell wrote to Anthony regarding the slow movement of suffrage in the South and the East, arguing that “We shall never make progress . . . until we get in first such women as all will admit are educated.” After 1890, Blackwell and Anthony developed a strong epistolary connection, one that reflects Blackwell’s continued pragmatism and Anthony’s growing conservatism. The newly formed NAWSA reflected this friendship and was emblematic of Blackwell’s practical approach to framing the suffrage movement in a way palatable to society. In 1894, Blackwell wrote to Anthony complimenting her “conservative

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course” of political action and encouraging her not to align with “insurrection” groups like the Populists. Blackwell was concerned that Anthony might once again make the mistake of aligning with controversial individuals and once more divide the movement. Much of the advice that Blackwell provided Anthony was at her own request. Anthony had previously aligned with Stanton to argue against male leadership in the movement but was now willing to work with men as long as they “wholeheartedly espoused woman suffrage.” This relationship demonstrates the significant influence that male reformers had on female reformers and the important role their letters played in creating collaboration between the sexes.96

Nineteenth century men played an important role in encouraging women to participate in reform movements. Despite the fact that many women reformers, including Stanton and Anthony, were hesitant to embrace male support, the letters exchanged between the men and women demonstrate that women activists trusted these reformers and were willing to listen to what the men thought of the movement. By acting as ambassadors to power, men like Garrison, Higginson, and Blackwell created opportunities for female participation within existing reform movements at a time when women were by and large expected to limit themselves to the private sphere of the home. As women became more publicly involved and accepted in political and social reform, male suffragists were no longer needed to act as intermediaries and could instead become collaborators and partners to female reformers. However, some twentieth century suffrage men continued to provide encouragement to female reformers. In contrast to the nineteenth century men, twentieth century men encouraged female suffragists by providing

advice, arguments, and arranging a visible and vocal presence that would benefit the overall success of the cause.

Ben Lindsey was a twentieth century man of letters, a prolific writer, and a passionate steadfast advocate of women’s suffrage. In a 1913 letter to Agnes Ryan, managing editor of the *Woman’s Journal* from 1910 to 1917, Lindsey wrote, “suffrage is right and just and is bound to happen in time.” As a Colorado judge, founder of the juvenile court system, and a social reformer, Lindsey was a household name during the Progressive era. This popularity allowed Lindsey to influence a great many female suffragists’ individual and collective forms of activism, including Alice Stone Blackwell, Carrie Chapman Catt, Lucy Burns, and Alice Paul. As an executive committee member of the National Men’s League for Women’s Suffrage (Men’s League), Lindsey maintained ongoing correspondence with the leadership of the key suffrage organizations NAWSA and the NWP. Lindsey was equally popular in Britain among the leadership of the National Union for Women’s Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) and the Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU). In 1915, Sylvia Pankhurst wrote to Lindsey, stating that the British suffragettes followed his work for children’s reform and asked if he would be willing to contribute to her paper, the *Woman’s Dreadnought*. In 1920, American suffragists embarked upon an international tour after attending the International Suffrage Conference in Switzerland. Lindsey wrote a “letter of introduction” to Irish MP and Home Rule advocate, Sir Horace Plunkett, stating “any courtesies you find it convenient to show them will be greatly appreciated by me.” That Lindsey was able to work with both conservatives and militants, at home and abroad, is a testament to his viability as a male suffragist. It also reflects the length to which Lindsey went to encourage the reform efforts of female suffragists.97

97 The Ben Lindsey Papers are located at the Library of Congress. There are boxes of correspondence that span decades of activism in child labor, women’s workplace protections, anti-vice, white slavery, prison reform, and
In October of 1912, Lindsey wrote to Jane Addams, encouraging her to visit Denver for a public speaking engagement and explained that suffragists were hoping “for the honor of entertaining you while you are here.” Lindsey frequently wrote to female suffragists, encouraging them to speak at meetings or events in Colorado. Likewise, suffragists sent Lindsey copious requests for speaking at local meetings, such as the Sioux City Equal Suffrage Club of Iowa which wanted Lindsey to visit and explain “why women should enjoy the right of suffrage?” In addition, Lindsey encouraged female reformers in their personal choices as well.

In 1914, a Nebraska suffragist wrote to Lindsey, asking if he would be willing to preside over her upcoming marriage. “If you can’t do it,” the unknown suffragist wrote, “I shall feel almost like remaining an old maid. What can I say more that this to prove to you how much I want you to do it?” Overall, Lindsey’s relationship to female reformers demonstrates a man fully committed to the cause and a willingness to use letters to forward the movement.

3.1.2 Critiquing Radicalism and Apathy

A second way that male suffragists used letters as a form of activism was to critique radicalism and apathy among female reformers. Male suffragists used their correspondence to repeatedly address any actions or words that they perceived to be damaging and threatening to women’s suffrage. I eliminated any letter that was not directly connected to suffrage, which left a large amount of correspondence remaining. What is chosen for this chapter is a very small sample that best demonstrates Lindsey’s role and importance to the movement. To best understand the breadth of Lindsey’s reach in the early twentieth century, one needs to peruse his papers in person; Agnes Ryan to Ben Lindsey, 20 August 1913, National American Woman Suffrage Association Papers, Library of Congress; Alice Stone Blackwell to Ben Lindsey, 16 June 1916, Ben Lindsey Papers, Library of Congress; Ben Lindsey to Carrie Chapman Catt, 8 March 1920, Ibid.; Lucy Burns to Ben Lindsey, 1 August 1913, National Woman’s Party Papers, Library of Congress; Men’s League (James Lees Laidlaw) to National Woman’s Party (Alice Paul), 11 July 1913, Ibid.; Sylvia Pankhurst to Ben Lindsey, 3 September 1915, Ben Lindsey Papers, Library of Congress; Ben Lindsey to Sir Horace Plunkett, 10 May 1920, Ibid.

98 Ben Lindsey to Jane Addams, 20 October 1912, Ben Lindsey Papers, Library of Congress; Sioux City Equal Suffrage Club, 11 March 1916, Ibid.; Unknown to Ben Lindsey, 15 October 1914, Ibid.
the overall success of the movement. Despite being privately committed to gender equality, both
nineteenth and twentieth century male suffragists exercised pragmatism in actions and words for
the purposes of gaining broader public support for the cause. Both nineteenth and twentieth
century activists used letters to combat radicalism and apathy among women. Overall, the
willingness of male suffragists to take their fellow reformers to task for questionable actions is
evidence that they were deeply engaged in the movement and invested in its success. Male
critiques of female reformers also suggest a significant shift in gender roles, for, despite their
pragmatic rhetoric, the inclination to critique a peer in a constructive fashion demonstrates an
understanding of equality among activists, male and female. Most significantly was that some
female reformers were willing to listen to the male opinions and that the men’s dedication to the
movement earned respect among women activists.

Prior to the Civil War, the association of abolition with women’s rights was considered
by many to be radical and controversial. However, in the post-war era, attitudes began to shift.
Once thought to be an impossible pipe dream, emancipation had now been achieved. The
question of who would be able to participate in the government of this new reconstructed
America was foremost on everyone’s mind from the freed people to the women’s rights
advocates like Stanton and Anthony who felt that their loyalty to the Union and wartime support
made them deserving of suffrage. Male suffragists began to argue for pragmatism over idealism
and supported granting black men the right to vote over women. Despite Stanton and Anthony’s
efforts to make suffrage a woman-centered movement, they realized that avoiding male support
altogether was impossible. In 1868, proving that politics does indeed make strange bedfellows,
Anthony and Stanton aligned with George Francis Train, a controversial suffrage supporter
known for using inflammatory racial rhetoric to stir up crowds. Garrison wrote a letter to
express his outrage that the former abolitionists would stoop to such a level. “I cannot refrain from expressing my regret and astonishment,” Garrison wrote, “that you . . . have taken such leave of good sense . . . [and aligned] with that crack-brained harlequin and semi-lunatic!”

Garrison remained committed to racial and gender equality throughout his life and held his fellow reformers to the same high, sometimes unreachable, level of morality to which he aspired. While he recognized the need for pragmatic action, he did not advocate compromise at the expense of personal ethics. The relationship between AWSA and NWSA only worsened over time, and Garrison confided to Theodore Tilton that he had lost all “respect and appreciation” for Stanton and Anthony because of their decision to align with Train for the sake of expediency. Garrison’s criticism of Stanton and Anthony’s behavior demonstrate his frustration with the two reformers, for Stanton and Anthony were quick to criticize men like Garrison for supporting black male suffrage over female suffrage, but did not see any issue with partnering with a known racist to argue for female suffrage at the expense of black men.

Garrison was equally critical of men who did not support women’s rights, arguing that they were “not fit to touch the hem of [women’s] garments.” After a decades-long fight to end slavery, followed by the hypocrisy of radicals like Stanton and Anthony, Garrison did not have much faith in the ability of men or women. However, he considered it shameful that “half of [the] vast population [was] not only underrepresented but denied all right to representation.”

Like Garrison, Higginson was also frustrated with the issues that plagued the suffrage movement in the post-Civil War era. Higginson was not a fan of Stanton and Anthony’s radical

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100 William Lloyd Garrison to Theodore Tilton, 5 April 1870, Merrill and Ruchames, eds., To Rouse the Slumbering Land, 173-174; William Lloyd Garrison to Sarah Maria Parsons, 6 February 1877, in Ibid., 453-454; William Lloyd Garrison to Abby Kelley Foster, 16 February 1874, in Ibid., 298-299; William Lloyd Garrison to Henry Browne Blackwell, 11 October 1873, in Ibid., 94-96.
tendencies. When questioned by Stanton regarding his commitment to the movement, Higginson responded that his “convictions” regarding women’s rights were unchanged. However, Higginson added, he no longer had confidence that it was achievable because of the contentious split between NWSA and AWSA. Higginson remained critical of Stanton and Anthony’s methods, particularly in his correspondence to fellow AWSA member Stone. The rift between the two organizations was a major topic of conversation in their letters, and Higginson once confided to Stone that he did not “believe much in National work, except as a good way of advertising [the movement].”

The different suffrage factions were not the only reason that Higginson was disillusioned about the movement’s ability to achieve success. Higginson was also concerned with the general apathy of women as a group. In an 1866 letter to Stanton, he expressed concern about “the acquiescence of women” to the status quo and that women who did not want voting rights was “an argument hard to answer for a man.” While Higginson believed that male support was needed to achieve suffrage, he did not believe that men alone were able to “secure women’s rights vicariously” for the other half of the human race. This was a routine topic between Higginson and Stanton, for, later that same year, he wrote, “Progress of Equal Rights is easy among men” but added that little had been accomplished in convincing women to support the movement. Through an analysis of these letters between Higginson and Stanton, historians can determine that Higginson grew tired of fighting a battle on behalf of women who did not want to fight for their own rights. Though he died in 1911, Higginson retired from official suffrage work.

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in 1884. His retirement did not end his interest in suffrage, and, he never wavered in his commitment to the idea of women’s rights.  

In 1853, Blackwell wrote a letter to Stone, complaining that “[My friend] laughs at me for my too high ideals.” Despite his private idealism, Blackwell tailored his arguments for suffrage to best fit his audience and was annoyed by activists who could not see the difference between ideology and action. In 1890, Blackwell wrote to Stone, describing his irritation with Stanton and Anthony’s use of sarcastic rhetoric aimed at predominantly male audiences. “The great majority of the men do not believe in Woman Suffrage,” he explained to his wife, “I fear we rouse more opponents than we make converts.” Blackwell lamented the unwillingness of certain suffrage women, namely Stanton and Anthony, to recognize the importance of appealing to their male audiences rather than offending them. Though Blackwell was a personal idealist, he knew that arguments of equality were not conducive to gaining support for the movement. In a letter to fellow suffrage supporter Harriet Taylor Upton, Blackwell stated that “the slow progress” of the movement was due, in large part, to a lack of “practical politics.” Despite the 1890 reconciliation of the suffrage movement and Blackwell’s occasional collaboration with Anthony, his criticism of radical methods continued to be a major theme of his letters. In 1894, Blackwell wrote to Anthony, urging her to replace the word woman with citizen in a suffrage petition so as not to offend any potential male supporters.

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Theodore Roosevelt described his views on women’s suffrage to Harriet Taylor Upton in 1908, stating that, while he supported suffrage in theory, he believed that in practice “the usefulness of woman is as the mother of the family.” Despite being a Progressive reformer, Roosevelt was conservative when it came to gender roles and was quick to criticize women who he perceived to move beyond those traditional roles. In 1899, Roosevelt confided to Jacob Riis that his hesitancy to publicly embrace suffrage was because of the “fiends among women” that did not deserve it. Though Roosevelt eventually evolved into a public supporter of women’s suffrage, he never wavered in his rhetoric that women should act as the “housekeepers of society” and even criticized suffragists such as Ethel Dreier for failing to appeal to the American women as, first and foremost, “mothers and wives.” Even after becoming a supporter of suffrage, Roosevelt remained more critical of radicalism than he was of apathetic women. This was largely due to Roosevelt’s own personal belief that suffrage was an impractical issue from its inception, and, though he supported it in principle, he did not believe it would have a major change on society. It is also possible that Roosevelt was indifferent to apathy among women at large because he realized their lack of involvement would have no effect on him politically. Even as Roosevelt grew to support suffrage more publicly, he maintained the belief that it elicited no dramatic change in politics. In a 1912 letter, Roosevelt admitted to feeling “amused” that women in the suffrage states voted like the men, resulting in his defeat for a third presidential term.\textsuperscript{104}

In 1907, W. E. B. Du Bois wrote to female suffragist M. B. Marston, stating that while he empathized with the suffrage cause, he was “hesitant to say anything concerning women’s rights” because of white suffragists’ poor treatment of African-Americans. As an African-American intellectual, Du Bois was highly critical of white suffragists for their willingness to overlook and sometimes utilize racist rhetoric to gain political favor in the South. “The Negro race has suffered more from the antipathy and narrowness of [white] women” Du Bois continued in his letter to Marston, “. . . anything I should say would be misinterpreted.” Du Bois was a strong advocate for women’s suffrage and proclaimed his support to suffragist Mabel Brown. However, he believed that suffrage should apply to women and African-Americans equally, for “either without the other would be a contradiction, and both are essential to our democracy.”

In addition to criticizing individual suffragists, Du Bois did not hesitate to call out the leaders of the suffrage movement for allowing these divisive tactics and controversial rhetoric. In 1911, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), of which Du Bois was a founder, sent a telegram to NAWSA demanding that they “express their sympathy with the black men and women who are fighting the same battle.” Two years later, Du Bois wrote personally to Alice Paul to express his outrage of her treatment of African-American women in the 1913 suffrage parade. While suffragists, particularly in the South, did not want to antagonize white male voters, they also did not want to offend a man as prominent and well connected as Du Bois, no matter how much they wanted to avoid him. Du Bois’ critique of the racism in the suffrage movement was not ignored by suffrage leaders and he was treated with

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“high consideration and respect” because of his position as a professor at Atlanta University, a founder of the NAACP, and editor of its journal, *The Crisis*.106

### 3.1.3 Mobilization and Arguments

One of the critical reasons the men in this case study were so pivotal to the success of the women’s rights and suffrage movement was because of their extensive personal and professional networks. These strong local, state, and national networks allowed male suffragists to create, share, and debate the arguments necessary for mobilizing support at the various levels of government. The key difference between the nineteenth and twentieth century male suffragists’ networks was largely one of scale and reach. The early women’s rights advocates created and maintained networks that were more localized and limited to personal correspondents, fellow reformers, and local and state political parties. Because of the technological advancements that took place at the turn of the century, Progressive era male suffragists were able to amass greater national networks, shifting the movement from a localized one focusing on women’s rights into a national effort to gain a federal suffrage amendment to the United States Constitution. The letters of these key male reformers show the expansive reach of their individual and collective networking abilities as well as how those abilities benefitted and became necessary to the success of the suffrage movement.

In 1853, Blackwell wrote to Stone, proclaiming, “Equality is my passion.” Although privately committed to equality, Blackwell also recognized that men and women needed to be

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“many-sided” on issues. From the beginning of his activism, Blackwell was a proponent of practicality and this is demonstrated in his letters arguing and mobilizing for suffrage. Blackwell believed that there was no better way to work for women’s suffrage than from within the existing political infrastructure. In a letter to Upton, he stated that the best way to get male support for the movement was for women to work with political parties. Of course, Blackwell believed that the Republican Party was the better choice. “I am a Republican,” Blackwell proclaimed, “first of all for the sake of equal suffrage.” Following the Civil War, Blackwell actively lobbied the party to publicly endorse women’s suffrage. In 1872, Blackwell wrote to James Freeman Clarke, a former abolitionist and fellow Republican, that he hoped the party would “endorse the recognition of the Rights of women in the platforms adopted at Worcester and Philadelphia.”

Though the Republican Party never officially claimed suffrage as part of the national platform until after the ratification of the federal amendment in 1920, Blackwell was unceasing in his efforts to gain the support of Republicans at all levels of government and corresponded with a broad network of lawmakers and party politicians, including United States Senators O.E. Babcock and George Francis Hoar. In 1873, he wrote a fellow reformer and member of the Republican Party, admonishing the “failure” of the party to discuss the “critical issue” of women’s suffrage. This extensive political network was one of many reasons that Blackwell was so significant as a male suffragist, something that Blackwell himself understood, for he did not hesitate to publish letters he sent and received in the Woman’s Journal to gain additional publication for the movement. Other suffrage supporters recognized the reach of Blackwell’s

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political network as well. In 1900, Senator Hoar wrote to Anthony on the issue of suffrage in Hawaii, mentioning that he consulted with Blackwell before deciding on his course of action: “he will tell you all about it and my humble share in accomplishing it.”108

As a Progressive era icon, Lindsey maintained epistolary connections with every major social reform movement of the era, including child labor, settlement houses, women’s workplace protections, anti-vice, white slavery, prison reform, and women’s suffrage. He was a frequent correspondent with social reformers whose names define the Progressive era, such as Jane Addams, Booker T. Washington, Upton Sinclair, Theodore Roosevelt, and Emma Goldman. In 1916, Goldman, a controversial anarchist, feminist, and birth control advocate, wrote to Lindsey requesting legal advice regarding her most recent incarceration. Goldman stated she was “asking all of [her] friends to write to the authorities” but assured Lindsey that she did not want to embarrass him politically and that he was under no obligation to assist her. On the opposite end of the political spectrum from Goldman was Roosevelt, who often referred to Lindsey as a “brother . . . in the cause of righteousness.” That Lindsey was considered to be a friend by both the radical Goldman and conservative Roosevelt reflects the broad scope of his influence during the Progressive era and further sheds light on why Lindsey was such a critical supporter of women’s suffrage during this time period. In a letter to Lindsey, Roosevelt remarked that their combined support “helped the woman suffrage cause” to gain in popularity. Roosevelt’s statement was correct, for the “Kids’ Judge” and the “Bull Moose” together provided a strong political network for the mobilization of suffrage arguments.109

109 Ben Lindsey to Jane Addams, 20 October 1912, Ben Lindsey Papers, Library of Congress; Booker T. Washington to Ben Lindsey, 6 August 1902, Ibid.; Ben Lindsey to Upton Sinclair, 4 September 1932, Ibid.; Theodore Roosevelt to Ben Lindsey, 16 November 1912, in Morison, ed., The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt, 650-
Lindsey’s correspondence with social reformers was not the only way that he contributed to the overall success of the movement. His connectedness to every aspect of the Progressive movement made him a prominent figure across the nation. American society held Lindsey in high regard, and he corresponded with citizens from across the country, many of whom wrote letters to him about suffrage. These letters with strangers demonstrate the important role that letter-writing played in linking male suffragists to the public at large, enabling them to expand their reach and their arguments. In 1916, a West Virginia woman wrote to Lindsey, asking his advice on the issue of suffrage, stating “I think the most reliable information could be given me by a man in your position in a state where they are actually using the ballot.” It was not uncommon for Lindsey to receive letters from strangers asking his opinion on suffrage. He received so many requests of this nature that his secretary drafted a generic response, issued only if Lindsey were unable to personally respond, thanking the individual for the inquiry, followed by the enclosed phrase: “I am sending you two pamphlets that explain fully Judge Lindsey’s views on Woman Suffrage.” However, Lindsey often took the time to respond personally to these letters, believing that it was crucial to connect with the public on an intimate basis. In response to one such letter, Lindsey replied that he was “heartily” for woman suffrage and had spent “some of the best years . . . campaigning on behalf of votes for women.”

Lindsey maintained relationships with politicians across the country as well, corresponding with people associated with local and state governments, including school officials and prison wardens. Many of these politicians wrote to Lindsey inquiring about the


110 A. Burgess Taylor to Ben Lindsey, 7 October 1916, Ben Lindsey Papers, Library of Congress; Ben Lindsey (Secretary) to C.A. Gates, 28 February 1916, Ibid.; Ben Lindsey (Secretary) to William Hoyt, 6 March 1916, Ibid.; Ben Lindsey (Secretary) to Marie Dally, 10 March 1916, Ibid.; Ben Lindsey to Trulie Schulte, 31 May 1916, Ibid.
lasting impact of women’s suffrage in Colorado. As suffrage gained in popularity, suffrage states, such as Colorado, became models of the positive impact that women could have with the vote. In 1913, amidst a local discussion of suffrage, a representative of the Natchez Chamber of Commerce in Mississippi wrote to Lindsey, requesting that he “state the benefits Colorado has derived from the women being granted the right to vote.” Lindsey’s influence on the politics of the era was such that the Progressive Party considered him for Roosevelt’s running mate in 1912, for, in the words of one admirer, “the most popular man in the United States next to Theodore Roosevelt” was Lindsey.111

Roosevelt was one of the most significant male suffragists of the twentieth century and this was largely due to his political reach as a Rough Rider, former President, and Progressive reformer. Historians often dismiss Roosevelt because his support was not consistent, but that should not negate the very important impact that he had on mobilizing suffrage support. From the beginning of his political career, Roosevelt privately supported suffrage. In an 1889 letter, Henry Cabot Lodge, an anti-suffrage senator, told the future president that his position on the matter was a “sad weakness” that he had always possessed. When Roosevelt ascended to the presidency following McKinley’s assassination in 1901, suffragists, male and female, began asking Roosevelt to make his private support of their cause known to the general public. “You are the first President of the United States who has ever given an opinion in favor of woman suffrage,” Stanton wrote four days before her death in 1902, adding one final plea urging the new leader to advocate for a federal amendment to the Constitution that enfranchised “thirty-six million American women.” During his administration, much to the chagrin of suffragists,

Roosevelt remained publicly indifferent on the issue. In 1910, he explained his pragmatic position in a letter to suffragist and president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), Carrie Chapman Catt, stating that he always supported women’s suffrage, but did not feel the issue was of “great practical importance.”

However, the next decade witnessed a shift in Roosevelt’s public support of the suffrage movement. In contrast to what some historians have argued, the suffrage movement made gains in popularity and momentum among activists as more western states began to ratify their constitutions approving votes for women. In 1912, Roosevelt ran for president as a third-party candidate associated with the newly formed Progressive Party and became the first presidential candidate to openly support the suffrage movement. Roosevelt’s public acceptance of the movement opened up a wide array of networking possibilities. He was affiliated with a number of Progressive era reformers, including Riis, Lindsey, Addams, and labor activist Florence Kelley. By the time Roosevelt decided to run for a third term, the growing popularity of suffrage and the increase of women voters in suffrage states made ignoring the issue no longer practical. In 1912, Roosevelt expressed his public support in a telegram to Addams, stating that “without qualification or equivocation” both Roosevelt and the Progressive Party supported the suffrage cause.

Du Bois was an important man of letters in the twentieth century in large part because he bridged the African-American community and the wider society. His letters reached every

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corner of American society in the twentieth century, and his correspondents were some of the most prominent individuals in the Progressive era, including steel magnate Andrew Carnegie, muckraker Upton Sinclair, United States Congressmen Robert M. LaFollette and William Borah, and President Woodrow Wilson. More significantly, Du Bois exerted extensive influence through his political network. This included prominent black leaders in America, such as the Tuskegee Institute founder Booker T. Washington, anti-lynching crusader Ida B. Wells, civil rights leader James Weldon Johnson, Pan African advocate Marcus Garvey, and Atlanta leaders John and Lugenia Burns Hope. While Du Bois wrote sparingly about women’s suffrage in his letters, his correspondence to these prominent Progressive era reformers discussing other issues demonstrates a significant fact about Du Bois’ overall advocacy of suffrage: When Du Bois did write about suffrage, it was guaranteed to be shared across an expansive network and reach a section of the population that white suffragists did not have access to on their own. As we have seen, suffragists were careful not to alienate Du Bois despite viewing him as a militant; they needed his influence to reach African-Americans. In 1917, suffragist Mabel Brown wrote to Du Bois, stating that she wanted to work on suffrage in the African-American community and needed his support and backing. “Your name is known to them all,” Brown wrote, “and I remember you once told me you believed in this cause.”

Finally, twentieth century male suffragists utilized a unique and specific political and social network that allowed them to encourage and critique reformers as well as mobilize support for the movement, namely the correspondence network of the Men’s League for Women’s

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Suffrage. The Men’s League was a circle of male suffragists who corresponded not only with each other but with a wide variety of individuals about how best to participate and propel the movement. This network included Lindsey, George Foster Peabody, James Lees Laidlaw, George Creel, and Max Eastman. The letters exchanged by these individuals in their roles of leadership with the Men’s League provided a critical component of male support that led to the eventual success of the suffrage cause. Many of the letters were requests for money, some involve the participation of key suffrage events, and others address anti-suffrage arguments. Furthermore, these letters demonstrate the connectedness of male suffragists and their willingness to engage pragmatically with lawmakers, female reformers, and others for the benefit of the cause. Most significantly, these letters demonstrate the organization, leadership, and strategies employed by the Men’s League, as well as the individual activism of male suffragists associated with the organization. For this reason, the letters of the Men’s League will be discussed in a later chapter and used to focus on the activism of the organization and these key individuals within the organization.

3.2 Published Writing

Since the colonial period, periodicals and pamphlets have been present in American society, but it was the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that brought about great expansion of American publishing and journalism. After the Civil War, publications grew as a result of innovations in printing technology, and the expansion of the postal service allowed Americans to connect to a broader world of ideas through the written word. From 1840 to 1920, a successful print culture emerged in America, one that was not limited to newspapers but also included scholarly journals, penny press, and magazines. Expanding secondary educational opportunities
for women created a new audience for publishers, who rushed to meet the new demand. Print culture was responsible for giving birth to a literary renaissance in America but more importantly it influenced the writing of activists. Many of these publications were created to target specific audiences, such as women, or issues like suffrage.¹¹⁵

For this reason, the movement for women’s rights in the nineteenth century operated on much of the same basis as the abolition movement, which depended heavily upon the press and access to postal mail. This is no coincidence when one considers that a number of the male reformers who supported women’s rights had connections with the press. Garrison began as a printer’s apprentice in Boston and later created the radical anti-slavery paper, *The Liberator*. Douglass published three papers that promoted women’s rights among other causes, *The North Star*, *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*, and *The New National Era*. Just as literary writers used the new technology to publish their works, social reformers like the men in this case study used the expanding print culture to reach a broader audience.¹¹⁶

In addition to making use of the print media that already existed, nineteenth century reformers also created forums for publication if there did not already exist one willing to convey their message. This was the case with women’s rights and suffrage with periodicals such as *Una*, *Woman’s Column*, *Woman’s Standard*, and *Woman’s Tribute*. However, no suffrage periodical was more significant than the *Woman’s Journal*. Founded in 1870 by Stone, Blackwell, and Higginson, the *Woman’s Journal* was the publishing arm of AWSA and created an alternative to Stanton and Anthony’s *Revolution*. Eventually, the radical arguments of *Revolution* would end, but the *Woman’s Journal* would last for forty years. From 1870 to 1910, this periodical served

as the standard bearer of the women’s rights and suffrage movement and “outstripped its rivals in terms of longevity and circulation.” In the twentieth century, new suffrage periodicals emerged, including the mouthpiece of the militant NWP, Suffragist. In addition, specialized suffrage publication houses, such as the National Woman Suffrage Publishing Company in New York City, were formed to meet the growing interest in the movement.117

In the nineteenth century, there was no such thing as an “official ideology” of the women’s rights movement. Justifications for women’s rights and suffrage had to be created, articulated, and sometimes remade to suit the audience of the moment. This is one reason why the nineteenth century men were so important to the overall success of the movement. Through their written advocacy, these reformers altered the debate from one of theoretical equality of the sexes into a movement that actively campaigned to gain women the vote. Eventually the equality argument would transform into the more acceptable moral womanhood argument.

Proponents of moral womanhood argued that, because women differed from men physically, mentally, and emotionally, they were able to contribute something unique to American politics. Deep-rooted ideas of gender influenced what forms of political action society felt was acceptable for women. As a result, these gendered norms impacted the beliefs of the men in this dissertation and became a significant component of their writings on behalf of the cause.

Publications not only reveal the arguments used to gain greater support, but they also reflect the carefully nuanced gendered language that was chosen for the movement.118

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The aforementioned arguments crafted by the nineteenth century reformers (woman as equal, woman as virtuous citizen, woman as a democratic symbol) carried into the twentieth century. The publication of male suffragists’ arguments demonstrated both the lasting influence of these reformers on the American conscience and the necessity of men’s voices for the success of the movement. The need to craft a politically savvy message that addressed nationwide concerns became even more necessary in the twentieth century as print culture connected with two important Progressive era cultural influences. First, print culture, particularly periodicals, responded to the growing presence of the middle-class and reflected Progressive-era fears of femininized men and weakening American strength in an increasingly international world. The press promoted an “ideology of masculine authority” and offered prominent men who served as public authorities on a wide array of topics, including suffrage. These periodicals boosted their publications with a rotation of regular contributors that wrote articles aimed at middle-class readers, men and women, with college educations. Later, many of these articles would be republished as separate essays or pamphlets and distributed by individuals and organizations in the movement.¹¹⁹

Muckrakers represent the second influence on the writing of the suffrage movement. Muckrakers were investigative journalists of the Progressive era who used the press to target societal ills and expose corruption in public and private arenas. As Roosevelt once remarked, “they liked to stir the muck.” Publications like Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*, Ida Tarbell’s *A History of Standard Oil*, Jacob Riis’ *How the Other Half Lives*, and Ida B. Wells’ *Southern

¹¹⁹ Some historians argue for a fourth key argument: women as a preventative measure against racial and ethnic voting groups. However, for brevity, I am including this as part of the moral womanhood or virtuous citizen argument; I also placed the individual men in the category that best fits the broad scope of their writing. This is not to suggest that the men only used the language or equality or moral womanhood, but rather than the bulk of their writings reflect one particular approach over the others; Clark, *Creating the College Man*, 10, 21.
Horrors were synonymous with the growing trends of social reform. Consequentially, suffrage activists in the twentieth century were influenced by both the masculinity ideology and muckraking. These men served as experts in their respective fields, and their publications were widely circulated throughout the country. However, despite the Progressive era ethos, the twentieth century male suffragists advocated a more traditional approach to gender than their nineteenth century counterparts. The moral womanhood language of the previous century would prove to be the popular argument needed for gaining broader support. In order to understand the way that male suffragists contributed to the suffrage movement through published works, one much examine their work through the lens of the three key arguments: woman as equal to man, woman as a virtuous and moral citizen, and woman as a symbol of American democracy.\footnote{Clark, \textit{Creating the College Man}, 17; Theodore Roosevelt, “The Man with the Muck Rake,” 14 April 1906, available at \url{http://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/theodore-roosevelt-the-man-with-the-muck-rake-speech-text}, Accessed on 27 January 2018; Stansell, \textit{The Feminist Promise}, 131-135.}

3.2.1 Woman as Equal

As contributing editor of the \textit{Woman’s Journal} from 1877 to 1884, Higginson wrote a plethora of articles on the subject of women’s suffrage. Despite understanding the need for pragmatism, Higginson was an idealistic man at heart with a strong moral compass rooted in equality. As a result, he was unwilling to argue for women’s suffrage on the basis on anything other than total equality between the sexes. In 1859, Higginson wrote a satirical piece entitled “Ought Women to Learn the Alphabet?” Originally published in \textit{Atlantic Monthly}, the essay made it clear how Higginson believed that suffrage supporters needed to frame their movement. “Woman must be a subject or an equal,” argued Higginson, “there is no middle ground.” Furthermore, he argued that refusing to grant women voting rights because they have no political
experience was akin to arguing against educating women because of their “supposed intellectual inferiority.” In an 1871 issue of Woman’s Journal, Higginson took a similar approach to arguing for equality by sarcastically questioning whether men will be able to discern whether they are voting for “measures or men” and then drawing comparisons to similar arguments for suffrage.  

Higginson’s call for equality was not limited to voting rights. In his essay, “The Fact of Sex,” Higginson discussed the impossibility of women being represented solely by men. “We claim for the disfranchised half of the human race,” what he called “legitimate forms of power.” Higginson’s ultimatum that women not just be enfranchised but play a pivotal role in government was a radical one for the nineteenth century. As women became a larger part of the American body politic during the twentieth century, the notion that they would play a role in government became less controversial. However, Higginson was not content merely to argue for equality. He also critiqued reformers who used the moral womanhood argument to further the cause. In his essay entitled “Womanhood and Motherhood,” Higginson stated that women did not have to be relegated to the roles of mothers and wives in order to justify their representation. “A woman should [not] merge herself in her child [or] her husband,” he wrote. Despite the growing conservatism of suffrage arguments, Higginson remained an idealist, which contributed to his frustration with the movement and his eventual retirement from activism. In 1893, in an article in the Woman’s Column, he bemoaned the fact that suffragists were trying to validate voting rights by framing women as perfect beings. “When shall we learn that the faults and follies of human beings belong to them as human beings,” asked Higginson. 

Like Higginson, Douglass was a man committed to equality and dismissed the more popular moral womanhood argument used by other suffragists. Far more than any other nineteenth century reformer in this case study, Douglass understood the intersectional connections between masculinity, womanhood, and race that existed in America. In 1847, Douglass created his antislavery newspaper, *The North Star*, of which the masthead read “Right is of no sex, Truth is of no color.” Like Garrison, the decision to publicly support women’s rights alongside antislavery earned the former slave criticism from the abolitionist movement. Douglass’ response was to write that the same freedoms for African-Americans were “equally true of woman.” Douglass further solidified his public commitment to women’s rights by attending the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention. More significantly, he published the proceedings of the convention in *The North Star* and went on to state that he himself “dared not claim a right which he would not concede to women.”

Douglass was a passionate advocate for women’s rights and spoke at several conventions, club meetings, and organized events on behalf of the cause. What is more significant is that each time he attended one of these events, he published his speeches so that his words on gender equality could be spread through the nation. In 1853, Douglass wrote an article entitled “Woman and Her Wishes,” which used the rhetoric of equality to advocate for women’s rights. Unless men admit that equality is for women as well as men, proclaimed Douglass, they “will be compelled to admit that the principles on which they maintain the right to vote are utterly worthless.” In all his writings, Douglass maintained his status as a “woman’s rights man” by connecting the battle for women’s rights with the notion of equality between men and women. Douglass continued his support of women’s rights by writing and publishing articles that argued

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123 *The North Star*, December 1847, 28 July 1848, 11 August 1848.
for gender equality in his second newspaper, *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*. As an African-American, he also used his public platform to address the problematic approach of supporting women’s rights without considering the “woman in a slave State where woman is made merchandise.” For Douglass, the equality argument extended to all women, not just white women, something that distinguishes him from other nineteenth century reformers. After the Civil War, Douglass grew even more incensed by Stanton and Anthony’s racially-based arguments for suffrage that were made at the expense of African-Americans. Despite his differences with Stanton and Anthony, Douglass remained a strong supporter of women’s rights and a proponent of equality. “Until this right is admitted, secured, and exercised,” he remarked in the *Woman’s Advocate* in 1866, “count me among the friends of the Woman’s Rights Movement.”

As the suffrage movement progressed from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, the male suffragists began to make more conservative arguments to advocate for suffrage. The new conservative ethos and rigid interpretation of gender roles was a direct response of the growing masculinity crisis and the rising influence of the educated, idealistic, and civic-minded “new woman.” By rejecting the violent and aggressive masculinity of the era, male suffragists who used the equality argument were attempting to construct a new masculinity, one where men were willing to support the changing roles of men and women. As a result, the equality argument became limited to political radicals and remained a unique interpretation of women’s suffrage.

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Very few twentieth century male suffragists made the equality argument, but Max Eastman was one of them, and his commitment to gender equality was a product of his Greenwich Village Radicalism and socialist views. In his autobiography, Eastman addressed the role that evolving notions of masculinity contributed to his suffrage activism when he stated that he was “not such a sissy that he dare not champion the rights of women.” In fact, Eastman formed the Men’s League in large part to demonstrate that, contrary to popular opinion, suffrage was not a ridiculous social cause advocated by silly women but a legitimate movement that had the backing of men and women committed to making America better.126

In his pamphlet “Is Woman Suffrage Important?,” Eastman encouraged men not to embrace the moral womanhood argument, for “neither sex has a monopoly on virtue.” Instead, he argued that suffragists should embrace gender equality to argue against disenfranchisement. While Eastman admitted that there were biological differences between men and women (“Women are mothers, men are not”), he did not believe biology should be used to suggest that women had more morality than men. Eastman asserted that, if women’s involvement in voting promoted positive change in society, it would be because more educated human beings were voting, not because women possessed greater morality. For Eastman, the bottom line was that “women [were] individuals and must be counted.” “Is Woman Suffrage Important?” is an important pamphlet from a twentieth century male suffragist despite its use of the equality argument. It was also a popular pamphlet, going into its fourth edition in 1915. This is most likely attributed to Eastman’s role as the founder of the Men’s League, the organization responsible for its publication. Eastman wrote many such publications during his tenure with the Men’s League and took to writing on behalf of the early movement with enthusiasm. In “Values

of the Vote,” Eastman criticized Roosevelt’s use of moral womanhood to justify holding a special “woman only” election to decide on suffrage in a 1912 edition of Outlook magazine. Roosevelt’s position, argued Eastman, gave the issue of suffrage “a glamour of justice to [mask] a travesty of principle.” In 1915, Eastman wrote in “Suffrage and Sentiment” that the notion of suffrage as an expansion of “woman’s sphere” was a ridiculous “untrue dogma” that prevents people from embracing new gender roles and possibilities.127

Eastman’s commitment to gender equality can be seen in his socialist periodical, The Masses. Though the bulk of the periodical focused on promoting socialism, workers’ rights, and the efforts of the labor movement, as editor, Eastman frequently included articles in the monthly paper pertaining to the activism of the suffrage movement. In an article titled “Confessions of a Suffrage Orator,” he wrote that the suffrage movement was never about making Americans “believe in the benefits of women’s freedom, it was a question of making them like the idea.” For Eastman, women’s suffrage was a simple matter of gender equality but he felt “it would be folly to pretend that the principle of equal liberty” was the only motivation of suffrage. Rather, he suggested that suffrage be a requirement for “universal citizenship” along with education and “civic consciousness.” His main criticism of moral womanhood was that it limited women, for “if society expects women to remain a doll-baby all her life, she will.” Eastman’s writing is important because it demonstrates that male suffragists used their writings not just to tell people what they wanted to hear but to challenge conventional norms and transform issues into new definitions of masculinity and femininity. Eastman was adamant that women should not be given the vote because of moral purity, but because they deserved the same rights as men and to

fight “the repressive prejudice that expresses itself and maintains itself in refusing to make her a citizen.” Eventually, Eastman’s views of gender equality became too radical for the suffrage movement, particularly as he aligned more and more with the growing socialist movement. However, his efforts to construct the suffrage movement as a new way of embodying masculinity and femininity would continue to have a significant influence on the movement.128

Like Eastman, Du Bois was adamant when it came to equality, for he was passionate about women’s suffrage and viewed it as a platform for gaining access to civil rights for African-Americans. Du Bois was critical of moral womanhood in his writings because he witnessed white suffragists, male and female, using the virtuous citizen argument to exclude the votes of minorities, particularly for “Negro suffrage” in the South. Du Bois’ understanding of gender was influenced by his own experience as an African-American and challenged male chauvinism among whites and blacks alike. For Du Bois, equality was not just about gender; it was also about race and suffrage that should be extended to black women. Du Bois was a strong proponent of black women’s suffrage and believed that access to political power would improve the quality of life for black women. Though a strong supporter of women’s suffrage, he is often overlooked as a male suffragist because of his extensive work for civil rights, socialism, and pan-Africanism. However, Du Bois was a lifelong advocate of women, a fact that is evident in his 1907 poem, “The Burden of Black Women,” in which he described the inequalities that have

been experienced by African-American women: “O woman arise! Mother of God, Bid the Black Christ be born!”

Much of what Du Bois wrote on women’s suffrage was published in the NAACP journal, *The Crisis*. From 1910 to 1920, *The Crisis* contained articles on women’s suffrage, many of which were authored by Du Bois in fourteen of the monthly publications. In these issues of *The Crisis*, the fiery editor often discussed white masculinity and forced black readers to acknowledge their own prejudices regarding women and gender stereotypes. In December of 1912, Du Bois wrote “The Black Mother,” calling on black supporters of suffrage not to fall prey to moral womanhood arguments. Americans have “felt so keep an appreciation of the qualities of motherhood [in the black mammy],” wrote Du Bois, stating that this idea of black womanhood was “a perversion” and “not treated with respect.” That same year, Du Bois stated that, despite the racist rhetoric of many suffrage supporters, African-Americans should still support voting rights for women because “it’s the right thing to do” and would ultimately benefit black women in the fight for racial and gender equality. This defense of suffrage demonstrates Du Bois’ belief that excluding specific groups of people would handicap the nation and prevent further progress for equality, for Du Bois believed that suffrage and equality “is a fight . . . [that] knows no race or sex.” In August of 1915, Du Bois showed his support of the growing movement by dedicating the monthly issue of *The Crisis* as special “suffrage” editions. The edition contained poems, tributes, and editorials on the issue of suffrage with notable contributions from Harriot Stanton Blatch, daughter of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and founder of

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the Women’s Political Union, and an article on “The Logic of Woman Suffrage” by Reverend Francis Grimké. That same year, he penned his strongest defense of equality in “Woman Suffrage,” where he wrote “it is inconceivable that any fair-minded person could talk about the ‘weaker sex’” followed by “we have outgrown that idea.”

3.2.2 Woman as a Virtuous Citizen

The belief that masculine traits were responsible for much of the societal ills was a commonly held assumption in America. The moral womanhood argument was the idea of woman acting as a virtuous citizen, one who would clean up politics with her presence at the ballot box. This was a popular argument in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as more and more reformers advocated for it. Over time, the use of gendered language became a staple in the suffrage movement, and the most popular male suffragists were the ones who utilized this language effectively in their writings. As a result, the majority of the male suffragists in this case study preferred to espouse the moral womanhood argument because it was more effective in gaining support among male voters.

Wendell Phillips was a proponent of the moral womanhood argument in his published writings. In a speech delivered at the 1850 women’s rights convention, Phillips stated that he believed that “every class should be endowed with [political] power” and that women’s rights was necessary for the benefit of society. The speech was very popular, and, when published, it

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130 Suffrage Articles in The Crisis: December 1910; October 1911; March 1912; June 1912; August 1912; September 1912; May 1913; August 1914; February 1915; April 1915; August 1915; November 1915; November 1917; March 1920; Lewis, W.E.B. Du Bois: A Biography, 419; The Crisis, November 1917; Du Bois, “The Black Mother,” The Crisis, December 1912; The Crisis, May 1912; Phil Zuckerman, ed., The Social Theory of W.E.B. Du Bois (Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press, 2004), 119; The Crisis, May 1913; The Crisis, August 1915; Du Bois, “Woman Suffrage,” The Crisis, November 1915.

set the tone for Phillips’ writings on women’s rights and his use of the moral womanhood argument was repeated in future speeches and publications. In 1851, Phillips wrote one of his most important contributions to the movement, “Shall Women Have the Right to Vote?” He articulated the various reasons that men should support suffrage rights for women, reassuring male voters that suffragists “do not feel called upon to establish or assert equality between the sexes.” “We do not seek to protect women,” Phillips wrote, “but rather to place her in a position to protect herself.” Phillips’ argument reflects a careful balance of gendered language, framing the issue of suffrage in a way that appealed to the notion that women’s votes were ultimately about protection of the weaker sex, for he believed that, even if women were “essentially inferior” to men, they were still deserving of rights.132

As a lawyer by trade, Phillips had first-hand experiences with the limitations women experienced under the law and recognized the need to be pragmatic in attempts to change the political system. This contributed to Phillips’ view that women needed the vote for protection in a male-dominated society, a crucial component of the moral womanhood argument. Phillips reaffirmed his position in another piece entitled “Woman’s Rights” and urged his fellow proponents of suffrage to exercise expediency above idealism. Phillips believed that it was more practical and more important to show how voting prevented women from being “cramped, fettered, excluded, and degraded” in society. He also once chastised a group of men who booed and hissed at the participants in a women’s rights convention, claiming “such bad behavior proved that women deserved suffrage” so they could clean up the existing political sphere.133

Ultimately, Phillips believed that arguments of equality were impractical and did more harm than good. This was expressed in 1879 in Phillips’ “The Other Side of the Woman Question.” Originally published as an article in the *Woman’s Journal*, this critique of anti-suffragists argued against the concept that women’s suffrage would destroy traditional gender roles stating, “Woman is man’s equal though unlike him.” By suggesting that because women differed from men physically, mentally, and emotionally, they brought something unique to society and American politics, Phillips’ writing reflected the moral womanhood argument. His use of traditional gender roles made this pamphlet a popular source of information and rhetoric for the cause. Suffragists, both male and female, continued to use Phillips’ writing to combat the growing voice of the anti-suffrage movement in the twentieth century.\(^{134}\)

Phillips was not alone in using the concept of woman as a virtuous citizen to argument in favor of suffrage. Blackwell also argued for suffrage on the basis of moral womanhood in his articles published in his periodical the *Woman’s Journal*. Though significant to the movement, the creation of the *Woman’s Journal* as a forum for discussion should not be considered Blackwell’s only contribution to the movement nor his most substantial one. Perhaps one of the most prolific male suffragists in this case study, Blackwell composed pieces on a wide array of topics, including the origins of the movement, legislative reports, responses to anti-suffragists, marriage reform, party politics, race relations, legislative victories, and tributes to suffragists who passed away. In addition, Blackwell’s articles were also frequently published in other suffrage papers, including the *Woman’s Standard*, *Woman’s Column*, and *Woman’s Tribute*. What it important about Blackwell is that, like Phillips, he was an effective proponent of moral womanhood.

\(^{134}\) Wendell Phillips, “The Other Side of the Woman Question,” 1879, Gerritsen Collection, Digital.
In an 1893 speech published in the *Woman’s Journal*, Blackwell referred to the suffrage movement as a demand for an “enlargement of woman’s sphere” rather than of an encroachment of women into the masculine realm. It was this nuanced language that demonstrates that men like himself understood all too well the significance of political and public appeal in advocating for women’s rights. In 1891, he wrote in “Man as Helpmate,” that women by their very nature were prone to “order, cleanliness, politeness” and that these ideas could be used to benefit American politics. Likewise, in 1896, Blackwell uses moral womanhood in a bold assertion that “women are better qualified to vote instead of men.” These articles are just a few examples that demonstrate Blackwell was not afraid to use the most persuasive arguments to gain greater support for the cause. He used the *Woman’s Journal* as his personal platform for arguing on behalf of suffrage, penning articles like “Suffrage in Mississippi,” “Suffrage Problems Considered,” and “Woman Suffrage Manifesto.” In all of these articles, Blackwell’s use of woman as a model for virtuous citizenship demonstrates why he was such a significant contributor to the movement.135

However, nowhere is Blackwell’s use of moral womanhood more visible than in his article “What the South Can Do,” which exploited existing racial dynamics to advocate granting white women the vote. Race was the most potent dividing line in American society, and suffragists often promoted white women as a preventative measure to potential votes from African-Americans in the South, Chinese immigrants, Native Americans, and Mormon polygamists in the West, and Europeans immigrants in the East. A common misconception

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about the western territories is that they were more progressive on race because they granted women voting rights prior to the rest of the nation. In reality, the practice of approving suffrage was a matter of expediency and practicality. These issues were exacerbated in the Reconstruction era, and amid the debate surrounding the ratification of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, Blackwell made the case that white women should be granted suffrage to protect white supremacy. His article, “What the South Can Do,” used statistical data to show how educated, white woman suffrage would prevent African-Americans from gaining any significant political strength in the South. “Supposed all the Negroes vote one way and all the whites another?” asked Blackwell. At the end of the article, he reiterated his argument by posing a question to Southern white men: “can any Southerner fear to trust the women of the South with the ballot?” His article was one of the most popular among the suffragists, especially in the South, and was printed repeatedly until the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. Southern suffragists celebrated Blackwell’s willingness to embrace a racist argument to promote women’s suffrage, and the suffrage leadership of NAWSA and the NWP turned the article into a pamphlet for distribution. Blackwell would continue to argue for education as a prerequisite for women’s suffrage, but he never again used such antagonistic language to support the cause. However, for some reformers, his name would remain permanently linked with the rhetoric in “What the South Can Do.”

In contrast to the other men in this case study, James Lees Laidlaw was not a prolific writer. However, he did contribute a speech that had a significant impact on the suffrage

movement and was distributed by suffragists. In 1912, Laidlaw gave a speech before the National American Woman Suffrage Convention and used moral womanhood rhetoric to question women’s lack of voting rights, by asking, “Should we not avail ourselves of their special knowledge concerning those matters which vitally affect the human race?” As the husband of a suffragist and president of the Men’s League, Laidlaw was a prominent male visage in the movement and had tremendous influence in the political and business sectors. Additionally, he knew the preconceived notions that men in power had regarding women. His use of moral womanhood arguments demonstrates the power of arguing that women needed protection and the impact that these arguments had on helping suffrage gain popularity across the nation. Laidlaw played on traditional views of women’s inferiority and suggested that, by giving women the vote, they would have “the opportunity for equal mental development with men.” While Laidlaw was more useful as a political mobilizer with the Men’s League than a writer, his NAWSA speech is important because it is evidence of the lengths that male suffragists like Laidlaw were willing to achieve victory. Furthermore, it shows that no matter how committed a man was to the idea of equality, in practice he spoke the language most palatable to the American public.\(^{137}\)

3.2.3 **Woman as Democratic Symbol**

The final argument that male supporters made in their published works was framing the movement for woman suffrage as an extension of American democracy. In a society where concepts of citizenship, voting, and patriotism were tied to white middle-class masculinity,

\(^{137}\) Laidlaw, “Statement at the National American Woman Suffrage Convention” (1912), in Kimmel and Mosmiller, eds., *Against the Tide*, 262-263
reformers like the men in this case study articulated a different approach to American democracy, one that showed “these reformers believed they were engaged in a more important revolution,” and one that would uphold the democratic values championed in 1776. Since the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, where women’s rights and suffrage advocates rewrote the Declaration of Independence into a Declaration of Sentiments that included the word “woman” in the text, the movement has frequently referenced the Declaration of Independence as the source of their demands for political equity. After the Civil War, these arguments had new meaning and took on a potency that placed women’s suffrage at the heart of the debate on what it meant to be a citizen in the reformed America. By using the “rhetorical traditions of the American Revolution,” male suffragists framed women’s suffrage as an expansion of America’s founding principles. This made it possible to effectively combat anti-suffragist arguments and, just as the slogan “no taxation without representation” became the universal phrase for describing the impetus behind the American Revolution, so, too, did those words hold meaning for the men in this case study.138

In addition to the equality argument, Douglass utilized the rhetoric of democracy in a number of his public writings. In 1866, the New York Tribune published a speech Douglass gave before the Equal Rights Convention in Albany, New York. Douglass reaffirmed this position by proclaiming that he was astounded that men attempt to form a government without taking into account half of the citizenry, for “we do not construct a government because we are male or female, but because we are human.” In his article “Woman and the Ballot,” published in 1870 in The New National Era, Douglass’ third periodical effort, he asserted that depriving women of

voting rights and participation in the process denies women dignity as human beings. Many years later, in 1881, Douglass wrote in his autobiography, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, “the only true and rational basis of government” is to “give woman a vote.” For Douglass, notions of equality and the promise of American democracy were connected. “The American doctrine of Liberty . . . declares that taxation without representation is tyranny,” opined Douglass in an undated speech, asserting that women’s suffrage was following the traditions of the American Revolution. This was especially important to Douglass as an African-American, who saw the struggle of women and blacks as one in the same. For reformers like Douglass, if American ideals of liberty and equality were extended to women, then they were also available to African-Americans.¹³⁹

A southerner by birth, George Peabody is most known for his passionate commitment to racial equality and educational opportunities for African-Americans. As a trustee of Tuskegee Institute and a treasurer for the Board of Missions of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Peabody helped to establish other “normal” schools for African-Americans, including Saint Augustine’s College in North Carolina, Voorhees Normal and Industrial School in South Carolina, and Fort Valley High and Industrial School in Georgia. However, Peabody was also a prominent businessman, male suffragist, loyal Democrat, and President of the Men’s League. Peabody was committed to suffrage because he believed that “all government should rest on the votes of the people.” Furthermore, Peabody believed that people who believe in “true democracy” were inclined to support women’s suffrage. This use of rhetoric that frames the suffrage movement as a continuation of good government was popular among male suffragists. In 1915, Peabody

responded to an editorial in the *New York Times*, arguing that he could not believe the editorial staff would “consider the present state or political status [of women] as ‘political genius’ and ‘true statesmanship.’” That same year, Peabody wrote a second response to the *New York Times*, stating that, if “the true basis for a permanent government” was founded on the “consent of the governed,” then women should be considered for voting rights because they were “governed” by the state. Peabody was not a prolific writer of articles or pamphlets, but his responses to editorials provide a glimpse of the arguments that he used to make the case for suffrage. For a man like as Peabody, who valued “universal” opportunities for men and women, black and white, the process of “relating the government closer to the people” was an important one and women’s suffrage was part of this work.140

When it comes to arguments supporting women’s suffrage, George Creel was a chameleon. More so than most male suffragists, Creel constantly altered his arguments to fit his audience, often using equality and moral womanhood in the same essay, article, or pamphlet. While each of the men in this case study took this approach to a limited degree, Creel was more adept at it than most, a fact that would later contribute to his position as the head of propaganda for Woodrow Wilson’s Committee on Public Information during World War I. Creel was a prolific writer and a “roll-up-your-sleeves” activist” during the Progressive era. As a muckraker, he produced an inexhaustible amount of writing for the *Rocky Mountain News, New York Times, Kansas City World*, and other periodicals across the country.141


141 Alan Axlerod, *Selling the Great War: The Making of American Propaganda* (New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2009), xi. Like Ben Lindsey, George Creel wrote vast articles for newspapers and monthly periodicals. He wrote on
However, Creel’s favorite way to write for the suffrage movement was pamphlets. His most popular pamphlet was “What Have Women Done with the Vote.” Originally published in *Century Magazine*, he used the rhetoric of American democracy to argue for women’s voting rights by stating “patriotism demands the elimination of prejudice and theories and sole consideration of facts and figures . . . woman is entitled to the ballot.” Creel’s use of patriotic language to promote voting rights was one of his favorite ways to frame suffrage, for he thought, “a government entirely by men is as stupid as a government entirely by women.” For Creel, the American experience was about equal representation as well as the Progressive ethos that advocated greater involvement of the people in the political process. The result is a piece of writing that found broad support in the suffrage movement. Both NAWSA and state suffrage organizations like the Pennsylvania Woman Suffrage Association published the article as a pamphlet and circulated it nationally and internationally.\(^{142}\)

While Creel was a popular author in his own right, his greatest contributions to the suffrage movement were not his individual articles, but the pamphlets that he created with fellow suffragist Lindsey. Concerned with political corruption, Creel and Lindsey met in Denver and quickly formed a partnership that would help reform politics in Denver. Women’s suffrage was just one way that these two male suffragists believed could contribute to a stronger American democracy. This very argument was made in their joint article, “Measuring Up in Colorado.” In the article, Creel and Lindsey list the various ways that women have had a positive impact on the laws in Colorado, claiming, “under a partially representative government the lives and interests

\(^{142}\) Creel, *Rebel at Large: Recollections of Fifty Crowded Years* (New York: G. P. Putnam and Sons, 1947), 146; “George Creel,” What Have Women Done with the Vote,” 1915, Sophia Smith Suffrage Collection, Smith College; “What Have Women Done with the Vote,” Undated, Pennsylvania Woman Suffrage Association Papers, Ibid.
of the underrepresented always suffer.” Originally published in 1911 in *The Delineator*, a popular Progressive periodical, Creel and Lindsey attribute the success of suffrage in Colorado not only to women’s innate goodness, but also to a “vigorous championship” of American principles. Like “What Have Women Done with the Vote,” “Measuring Up in Colorado” was an important pamphlet for the movement and was printed by conservatives and militants on both sides of the Atlantic.\(^\text{143}\)

3.3 **Conclusion**

By writing letters and published works, male suffragists comprised a critical component of suffrage activism, one that was necessary to the overall success of the women’s rights and suffrage movement. The men in this case study had political, economic, and social connections that enable them to promote suffrage on local, state, and national levels of the campaign. Through their writings, historians can gain a better understanding of the important roles these key individuals played in establishing the arguments and activist networks necessary for the successful ratification of a federal amendment on women’s suffrage. By examining their correspondence, a clearer picture of male involvement begins to emerge, one in which male suffragists actively encouraged women reformers, critiqued behaviors that threatened the movement, and mobilized networks for support. By examining their published works in periodicals and pamphlets, one can see the articulation of arguments that were critical to the movement. Though there were some important differences between the activism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, male involvement through writing remained a crucial aspect of what made women’s suffrage a possibility in America.

\(^{143}\) Creel, *Rebel at Large*, 86; Creel and Lindsey, “Measuring Up in Colorado,” *The Delineator*, February 1911.
This discussion of letters and published works is not meant to be a comprehensive study of the breadth of male suffragist writing. For one, it would be impossible to catalog the entirety of male written activism. Many of these individuals wrote letters that served multiple purposes and articles that used overlapping rhetoric of equality, womanhood, and democracy. Overall, this chapter was meant to reflect a small sample of the multitude of ways that suffrage men contributed to the movement through advocacy in private correspondence and in publications. It is my hope that future historians will develop these ideas even further.

Men in the nineteenth century were pivotal in the early years as proponents of women activists and establishing arguments that would define the movement. Men such as Garrison, Phillips, Blackwell, Douglass, and Higginson focused their attention on crafting key arguments that would convince the broader American public to embrace the radical idea of women as political participants. These arguments included woman as an equal, woman as a virtuous citizen, and woman as a democratic symbol. The arguments articulated by the nineteenth century individuals would become so popular that the reformers of the twentieth century would embrace them and use them to justify their own activism.

The writing of the twentieth century reformers reflected the Progressive ethos that addressed societal ills in America at the turn of the century. Likewise, as the popularity of suffrage began to grow, male suffragists articulated more conservative arguments of virtue and moral womanhood to justify their cause. Unlike the men of the nineteenth century, who took a more insular approach to writing and remained within their small circle of like-minded reformers until the Reconstruction era, the twentieth century men broadened their writings to include national and international audiences. Men such as Lindsey, Du Bois, Eastman, and Roosevelt spread the suffrage message through their personal and professional letters as well as through
publications like *The Masses* and *The Crisis*. These extensive networks made it possible to further articulate the arguments necessary for women’s suffrage. Despite the key differences between the two generations, the writings of male advocates of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were crucial to the success of the movement. Without these “strategists, co-conspirators, and sympathizers,” the suffrage movement would not have experienced the success that it did in 1920. Finally, reformers associated with the Men’s League represent the ultimate evolution of male suffrage activism, as men like Laidlaw, Peabody, and Creel transformed male involvement in women’s suffrage in tangible and important ways.144

4 “STAND UP AND BE COUNTED AS A MALE SUFFRAGETTE!”

In his autobiography, *The Enjoyment of Living*, Max Eastman wrote that there was “nothing harder for a man to do than stand up and be counted as a male suffragette!” Eastman and others like him, often experienced ridicule and outrage for their public support of women’s suffrage. Despite the criticism, this public advocacy was important and demonstrated the broader role of male suffrage activism that took place in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. From 1840 to 1920, male reformers were pivotal to the activism, organization, and mobilization of broader male support that contributed to the success of the women’s rights and suffrage movement. Historians have long recognized that men have contributed to the movement, but they have not explored the extent of their activism or examined how it evolved over time. The questions that will provide the guiding framework for this chapter include: What forms of male suffrage activism existed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? What role did political partisanship

144 Stansell, *The Feminist Promise*, 100.
play in the individuals’ activism? What role did suffrage organizations play in shaping male suffrage activism? How did men participate publicly in the movement and how did this activism transform over time? Finally, what does male activism reveal to historians about the necessity of key male support in the movement?145

The men in this case study participated in the women’s rights and suffrage movement through political parties and suffrage organizations, both of which made it possible for them to create a public presence of male support. Prior to the Civil War, the political and organizational activism of the nineteenth century men tended to be more focused in the North and New England regions. After the Civil War, the issue of women’s suffrage became linked with the national dialogue on what participatory American democracy would and should resemble. As a result, male activism made women’s suffrage more visible and acceptable to the general public and, in doing so, created a new understanding of what it meant to be a male suffragist. Twentieth century male suffragists gave public support to the cause, making the issue of women’s suffrage less controversial and framing women’s rights as part of the ongoing discussion on Progressive era political reform. While men of both centuries were active in political parties and suffrage organizations, the twentieth century male suffragists had the satisfaction of seeing a federal suffrage amendment added to the Constitution.

Male suffragists like the ones in this case study brought much-needed legitimacy and visibility to the movement’s efforts to gain greater support among hold-out lawmakers and reticent voters who were concerned with societal decay. According to historian Bruce Dorsey, they did so during a time period in which many men were not willing “to relinquish the

privileges of male dominance . . . that characterized” voting rights for women. This is why it was critical to have key male support, especially in the nineteenth century, because society was unable to fully accept women as public political figures. The Democratic, Republican, and Progressive parties provided platforms for greater political advocacy and involvement. The Men’s League for Woman Suffrage collaborated with existing suffrage organizations like the National American Woman Suffrage Association and the National Woman’s Party to spread pro-suffrage ideas across the nation. Furthermore, through these organizations, twentieth century male suffragists greatly expanded their in-person activism. While nineteenth century men gave speeches at conventions of like-minded reformers or symposiums, twentieth century men engaged in broad public spectacles designed for broader exposure. Their visible presence at mass meetings, suffrage conventions, parades, government committees and hearings, fundraising events, and political party gatherings allowed the public to witness prominent men who not only supported the movement but continuously articulated for its importance to society. Finally, these activists also provided a much-needed financial support to the movement through their business contacts and opened doors to power for the suffrage cause that might have otherwise remained closed to female activists.146

As previously discussed in Chapter Three, improvements in technology and communication played a critical role in the formation of the women’s rights and suffrage movement; without them, the ability to travel and organize beyond a local level would have been impossible. This is true for both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, where greater methods of communication also extended to travel and transportation. In the nineteenth century, the

development of canal systems, steamboats, turnpikes, and railroads made it easier for suffrage activists to mobilize, for as historian Rebecca Edwards argues, these technologies linked the country through “urbanization and industry” at the turn of the century. As a result of this dramatic shift in technology, twentieth century male activists were more mobile and able to reach a national audience in ways that nineteenth century men could only imagine, and new inventions like the automobile, further enabled male suffragists to construct a “nationwide network for reform and protest” on behalf of women’s suffrage. Over the course of the eighty year campaign, the women’s rights and suffrage movement expanded on local, state, and national levels.\textsuperscript{147}

4.1 Political Parties

Since the creation of the Constitution in 1789, political parties have been part of American life. However, it was during the nineteenth century that a permanent two-party system was established, an event that is defined by historians as “one of the striking developments of the era.” Historians also refer to the nineteenth century as a pivotal moment in American political history because of the development of this two-party system, the expansion of voting rights in the early half of the century, and the political activism that emerged out of Jacksonian Democracy. However, in \textit{The Rise of American Democracy}, historian Sean Wilentz argues that any notion of democracy as a permanent institution in America is false and that issues of rights and citizenship have been continuously negotiated with struggle throughout the nation’s history. Likewise, historian Alexander Keyssar suggests that American history should be considered an

endless debate about enfranchisement and who should be allowed to participate in the political structure. This understanding of democracy explains why male suffragists like the ones in this case study understood women’s rights and suffrage as a natural evolution of American democracy. However, theoretical ideas of equality did not always extend to practical action in the political realm. In the early nineteenth century, the prevailing ideology of “separate spheres” created semi-rigid social boundaries for men and women. In general, politics was considered a male domain, and political parties were hesitant to accept women as members. While women routinely engaged in politics by influencing male voters in their personal sphere, the perceived “intrusion” of women into previously masculine “gendered spaces” was a controversial one. Therefore, in order to achieve political success, it became necessary for politically-minded women to construct alliances with men who were supportive of the cause of women’s rights and suffrage and to work within existing political structures to affect necessary change in the nineteenth century.148

In contrast, twentieth century suffragists witnessed a growing number of women involved in political parties during the Progressive era. Middle-class women were the largest contributors to social and political reform, and a sense of “social solidarity” pervaded the politics of the nation. This Progressive ethos centered on government reform and was a response to the growing desire for public participation in addressing social ills through voting. These reforms manifested in direct primaries, direct election of United States senators, referendums and ballot initiatives, and the recall of public officials. To the increasing number of twentieth century male

suffragists, women’s suffrage was a simple extension of this greater sense of political reform. As more men and women participated in the political system, the need for parties to demonstrate greater acceptance of suffrage grew, resulting in a more diverse system for male suffragists to use to benefit the cause of women.149

4.1.1 Republican Party

Founded as the antislavery party in 1854, the Republican Party became the default political party of women’s rights and suffrage supporters, but the relationship was never an easy one. The Republican Party, which encompassed former antislavery Whigs and Free Soilers, was established in response to pro-slavery sentiment of the Democratic Party. Women were already participating in social reform via the abolition movement, in large part because of Garrisonian efforts to include women as allies to the movement. For nineteenth century women rights advocates, transferring their support of abolition to the Republican Party seemed like a natural transition. However, the issue of women’s rights complicated the relationship between party leadership and the women’s rights advocates who would willingly support the party platform. Initially, Republican leadership attacked women’s rights advocates as gender deviants, but eventually grew to accept, if not the participation, at least the support of women as “mothers, wives, and daughters” of potential voters. In 1872, the Republican Party issued a compromise platform stating that the party was “mindful of its obligations” regarding women’s suffrage without outright supporting the movement. Over time, this limited acceptance of suffrage became “routine and unremarkable” as more women entered the political arena and “refused to

accept the premise of a gender-based state.” While radical male suffragists like Garrison and Phillips were hesitant to fully embrace partisan politics, others like Douglass, Higginson, and Blackwell began to argue that the movement needed to align with the Republican Party to create a strong network of support if it had any chance of achieving a legislative victory.¹⁵⁰

Prior to the Civil War, radical abolitionists and “women’s rights men” did not involve themselves in party politics out of a belief that they were “hopelessly compromised.” One such individual was William Lloyd Garrison, who was committed to the idea of resistance through non-action. For male suffragists like Garrison, women’s rights was more about principle than actual participation, for, as he stated in 1853, to refuse women a voice was “the natural outbreak of tyranny.” In 1831, Garrison gave a speech in Boston and stated, “There shall be no neutrals; men shall either like or dislike me.” Garrison was speaking about abolition, but his willingness to make himself a public “lightening rod” for causes reflected his belief that provoking outrage was necessary for change, a conviction that Garrison held for abolition and women’s rights.¹⁵¹

After the Civil War, the abolition movement transitioned from ending slavery to promoting civil rights for African-Americans, and Garrison became more willing to participate in the political system. Like many former abolitionists, Garrison viewed black male suffrage as a necessity for the success of Reconstruction and aligned himself with the Republican Party to achieve this goal. Some suffrage historians are quick to malign Garrison for his pragmatic support of the Fifteenth Amendment, arguing that it reflects a lack of true support for the cause.

This viewpoint comes from Stanton and Anthony’s own perceptions of Garrison as a man more interested in supporting Republican politics than women’s rights. In reality, Garrison was cautious about aligning with the Republican Party despite his work with them. In 1872, he wrote to Henry Blackwell, stating that he understood the need to be pragmatic but that the movement needed to exercise caution before “committing our movement in favor of one political party against another.” It would be easy to suggest that Garrison’s pragmatism is the reason that he was important as a male suffragist. However, it was Garrison’s idealism, rejection of mainstream American politics, and “anti-institutionalism” that made him into an outspoken agitator for early women’s rights. In fact, it was largely due to the successful efforts of agitators like Garrison that political parties began to gradually and tentatively accept women’s rights and suffrage.152

Like Garrison, Phillips believed that party politics had been corrupted by the shadow of slavery. Phillips, however, was a contradiction, for he participated in Garrisonian “non-resistance,” but he also felt strongly that political avenues could be used to create legitimate social change. He refused to vote for any lawmaker who had to swear allegiance to “a government that upheld slavery” but was adamantly committed to women’s rights and suffrage. As a lawyer, abolitionist, and women’s rights advocate, Phillips had the ability to make “every difference of opinion into a moral confrontation.” Phillips was not a party man, but he maintained connections with prominent Republicans like United States Senator Henry Wilson, United States Senator and author of the Fourteenth Amendment Charles Sumner, founder of the

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Republican Party Salmon Chase, and Special Agent of the Treasury Department Albert Browne. However, Phillips’ name is inextricably linked with the Republican Party because of his support of their efforts to enfranchise black men before white women in the Reconstruction era. The debate over the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments and the subsequent split of the suffrage movement is often blamed on Phillips, who pragmatically proclaimed that it was “the negro’s hour” and women would have to wait their turn for a federal amendment. In 1866, Phillips cautiously advised Elizabeth Cady Stanton to end her “petition campaign” aimed at Republicans in Congress, suggesting that it could have a negative impact on the movement. His ability to foresee the political problems and the necessary solutions made Phillips an important contributor to the movement. Furthermore, his understanding of the political climate and his willingness to act accordingly set an important precedent for the suffrage movement by encouraging suffragists to mold their activism around the party politics. Despite his own lack of involvement with the Republican Party, Phillips’ belief that politics could achieve good was reflected in the later years of suffrage activism.\textsuperscript{153}

In contrast, Douglass evolved from a “radical” abolitionist into a Republican “party man.” This was due in large part to his strong relationship with President Abraham Lincoln. According to historian James Oakes, Lincoln was a “lifelong politician” who struggled to find a balance between practical politics to preserve the Union and a fierce hatred of slavery as an institution. As a student of Garrison, Douglass was highly critical of Lincoln’s pragmatism in the early days of his activism but over time began to understand and “appreciate the constraints

that American democracy placed on antislavery politicians.” This pragmatism also impacted his support for women’s rights. By the end of his life, Douglass was a loyal and committed member of the Republican Party and used his political connections to work for the suffrage. Furthermore, he believed that other suffragists should also support the Republican Party. When questioned by suffragist Olympia Brown on his support of the Republican Party, Douglass responded: “the Republican Party is in favor of enfranchising the negro and is largely in favor of enfranchising woman. Where is the Democrat who favors woman suffrage?” For Douglass, the issue of supporting the Republican Party was a simple one for suffragists, because “all the Democrats voted against it.”

Thomas Wentworth Higginson “had not thought of a career in politics” to bolster his support of abolition and women’s rights. Nevertheless, that is exactly what the radical minister did and, at the age of twenty-five, began his political career when he ran as a Free Soil candidate for the United States House of Representatives. He did not win the election, but his early entry in the political arena shaped his future involvement in the Republican Party by making him see the value of participating in the political machine. As a former colonel with the Union Army during the Civil War, Higginson was uniquely suited to politics. During the Reconstruction era, Higginson, like the other male suffragists in this case study, aligned with Republicans to advocate for the ratification of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. Higginson, who considered himself an ardent supporter of suffrage, felt that “nothing would be gained for women” if these amendments were defeated. He remained a supporter of prominent Republicans like Grant, arguing that it would prevent Southern lawmakers from returning the region to one of

white supremacy but also open the possibility of women’s suffrage. In 1872, Higginson ran as a Republican for the Massachusetts state legislature and won the seat. During his two-year term as a state lawmaker, Higginson used his seat to advocate for women’s suffrage, but his efforts were not successful. In 1893, Higginson wrote to Stone, proclaiming that the Republican state of Massachusetts may provide “a momentary advantage” for women’s suffrage. However, his optimism was short-lived and he eventually grew frustrated with the friction within the suffrage movement as well as the American political system. What is especially significant about Higginson’s connection with the Republican Party is that it represents a shift in how women’s rights advocates began to connect women’s suffrage to party politics. During the twentieth century, male suffragists further expanded the relationship between the suffrage movement and political parties and began actively using the political machine to advocate their cause. Some male suffragists, like Higginson, found solidarity for suffrage in other political parties.\(^{155}\)

Of all the nineteenth century men, Blackwell was the one who actively created alliances between the Republican Party and women’s suffrage in the post-Civil War era. Unlike his fellow suffragists, Blackwell was politically active from the beginning of his commitment to women’s rights. Historian Leslie Wheeler argues that Blackwell was “crucial” to the successful election of Salmon Chase, famed abolitionist and future founder of the Republican Party, as governor of Ohio in the years before the Civil War. The post-war years turned Blackwell into a “loyal Republican,” and he began to advocate for suffragists to frame voting rights as “a purely political question” rather than one of equality. Despite his party loyalty, Blackwell did not hesitate to take Republican leaders to task for their “failure” to support women’s suffrage on a federal level.

and continuously worked to get suffrage included on the national platform. He was equally quick to admonish radical suffragists like Stanton and Anthony for their impatience and demands upon the party. In an 1892 letter to Anthony, Blackwell reminded her that it was due to his party loyalty that it became possible for “getting a [suffrage] resolution into the [1872] Republican platform.” Two years later, Blackwell admonished her to be patient and not offend Republican leadership by demanding a “resolution passed by a bare majority, on an implied understanding of support.” Mostly, Blackwell wanted suffragists “of every shade of political opinion” to get involved in working with political parties. Blackwell’s involvement with the Republican Party helped to set the tone for moderate suffragists associated with the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) and later the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). His pragmatism and firm belief that suffragists needed to work within the existing political system made Blackwell a significant ally for the cause.156

Similar to the nineteenth century, women’s suffrage was not an explicitly stated part of the Republican Party’s platform of the twentieth century. The party leadership had previously issued limited statements of general support for women in 1872 and 1876, but that was the extent that party leaders were willing to give to the movement. Republicans chose to bestow upon their women supporters an “auxiliary status” that kept party women loyal without having to fully embrace women’s suffrage. Despite the fact that more Republicans became outspoken advocates of women’s suffrage during the Progressive era, the suffrage movement maintained a policy of

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“nonpartisanship.” Nonetheless, many suffragists, male and female, remained ardent supporters of the political parties, something that concerned NAWSA leaders like Carrie Chapman Catt and Anna Howard Shaw who believed that party affiliations “divided women’s loyalties.” For many social reformers, the Progressive era symbolized a new commitment to principled politics that trumped partisanship. It seemed as if the twentieth century suffragists were following Blackwell’s advice to get a federal amendment for suffrage and align their activism within the framework of a variety of political parties. 

4.1.2 Progressive Party

Perhaps the most popular Republican supporter of women’s suffrage was Theodore Roosevelt, yet it was his support as a Progressive Party candidate that had the greatest influence on the suffrage movement. A consummate politician, Roosevelt “repeatedly remade himself” for political gain despite the criticism he earned from his fellow political elite. Nowhere is this more evident than Roosevelt’s transition from Republican to Progressive. The Progressive Party was a short-lived third party in American history but a critical one for woman’s rights and suffrage. Established by Roosevelt in 1912, the Progressive Party was an extension of the Republican Party in many ways. During the early twentieth century, progressives were having a strong influence on the political party system, and the Republican Party split into factions over key reform issues, including the direct election of senators, income tax, and ballot initiatives and referendums. Roosevelt sought a third presidential term and wanted to distinguish himself from conservative Republican William Taft with whom he disagreed on these issues. Furthermore, Roosevelt recognized the growing political power of women voters in the west and the

157 Gustafson, Women and the Republican Party, 55, 94, 61, 86, 93.
increasing popularity of the suffrage movement nationwide. As a result, the Progressive Party became the first political party to explicitly state support for women’s suffrage as part of the party platform.\footnote{McGirr, A Fierce Discontent, 96; Gustafson, Women and the Republican Party, 130.}

In 1912, Roosevelt wrote that it was his hope the Progressive party would become “associated with American womanhood” because of its stance on suffrage. The decision to make suffrage an official issue reflected the growing momentum and popularity of the suffrage movement throughout the nation. Roosevelt always supported suffrage in theory, but his public support of the issue was a pragmatic decision, one that demonstrated his understanding that America’s perceptions of suffrage was changing. The growing number of women voters in western states combined with progressive male suffrage activists in the east comprised a group of potential supporters that Roosevelt could not ignore.\footnote{Theodore Roosevelt to Jane Addams, August 1912, in Morison, ed., The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt, 594-595; Sidney M. Milkis, Theodore Roosevelt, the Progressive Party, and the Transformation of American Democracy (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2009), 161.}

\subsection*{4.1.3 Democratic Party}

The formation of the Democratic Party is often linked with Andrew Jackson in the early nineteen century, but its origins go back to the post-Revolutionary period Democratic-Republicans. The Democratic-Republicans of the Jeffersonian era favored limited federal government and a strict interpretation of the United States Constitution. As the party began to decline in power, prevailing views regarding the “natural superiority of well-born and well-bred gentlemen” like the founding fathers began to evolve into a slightly more inclusive argument about who could participate in voting. As westward expansion brought new states into the union and increased the number of registered voters in the nation, the Democratic-Republican Party
split into regional factions. As a result, and with the support of the South and West, Andrew Jackson won the popular vote in the Election of 1824, but an electoral college loss sent the decision to the House of Representatives where John Quincy Adams was chosen to be president. In 1828, Andrew Jackson won the presidency and became the official leader of the Democratic Party. His presidency is referred to as the “Age of the Common Man” or “Jacksonian Democracy” because of the president’s appeal to non-elites and the expansion of white male franchise during his presidency. However, Jackson was not a supporter of abolition or women’s rights, and, since both reforms were inextricably linked during the nineteenth century, very few Democrats supported the idea of expanding voting rights to women. Prior to the Civil War, Southern whites’ fears regarding abolition made the Democrats the de facto party of white supremacy. After the Civil War, Democrats worked to keep African-Americans from exercising their new political rights. Furthermore, nineteenth century Democrats viewed women’s rights and suffrage advocates as gender traitors out to corrupt Southern womanhood and encourage miscegenation.\(^\text{160}\)

Democrats of the early twentieth century were just as committed to white supremacy and racial purity as those of the nineteenth century. The party was even less inclined to support women’s suffrage than the Republican Party because of deeply entrenched ideas regarding Southern womanhood. While the Democratic Party of the twentieth century did not have the large numbers of suffrage supporters in its ranks, there were some Democrats who advocated for the cause. A significant number of them did so out of racial concerns related to long-held fears of black male sexuality and brutality towards white women. However, a few Democrats felt the

party more closely represented the “common man” spirit espoused by party founder Andrew Jackson. These Democrats embraced the Progressive ethos for reform and created a new vision of American government that would go on to include programs like Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal and Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society.  

George Creel became one of the Democratic Party’s most visible advocates of women’s suffrage. As a reformer, Creel was an opportunist who worked with any party on his ever-shifting interests. Creel believed that it was necessary for citizens to use political parties to create change in society. In his autobiography, Rebel at Large, Creel wrote that he was “wholeheartedly convinced that the Democratic Party was . . . more likely to stand for human rights” than the Republicans. While Creel collaborated with Republicans and Progressives on ending political corruption, he remained a Democrat “by inheritance.” In Creel’s mind, the best way to end political corruption was to give women the vote and he felt certain that the Democratic Party was the avenue of success. Creel was critical of the NWP’s policy of holding the party in charge of the government responsible for the failure of suffrage, accusing the leaders of “betraying women voters.” Eventually, Creel would leave the suffrage movement to become the head of the Committee on Public Information, Woodrow Wilson’s propaganda machine during World War I. His decision to work as the lead “censor” elicited surprise among suffragists, for his work as a muckraker seemed to be the “very antithesis of the idea of censorship.” As a member of the Wilson administration, Creel worked to silence the White House picketers of the NWP and encouraged Wilson to ignore the suffragists. His transformation from ally to silencer of suffrage during World War I is less an indication of a change in his beliefs on suffrage and more of a reflection of the divisive impact of the war on the

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Howe, What Hath God Wrought, 100; Wheeler, New Woman New South, 4; Wilentz, Rise of American Democracy, 10; McGerr, A Fierce Discontent, 316.
suffrage movement. Nonetheless, before Creel became affiliated with the Wilson administration, he was an outspoken advocate of suffrage within the Democratic Party.  

Like Creel, George Foster Peabody was a lifelong Democrat and an avid supporter of ending corruption in party politics. Unlike Creel, the Georgia native never wavered in his devotion to the cause and actively used his political connections to promote suffrage. During his formative years, Peabody joined the Young Men’s Democratic Club. As an adult, he became President of the Brooklyn Democratic Club in 1894 and Treasurer of the National Democratic Party in 1904. In 1909, Peabody met Woodrow Wilson, and the two men established a close friendship and remained “at all times in close touch.” During Wilson’s administration, the friendship continued, and the president repeatedly wrote Peabody for suggestions, advice, and as thanks for the support of his “dear friend.” In one such letter, Wilson assured Peabody that his “radicalism” did not offend him and that it was Peabody’s “mere frankness of thought which does you the most honor.”

It is significant that Peabody and Creel, two male suffragists, had such close ties to President Wilson. Because of the White House picketing controversy and the growing political pressure to reward women for their wartime loyalty, Wilson would eventually support a federal amendment for suffrage in 1919. However, his transition from anti-suffragist to suffrage supporter could also be due to the prominent male suffragists like Peabody and Creel in his circle. By supporting women’s suffrage, men like Creel and Peabody were a different kind of

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163 Louisa Ware, George Foster Peabody (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 91, 30, 31, 60, 126, 61; Woodrow Wilson to George Foster Peabody, 16 October 1912, George Foster Peabody Papers, Library of Congress; Woodrow Wilson to George Foster Peabody, 26 March 1912, George Foster Peabody Papers, Library of Congress.
Democrat, one who was not afraid of reform and redefined “the gendered boundaries of the political world.” After years of suffragists forming alliances with the Republican Party, it is ironic that a Jacksonian-style Democrat would successfully promote a federal amendment and the subsequent ratification of women’s suffrage.\textsuperscript{164}

4.1.4 Independent and Bipartisan

Like Garrison and Phillips in the nineteenth century, some twentieth century male suffragists chose to remain independent of political parties and work with any supporter of the cause regardless of affiliation. Despite the fact that Progressivism is often linked to a “denigration of individualism,” male suffragists embraced the individual choice that allowed for mobility between political parties. Nowhere is this more evident than in the suffrage movement, which actively encouraged an avoidance of partisanship in order to give the movement a moral foundation. As a result, the Progressive era witnessed more male suffragists willing to collaborate across a political spectrum, while remaining independent on an individual basis. James Lees Laidlaw represents one example. As a businessman in New York City, Laidlaw had strong ties to the Republican Party. However, he disapproved of the Republicans for failing to support suffrage outright. Likewise, Laidlaw’s wife, Harriet, described him as being “very much down on the Democrats” for the same reason. As president of the Men’s League, Laidlaw worked with prominent Democrats like Creel and Peabody, but he also maintained close relationships with Republicans like Jeanette Rankin, the first woman to be elected to serve in the United States Congress. Laidlaw understood the need for pragmatism in politics and, on the eve

of World War I, encouraged Rankin to vote for the war so as not to damage the cause of suffrage with members of both parties. Laidlaw also donated money to campaigns that he felt benefitted the cause of suffrage, such as Ben Lindsey’s 1916 re-election for Denver judge, to which he wrote a check for one hundred dollars.¹⁶⁵

Ben Lindsey was born a Democrat and raised to believe that Republicans were “the embodiment of evil.” As a young lawyer active in Denver political campaigns, Lindsey came to the realization that “the Democrats were not much better.” Nevertheless, he remained loyal to the party of his youth, convinced that reform could occur from within. Year later, Lindsey became a Denver judge and worked hard to tackle reform and corruption in the court system of Colorado’s largest city. This earned him no shortage of political enemies, even from his own party. In 1904, Democrats, motivated by their own party leadership, failed to re-nominate Lindsey for judge. He became a Republican, for he had begun to “cultivate friendships within the liberal faction” of the party that also wanted political reform. Lindsey won his 1904 re-election in a bipartisan victory, but the experience taught him a valuable lesson about partisan politics and he converted into a political independent, convinced that it was the best way to avoid the “corrupting influences” of both political parties. Despite his independency, Lindsey remained connected with prominent members of the Democratic and Republican Parties, including Creel and Roosevelt, respectively. Like Laidlaw, Lindsey’s political connections made him an important public figure for the suffrage movement. Though he was leery of partisanship, his experience as a judge made Lindsey a pragmatic participant in working with all political

parties on the issue of suffrage. In a letter to Carrie Chapman Catt, Lindsey remarked that he felt suffragists needed to be a “non-partisan force” and work with any advocate of suffrage regardless of political affiliation. Laidlaw and Lindsey’s willingness to focus on issues rather than party made them both significant public supporters and advocates of the movement.\footnote{Charles Larsen, \textit{The Good Fight: The Life and Times of Ben Lindsey} (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1972), 21-22; Ben Lindsey, \textit{The Dangerous Life} (New York: Horace Liveright, 1931), 17; Larsen, \textit{The Good Fight}, 61-63; Ben Lindsey, \textit{The Dangerous Life}, 17; Ben Lindsey to Carrie Chapman Catt, 8 March 1920, Ben Lindsey Papers, Library of Congress.}

\subsection{Socialist Party}

At the turn of the century, socialism was not a new political movement. Since the publication of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels’ \textit{Communist Manifesto} in 1848, social reformers have aligned with socialism in order to create a vision of “equality through collectivism.” Higginson was the only nineteenth century male suffragist to embrace socialism. At the age of eighty-three, he co-founded the Intercollegiate Socialist Society with Upton Sinclair and Jack London in 1906. However, Higginson was a rarity among the nineteenth century reformers, who preferred the traditional partisan politics to more radical ideology. During the Progressive era, socialism rose in popularity because of the perceived corruption of the traditional political parties, “evils” of big business, and unchecked abuses of laissez-faire capitalism. The Progressive era was an experiment in creating “a limited form of socialism,” and, with the rise of organized labor and anti-trust politics, more Americans advocated for socialism as a way of halting the exploitation of people and resources. Whether one was influenced by the fear of disintegrating values, social injustice, or utopian dreams, socialism provided an outlet for many
political outsiders who were not content to simply reform American society but wanted to drastically remake it.\textsuperscript{167}

Max Eastman was drawn to socialism because it “offered a method for revolutionary change.” He felt called to it because of “strong disgust” and “disillusionment” with middle-class America. As a socialist, Eastman believed that American democracy had failed and that only when women had the vote would the nation truly live up to its ideals. The radical environment of Greenwich Village transformed Eastman from a male suffragist into a male feminist and socialist. As a result, Eastman believed that by “emancipating” both women from patriarchy and America from capitalism, men would become similarly “free” from societal constraints and pressures. As previously discussed in Chapter Three, Eastman was editor of the radical socialism publication, \textit{The Masses}, which monthly tackled controversial issues of labor reform, birth control, and sex radicalism. He was also a member of the radical feminist group, Heterodoxy, along with his sister and fellow male suffragist Creel. Militant suffragists associated with the NWP (His sister, Crystal, was a member and leader of the organization.) embraced Eastman because of his radicalism. However, the moderate and conservative suffragists shied away from any individual associated with socialism because of the negative press they earned. In July of 1912, the \textit{New York Times} wrote a scathing article about a proposed New York suffrage parade, connecting the newly formed Men’s League to socialism and claiming that “Socialists . . . will make up the rank and file of the Suffragist parade.” Movement leaders realized that socialistic associations posed a threat not only to the movement as a whole but also to the successful election of Roosevelt, the first presidential candidate to openly support

suffrage. Eventually, Eastman left the Men’s League to focus on work for the Socialist Party. In 1917, Wilson and his allies in Congress passed the Espionage Act, a law that penalized anti-war statements and behavior with sentences of up to twenty years in prison. As an outspoken proponent of socialism, Eastman was indicted under this act, proving that moderates and conservative suffragists had been right in their hesitancy to embrace him as part of the movement.¹⁶⁸

Like Eastman, W.E.B. Du Bois joined the Socialist Party and his radicalism was a double-edge sword for suffragists, many of whom “took advantage of the racist agenda [of the South]” to expedite progress in their own movement. While suffragists recognized that Du Bois’ network of black and white activists could be useful to the cause, his radical vision of a future for blacks and whites that promoted equality proved to be too provocative to warrant an alliance with the black intellectual. It is worth noting that not all white suffragists felt this way. For example, fellow male suffragist Peabody frequently corresponded with Du Bois on issues of black education and the development of black colleges and universities. Settlement house worker and suffragist Jane Addams was also a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and worked closely with Du Bois as part of the organization.¹⁶⁹


As an African-American, Du Bois identified as a socialist because he felt the party “rang truest on the race question.” For many in the black community, the Socialist Party provided a “revolutionary ally” for addressing issues of systematic racism, disenfranchisement, the rape of black women, and the lynching of black men. Furthermore, Du Bois’ socialism exposed him to “black left feminism” and created an understanding of gender equality that differs from the traditional “masculinist vision of black liberation.” However, during the Progressive era, Du Bois’ official relationship with the Socialist Party was short-lived. In 1912, he resigned from the party to support Woodrow Wilson on the premise that the Democratic candidate would publicly support African-American rights. Wilson did not keep his end of the bargain, a fact which angered Du Bois and pushed him further to the margins of radical leftist politics. Du Bois remained committed to socialist ideas throughout his lifetime, eventually becoming a member of the Communist Party in 1961.¹⁷⁰

To further complicate the relationship between suffragists and socialists, America’s involvement with World War I ushered in an atmosphere of intolerance for socialism. As a result, male suffragists affiliated with the Socialist Party, such as Eastman and Du Bois, were often more problematic than immediately beneficial to the cause. Nevertheless, their political activism was important for two key reasons. One, their political activism demonstrated the diversity of partisan alignments that comprised the suffrage movement in the Progressive Era. Second, just as the radicalism of activists like Garrison pushed society to embrace a more

moderate women’s rights platform in the nineteenth century, the radicalism of socialists like Eastman and Du Bois made it possible for Americans to accept the more conservative arguments made by the other twentieth century male suffragists. In the end, their political activism mattered because it made women’s suffrage possible.171

4.2 Suffrage Organizations

Nineteenth century women’s rights advocates learned how to organize a movement from the abolitionists, who provided a setting for the growing demand to “liberate the woman.” Abolition remained the primary focus of reformers prior to the Civil War, and organizations exclusively dedicated to women’s rights did not exist. Suffragists, male and female, worked together within abolition organizations, for both causes “nourished and strengthened each other.” After the Civil War, organizations for abolition dissolved or transferred their focus to civil rights. As the “woman question” became part of the broader national debate on citizenship and voting, organizations specifically designed to support women’s rights and suffrage were created to draw greater attention to the cause. Initially, these organizations were comprised of men and women working collaboratively to achieve the common goal of voting rights. However, the suffrage schism that occurred surrounding the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendment debate fundamentally altered the relationships between male and female suffragists and led to the creation of gender-segregated organizations like AWSA and NWSA, both of which would play an important role in defining male suffragism at the turn of the century.172

171 McGerr, A Fierce Discontent, 305.
While nineteenth century male suffragists often worked in partnership with women within the same organization, twentieth century reformers worked outside but in collaboration with the female-run groups. Male suffragists created their own organizations in the hopes of using their masculinist privilege to generate support for the suffrage movement. The Progressive era was a period of great social reform with a “stunningly broad agenda” that encompassed a number of areas private and public. However, Progressive era reformers also tended to be more conservative in their gender roles than the nineteenth century activists. This conservatism is reflected in the formation of gender-segregated organizations like NAWSA and the Men’s League for Women’s Suffrage (MLWS). As more men and women participated in the national social reforms of the twentieth century, the need for greater diversity within social movements like suffrage became increasingly evident, and collaboration between the sexes would once again be pivotal to the success of the movement.  

4.2.1 American Anti-Slavery Society

Founded by Garrison in 1833, the American Anti-Slavery Society (AAS) represented the merging of abolition and women’s rights into a single platform. Though not explicitly a women’s rights organization, the AAS played a fundamental role in the development of the early women’s rights movement by becoming the first organization to openly support gender equality. Garrison’s organization had already developed a notorious reputation for emphasizing racial equality in addition to antislavery, a decision that was further complicated by his willingness to publicly support women’s rights. Garrison strongly believed that both men and women should “answer God’s call” to address the societal ills of the nation, but the decision to admit women as

full members into the AAS was not without controversy. In 1839, the AAS experienced a “schismatic withdrawal” for allowing women to be admitted as “delegates on an equal basis” with men. Despite this setback, the AAS remained a powerful presence in the abolition movement and brought strong women to the abolitionist cause, including reformers like Abby Kelley Foster, Maria Stewart, Lydia Maria Child, the Grimké sisters, Lucy Stone, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. More significantly, many of these individuals were also supporters of women’s rights, for, as Angelina Grimké once wrote, “The investigation of the rights of the slave had led me to a better understanding of my own.” As a result, the AAS created a strong national platform for women’s rights, made female abolitionists and women’s rights advocates into household names, and turned women’s rights into a national movement.¹⁷⁴

The AAS also solidified a foundation of male support for the early women’s rights movement by taking advantage of opportunities to create a permanent and visible male presence that advocated for gender equality. According to historian Michael Pierson, male suffragists challenged traditional notions about the women’s sphere by working with them publicly and, in doing so reframed what it meant to be a man who supported equality in nineteenth century America. In antebellum society, men were encouraged to be independent of influence “either from inside the household or from outside it.” However, in their personal and working relationships, male suffragists demonstrated a new understanding of masculinity, one that was open to influence by the women in their sphere. Therefore, by publicly supporting women’s rights at conventions and meetings and in the press, male suffragists transformed their personal

identities as “patriarchal husbands and fathers” into fearless champions for equality between the sexes.\textsuperscript{175}

The 1840 World Anti-Slavery Convention was a significant event for women’s rights and the beginning of public male support for the cause. Hosted in London, the June convention was organized by the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society to advocate for the “universal Abolition of Slavery and the Slave Trade.” Delegates from every corner of the British Empire were in attendance, as were representatives from French, Dutch, Canadian, and American antislavery organizations. The American delegation was the only one to bring women to the proceedings, a decision which encountered significant “resistance” from the European male delegates, many of whom felt that women had no place in the antislavery movement, much less political conventions. Garrison had been warned ahead of time that “there was no chance” women would be allowed to participate, but he remained determined and optimistic. Upon arriving in London, he was outraged by the actions of the convention and refused to sit in the main section of Freemason’s Hall with the male delegates. Instead, he chose to sit in the gallery with the female delegates, declining to participate in actions that “dishonoured his colleagues.” For the remaining six days of the convention, Garrison and AAS members remained in the gallery, silently drawing attention to the plight of the rejected female abolitionists and the cause of women’s rights.\textsuperscript{176}

Garrison was not the only man who was offended by the decision of the convention committee. Wendell Phillips, along with his wife Ann, attended the convention. Phillips

\textsuperscript{175} Michael Pierson, \textit{Free Hearts and Free Homes: Gender and American Antislavery Politics} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2003), 8, 17, 79.

represented the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society and, at Ann’s request, remained on the floor to advocate for the cause while his wife passed him notes from her seat in the gallery. As an abolitionist, Phillips’ oratory skills made him a star at the podium in America, and he demonstrated those skills by speaking on behalf of the female delegates. Demanding that women be allowed to participate in the convention, Phillips proclaimed, “We stand here . . . to interpret ‘friends of the slave’ to include women as well as men.” Phillips’ initial request was denied, and he continued to speak on behalf of the female delegates throughout the convention. On the final day, he attempted to lodge a formal complaint “in support of women’s rights” but was deprived of the opportunity by the convention committee. Because of their actions, both Garrison and Phillips were barred from the speeches given after the convention, an attempt by the convention committee to squelch any further discussion of the “woman question.” The events that took place at the 1840 convention had a significant impact on the proponents of women’s rights, both male and female, for they would leave the convention more committed to the cause than ever before. Eight years after that experience, two female reformers who attended the convention would make it their mission to create a women’s rights convention in America. Their names were Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and the location of the convention was Seneca Falls, New York.  

Though the AAS did not host official women’s rights conventions, members supportive of the cause attended a number of independent conventions in the years preceding the Civil War. In 1848, four women reformers, including Stanton and Mott, organized the first ever women’s rights convention in the world. They did so in their hometown of Seneca Falls, a city that,

according to historian Sally McMillen, was “situated in the heart of an area that was on fire with various reform movements.” On July 11, 1848, an announcement for the convention was posted in the local paper, the Seneca County Courier, stating that the meeting would “discuss the social, civil, and religious condition of the rights of women.” Because of its location in upstate New York and organized at the last minute, neither Garrison nor Phillips were able to attend the convention. However, it was not without male supporters, for on the first day, forty men attended the opening session. Stanton and organizers were surprised by their attendance but allowed the men to remain for the first day of the convention provided they were willing to “listen rather than talk.” On the second day, men were allowed to participate in the discussions and debates. 178

Though originally designed to be a convention for women, the two-day event hosted three hundred women and men. Despite being organized by female reformers, Lucretia’s husband and AAS member, James Mott, presided over the conference because it was considered inappropriate for women to lead a mixed audience meeting. Another important man who attended Seneca Falls was Frederick Douglass. A long-time supporter of women’s rights, Douglass advertised the convention in his paper, The North Star, and published accounts of the proceedings in the days that followed. Douglass’ attendance at Seneca Falls was crucial for another reason. Amid discussion and adoption of the “Declaration of Sentiments,” Douglass encouraged the attendees to approve Stanton’s controversial platform that would include suffrage as part of the campaign for women’s rights. For Douglass, as a former slave, the arguments for withholding suffrage for women sounded eerily similar to those used to deny African-Americans

their rights. He could not, in good conscience, argue for anything less than full equality.

Douglass proclaimed in the July 28 edition of *The North Star* that, by supporting women’s suffrage as well as women’s rights, men were “standing up . . . on the watch-tower of human freedom.” Douglass’ support was significant, and, at the end of the convention the suffrage platform was included in the “Declaration” along with the signatures of sixty-eight women and thirty-two men. Despite the successful creation of a suffrage platform in the “Declaration,” the resistance of the convention attendees, as well as societal attitudes towards women’s rights, demonstrated that further work on the issues were necessary. Nonetheless, the Seneca Falls Convention was important because it forced newspapers that had previously overlooked or outright ignored women’s rights to pay attention.¹⁷⁹

Two years later, the first National Women’s Rights Convention was held in Worcester, Massachusetts. The 1850 Convention emerged out of an AAS meeting held in Boston earlier that year where Lucy Stone, Abby Kelley Foster, and Paulina Wright Davis decided to create a formally-recognized movement for women’s rights. Garrison, Phillips, and Higginson all supported the decision to create the convention and affixed their signatures to the call. In contrast to Seneca Falls, which had been an impromptu and locally-based meeting, the Worcester meeting was larger and more publicized in the days that proceeded the convention. The Worcester meeting was significant because it was directly linked with the AAS, which brought nationally-recognizable men to the event, including Garrison, Phillips, Higginson, and Douglass. It was also important because, from the very beginning of the convention, female reformers argued about whether to blame men for the disenfranchisement of women or to include them in

the movement. Stanton, Mott, and Susan B. Anthony advocated for a radical approach that, in the words of Mott, “did not mince words about the responsibilities of men for the injustices suffered by women.”

In contrast, moderate reformers like Stone and Davis called for the creation of a movement that would “appeal to [man’s] sense of justice.” Phillips argued for gender neutral language in an attempt to find a compromise between the rhetoric of the radicals and the moderates. While the radical perspective was covered by the *New York Tribune* with a degree of condescension, Phillips’ efforts to create conciliation between the two points of view was treated with respect. “Mr. Phillips remarked that he felt interested in this movement,” stated the *New York Tribune*, for “He did not think all the guilt of these wrongs to which women are subjected rested on Man.” Phillips gave his most famous speech on suffrage at the Worcester Convention, entitled “Shall Women Have the Right to Vote.” Suffrage historians typically attribute the split between abolitionists and suffragists to the Reconstruction era debate on black male suffrage, but the Worcester Convention demonstrates that these factions formed well before the post-Civil War period. Furthermore, the convention debate on gender roles demonstrates why men were necessary for the movement, for they recognized the important need for compromise and patience in the long struggle for equality.

Additional women’s rights conventions followed the Worcester meeting in the years leading up to the Civil War, including conventions in cities such as Philadelphia, Cleveland, New York City, and Syracuse. Each of the men in this case study attended women’s rights

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conventions off and on during the decade leading up to the Civil War. Garrison, Phillips, Douglass, and Higginson were regular participants and speakers. In 1853, Blackwell made his women’s rights debut at the women’s rights convention in Cleveland. The presence of these men at these conventions demonstrated the level of their commitment for women’s rights. While female suffragists admired the men for their stance on women’s rights, journalists often criticized them, for the general press was not sympathetic to the cause of women’s rights or the men who supported the movement. In 1852, the *New York Herald* published an observation of the men who participated in the National Woman’s Rights Convention held in Syracuse, New York, stating, “the majority . . . of them ought to wear petticoats.” Despite the ridicule they experienced, male suffragists like those in this case study continued to publicly support women’s rights and gave the movement a much-needed visibility and legitimacy by attending these conventions and explaining their reasons for supporting the cause.182

4.2.2 *American Equal Rights Association*

Women’s suffrage activism was limited during the Civil War but was renewed amid the post-war debate on slavery, citizenship, and voting rights. Initially, male and female women’s rights advocates worked together to promote both the rights of African-Americans and women through the auspices of the American Equal Rights Association (AERA). Formed in 1866, the organization lasted three years before finally succumbing to the political pressures within the movement regarding the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. Male suffragists like the ones in this case study felt that Reconstruction of the South could not be achieved without black male

suffrage. In 1865, Phillips infamously remarked that it was “the negro’s hour,” a statement that Stanton and Anthony considered a slap in the face from a friend and supporter of women’s rights. Like Phillips, Garrison had worked too hard as an abolitionist to see African-Americans forced back into a new, disguised form of slavery, something many abolitionists feared would occur should the Fourteenth Amendment fail to be ratified. Despite being disappointed with the insertion of the word “male” into the proposed law, Garrison felt it was important to secure a victory for the freedmen. For Douglass, the amendment debate was one of life or death for African-Americans in the South, who were battling increased racial violence at the hands of the Ku Klux Klan and Southern whites who were attempting to maintain white supremacy. In contrast to Stanton and Anthony, who angrily argued that black men were too ignorant and uneducated to vote before women, the men in this case study, as well as female reformers like Stone, felt that it was more practical to work for one reform at a time.\footnote{Flexner and Fitzpatrick, \textit{A Century of Struggle}, 136; Wendell Phillips, “American Anti-Slavery Anniversary,” \textit{Anti-Slavery Standard}, 13 May 1865; Mayer, \textit{All on Fire}, 609; Foner, ed., \textit{Frederick Douglass on Women’s Rights}, 29.}

As a result of the rising tensions, very little effective activism occurred for women’s rights and suffrage, making AERA an organization in name only. Despite the rancor that existed towards them, AERA men continued to publicly support women’s rights. In 1867, Blackwell and Stone traveled to Kansas for a ratification campaign and attempted to have the word “male” removed from the referendum. Stanton and Anthony followed, choosing to align with the notorious George Francis Train, a man whose “presence as an advocate of woman suffrage was enough to condemn it.” The infighting between AERA members contributed to a failure to remove the offending word from the amendment. In 1869, AERA held a convention to discuss suffrage. Phillips presided since Garrison began to take a less visible role in the movement.
Unable to get support for a federal women’s suffrage amendment and feeling betrayed by their former allies, Stanton and Anthony separated from AERA to form the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), which operated on the basis of “women first” and refused to allow men to participate in the organization. The short-lived AERA dissolved shortly after the split of the movement and a new era of suffrage activism began.\(^{184}\)

4.2.3 **American Woman Suffrage Association**

Founded in the same year as NWSA, the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) was created in response to the growing discontent in the movement and as an alternative to the radicalism of Stanton and Anthony’s anti-male mentality. As an organization, AWSA promoted women’s suffrage through the creation of state auxiliaries by hosting national conventions, publishing pro-suffrage materials, and distributing petitions. Stone, Blackwell, and other men formed AWSA to advocate for a federal suffrage amendment using collaborative efforts between men and women. As former abolitionists, AWSA members understood that the abolition movement had been most successful when it involved the cooperative efforts of men and women. Therefore, from 1869 to 1890, AWSA worked to advance the suffrage movement with a state-by-state approach, believing that the best way to achieve women’s voting rights nationally was by working one state ratification campaign at a time. In 1869, the new territory of Wyoming adopted women’s suffrage. The territory of Utah immediately followed in 1870, thus giving credence to AWSA’s platform of state-by-state activism. Male suffragists played a pivotal role in AWSA through leadership positions, conventions, and the managing of the

organization’s official publication, the *Woman's Journal*. Despite the fractious nature of the suffrage movement, men continued to publicly and passionately advocate for women’s rights and suffrage in the post-Civil War era.¹⁸⁵

Unlike NWSA, AWSA included prominent men in leadership positions, for as it was written into the constitution that “no distinction on account of sex shall ever be made in membership or in the selection of officers.” AWSA presidents were varied and elected for a term of one year, and, from this, historians can postulate that this was an effort to further distinguish AWSA from NWSA and to prevent the organization from being associated with specific individuals the way that NWSA was associated with Stanton and Anthony. Three of the men in this case study served as president of the organization: Higginson in 1872-73, Garrison in 1876-77, and Blackwell in 1879-80. While Stanton argued that “male presidents” were “terrible humiliations” to the movement, an idea that reflected her prejudices towards the AWSA men, the visible presence of each man in a leadership position proved significant to the movement. Through AWSA, male suffragists served as an important visible presence as leaders of the movement and used their position to advocate for suffrage among lawmakers rather than the general public. The 1870s witnessed a growth of state constitutional conventions that took up the issue of women’s suffrage, which served as a testament to the effectiveness of AWSA’s use of male leadership in appealing to male lawmakers as well as the effectiveness of the pro-suffrage arguments espoused by these prominent men. Furthermore, it demonstrated the

importance of male involvement to other suffragists, mainly Stanton and Anthony, who eventually eliminated the women-only requirement for membership and leaders of NWSA.186

Men’s attendance at annual conventions and meetings helped further the cause. AWSA held many of its conventions in Midwestern cities like Cleveland, Cincinnati, Detroit, and Minneapolis, all of which had a strong base of robust support for both AWSA and women's suffrage. In 1869, Higginson and Blackwell served as convention delegates at the organization’s first official conference in Cleveland. Blackwell continuously played a prominent role in AWSA’s annual meetings and was either a speaker or delegate at practically every convention. Other male suffragists were more sporadic in their attendance, but continued to appear at the occasional meeting and gave visible public support to the cause. As the years progressed and the nineteenth century male suffragists grew older, their activism began to wane, and their attendance at conventions became less frequent. Garrison, Douglass, and Phillips, the early advocates of women’s rights, shared the stage one final time at an AWSA rally in 1873. In the post-Civil War era, Douglass and Phillips focused on working with the Republican Party and the New England Woman Suffrage Association (NEWSA), respectively, rather than engaging in the political quagmire of AWSA and NWSA’s rivalry. Likewise, Higginson grew frustrated with the relationship between suffragists and retired from AWSA in 1884. Despite this decision, Higginson continued to attend the occasional conference, including the 1885 convention in Minneapolis, where he proclaimed “the cause remains the same . . . it is a part of the necessary evolution of a democratic society.” What is truly significant about male attendance at these

conventions was the articulation of ideas that were used to argue in favor of women’s suffrage. Many of these ideas were later published and distributed by AWSA in the *Woman’s Journal,* but they were also used by NWSA and later generations of suffragists who felt that using male voices would benefit the movement.\(^\text{187}\)

As the official organ of AWSA, the *Woman’s Journal* was responsible for promoting the organization as well as advocating different perspectives on women’s suffrage. The *Woman’s Journal* was also the longest-running suffrage periodical in American history. From 1877 to 1884, Higginson served as a co-editor and contributor to the *Woman’s Journal.* In 1870, Garrison was asked to serve as an associate editor, and, though it was a “nominal” position, he wrote a number of articles for the *Woman’s Journal.* However, apart from the occasional contribution, Garrison’s more fervent activist writing was long behind him. In contrast to Garrison and Higginson, Blackwell’s activism was just beginning, and he became an even more outspoken advocate for women’s suffrage through the *Woman’s Journal.* Blackwell’s name was synonymous with the *Woman’s Journal* because of his contributions as both a writer and a co-editor, a post he maintained from the inception of the magazine until his death.\(^\text{188}\)

Overall, the men associated with AWSA played a pivotal role in promoting suffrage as a movement. Historians have treated the period of the split between AWSA and NWSA as a time

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when very little activism on behalf of suffrage occurred. However, the opposite was true. While very little action occurred on the federal level, the male leadership of AWSA made arguments and increased the visible presence of the movement. Such efforts were undercut between 1870 and 1890 by a number of incidents that threatened to sideline the suffrage movement, including: Anthony’s public accusation that Stone and Blackwell lied about being married; NWSA’s acceptance of Victoria Woodhull, a controversial free love advocate and spiritualist, as a proponent of suffrage; and a sex scandal between suffragist Elizabeth Tilton, wife of Theodore Tilton, and famed minister, Henry Ward Beecher. Furthermore, the constant infighting, insults, and public stunts between the two organizations created frustrations among suffragists and contributed to an increase in public apathy regarding women’s suffrage. Suffragists with both organizations quickly realized that something needed to be done in order to preserve the movement for the future.  

4.2.4 National American Woman Suffrage Association

For many years, the split between NWSA and AWSA dominated the movement of women’s rights and suffrage. The two organizations were more likely to argue about methods than work collectively for substantial change, resulting in very little work of lasting value for the suffrage cause. At the same time, the old guard of the movement was disappearing and a new generation of women was becoming involved in the movement. AWSA and NWSA leadership began meeting as early as 1887 to discuss unification of the two organizations, but the process took three more years to bring to fruition. In 1890, the two organizations formed into a single group dedicated to suffrage, the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA).

189 McMillen, Lucy Stone, 197, 200-202, 197, 232.
This merger had two long-reaching consequences for the suffrage movement. First, NAWSA adopted the goal of obtaining a national amendment to its platform despite the fact that the broad American electorate and leadership was not ready to adopt women’s suffrage on a national level. Even though the idea of women’s rights had advanced significantly since the early nineteenth century, women’s suffrage was still perceived by many to be too radical of a reform. Historians describe the period between 1890 and 1912 as the “suffrage doldrums” because of the lack of movement towards winning a national amendment. In reality, activists made progress on the local and state levels, and men were becoming more accustomed to seeing women involved in political reform.\(^{190}\)

The second consequence was that the creation of a single organization would effectively eliminate men from the organized women’s suffrage movement for a considerable time period. Part of this was due to the deaths of the previous generation of male suffragists like Garrison (1879), Phillips (1884), and Douglass (1895). At the turn of the century, only Higginson and Blackwell were still alive, and Higginson maintained such a limited role that he was practically removed from the movement. Suffrage historians typically point to the NAWSA merger as a benefit for the movement because it ended the rivalry between suffragists, but they have not recognized that the merger actually came with costs as well. By eliminating men as key members of the organization, the formation of NAWSA was partially responsible for creating the period known as the “suffrage doldrums,” and the movement would only gain momentum when suffrage women began to collaborate with male counterparts once more. Ironically enough, Blackwell predicted that the merger would bring about this result. In an 1888 letter to his daughter, Alice Stone Blackwell, the male suffragist remarked that caution was necessary and

that the merger could potentially be a “great blow” to collaborative efforts between men and women that had been central to AWSA. Blackwell remained involved in women’s suffrage through the *Women’s Journal* and by attending conventions like the 1895 NAWSA Convention in Atlanta, the first meeting held in the South. However, male influence waned in the years following the merger, and, with Blackwell’s passing in 1906, one of the most important male voices for suffrage was permanently silenced. As a result, male leadership in suffrage organizations effectively disappeared, and new male supporters of suffrage would be limited to supporting suffrage in the world of party politics and from the outside of the movement.¹⁹¹

4.2.5 *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People*

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), founded in 1909 to serve as an advocacy group, evolved as a response to the increased Southern racial violence following the *Plessy vs. Ferguson* case legalizing segregation. The goal of the NAACP was to “ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality” of minorities, particularly African-Americans. Though not the primary goal of the group, women’s suffrage became an integral part of the organizational platform. This was because, in addition to Du Bois, who was a male suffragist, many of the early members of the organization were also suffragists, including Oswald Garrison Villard, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Jane Addams, Josephine Ruffin, Inez Milholland, Florence Kelley, and Mary Church Terrell. Despite the racist reputation the mainstream suffrage movement earned among African-Americans, there were equality-minded whites collaborating with blacks for civil rights at the turn of the century. Many of these

individuals, like their nineteenth century abolitionist predecessors, saw a connected struggle between the experiences of women and African-Americans. Furthermore, these early members were also involved in mainstream suffrage organizations, such as the Men’s League (Villard), NAWSA (Terrell), and the NWP (Milholland). These connections allowed the issue of women’s suffrage to become an unofficial part of the NAACP platform and activism.  

As the Director of Publications and Research and the editor of *The Crisis*, the official journal of the NAACP, Du Bois could influence African-Americans on suffrage. “Every argument for Negro suffrage is an argument for woman’s suffrage,” he wrote in *The Crisis* in April of 1915. Du Bois used his leadership position in the NAACP to “educate” the African-American community on women’s suffrage. In addition to targeting the racism of suffrage leaders, Du Bois advocated for African-American women with the mainstream movement, most notably by petitioning NAWSA to allow black women as members of its organization. In September of 1912, Du Bois devoted this issue of *The Crisis* to a “Woman’s Suffrage Number” that focused entirely on the growing movement. The suffrage issue paid tribute to nineteenth century male suffragists with a portrait of Frederick Douglass as the cover and an article on Garrison’s support of suffrage written by his daughter and included an article entitled “Colored Women as Voters” written by Adella Hunt Logan, which discussed states where African-American women were allowed to vote. In addition, the suffrage issue published a piece by Mary Church Terrell, founder of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), who wrote “for an intelligent colored man to oppose woman suffrage is the most preposterous and ridiculous thing in the world.” In “Two Suffrage Movements,” Martha Gruening remarked “it is strange to see so many [white suffragists] . . . point with pride to the action of Garrison [for his 

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support of women] . . . [and] not Garrison’s lead [on race].” Du Bois published additional suffrage issues of *The Crisis* in April of 1915 and November of 1917. Through the official mouthpiece of the NAACP, Du Bois’ public support challenged the “genuine conservatism” of black men on gender roles, and, by creating a forum for ongoing discussion, he forever linked the organization with the suffrage movement.¹⁹³

4.2.6 *Men’s League for Women’s Suffrage*

The Men’s League for Women’s Suffrage became one of the most important organizations for male suffragists in America. The American organization was founded in 1909, but its origins began in Great Britain and Ireland. The British suffrage movement was much more radical than the American movement in large part because of the patriarchal underpinnings of the monarchy and aristocracy, the established church, and the empire as well as rigid gender roles. Historian Sylvia Strauss suggests that it was this deep-rooted traditionalism that gave birth to a national “treason to masculinity,” which would result in the formation of the Men’s League. As early as the eighteenth century, British progressive arguments for women’s rights crossed the Atlantic and influenced men and women, including Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* and John Stuart Mill’s *On the Subjection of Women*. Mill’s work was particularly important as a male voice stating unequivocally that “women had the right to develop themselves fully as free individuals” because it demonstrated that men could support women’s efforts for greater equality. Additionally, Mill suggested that gender equality

benefitted men as well as women, a radical notion during a time when women were still legally “covered” by their husbands. American abolitionists like Garrison were familiar with Mill and his work. In 1867, Garrison published excerpts of Mill’s work in his own paper, *The Liberator* and later traveled to London and met Mill during his visit. Mill’s work continued to influence male suffragists at the turn of the century, and his words were repeatedly used in suffrage articles, speeches, and documents, including Stanton and Anthony’s *History of Woman Suffrage*.  

As the issue of suffrage grew in prominence in Britain and Ireland, anti-suffrage lawmakers rallied to protect traditional views of womanhood and organized resistance to the movement. In response, male suffragists and suffragettes created their own groups to provide an alternative interpretation of “womanliness” and “manliness.” It was in this political climate that the British Men’s League for Woman Suffrage was formed. Founded in 1907, the Men’s League included a distinguished list of lawmakers, artists, writers, ministers, and military men, including Philip Snowden, Labour Party politician and aristocrat; J. M. Barrie, author of *Peter Pan*; George Bernard Shaw, playwright; Thomas Hardy, poet and author of *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*; Laurence Housman, writer and socialist; Israel Zangwill, author of *The Melting Pot*, and Frederick Pethick-Lawrence, future Labour Party MP in the British Parliament. Members of the Men’s League provided a visible public presence of male supporters for suffrage and used their economic, social, and political connections to further the movement. In a pamphlet, entitled “Why Men Should Work for Women’s Suffrage,” the League stated that its purpose was to “enable men sympathizers” and “concentrate the electoral strength of the movement.” This

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visible and vocal presence of British and Irish men who actively participated in redefining masculinity through activism was hard for men in the United Kingdom to ignore and did not go unnoticed by men in the United States.\textsuperscript{195}

The origins of the American chapter of the Men’s League is a subject of dispute among some historians. In \textit{Gilded Suffragists}, Johanna Neuman claims that the organization was “the brainchild” of Fanny Garrison Villard, daughter of abolitionist and male suffragist William Lloyd Garrison, who encouraged her son to create the organization. However, most historians identify Eastman as the founder of the organization. Eastman himself suggested in his autobiography that he created the Men’s League: “I had stated, at some suffrage rally, that I was going to form such a league.” In 1912, fellow Men’s League member Robert Cameron Beadle wrote an article for \textit{Trend} magazine, in which he proclaimed “the idea of the Men’s League germinated in the mind of one man . . . Max Eastman.” The early days of the movement consisted primarily of “corralling” prominent men for membership and sending out letters of support. According to Eastman, who served as the first official secretary of the group, the initial purpose of the Men’s League was “to exist” without becoming publicly active in the suffrage movement. This decision was because of the ridicule the men experienced in the press. In 1909, the \textit{New York Times} ran a story headlined “Male Suffragettes” and described the organization’s purpose was to destroy “anti-Suffragists like a bomb.” From this decision, historians have inferred that the Men’s League was an organization in name only and not particularly involved in the movement. However, Eastman, not content with simply “sending out letters” and running an

\textsuperscript{195} Strauss, \textit{Traitors to the Masculine Cause}, 221-223, 225; In the British movement, suffragette was used to denote radicals associated with the Women’s Social and Political Union. The term was used for men and women; The Men’s Political Union for Women’s Suffrage, Men’s Federation for Women’s Suffrage, Men’s Society for Women’s Rights, and Male Electors for Women’s Suffrage were also British organizations for male support. However, the Men’s League was the most active and the only organization that crossed the Atlantic to form satellites in the United States; “Why Men Should Work for Women’s Suffrage,” 1912, Suffragette Fellowship Collection; Bolt, \textit{Feminist Ferment}, 71-76.
organization in name only, worked hard to recruit men who were passionate supporters of suffrage and would mobilize other men for the cause.196

Eastman recruited George Peabody, a man whose financial connections with various industries as well as his “generosity made the rest possible.” Moreover, Peabody was reached out to his friends including prominent individuals such as Woodrow Wilson and Andrew Carnegie. As the president of the Men’s League in New York from 1909 to 1912, he used his contacts to support suffrage through the League. Peabody also used his position to urge militants in the NWP and states’ rights suffragists in the South to cooperate with lawmakers in achieving a federal amendment. In a letter to Crystal Eastman, Peabody remarked that he felt it “very injurious” to the movement to threaten lawmakers in Congress with “political disaster” if they did not support suffrage. Likewise, Peabody wrote to southern suffragist Kate Gordon that her selfish insistence that suffrage be ratified by states rather than by a federal amendment was a “serious denial of democracy.” For Peabody, the radicalism of the NWP and the Southern suffragists using racist tactics were one in the same. “I wish that [the NWP] . . . could get this straight in their minds,” wrote Peabody in a letter to suffragist Rose Young, “Their prejudice is a close second to the Southerners.” Peabody’s importance as a networker led to female suffragists meeting important individuals who could give financial support to the movement. Suffragist Kathryn Starbuck recalled that Peabody held lunches and dinners for the movement and would bring together individuals “whom he thought it would be useful . . . to meet.” However, under Peabody’s leadership, the Men’s League remained a small organization with limited public involvement. Despite his strong commitment to women’s suffrage, Peabody’s personal and

professional affairs made it difficult for him to effectively lead the organization in a way that would benefit the cause.\textsuperscript{197}

In 1912, Peabody handed over the reins of the Men’s League to James Lees Laidlaw, whom fellow suffragists described as the perfect fit for this important office. While Peabody remained an Honorary President of the Men’s League, the daily organization and activism was now the responsibility of Laidlaw, transformed the Men’s League from a small state organization into a national association of men who publicly advocated for women’s suffrage. Laidlaw remained the president of the Men’s League until 1920, when the group unofficially dissolved after the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. While historians have suggested that the Men’s League did not alter dramatically the national suffrage movement, nothing could be further from the truth. Under Laidlaw’s leadership, the Men’s League became an active, vital national presence that supported women’s suffrage and helped the movement win a federal amendment.\textsuperscript{198}

Peabody and Laidlaw were not the only men in this case study involved in the Men’s League. Creel and Lindsey also served prominent roles. Creel was the Publicity Director for the Men’s League in New York until becoming part of Wilson’s administration in 1917. As director, he responded to anti-suffragists in articles, editorials, and letters and organized a ten-member committee to assist him with the process. Through his work, the Men’s League fought a publicity war on behalf of women’s suffrage through surveys, petitions, bulk mailings, and

\textsuperscript{197} Eastman, \textit{Enjoyment of Living}, 317; Kathryn Starbuck to Louisa Ware, 8 September 1944, in Ware, \textit{George Foster Peabody}, 191; George Foster Peabody to Crystal Eastman Benedict, 4 March 1914, George Foster Peabody Papers, Library of Congress; George Foster Peabody to Kate Gordon, 26 June 1919, Ibid.; George Foster Peabody to Rose Young, 1 June 1918, Ibid.; Ware, \textit{George Foster Peabody}, 148.

pamphlets. Lindsey joined the Colorado Men’s League and served on the Executive Committee of the National Chapter with other prominent men from California, Oregon, Colorado, Ohio, Illinois, and New Hampshire. The states associated with the Executive Committee were significant because each of them allowed women’s suffrage to an extent. In the case of California, Oregon, and Colorado, women had full voting rights in local, state, and national elections. Ohio, Illinois, and New Hampshire allowed limited voting for women in specific elections pertaining to schools and local issues. The men associated with these states provided visible testimony to the role that women’s suffrage played in their communities and gave them a legitimacy for advocating that female voters would benefit society.199

In recent scholarship, historians have discussed the contributions of the Men’s League in New York City and their efforts at gaining state suffrage in 1917. However, historians have often overlooked the important roles of the National Men’s League, which had a membership of 20,000 men across the country. The National Men’s League was formed in response to the growing number of state Men’s Leagues and emerged out of a need to coordinate male activism. Furthermore, this organization also served a vital role by collaborating with female-led suffrage organizations, such as NAWSA, the NWP, the WPU, and the College Equal Suffrage League. In addition to overlooking the contributions of the National Chapter, historians also dismiss the Men’s Leagues efforts in other states, even going so far as to argue that the New York Chapter was the only active branch of the organization. Men’s Leagues were present and active in New Jersey, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Colorado, and Georgia. Additionally, college-level chapters, most notably the Harvard Men’s League, worked to gain support among the new

generation of educated men who were redefining masculinity by participating in social reform. Through all of these variations of the Men’s League, men actively worked to promote women’s suffrage as a viable aspect of democracy and contributed to the movement in significant ways.\textsuperscript{200}

The Men’s League arranged for prominent men to speak at suffrage events. As president, Laidlaw spoke before Congress in 1912 and urged lawmakers to support a federal amendment for woman suffrage. In 1913, Alice Paul wrote to Laidlaw asking for the National Men’s League to hold a convention in Washington D.C, stating that a convention organized by the Men’s League could “give the impression of great power” to members of Congress. Laidlaw approved the idea of a national convention, but Paul backed out of the arrangement, claiming a full schedule. Laidlaw still attended the convention as a representative of the Men’s League and gave a speech of support. Eventually, the Men’s League held its own national convention in Philadelphia. The Men’s League also organized “one minute talks” in which members were allowed to make a case for suffrage in exactly one minute. At one meeting in January of 1915, Laidlaw explained that seeing women work for suffrage “has been an inspiring thing for me.” Lindsey was another prominent speaker and public representative of the Men’s League. Female suffragists welcomed Lindsey’s presence at their local and state suffrage events, claiming that his “championship would be of great value” to the cause.\textsuperscript{201}


The Men’s League also contributed to the suffrage cause through fundraising. Since its inception, the Men’s League worked to mobilize financial support for suffrage. Most of the leaders of the Men’s League were connected with the world of business and finance, such as Peabody and Lindsey, or connected to wealth through family and friends, such as Creel who had access to money through his famous actress wife, Blanche Bates. Dues for the Men’s League consisted of one dollar, but wealthy members usually contributed more to the cause. Members like Peabody and Laidlaw gave money to female-led organizations and supported their fellow-members with donations. In 1910, the Men’s League hosted a fundraising dinner in New York City. The special guest of the evening was Ethel Snowden, the suffragist, socialist, and prominent wife of Labour politician and British Men’s League member Philip Snowden. Peabody proclaimed the evening a financial success when the organization recruited new members that evening.  

Finally, the most significant contribution of the Men’s League was the visible, public presence of men who supported the suffrage cause. Male suffragists like Lindsey, Peabody, Laidlaw, and Creel used their business and political influence in contacting governors, lawmakers, university leaders, and other prominent officials urging support for the suffrage cause. In 1913, the New York Men’s League began a “blue button” campaign to act as publicity for the organization and generate greater public support among men and women. As part of this

1915; Mississippi Woman Suffrage Association to Ben Lindsey, 18 May 1912, Ben Lindsey Papers, Library of Congress; Knoxville Equal Suffrage League to Ben Lindsey, 13 February 1912, Ibid.  
campaign, Men’s League members wore a blue button complete with the organization’s initials and a “chevron of suffrage in yellow across it.” The New York Times remarked that men who wore the button were announcing “I am a woman suffragist.”

The Men’s League also provided a strong male presence by attending suffrage parades. In May of 1911, the organization participated in a suffrage parade in New York City. The New York Times stated with astonishment that “200 real live men” planned to attend the parade. The Men’s League only had eighty-nine members present and many of them were openly mocked and slandered as they participated in the event. Under Laidlaw’s leadership, the Men’s League presence expanded in suffrage parades. Just one year later, another parade was held in New York City. This time, an estimated one thousand men took to the streets with their fellow female suffragists, and, according to one local paper, “it was not possible to keep track of those who pledged themselves.” Moreover, this particular parade was significant because Theodore Roosevelt was invited to attend and serve as leader of the Men’s League parade division. He declined the opportunity. Female suffragists applauded the participation of the Men’s League, for as one suffragist stated regarding Laidlaw, “Never shall I forget his leading the Men’s Division in the Suffrage parades . . . his courageous response was inspiring.” By 1915, the Men’s League was able to get ten thousand men to attend suffrage parades, a testament to Laidlaw’s organization and leadership skills. New York was not the only state where men were present via the Men’s League. The organization participated in marches and parades in Boston and Philadelphia. However, the most notable participation of Men’s League was in the 1913 Suffrage Parade in Washington D.C., organized to coincide with Woodrow Wilson’s presidential

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inauguration. According to historian Christine Stansell, suffrage parades became symbolic of “modern woman’s determination to hold her ground in a man’s world.” However, these visible representations of men supporting women with activism were necessary for the movement to succeed. The growing number of men participating in parades came at a pivotal time for the movement as momentum towards a federal suffrage amendment accelerated. Furthermore, for male suffragists like the men in this case study, standing up for suffrage meant that they, in the words of Eastman, “had asserted [their] manhood.”

4.3 Conclusion

The activism of male suffragists helped the women’s suffrage movement in many ways. Through their activism, both as individuals and with organizations, historians can gain a richer understanding and appreciation for the ways in which men contributed to the movement. Through their engagement with both political parties and suffrage organizations, male suffragists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries played an important role in creating and maintaining networks that were pivotal for the successful ratification of a federal amendment granting women the right to vote. Though there were some significant differences between the suffrage activism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, male involvement made women’s suffrage a possibility in America.


205 Strauss, Traitors to the Masculine Cause, xiii.
Men of both centuries were active in party politics. Through work with Democratic, Republican, Progressive, and Socialist parties, male suffragists used national platforms to gain greater support for the cause. Nineteenth century men like Higginson, Douglass, and Blackwell were adamant believers aligning with the Republican Party to advance the cause of suffrage while reformers like Garrison and Phillips were more skeptical of partisan politics on the whole. Nevertheless, Garrison and Phillips recognized the need for pragmatism and collaborated with Republican party leadership to achieve their goals for women’s rights. Twentieth century men broadened their support to other political parties including the Democratic Party and the Socialist Party. Ardent Democrats Peabody and Creel believed the Party of Jackson’s belief in “common man” democracy best represented the spirit of women’s suffrage. Socialists like Du Bois and Eastman argued outside the traditional political boundaries, and their radical politics pushed society to accept the more moderate platforms. However, not all twentieth century men believed that aligning with one party was the best way to further the cause. Lindsey and Laidlaw were independents who worked with the entire political spectrum to achieve change.

Men of both centuries joined suffrage organizations. The early women’s rights movement emerged out of abolitionist organizations like the American Anti-Slavery Society, which sustained women’s rights activism prior to the Civil War. Male advocates like Garrison and Phillips welcomed women into reform movements and challenged traditional gender roles by advocating for their ability to speak publicly. After the war, the movement shifted from women’s rights to suffrage and male activism continued to be an important part of the effort. Through organizations like the American Equal Rights Association and the American Woman Suffrage Association, male activism expanded, and arguments were made that collaboration between the sexes would contribute to the success of the movement. Men like Garrison,
Higginson, and Blackwell played an active role in AWSA and helped to increase public support in a time when the movement suffered from internal divisions. However, the eventual merger of the movement into a single, women-only organization eliminated male support from suffrage organizations for a lengthy period of time. The twentieth century ushered in a new era of the suffrage movement, and male activism experienced a rebirth in organizations like the NAACP and the Men’s League. Through their visible public activism, male suffragists were able to broaden support for the movement in very tangible ways and have a lasting impact on American society.
In 1870, Susan B. Anthony wrote to Laura de Force Gordon, stating that “women are too easily made tools of by the men who come into our movement – and every man . . . wants all of us women to follow his lead . . . we know that women must lead our movement.” Anthony’s remark demonstrated one particular view of male involvement in the movement and argued that ownership of the movement should be the sole province of women. The issue of male participation, leadership, and support, whether they should be welcomed and to what extent, largely divided the suffrage movement in America. Suffragists, from moderates to militants, argued about the roles that men should play in the cause. From 1840 to 1920, male involvement in the women’s rights and suffrage movement were not just beneficial but necessary for the creation of a successful movement and ultimate goal of achieving a federal amendment that granted women the right to vote. While historians have written about the ways male suffragists were viewed by the press and the general public, very little has been written regarding the perceptions that female suffragists had for their fellow male activists.206

In the nineteenth century, idealistic women such as Anthony and her reformist companion, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, actively campaigned for limited male involvement in the movement. In contrast, pragmatic activists like Lucy Stone argued for a more moderate position of inclusion and believed in the importance and necessity of male support. These two opposing viewpoints exacerbated an already contentious split between the two key suffrage organizations: National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) led by Stanton and Anthony and American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) led by Stone and fellow suffragists, male and female.

206 Susan B. Anthony to Laura de Force Gordon, 17 November 1870, in Ann Gordon, ed., The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, 6 vols. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 2: 373; For more information on this split, refer to Chapter 1. Original spelling has been preserved for titles.
who wanted male participation and leadership in the movement. This philosophical rift that had long-reaching influence and continued even into the twentieth century, for many of these women also had private reservations, even ambivalence, about men in the movement. However, Progressive era women proved to be more pragmatic than their nineteenth century counterparts on the issue of male support, for, despite their personal experiences with and general resentments towards men of the time, women such as Carrie Chapman Catt, Anna Howard Shaw, and Alice Paul collaborated with prominent men to achieve legislative victory.\(^\text{207}\)

Faced with the “political embarrassment” of a growing anti-suffrage movement composed primarily of women, twentieth century suffragists aligned with prominent male supporters as a matter of practicality more than any notions of equality. Advocates for suffrage in the Progressive era learned quickly what women like Stone realized in the nineteenth century: if the movement were to achieve any kind of political victory, pro-suffrage women needed to align themselves with supportive male allies. Similar to their nineteenth century predecessors, twentieth century women had conflicting views regarding the extent to which men should be allowed to participate in a movement for women’s rights, but they differed because they recognized that men did have a place in the movement. This chapter closely examines the female suffragists’ perceptions regarding male participation in the women’s rights and suffrage movement. By examining how early encounters with individual men shaped female suffragists’ views of men as a whole, how nineteenth and twentieth century reformers differed in their views of male support, both generally and regarding specific reformers, and how British suffragists viewed American men and used them to promote their own movement, historians can gain a

better understanding of not just the roles that men played in the movement but how the women viewed their roles and contributions.\textsuperscript{208}

5.1 Motivations and Influences of Suffrage Women

Though not the central focus of this case study, the female reformers’ early experiences with individual men greatly influenced their views of men as a whole and men as reformers in the movement. Therefore, it is critical to briefly examine the role that fathers, husbands, and fellow reformers had on the lives of key women in the suffrage movement. It would be impossible to examine the motivations and perceptions of every female suffragist involved in the movement. Therefore, this chapter will primarily focus on the perceptions of the key women leaders of the movement: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, leaders of NWSA; Lucy Stone, co-leader of AWSA and co-founder of the \textit{Woman’s Journal}; Anna Howard Shaw, president of National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA); Carrie Chapman Catt, president of NAWSA and the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA); and Alice Paul, founder and president of the National Woman’s Party (NWP). These key women’s experiences provide a snapshot of the types of early experiences women in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries generally had with men. These women are also important because they had the most significant influence on the movement, both in its organizational development and how it was remembered over time. Like the male reformers discussed in previous chapters, the early experiences of the female reformers contributed to an awareness of gendered difference and values in society and politics. As the societal expectations of relationships between men and

\footnote{\textsuperscript{208} Susan Marshall, \textit{Splintered Sisterhood: Gender and Class in the Campaign Against Woman Suffrage} (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 9.}
women evolved from the nineteenth to twentieth century, so, too, did the female suffragists’ views of male involvement in the movement.  

5.1.1 Fathers

Stanton’s ability to “transform each . . . demoralizing experience into a new understanding of women’s wrongs, and therefore, their rights” made her into a key leader of the women’s rights and suffrage movement in America. By all historic accounts, Stanton had every advantage of privilege for a woman in the mid-nineteenth century. However, her father’s frequent laments that Stanton “had [not] been born a boy” had an enormous impact on her and demonstrated that even intelligent men could not be wholly trusted to support the dreams of women. Stanton would hold fast to this inherent distrust of men, who she viewed more as pawns to be used for the cause rather than true collaborators. Similarly, Stone’s understanding of the suffering of women would come from sources closest to her. Upon Stone’s birth, her mother proclaimed, “Oh dear! I am sorry it is a girl. A woman’s lot in life is so hard.” Stone’s childhood was made more difficult by the abuses she suffered at the hands of her alcoholic father: frequent beatings, emotional manipulation, and sexual abuse, all of which contributed to her cynicism about relationships between the sexes and would push Stone into the direction of women’s rights activism. In contrast, Anthony did not experience a father’s disappointment that she had been born a girl in a man’s world nor abuse at his hands, for he frequently “encouraged his very headstrong daughter to follow her own instincts.” At the age of seventy-five, Anthony recalled

Additional female suffragists have been included in the analysis of suffragists’ perceptions of specific men in the case study.
her father’s reaction to her decision to work for women’s rights: “He placed his hand on my head and gently said: ‘If thee must, Susan, thee must.’”

Catt was born to an educated but “ordinary” family in the Midwest and was considered to be both a “nonconformist” and “unusually independent” child. Like Stanton and Stone before her, Catt grew up in a family resistant to women’s equality. Her father in particular, Lucius Lane, was opposed to his daughter going into society as an equal of men. He refused to pay for Catt to attend college, so she earned money by teaching school and working in the library at Iowa State while she attended classes. As an adult, Catt rarely mentioned her father in interviews and personal writings, but his insistence that she conform to traditional gender roles had a strong influence on Catt’s lifetime of activism. Like Catt, Shaw rarely mentioned her father. The one exception was her description of Thomas Shaw in her autobiography: “Like most men, my dear father should never have married.” Though outsiders considered Thomas Shaw to be an affable man, his daughter viewed him as a man who continuously failed his family from the time of her birth until his death. This continuous disappointment with the patriarch contributed to Shaw’s initial hesitancy to accept men as committed members of the movement. In contrast with Catt and Shaw, Paul’s relationship with her father was a less ambivalent one. William Paul frequently remarked: “When there is a job to be done, I bank on Alice.” As a Quaker, Paul supported gender equality in education and supported his daughter’s determination to attend Swarthmore College at the age of sixteen. Though their relationship was not a contentious one, Paul was a stern and stoic figure in his daughter’s life and influenced her strong

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work ethic, as well as her own unemotional nature. As a result, his death in 1902, the spring of her first year at college, “barely caused Alice to break her stride.”

5.1.2 Husbands

Stanton’s marriage to abolitionist Henry Stanton, a man who was traditional on women’s rights intensified her disappointment with men. Like many female reformers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Stanton struggled with the idea of marriage as an institution because of the restrictions it placed on women. Stanton’s dissatisfaction with her own husband would result from Henry’s difficulty earning money for the growing family. Though Stanton entered the union with optimism and hoped for a “collaborative partnership,” her husband’s ambivalence towards women’s rights would contribute to her lifelong disappointment with men and her belief that even the best of men like her father and husband were unable to commit wholly to her cause. Unlike Stanton, Anthony never expressed a desire to marry despite her numerous suitors and was “fiercely proud” of her own independence. Part of Anthony’s viewpoint came from her personal understanding of the intertwined nature of economic and political rights. In 1896, she explained her reasons for never marrying by saying, “no man wanted to marry a woman who had ‘views’ [on women’s rights] . . . and I have taken the consequences [of those views].” Anthony’s desire to remain financially and legally independent

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in her own life contributed to her idea that men’s presence in the movement would hamper women’s abilities to establish an independent movement of their own.²¹²

Because of her childhood experiences, Stone was content with her decision to never marry, for she believed marriage to represent the “loss of identity, the physical revulsion of marital sex, and intellectual suffocation.” The story might have ended here, but Stone met Henry Blackwell, a man who possessed “boundless idealism, a romantic belief in natural human goodness, commitment to reform, [and] a passion for politics.” The cynic fell in love with a hopeless romantic, and their forty-year marriage would become a testament to the power of collaboration between men and women for the cause of women’s rights and suffrage. Though Stone was hesitant to marry, Blackwell convinced her that a union of “perfect equality” would exist between them. In 1853, Blackwell wrote to Stone regarding the Stanton marriage, stating that Elizabeth and Henry were “unsuitably” matched because of their different opinions on women’s rights, and asked Stone if “a woman who ignites herself with a fellow worker” would create a stronger union. Together, Blackwell and Stone made a formidable partnership in the cause and in many ways were responsible for the influencing the continued successful inclusion of men into the movement during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.²¹³

Similar to their nineteenth century counterparts, the twentieth century female activists also struggled to integrate political views of equality with their more intimate relationships with men. As the boundaries between the sexes radically changed at the turn of the century, so, too, did beliefs that women were required to marry. These changes were reflected in a broad decline

of marriage rates that took place from the 1880s to the 1890s that coincided with an increase in women’s activism in public spaces. Though there were suffrage supporters who enjoyed an equal partnership with men in marriage, such as Harriet Burton Laidlaw and, to some degree, Carrie Chapman Catt, many suffragists chose never to entertain the question of marriage, preferring to focus their lives on their activism. One woman who came to this conclusion was Shaw, who decided early in life that “the role of ‘wife’ would never suit her.” Similarly, Paul viewed romantic relationships as a distraction and chose never to marry, a decision that many female activists made because they did not think it possible to have both marriage and meaningful work outside the home.\textsuperscript{214}

In contrast, Catt maintained two marriages that benefited her as an activist. Her first marriage to Leo Chapman, a “reform minded liberal Republican,” only lasted a year due to his death, but it left her a very wealthy and independent widow at the age of twenty-seven. In 1890, she remarried, this time to George Catt, an engineer and women’s suffrage supporter. In contrast to her first marriage, which was more of a business partnership, Catt’s second marriage was a love match, and George Catt encouraged his wife’s activism. In interviews, Catt often remarked that her husband would say, “I am as earnest a reformer as you are, but we must live. Therefore, I will earn the living for two and you will do reform work enough for both.” This partnership would continue until his death in 1904, an event that led to her temporary retirement from NAWSA, which she would resume in 1915, and contributed to a decade of international travel and suffrage work abroad as part of her effort to heal from the loss of her husband. Catt’s second marriage demonstrates the importance of collaboration in a relationship for the success of the

\textsuperscript{214} McGerr, A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 45; Harriet Burton Laidlaw’s marriage to James Lees Laidlaw is discussed in Chapter Two on the motivations of the male reformers; Franzen, Anna Howard Shaw, 31; Zahniser and Fry, Alice Paul, 303.
movement, and like Stone before her, she experienced the ideal situation: a husband who was also a partner in suffrage activism.²¹⁵

5.1.3 Fellow Reformers

Stanton grew up in the presence of reformers like her cousin, Gerrit Smith, who was a follower of William Lloyd Garrison’s radical abolitionists, and was frequently introduced by her father and cousin to individuals who both argued and agreed with the young women’s rights advocate. These early encounters with male reformers resulted in her preference for the company of articulate, educated men. Despite her enjoyment of their company, Stanton would not allow her admiration for men as individuals to influence her distrust of them as a whole. Like Stanton, Anthony grew up surrounded by reformers, such as Frederick Douglass, who influenced her general acceptance of male reformers. However, not all of Anthony’s experiences were golden, for she frequently came face to face with male hostility. This aggression was not limited to reform opponents, for some male reformers opposed women’s participation in the cause. Like Stanton, Anthony never entirely trusted men to fully accept the premise of women’s rights. Like Anthony, Stone experienced backlash from male reformers when she began her career advocating for women’s rights. During one of her lectures, Stone was chastised by abolitionist Samuel May for discussing women’s rights to an antislavery crowd. Stone responded, “I must speak for women.” Despite the occasional critique, Stone took refuge in

support from radical men who challenged traditional gender roles and presented an alternative masculinity by merging antislavery and women’s rights into a single platform of social justice.  

Unlike the reformers of the nineteenth century, the twentieth century female activists experienced greater support from the male reformers of the time period because of the shifting of gender roles that occurred. This was the height of the Progressive era, where men and women collaborated daily to address issues that impacted society, such as temperance, labor, white slavery, child labor, and public vice. During this era, women’s suffrage was growing in popularity, and there was an increased number of men became willing to brave negative labels such as “sissy,” “weak,” and “effeminate” in order to speak out in favor of the movement. Catt, Shaw, and Paul did not suffer from the same type of backlash from male reformers that Stanton, Anthony, and Stone did at the beginning of their careers because women’s activism in the twentieth century had become a new political norm. Shaw experienced more acceptance from male reformers in large part because of the work of reformer James Redpath, who worked to promote women public speakers in the post-Civil War era. As a result, Shaw was able to collaborate with the likes of Redpath, Garrison, and Phillips without having to prove herself worthy enough to speak publicly in the first place. She also worked closely with the Stone-Blackwell family as part of the *Woman’s Journal*, which put her in contact with reformers such as Blackwell and Higginson, both of whom were ardent supporters of women’s rights. Catt also worked closely with men, both as a reformer and writer for newspapers. While she did not experience negativity from her fellow reformers, she did have negative interactions with her male co-workers during her work in newspapers. One case involved a man grabbing her and

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kissing her in the workplace, an event that left Catt determined to help other women challenge male power and oppression. Catt’s primary experience working with male reformers came not only from her own experience of being married to two male reformers but also from her leadership of NAWSA and the IWSA, both of which relied heavily upon male support and collaboration. Her many travels to Great Britain put her in touch with men who were redefining societal notions of femininity and masculinity via suffrage activism in the Men’s League as well as women who collaborated closely with the organization to gain support for the cause.

Likewise, Paul’s introduction to activism came while working with the Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU), the militant branch of the suffrage movement in Great Britain. The WSPU collaborated with the British Men’s League, of which some individuals like Frederick Pethick-Lawrence and Philip Snowden had membership in both organizations. The early experience of twentieth century reformers working in collaboration with men made it possible for them to set aside their personal cynicism of men as a group and recognize the importance of gaining their support and participation for the movement.217

5.2 American Suffragists’ Perceptions of Men and Male Support

After the Civil War, Stanton and Anthony believed that the male reformers who advocated for women’s rights prior to the war would continue to support their efforts to secure a federal amendment for women’s suffrage. While, traditional suffrage historiography describes male reformers abandoning the cause of suffrage in favor of supporting black men, the reality is

that the post-war debate surrounding the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment was a complicated balancing act of political pragmatism. “Negro rights,” “universal suffrage,” and “manhood suffrage” were phrases being thrown about by reformers and politicians alike, all in an attempt to define what citizenship would look like in the new Reconstruction-era America. Stanton and Anthony were especially hopeful that their patriotic support of the war effort would be rewarded with voting rights, for “it was logical . . . that the same men . . . who were debating and expanding the rights of former slaves would give their support to the cause of women as well.” In the end, when men advocated that it was expedient to grant rights to African-American men before white women, Stanton was outraged and argued that this decision only proved that male reformers could not be trusted with the movement. In a 1866 letter to Phillips, Stanton wrote angrily, “What good are our [women’s rights] petitions so long as . . . our anti-slavery priesthood [is] opposed to them.” Anthony also felt betrayed by the actions of male reformers and in June of 1868, she gave a speech to the Union League of America, an African-American association, stating that “The women helped the anti-slavery movement . . . [but] our abolition friends [were] unwilling to help us.” As a result, Stanton and Anthony both used the perceived “failed promises” of male reformers as justification for limiting their participation in the movement.218

In response, Stanton and Anthony formed NWSA, which focused solely on obtaining a federal woman suffrage amendment. The two women reluctantly agreed that men were a necessary evil to the movement and thus “would befriend any man who made woman suffrage

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his top priority.” However, both Stanton and Anthony drew the line at trusting men with leadership of NWSA, for they both believed that male leaders of a women’s rights organization was humiliating and counter-intuitive. They also eschewed relationships with the Republican Party, a move which alienated a number of reform-minded men, such as the ones in this case study, as well as women who had been loyal to the party since its inception. Stanton did not trust that Republican men would support her cause and believed that Reconstruction had become, in her words, “a battle between the sexes, in which all men, black and white, Republican and abolitionist, had joined forces to keep women in their place.” Despite Stanton and Anthony’s insistence that only women could successfully advocate for women’s rights, they aligned themselves with some peculiar characters with deep financial pockets in an effort to further their cause. One such individual was George Francis Train, a white supremacist and self-proclaimed women’s rights advocate. “If the Devil steps forward ready to help,” wrote Stanton in 1867, “I shall say good fellow come on!” To many of the male reformers whom Stanton and Anthony criticized, George Francis Train was just such a devil and this action further divided the relationships between men and women of the movement.219

Anthony’s views on male participation are harder to pinpoint. On the one hand, she remained fiercely loyal to Stanton and NWSA during Reconstruction and willingly aligned herself with the likes of Train. On the other hand, evidence suggests that Anthony was the more pragmatic of the two women and often acted as peacemaker between the leadership and individuals in NWSA and AWSA. In the 1890s, Anthony played a critical role bringing the two organizations together and eliminating the rift between the reformers. Unlike Stanton, Anthony “did not blame [men] for all the inequities of the ruling majority.” Nevertheless, she shared

219 Ginsberg, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, 123, 127; Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Edwin A. Studwell, 20 November 1867, in Gordon, ed., The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, 2: 116.
Stanton’s view that men in the movement were unable to fully commit to the cause of women because, in Anthony’s mind, “even the best of men [cannot] comprehend the humiliation, the degradation, which women suffer because of her disenfranchisement.” Anthony also believed that men should not have active positions of leadership in women’s rights organizations and even mocked and ridiculed suffragists who supported male leaders in the movement. “I have laughed in my sleeves at the national face of [AWSA],” wrote Anthony to Harriet Hanson Robinson in 1880, “Just Lucy Stone with her [male] adorers . . . It is too rich.”

Though Stanton and Anthony tried to assure men in their circles “[we] care what all good men say,” one can only assume that Stanton and Anthony were referring to men who agreed with the NWSA position. In 1882, Stanton wrote that, if NWSA could not find a woman to support their cause, they would have to align themselves with a prominent white man, something she considered to be “humiliating” for the movement. Stanton and Anthony’s actions during Reconstruction would have a lasting and hurtful impact on the legacy of the movement, for it would be tainted as one built off hatred towards men. Eventually, both Stanton and Anthony would soften their attitudes towards men in the ranks, taking time to acknowledge the “steadfast, unwavering devotion” of certain men to the cause. In 1890, Stanton gave an address to the newly merged NAWSA, proclaiming, “We must not forget our devoted friends [male reformers] . . . who with pen and tongue gave the weight of their position . . . to the cause of women, and continue to do so at this hour.” Modern feminists, and even some historians, often applaud Stanton and Anthony for their radical approach to women’s rights, but in reality, they did more damage than good. It was men like Garrison, Phillips, Douglass, Higginson, and Blackwell that

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Stanton and Anthony pushed aside, the same reformers Stone worked with in AWSA, who were ultimately responsible for helping women’s rights and suffrage gain ground in a time when women had few legal rights under the law.\textsuperscript{221}

In contrast to Stanton and Anthony, Stone had very little to say regarding the participation of men in the women’s rights movement. However, though her words on the subject are few, Stone’s actions regarding male participation speak volumes. Stone’s willingness to incorporate men as equal partners in the AWSA stemmed from her personal experiences with acceptance from male reformers like Garrison, Phillips, and Higginson in the early abolition movement. Her decision to work with men in a leadership capacity gained broad support and maintained a critical connection between women’s rights and the Republican Party, one that benefitted the suffrage movement in the twentieth century. In addition, her marriage to fellow reformer Henry Browne Blackwell served as evidence that men and women who believed in women’s rights could maintain traditional relationships in society, an argument that many critics made regarding the changing dynamics of women’s roles and women’s rights. Finally, Stone’s daughter with Blackwell, Alice, would be one of the main proponents of unison between NWSA and AWSA in 1890 as well as an advocate for collaboration between men and women reformers.\textsuperscript{222}

In 1869, Stone wrote to women’s rights supporter James Freeman Clarke, discussing the formation of AWSA as a group that “should be organized by men and women whose names will


command confidence, and win cooperation and sympathy.” In contrast to NWSA, the AWSA allowed men to take positions of leadership alongside women. Reformers such as Henry Ward Beecher, Mary Livermore, William George Curtis, Julia Ward Howe, Garrison and William Lloyd Garrison Jr., Stone, Higginson, and Blackwell all worked side-by-side in the organization. Much of this male support came at Stone’s encouragement for she believed that the presence of men in the movement “added greater legitimacy and prestige -to say nothing of financial support- to women’s efforts.” The ASWA attracted a large membership, including many reformers who had been alienated by Stanton and Anthony’s behavior surrounding the Fourteenth Amendment debate. However, the membership also formed around female reformers who wanted an organization that welcomed male participation, mostly so they could expose their husbands, brothers, sons, and fathers to the ideas of women’s rights. Stone sent a letter to Stanton notifying her of the formation of AWSA, stating that it was an organization for “all of the friends of the cause,” the implication being that men and women needed to work together, for it was “better than either could do alone.”

Stone’s actions demonstrated her commitment to gender equality and to a movement that welcomed “men as equal participants.” Stone and Blackwell worked together to create not just the AWSA but also the Woman’s Journal, which ran from 1870 to 1910. Similar to the AWSA, the leadership of the Woman’s Journal included Higginson and Garrison as guest editors. While Stanton and Anthony were attempting to draw a battle line between the sexes, the AWSA was working collectively to gain broader public support for women’s rights. In the words of Stone,

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the movement “must not [be solely] women’s rights . . . it concerns men, just as much.” Stone and Blackwell both wrote numerous articles and editorials for the *Woman’s Journal*, using the publication to promote a mutual understanding of gender equality and collaboration between the sexes that was revolutionary for its time. In contrast to historians who suggest Stone’s greatest achievement was her oratory skills, her true legacy included her effort to foster an intersectional understanding of women’s rights that applied to men and women. It is a legacy that a later generation of suffragists, including her own daughter, would use to gain support for the passage and ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment.²²⁴

As the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth century, the suffrage movement became more mainstream and experienced a renewed energy because of the growing Progressive movements around the country. Twentieth century activists such as Catt, Shaw, and Paul embraced Stone’s collaborative approach and viewed men as necessary allies for gaining broad support. However, despite the collaborative approach, there were still individuals who argued that women should lead the movement and the organizations, while men remained in the background as supporting players. As the suffrage movement grew in popularity during the Progressive era, women replaced men as the leaders of key suffrage organizations, such as NAWSA and the NWP. NAWSA and the NWP both adopted the policy of collaboration between the sexes, but as one historian put it, the legacy of gender exclusion established by Stanton and Anthony, “would be hard to shake.” The twentieth century suffrage movement, though more collaborative in nature, was also more segregated in terms of organizations and

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membership. Women welcomed male support but insisted on being the ones to lead the movement.\textsuperscript{225}

Shaw, who served as vice president (1892-1904) and president (1904-1915) of NAWSA, trained under the leadership of Anthony. Her natural reticence towards trusting men, born of her personal experiences with her father, became exacerbated while serving as an apprentice to the anti-male rhetoric of Stanton and Anthony in the post-Civil War period. As a result, Shaw understood that some women in the movement were “wary of a male takeover” and felt it important that men be used only for their “names.” In 1908, when approached about the formation of a Men’s League for Woman Suffrage, Shaw expressed concerns that increasing male activism for the movement would lessen the ability for women’s voices to be heard. However, Shaw quickly recognized that, if women were going to gain voting rights, it was important to appeal to the men’s sense of justice and fairness. In 1917, Shaw wrote a speech entitled, “If American Men are Worthy.” In the speech, Shaw encouraged American men not to let a few “objectionable” women prevent what is best for the country. “Let honest men,” Shaw proclaimed, “. . . demand the enfranchisement of women . . . It is American men, not women, who are on trial . . . will you lead or will you follow?”\textsuperscript{226}

Like Shaw, Catt was also a protégé of Stanton and Anthony and served as the president of NAWSA from 1900 to 1904 and again from 1915 to 1920. It was during Catt’s second term as president that the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified to the United States Constitution.


Unlike Shaw, Catt was more pragmatic in her approach. Catt felt it was futile to draw attention to men’s flaws and more important to focus on changing their minds and attitudes towards women’s suffrage. She was also quick to draw comparisons between the behavior of men and women. In 1903, Catt responded to anti-suffrage claims that “bad” women voters were solely responsible for removing a senator from Colorado. “There are more good women in proportion to bad women,” Catt wrote, “there are [more] honest men voters as compared with the dishonest men voters.” Unlike Shaw, Catt encouraged men to participate in the movement and even used them as examples for other men to emulate. She knew well that the success of the movement would depend greatly on gaining male support. In 1917, Catt appealed to the “Men and Women of New York,” asking “Can you not trust the morals of your mother and wife as other men trusted theirs when giving them suffrage?” The brochure was published by the Empire State Campaign Committee, an umbrella organization that connected NAWSA with the New York Women’s Suffrage Party and the Men’s League.227

Catt was not always optimistic about male support, particularly from lawmakers. In a letter to Ida Husted Harper, she bemoaned Congressional lawmakers who dragged their feet on the issue of suffrage, writing that, “If there is any chivalry left, this is the time for it to come forward and do an act of simple justice.” She also grew frustrated with continuous appeals for men to do the right thing and frequently complained privately about the “apathetic ignorant male public.” Her willingness to work with men to achieve her goals should not be mistaken for an enlightened view of changing gender roles. If anything, Catt was remarkably traditional on the

issue of patriarchy, as well as elitist when it came to notions of women’s superiority over men. She showed little to no interest in challenging marriage as an institution as Stone had or embracing sexual liberation like the Greenwich Village feminists of her time. Nevertheless, Catt recognized that key male support provided critical momentum to the movement and did not hesitate to align herself or her movement with them if it achieved the goal of a federal amendment. During her tenure, NAWSA focused efforts on changing men’s minds about suffrage and hoped that gaining more male supporters would convince male lawmakers to support a federal amendment. This became part of Catt’s “Winning Plan,” because she feared that, without male support, the movement would lose steam, and she would not achieve a federal amendment.228

Despite her Quaker background and theoretical view of gender equality, Paul made little effort to collaborate with men beyond what was required to gain a federal amendment. If anything, she viewed them both as tools to use and potential distractions for the women of the movement. In 1913, when the NWP organized “pilgrim marches” to Washington D.C., Paul complained to fellow suffragist and friend Caroline Katzenstein that, much to her disappointment, men were being allowed to participate. Paul was also quick to remind people that suffrage was “a woman’s movement” and that even anti-suffragists would not be attacked by the NWP. However, Paul did not fail to call out men, even supporters, for their faults and unwillingness to play the suffrage game her way. For example, the NWP, under Paul’s authority, targeted the male members of the Republican Party for their lack of support for a

federal amendment. This was done despite the historic connection between the Republican Party and women’s rights since the antebellum period. As a result, female and male supporters of suffrage aligned with the Republican and Democratic parties were outraged that Paul showed little concern about offending potential supporters and lawmakers. Paul’s reluctance to rely on male allies was mostly due to the controversial nature of the NWP’s militant tactics, many of which moderates felt were inappropriate and more likely to make enemies than win friends for the movement. In 1917, Carrie Chapman Catt wrote to Helen Gardner, complaining that “hundreds of men interviewed say they believe in woman suffrage . . . but that they will vote against it as a rebuke to the [White House] ‘pickets’.” Though every movement needs its radicals to push the broader public towards the more moderate position, Paul’s militancy did not win her much support with male suffragists or the women who realized they needed men to win.229

5.3 American Female Suffragists’ Perceptions of Key Men

Despite the private cynicism, ambivalence, and concern regarding male leadership in the movement, female suffragists were quick to recognize, publicly and privately, the key men who supported their cause. In letters, memoirs, histories, and interviews, these women paid tribute to the men who committed their lives to the cause of women’s rights and suffrage. Over time, each of these men became crucial not just for their activism but also for their examples as what suffrage men should be. Female reformers held them up publicly even if they expressed private

reservations about the growing role of men in the movement. From the nineteenth to the twentieth century, female reformers made connections with the men who helped the movement financially, politically, and socially. Furthermore, the women of the twentieth century paid tribute to the men of the nineteenth century, as well as to the twentieth century activists, by reprinting their speeches, essays, and interviews for a new generation. These actions demonstrate that female activists were well aware of the importance of the key men in their movement, especially the contributions of individual men discussed in this case study.

On May 31, 1879, the Woman’s Journal published a description of the funeral of William Lloyd Garrison, who passed away six days earlier. The ceremony was “filled to overflowing” with former abolitionists and women’s rights advocates. “The movement for women owes more to Mr. Garrison than can be told to-day,” wrote Stone, for “he assumed, without hesitation, the championship of the denied rights of Woman.” Stone went on to proclaim that since the beginning of her friendship with Garrison, he had been an “unfailing friend” to the women’s movement. She was not the only female suffragist to make such an assertion. As an abolitionist, Garrison was known as a zealot who was uncompromising in his principles, but as abolition came to fruition, his legacy was recreated to show him as a model citizen who had foresight on issues of racial equality and women’s rights. As a result, suffragists used Garrison as an example of manly support for the cause, for as historian and sociologist Michael Kimmel argues, “political freedom” and “American men’s identity” have always been linked.230 In 1842, Stanton remarked in a letter to fellow reformer Elizabeth Pease that she admired Garrison for his refusal

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to speak at the Anti-Slavery Convention in London, describing him as an “honest, upright man, ever ready to sacrifice present interest to stern principle.”

Despite the personal grievances that developed between Stanton and Garrison years later over his perceived “abandonment” of the cause during the Fourteenth Amendment debate, Stanton frequently remarked that she had never met a man who understood the full scope of “the woman question” as much as Garrison. Likewise, Anthony criticized women who felt they could improve upon the tactics and ideas of Garrison and Phillips. Complaining in a letter to Stanton in 1871, Anthony remarked that new recruits to the movement were changing methods, for even “the Apostles in turn [thought he could] improve upon Christ’s methods.” By drawing parallels between the teachings of Christ and the ideas of Garrison and Phillips, Anthony demonstrated that, despite the disagreements that occurred during this time period, Garrison and Phillips provided critical support to the movement. Furthermore, the obituary represented Garrison as a model of good masculinity and suffragists used Garrison as a role model for male suffrage support. His early support for women’s rights was crucial for success and this is evident in Stanton, Anthony, and Stone’s beliefs that women owed Garrison more than any other man for his support of women’s rights.

Wendell Phillips was too conservative and practical-minded for Stanton’s brand of activism. In 1850, at the first national convention of women’s rights in Worcester, Stanton pushed for a platform that would “not mince words about the responsibilities of men for the injustices suffered by women.” Phillips, and other reformers, argued against a “language of

231 Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Elizabeth Pease, 12 February 1842, in Ann Gordon, ed., The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, 1: 29.
“blame” and tried to find a middle ground for the rhetoric that would not offend the broader male base they were attempting to convert to their cause. The back-and-forth between Phillips’ pragmatic approach and Stanton’s radical anger at woman’s place in society defined much of their relationship. Despite their differences, Stanton still considered Phillips a “champion” of the cause and later in life remarked that he had been “one of the most advanced and glorious [reformers] of the nation.” Anthony shared this opinion and, in a letter to Stone, remarked that she considered Phillips “a lifelong friend and advocate,” one whom the movement owed a great deal for his work. Anthony considered Phillips, more so than Garrison, to be the heart of the movement and viewed him as a great agitator for the cause.233

Though Stanton recognized the contributions of Garrison and Phillips, it was in Douglass that she witnessed an “unwavering devotion to the cause” of women’s rights. In 1897, Stanton wrote a letter to Anthony that was later read aloud at a celebration of Douglass’ birthday and to raise money for a monument in his name. “I loved him as he loved me for the indignities we alike endured,” Stanton reminisced, “[There will be] no marble too pure for his monument; no garlands too beautiful for his shrine!” Douglass was both a revered and controversial individual among suffragists, who admired his radicalism and his earnest sincerity in supporting women’s rights even as they questioned his decision to support black male suffrage before women’s suffrage. His willingness to address the personal racisms of individual suffragists created conflicts that sometimes overshadowed the perceptions of the suffragists towards Douglass. In 1854, Stone gave a speech on women’s rights to an all-white crowd, where black participants,

including Douglass, had been barred from attending. Douglass chastised Stone for not cancelling the engagement, something that led to a long-standing feud between the two reformers. In the midst of the Fourteen Amendment debate, Stanton went so far as to claim that “black men are women’s worst enemies,” temporarily shattering her relationship with Douglass. This feud demonstrates how issues of gender and race were deeply connected during the time period and how suffragists used arguments about masculinity to subordinate black men.²³⁴

Suffragists especially resented his marriage to a white woman because it contributed to gendered-fears of miscegenation in the South. In 1895, Anthony went so far as to write Douglass, begging him not to attend the NAWSA Convention in Atlanta, for fear his marriage to a white reformer would negatively impact the movement. Mostly, nineteenth century suffragists recognized in Douglass an individual who had been loyal to the movement from the early days of Seneca Falls. This type of loyalty was not one they could afford to overlook or take for granted. They also recognized the importance of preserving Douglass’ support for future generations. In 1882, Stanton wrote to Douglass asking him to contribute material to History of Woman Suffrage. In later years, Stanton and Anthony reached out to him for his insights and contributions. “What I want you to do,” Anthony wrote to Douglass in 1893, “is to write or speak right of your very soul, the best and most needed thought you have . . . Next to my pride that Mrs. Stanton shall do her . . . best – is my pride that Frederick Douglas shall do his.”²³⁵
Stanton and Anthony left behind a significant amount of material that sheds light on their perceptions of the male reformers, but Stone was much more reserved in her writing and did not go to the same lengths to preserve her view of the history of the movement, in general, and her view of men, specifically. Stone also died a decade earlier than Stanton and Anthony. For these reasons, historians do not have the plethora of source material for understanding how Stone viewed many of the men in the movement in the same way as her reformist counterparts. The two notable exceptions to this were her thoughts regarding the reform efforts of her husband, Henry Browne Blackwell, and her longtime friend and correspondent, Thomas Wentworth Higginson.

In 1853, Stone wrote Blackwell a response to his request for her friendship by proclaiming, “I am glad of the friendship of the good whether they be men or women, and sex shall never debar me, (with my consent) from the companionship of such.” This was Stone’s primary attitude towards men and women as partners and also as reformers. As Stone grew older and became more involved in motherhood, she depended upon Blackwell to do the work of reform for her, something that he was willing to take on: “I will act as your supporter & aid & we will see whether we cannot do your great work a real service.” It would be easy to dismiss Stone’s positive view of her husband’s work for suffrage as solely the words of a loving wife, but she was not the only reformer to speak highly of Blackwell’s contributions to the movement. In 1876, Anthony remarked to Elizabeth Boynton Harbert regarding the Republican Party platform: “I imagine [it] is Harry Blackwell’s very words – it sounds just like him.” Stanton was more critical of Blackwell, frequently complaining about his relentless critique of her actions and writings in the Woman’s Journal. “Blackwell is determined if possible to kill me,” Stanton lamented to Anthony in 1890, “And you say sit still & let him do his worst.” Anthony
recognized what Stanton did not, the importance of having a man like Blackwell who could articulate reasons for supporting suffrage that other men would embrace. Stone, of course, was never faint in her praise of her husband’s commitment to women’s rights. Six years before her death, she responded to a telegram of Blackwell’s on the passage of a suffrage amendment in Rhode Island. “I am sorry to have so much of the work of the campaign devolve on you,” Stone replied, “[But] no speech will be so effective as yours.”

Another reformer who drew praise from Stone was Thomas Wentworth Higginson with whom Stone had been friends and correspondents since the early days of the abolition movement. As an abolitionist, minister, and military officer in the Civil War, Higginson was emblematic of nineteenth century masculinity because of his connection with the dominant influences of politics, religion, and war that exerted themselves on men. Stone felt that Higginson was “one of the . . . men who best understood what women needed” and found in him a kindred spirit on the issue of women’s rights. Stone remarked that he was a “very noble man,” one whom she trusted to officiate at her wedding to Blackwell as well as collaborate with her as part of the leadership of AWSA and the Woman’s Journal. Stanton and Anthony also credited Higginson for his work on behalf of women’s rights and considered him a “cultured” man and “devoted friend” to the movement. Though they were not as effusive in their praise as Stone, they nonetheless recognized that Higginson, as a writer, played a critical role in garnering support for the movement. This is evident in Stanton’s and Anthony’s attempts to incorporate Higginson into the History of Woman Suffrage. In 1879, Stanton confided in Elizabeth Buffum

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Chace that Stanton and Anthony, “might add Mr. Higginson” to the published volumes on women’s rights.\(^{237}\)

The male reformers of the nineteenth century were equally significant to the women of the twentieth century. For example, Stanton’s daughter, Harriet Stanton Blatch, who was a militant suffragist and founder of the Women’s Political Union (WPU), frequently approached Garrison and Phillips, rather than her own mother, for advice about activism. Phillips’ initial response was to encourage Blatch to go speak to her mother, for he believed that there was no one “better fitted to guide and direct” than Stanton. In contrast, Garrison was full of advice that served Blatch’s need to be independent from her mother’s activism.\(^{238}\) Likewise, Catt valued the opinions of men like Blackwell with whom she carried on a correspondence until his death in 1909 and asked him for advice frequently. In 1943, Catt wrote to Alice Stone Blackwell that she was “grateful for the braver souls who started the movement . . . your mother, your father.” In 1900, the periodical *Woman’s Standard* printed an article about Blackwell proclaiming him as “the husband [of Lucy Stone] . . . [who] finds solace in carrying her flag and helping to fight her battles” in women’s rights. Twentieth century activists also demonstrated their regard for the nineteenth century men by continuously printing their words in pamphlets, brochures, essays, and broadsides to distribute for the cause. The words of Garrison, Phillips, Douglass, Higginson, and Blackwell appear in the periodicals of the Progressive era, namely the *Suffragist*, the mouthpiece of the militant NWP, and the *Woman Citizen*, which was the mouthpiece of


\(^{238}\) Harriot Stanton Blatch and Alma Lutz, *Challenging Years: The Memoirs of Harriot Stanton Blatch* (New York: Putnam and Sons, 1940), 45-46; Reprinted in DuBois, *Harriot Stanton Blatch*, 33. The WPU in the United States was a different organization than the WSPU in Great Britain. However, Blatch, who was married to an Englishman, was involved in activism with the WSPU and decided to create her own organization similarly named.
NAWSA. The creation of the *Woman Citizen* in particular is a tribute to Blackwell and Higginson, for it once went by another name until 1916: *Woman’s Journal.*

Twentieth century suffragists were quick to collaborate with men to benefit the movement, but they were less willing to speak public words of recognition for the men than their nineteenth century counterparts. Additionally, not all male supporters were valued equally for their recognition. Frederick Douglass’ words and support were such a part of the suffrage narrative that it would have been hard to omit him from the movement. Instead, he became a notable role model of suffrage support for both nineteenth and twentieth century reformers. In contrast, W.E.B. Du Bois was a male supporter who did not gain many accolades from the white suffragist leadership of NAWSA and NWP. This was due to the rising racial tensions of the early twentieth century. The growing racial violence in the South, fear of weakening white masculinity, and the legalization of segregation made race relations more compartmentalized than the previous generation of activists. Du Bois was considered by many Progressives to be a militant who wanted more for the black community than white society was prepared to give. Therefore, Du Bois may have been a strong advocate for women’s suffrage, particularly black women, but he was rarely recognized for his support by white female suffragists. Much of this was due to the fact that moderates and militants alike were attempting to curry favor with Southern men and used gendered and racially-based arguments to win their support. Tactics such as these outraged Du Bois, and he never failed to call out suffragists for their actions, such as his outraged letter to Alice Paul regarding the treatment of the African-American delegation at

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the 1913 Washington parade. Historian and suffragist Mary Beard responded to Du Bois’ critique of Paul with a response assuring him that she was “a sincere . . . friend of your race.” This careful response to Du Bois demonstrates that suffragists could not escape the fact that he had tremendous political clout among African-Americans in the Progressive era, even if they were simultaneously trying to win over white supporters in the South. For black suffragists, Du Bois represented the ideal of the New Negro, an educated man who supported women’s rights as well as civil rights. Whether intended or incidental, the “evolutionary optimism” and structure of Catt’s “Winning Plan” for obtaining a federal suffrage amendment was remarkably similar to Du Bois’ “Talented Tenth” concept, which provided racial uplift for African-Americans by educating and mobilizing the African-American elite. Similarly, Catt proposed to grant voting rights to educated white women so that they in turn would raise up society with the vote.  

Another male supporter who was critical to the cause but did not receive a lot of recognition from the leadership of the movement was Max Eastman. Eastman viewed his acceptance of women’s suffrage not as a passion but as part of his “civic duty” and largely the result of his sister’s influence. Though a founder of the Men’s League in New York in 1909, Eastman’s erratic behavior and habit of canceling speaking engagements made him a difficult supporter. Nevertheless, some moderates embraced him in the beginning. Harriet Burton Laidlaw wrote to her husband, James Lees Laidlaw, asking him about the possibility of getting Eastman to speak in California at a local suffrage rally for the state ratification campaign. Though Eastman was a passionate supporter of suffrage and representative of the New Man of

the early twentieth century, he was a controversial male figure. Eventually, his radical ties with the Greenwich Village bohemian crowd and as editor of the socialist magazine, *The Masses* made Eastman’s politics too controversial for many moderates especially with Shaw and Catt who detested anything that could potentially detract from the cause. In contrast, militants associated with the NWP had more direct contact with Eastman because of the significant overlap of membership between the NWP and the Greenwich Village movements: socialism, anarchism, birth control, and free love. However, Paul still regarded Eastman as a distraction to the NWP, particularly in light of his controversial relationship with NWP darling and spokeswoman Inez Millholland. Nevertheless, Eastman’s words were still used by moderates and militants to provide evidence for why suffrage was necessary. Despite their personal distance from him, they were not afraid to deploy his writings to support the cause.  

Like Du Bois and Eastman, George Creel did not garner much commentary from female suffragists. However, moderates and militants did not distance themselves from Creel like they did with Du Bois and Eastman. In addition to printing his articles in suffrage periodicals, brochures, and pamphlets to distribute, female suffragists like Millholland, Shaw, Blatch, and Eastman also appeared with him at speaking engagements. Moderates loved that Creel was heavily critical of the NWP for its militant tactics. By 1914, Creel was more willing to appear with NWP members at speaking engagements, but the goodwill did not last long. When Creel went to work for Woodrow Wilson and the Committee of Public Information during World War I, it further escalated tensions between NAWSA and the NWP. NAWSA and Creel collaborated to keep stories of the White House pickets out of the news, a decision that created animosity.

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towards him from Paul and the NWP. This demonstrates that NAWSA viewed Creel as an ally in tailoring the mainstream press to favor the moderates over the militants, while the suffragists like Paul likely viewed him as a betrayer to the cause.242

Like Creel, Ben Lindsey was a male suffragist whose writings on the legal implications of suffrage made him a crucial partner in the movement. Moderates associated with NAWSA, like Shaw and Catt, published Lindsey’s articles, many of which were co-written with Creel, in brochures, pamphlets and periodicals. One of the reasons that moderates and militants appreciated the example that Lindsey set was because of his position as a juvenile court judge in the state of Colorado. A state with a long-standing track record of women’s suffrage, Colorado was frequently used as an example of the good that can come from granting women the right to vote. Lindsey’s testimony was used by moderates and militants to address the anti-suffragist arguments. In 1913, Nora Blatch de Forest, granddaughter to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, wrote to Lindsey thanking him for the use of his words in a pamphlet and requested his presence at a speaking engagement. In 1920, Catt wrote to Lindsey to request that he speak at a public dinner for NAWSA. Furthermore, Lindsey was in the apex of professions associated with Progressive era masculinity and his prominence in the fields of politics and law made him an ideal image of a suffrage man. Though Lindsey was a powerful partner, as a writer, judge, and member of the Men’s League, like Du Bois, Eastman, and Creel, his actions did not receive many verbal or written accolades or recognition from leaders like Shaw, Catt, and Paul. However, the true testimony is that moderates and militants alike continued to reach out to Lindsey for assistance.243

243 This assertion is made after substantial perusal of NAWSA and the NWP’s Papers, which contain copies of Lindsey and Creel’s pamphlets and clippings from a variety of papers; Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle: The
Suffragists reserved their greatest praise for men who had significant political and financial power. One example is provided by George Foster Peabody. In 1920, Catt wrote to Peabody to express her gratitude for his “great service to our common cause.” Harriet Burton Laidlaw was equally complimentary of Peabody, proclaiming him to be a “splendid vanguard of man” who contributed greatly to the cause of suffrage. Moderates viewed Peabody as significant because of his role as a Southerner from Georgia in the movement. It was rare for a prominent male Southerner to support women’s rights as vocally as Peabody and suffragists like Catt and Shaw attempted to use Peabody as an example of Southern male support. However, not all Southern suffragists viewed Peabody in such a positive light. Kate Gordon, a Louisiana suffragist and founder of the Southern States Woman Suffrage Conference, expressed dismay when Peabody supported a federal amendment over state-by-state ratification. In 1919, she wrote Peabody, stating that she was “surprised” by his support for the federal amendment and was disheartened that “a Georgian, closely in touch with Southern development,” would vote in such a way. Gordon was the exception to the rule, as most NAWSA members interacted with Peabody in his role as president of the Men’s League. NAWSA members were not the only ones to think highly of Peabody. Despite Paul’s blasé approach to male support, other NWP suffragists wanted to garner more male support in the movement. One example was NWP member Crystal Eastman, who corresponded with Peabody on how best to address racial issues in the South.244

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244 Carrie Chapman Catt to George Foster Peabody, 6 February 1920, George Foster Peabody Papers, Library of Congress; Harriet Burton Laidlaw to George Foster Peabody, 31 January 1919, Ibid.; Kate Gordon to George Foster Peabody, 24 June 1919, Ibid.; George Foster Peabody to Crystal Eastman, 4 March 1914, Ibid.
Upon James Lees Laidlaw’s death in 1932, suffrage supporters sent a flood of letters to his widow, Harriet, declaring their goodwill towards Laidlaw’s time and energy to the cause. “The world was a nicer place for his being here,” wrote Mildred Adams, “and a sorrowful place for his leaving it.” As a financier, president of the Men’s League, and husband of a prominent female suffragist, Laidlaw was well-known in suffrage circles as Harriet’s “beloved Jim.” Those who worked with him in NAWSA and the New York Suffrage Campaign attested to his hard work and devotion to the cause, labeling him as a “gallant and glorious man.” It was under Laidlaw’s leadership that the Men’s League became recognized by NAWSA and the NWP as “an accepted feature” of the suffrage movement nationally. Frances Perkins, the first woman to become a cabinet secretary in America, reminisced that Laidlaw frequently gave the women “courage” and considered the “suffrage movement his own.” “I recall so plainly,” she wrote in 1932, “as he joked and encouraged us on . . . in the great suffrage parade.” Laidlaw also received the gratitude of NAWSA when he helped to memorialize the work of Anna Howard Shaw after her death. The regard of suffragists demonstrates the importance and regard that Laidlaw commanded as part of the suffrage movement. Even militants like Paul, who was dismissive of most male suffragists at best, took time to reply to letters written by Laidlaw about the suffrage movement. Laidlaw represents a male supporter at his best, one who was able to build bridges across a divided movement, and work for the betterment of an important cause.245

If any male supporter of suffrage elicited controversy, it was Theodore Roosevelt. While slow to publicly embrace women’s suffrage, Roosevelt finally did so and became a symbol of the movement. Most militant suffragists, like Blatch and Paul, were divided in their perceptions of Roosevelt’s public support of suffrage, which only truly began during his 1912 presidential

245 Laidlaw, Memorial, 6, 7, 22, 38; Neuman, “Who Won Woman Suffrage,” 359; Franzen, Anna Howard Shaw, 181; Alice Paul to James Lees Laidlaw, 8 October 1914, National Woman’s Party Papers, Library of Congress.
campaign with the newly formed Progressive Party. Blatch viewed Roosevelt’s support for suffrage as an “embarrassment” to the movement because of his extreme masculinity and felt he was not genuine in his support of the cause. However, Paul realized early on that Roosevelt’s “bully pulpit” as a former president and now presidential candidate would provide a public forum for changing the minds of men on the issue of suffrage. Nonetheless, the tactics of the NWP remained too militant for Roosevelt to endorse or support. In fact, Jane Addams, founder of the settlement house movement and Roosevelt supporter, encouraged Paul to “tone down” the militant rhetoric of the NWP so as not to offend Roosevelt and the men who might be converted with his support.246

Unlike militants, moderates were more willing to embrace Roosevelt’s audaciousness because of what he symbolized for the cause: a popular former president who gave attention to suffrage and showed the world that men could support suffrage without losing their manliness. Since 1910, Catt had attempted to cajole Roosevelt to speak out publicly for women’s suffrage, but it would take a presidential campaign and the rising tide of states adding suffrage to their constitutions to convince Roosevelt that it was a worthwhile investment. Harriet Burton Laidlaw was one of the moderates who actively worked to bring Roosevelt into the movement. She invited him to participate in mass meetings and parades, all of which he politely declined. After his announcement of support in 1912, Laidlaw renewed her efforts to recruit Roosevelt by sending a NAWSA delegation to his summer home on Long Island in Oyster Bay. Not all moderates were optimistic about Roosevelt. Privately, Shaw had concerns about Roosevelt’s eleventh-hour support of the cause. Shaw did not “support or trust” Roosevelt, but still accepted his willingness to publicly endorse the movement. Shaw’s eventual support, Catt’s letters, and

246 DuBois, Harriot Stanton Blatch, 144; Lunardini, Alice Paul, 46, 39.
Laidlaw’s campaign to get Roosevelt on the roster of public male support show that they recognized his importance as a political figure in the Progressive era and what such an individual might contribute to the suffrage cause. Even if the twentieth century suffragists were not as generous in praising of the men in the movement as the nineteenth century reformers, they still recognized the significance of having prominent men by their side.247

5.4 British Suffragists’ Perceptions of American Men and Male Support

Since the 1830s, women’s rights and suffrage advocates in America and Britain engaged in transatlantic observation of each other’s movements. This mutual scrutiny reflected the unique relationship between the two countries as well as the emergence of a greater international movement for women’s rights and suffrage in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While this connection spanned two centuries, it was during the twentieth century that transatlantic observation became commonplace and more accessible. Because of advances in travel and communication, twentieth century suffragists could engage with valuable allies abroad and gain support for their own movement at home. Furthermore, the shared Anglo-American history, from the colonial period to American independence, undergirded the British and American movements. In many ways, the later generation of suffragists viewed their movements as a broader way of challenging “the essentially male national identities carefully forged on each side of the Atlantic.” In addition, both American and British suffragists ultimately recognized that they could not win the vote without broader male support. As Olive Walton, a twentieth

century British suffragist, wrote, “Can we ever forget those men who stood by us in those first
days, when we were not victors, but outcasts?”

British suffragists considered American men more progressive than British men because
of their willingness to hear women’s demands for suffrage even if they disagreed with the idea of
women having voting rights. In *Woman Suffrage in America*, a pamphlet published by the
Women’s Social and Political Union in 1909, Ethel Snowden wrote, “The men [in America] are
in the majority” and “women are treated with greater courtesy and consideration . . . than in this
country.” When Sylvia Pankhurst traveled to America in 1911, she spoke before the all-male
state legislature in Iowa. This was an event that was rare for British suffragists, where women
were unable to attend sessions of Parliament and were ignored or dismissed by many of their
own political leaders. In March of that same year, *Common Cause* rejoiced that Sylvia
Pankhurst had received a “unanimous invitation of both Houses” and “a tremendous ovation
from a packed [male] audience.” The fact that women were not only allowed but also welcomed
in political arenas, such as state legislatures, demonstrated to the British suffragists that
American men were more willing to hear their arguments for suffrage. However, they failed to
recognize the contradictions of American political culture, which made room for women as
petitioners and lobbyists while preventing them from acting as voters. British women did not
directly experience this ambiguous standing as citizens, leading them to perceive a progressive
attitude among American men in general that was not as broad as they believed.

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In Great Britain, critics called male supporters of suffrage “traitors to the masculine cause” for failing to resist the efforts of the suffrage movement. In this respect, British suffragists viewed American men more open to changing views of masculinity. Nowhere was this portrayed more frequently than in the tall, slender, but imposing and recognizable icon of Uncle Sam. British suffrage periodicals ran political cartoons that contrasted Uncle Sam with the rotund, short, and stodgy image of John Bull, the masculine icon of the British nation, in an attempt to show America as the young, progressive nation and Great Britain as the old country trying desperately to hold on to its masculinist ways. These images were especially popular among militant suffragists and published more frequently in Votes for Women and The Suffragette than in Common Cause. In August 1909, Votes for Women ran a headline featuring Uncle Sam and John Bull standing outside a schoolhouse. John Bull is pulling behind him a struggling Lloyd George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who is portrayed as dragging his feet on the issue of women’s suffrage. John Bull says to Uncle Sam, “I shall be obliged, if you will knock a little sense into his head. He is too stupid or too obstinate to learn constitutional history.” The cartoon demonstrates that British suffragists believed British men were falling behind on the issue of suffrage and could learn from the example set by American men’s more advanced attitudes.\(^{250}\)

In another Votes for Women cartoon, Uncle Sam graciously bestows the right to vote to a California woman and says, “I have the greatest pleasure in handing you this small token of my esteem and respect.” Once more, John Bull watches from the background and says to himself, “I

shall have to hurry up and enfranchise the women of my country or I shall get left behind.” In 1914, *Votes for Women* celebrated the passing of the suffrage amendment to the Illinois state constitution with a cartoon depicting a community fair, where a woman wearing the label of “Illinois Voter” is successfully shooting down excuses against women’s suffrage. Uncle Sam watches on the sidelines with a relaxed and proud smile and the caption reads “Illinois Women Shoot Straight.” *Votes for Women* used another cartoon to address the ongoing Congressional debate on suffrage in the United States. Uncle Sam expresses his respect for American women by bowing and removing his hat in a chivalrous gesture toward Lady Liberty, while suffragists supporters look on in the background. The headline read, “A Winning Cause,” and proceeded to outline the reasons that an amendment to the U.S. Constitution was considered necessary by some American suffragists. In all cases, British suffragists used the example of Uncle Sam to illustrate the lack of support in their own country’s Parliament and government.\(^{251}\)

British suffragists viewed America as a nation filled with open-minded men capable of matching the “new woman” of the century. In reality, American men, generally speaking, were no more progressive than British men. In many areas of society, such as racial and social inequalities, American men were more conservative than the British suffragists understood. For example, American men were more inclined to vote for women’s suffrage to prevent other groups from voting, such as African Americans in the South and Native Americans and Chinese in the West. They were also concerned with the flux of immigration from Europe and Russia and the impact these groups had on voting. British women failed to understand that granting

white women the right to vote was a pragmatic rather than idealistic solution for many American men.252

However, these political and social facts do not negate the belief of the British suffragists that “men could be feminists, too” and would provide aide to the growing movement in the United States. For this reason, British suffragists recognized that male suffrage organizations such as the Men’s League helped with the American suffrage campaign. Originally a British organization, British suffragists took an interest in the formation of state and national chapters within the United States and repeatedly commented on the activism of the Men’s League. “An event to be welcomed with joy in Britain as well as in America,” stated Common Cause on January 27, 1910, “is the recent formation of a Men’s League for Women’s Suffrage of the State of New York.” Two months later, Common Cause reported that a Massachusetts’ Men’s League had been formed. Because of its British origins, the Men’s League served as an important transatlantic connection between the American and British movements. As a result, British suffragists celebrated the important contributions than men were making to the suffrage cause through organizations like the Men’s League.253

In addition to organizations, British suffragists also closely monitored prominent American individuals who advocated for women’s suffrage. In Woman Suffrage in America, Ethel Snowden wrote, “The best men in America are rousing themselves to a sense of their social responsibilities. On every hand and in every city . . . men and women of high character are no longer going to be content to have their great Republic the scorn of older nations and the prey of bad men.” Like their American counterparts, the British suffragists printed essays and speeches

252 Bolt, Feminist Ferment, 70; For more information, refer to Sneider’s Suffragists in an Imperial Age.
given by nineteenth century American men to demonstrate both the longevity of the movement and the universality of arguments for suffrage. It was not uncommon to find Higginson’s “Ought Women to Learn the Alphabet,” Phillips’ “More Light On the Woman Question,” and Douglass’ statement about becoming a “woman’s rights man” in the British suffrage periodicals. For the most part, the nineteenth century men were used in suffrage memorials and tributes, such as the anniversary of the 1840 Anti-Slavery Convention in London, Seneca Falls, and the formation of NAWSA. While British suffragists occasionally looked back at the nineteenth century American movement, they preferred to focus their attention on the broader male support that was gaining ground in the twentieth century.254

In 1912, when Theodore Roosevelt left the Republican Party to become the presidential candidate of the new Progressive Party, British suffragists rejoiced. Votes for Women ran a headline article, written by Sylvia Pankhurst, entitled, “U.S. Progressive Party and Woman Suffrage,” that included an explanation of the party platform regarding suffrage and a copy of Roosevelt’s letter to social reformer Jane Addams asking her to be a nominating delegate at the party convention. “The Party has been launched largely by the consideration and enthusiasm of women,” wrote Pankhurst, “America is a new world, and we must always hope that . . . the new Progressive Party may be worth the trust of Miss Addams and the other woman delegates.” That same year, Israel Zangwill, Men’s League member and author of The Melting Pot, remarked on Roosevelt’s support as equally crucial to the men’s roles in the suffrage cause. “No one could accuse Mr. Roosevelt of not being a manly man,” wrote Zangwill, “members of the Men’s

254 Ethel Snowden, Woman Suffrage in America. Suffragette Fellowship Collection; Also, “Foreign News: United States” section in Common Cause repeatedly ran excerpts of speeches and writings from prominent men of the nineteenth century. This assertion is made after perusing editions of both Common Cause and Suffragette/Britannia from 1900 to 1920.
League in England [and the United States] could no longer be called effeminate. The Bull Moose was with them, and roared, ‘Votes for Women.’”

While Roosevelt was the most prominent male suffrage supporter in America during the twentieth century, the British also followed other equally outspoken supporters of suffrage. British suffragists described Creel as having a “vigorou personality and ability [to] assure the success of this work, to which he is giving all of his time, thought and energy.” Many of the articles that he wrote for American publications were also published by British suffragists as an example of prominent male support. One example that repeatedly appeared in British suffrage periodicals was “What Women Have Done in Colorado.” Co-written with fellow Men’s League member Ben Lindsey, the piece conveyed how women’s suffrage benefitted the state of Colorado by allowing women an opportunity to reform government and help pass laws that benefitted women and children. Articles such as this one reinforced British perceptions of American men as more progressive in both outlook and conduct. The examples used by British suffragists served to “emphasize the difference between the way in which women are treated [by men] in America and in England.”

5.5 Conclusion

The issue of male support in the women’s rights and suffrage movement is one that has largely been ignored in historiography. Much of this approach stems from the simple fact that suffrage, then and now, was primarily viewed as a woman’s movement. In reality, it should be

255 “Mr. Roosevelt Declares for Women’s Suffrage,” Common Cause, 15 August 1912; Sylvia Pankhurst, “U.S. Progressive Party and Woman Suffrage,” Votes for Women, 20 September 1912; Men’s League for Women’s Suffrage, More Light on the Woman Question: A Record of the First Congress of the Men’s International Alliance for Women’s Suffrage, 23-29 October 1912, Suffragette Fellowship Collection.

viewed as a collaborative effort between men and women in order to secure suffrage for half the population. As previously stated, the issue of male participation is one that divided the American movement since its inception. In the nineteenth century, Stanton and Anthony argued for a movement led solely by women, while Stone collaborated in partnership with men. In the twentieth century, reformers like Catt, Shaw, and Paul worked side-by-side with men to achieve legislative victories at the state and federal level. Both generations expressed concerns about the possibility of men taking over the movement and had to balance the idealism of a woman-led movement with the reality that they were seeking change in a society that still struggled to recognize the validity of women in politics.

Suffragists, American and British, ultimately recognized the critical need for male support, even if they expressed private cynicism and ambivalence about men as a group. Similarly, suffragists understood that individuals like the men in this case study were even more important to the movement because they represented new examples of “middle-class manliness” that challenged the prevailing gender roles of the time period. Furthermore, these individual men contributed much needed emotional, financial, and political support to the women in the cause. In the case of the transatlantic suffragists, the American men also demonstrated that British men by comparison were not as open-minded or supportive of suffrage, a concept British suffragists were able to use to articulate for broader male support in their own movement.257

In 1888, Stanton gave an address before the International Council of Women. In her speech, she referred to the male supporters of suffrage who have “passed to the unknown land” by proclaiming them as “noble coadjucators” to the movement. Whether the female suffragists viewed these men as “necessary evils” or “noble coadjucators,” all of them agreed that the men

played a pivotal role in the movement. Despite the grievances many of the leaders of the movement had towards men because of their personal experiences, they could not escape the fact that, in order to gain a federal amendment for women’s suffrage, they had to convince men to relinquish control of their political power. The men in this case study played a critical part in convincing the broader American public to give up that control. The suffrage movement worked best when men and women collaborated as equal partners to achieve social change. This is a lesson that the current women’s movement, in the wake of the 2016 presidential election, should take to heart. Harriet May Mills said it best when, in her tribute to James Lees Laidlaw, she remarked: “Word has come that Mr. Laidlaw has left this little sphere . . . I am grateful that I knew him and worked with him for a little while in the great battle for Woman Suffrage. The world needs such men.”

6 CONCLUSION: “BE A GOOD BOY”

In Nashville’s Centennial Park, there is a statue of five women who were critical to the suffrage movement in Tennessee: National American Woman Suffrage Association President Carrie Chapman Catt, National Woman’s Party Representative Sue Shelton White, and state suffragists Anne Dallas Dudley, Abby Crawford Milton, and J. Frankie Pierce. Erected in 2016 as part of the state’s preparation for the centennial celebration of the Nineteenth Amendment, the statue reflects the common narrative of the suffrage movement, one in which oppressed women fought against tyrannical men in order to gain the right to vote in 1920. This narrative is problematic for several reasons. First, it portrays women as continuous victims and ignores the

258 “Address of Welcome by ECS to the International Council of Women,” 26 March 1888, in Gordon, ed., The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, 5: 99; Laidlaw, Memorial, 94-95. Original spelling has been used for the title.
many ways that women have created autonomy for themselves throughout the nation’s history. Second, women have, at various moments, often been their own worst enemy and fought against the very laws and movements that would benefit them socially, politically, and economically. Finally, and for our purposes, most importantly, the narrative ignores the valuable and necessary contributions of male supporters who contributed to the success of the women’s rights and suffrage movement.²⁵⁹

The men in this case study were motivated to support women’s rights and suffrage for a variety of reasons. Reformers were influenced by personal religion and ethics, romantic relationships with female reformers, familial connections and friendships with strong women, or political pragmatism. Nineteenth century reformers tended to be motivated by the religious influences of the Second Great Awakening, while twentieth century reformers were more likely to give practical reasons for supporting suffrage that were not influenced by religion. Regardless of their motivations, reformers from both generations supported an unpopular cause and used their societal privilege as men to fight for the rights of others.

Male suffragists contributed to the movement through letters and publications. In their letters, they encouraged the activism of female reformers, critiqued radicalism and apathy among women, and mobilized support for the movement by expressing their opinions on suffrage. Through published works, such as periodicals and pamphlets, male supporters advocated for women’s rights and suffrage. The key arguments they made included woman as an equal to a man, woman as a virtuous citizen who was capable of cleaning up society with the ballot, and woman as a symbol of American democracy. Nineteenth century male suffragists crafted these

²⁵⁹ Tennessee was a battleground state for ratifying the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution. Anti-suffragists believed that the southern state would defeat the amendment, while suffragists sent representatives to rally support; Elaine Weiss, Woman’s Hour: The Great Fight to Win the Vote (New York: Viking, 2018), 309; For more discussion of this narrative, see Chapter One.
arguments while twentieth century men expanded upon them to gain greater public support. Furthermore, the nineteenth century was primarily a period of strong written activism, while the twentieth century would prove to be a period of public, visible support for the movement.

The activism of male suffragists centered around political parties and organizations. Through these groups, men such as the individuals in this case study created and used networks that would help to mobilize support for the cause. Men of both generations brought a much-needed public face of male support to the movement, one that sustained it through hard times and reinvigorated the cause. Political parties like the Republicans, Democrats, Progressives, and Socialists provided platforms for greater political advocacy. Suffrage organizations such as the American Anti-Slavery Society, the American Equal Rights Association, the American Woman Suffrage Association, the National American Woman Suffrage Association, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the Men’s League for Woman’s Suffrage afforded opportunities for male activists to work for suffrage and bring greater legitimacy to the movement.

Finally, each of the men in this case study was important to the cause on an individual level and brought something unique to the movement. William Lloyd Garrison brought passion and a fierce belief in gender equality. As an abolitionist, he placed women in prominent speaking positions and gave them the support they needed to believe in themselves and act for their cause. Wendell Phillips was the pragmatic advocate and a powerful orator for women’s rights. As a lawyer, he understood the complexity of politics but never sacrificed his personal ideals. Frederick Douglass was the “woman’s rights man” who spoke from his own experiences with disenfranchisement and discrimination. A former slave, Douglass viewed women’s struggles similar to those of African-Americans. Thomas Wentworth Higginson was the well-
respected military figure and promoter of women’s voices. Like Garrison, he encouraged women to speak their truths. Henry Browne Blackwell was the missionary of the movement, a man who spent his entire life dedicated to the cause of women’s rights and created the most prominent pro-suffrage paper, the *Woman’s Journal*.

The twentieth century men were no less extraordinary and no less critical to the movement. Max Eastman was the radical founder of the Men’s League, whose socialist tendencies helped push the wider public to embrace more moderate and conservative arguments in favor of suffrage. W. E. B. Du Bois was the intellectual and promoter of equality for all women, including African-Americans. His fierce critiques of female suffragists’ racism demonstrated a unique understanding of intersectional feminism that was ahead of its time. George Creel was the propaganda artist. Whether as an individual or through the Men’s League, he criticized anti-suffrage arguments and was a fierce defender of the cause. Ben Lindsey was a prominent judge and Progressive reformer who maintained an extensive network of correspondents. He was well-respected nationwide, and, through his letters and articles, Lindsey demonstrated why women’s suffrage would be beneficial to society. George Foster Peabody was the financier and the male public face the suffrage movement needed for the South. His political connections to the Democratic Party and at the same time, the African-American community made him indispensable to the movement. James Lees Laidlaw was the national face of male support as President of the Men’s League and transformed the organization into a powerful collaborative effort with female suffragists. Finally, Theodore Roosevelt was an example of Progressive masculinity as a politician, military hero, and Progressive reformer. The pragmatic
politician’s support of women’s suffrage in 1912 gave the movement a political boost and removed the stigma from male suffragists as “hen-pecked husbands.”

There is an important lesson for modern day reformers to learn from the collaboration of men and women in the suffrage movement. Just as nineteenth and twentieth century female reformers recognized the need for collaboration between the sexes, so, too, does the current generation of feminist activism. Rather than insist upon a woman only movement, as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony did in the late nineteenth century, modern feminists should work hard to find like-minded male supporters and collaborate with these individuals to create substantive change in gender roles and society. By writing this dissertation, it is my hope as a historian that future generations will learn from the men and women who came before them and work cooperatively to bring about gender equality. As James Lees Laidlaw once remarked in a letter to his wife, “if we can get some men it will be a help even if only for a short time.”

In the end, the federal ratification of women’s suffrage in America came down to one man. At the age of twenty-four, Harry Burn was the youngest lawmaker in the state legislature of Tennessee. As a Republican in a solidly Democratic state, Burn had always voted against suffrage because he wanted to have a long career in politics and realized that his constituents did not support women’s voting rights. However, what is not commonly known is that Burn privately supported the idea of suffrage and always felt that it was unfair to exclude women from voting. He struggled with his conscience about whether political pragmatism should out-weigh his more idealistic principles. On the morning of the ratification vote, Burn received a letter from his mother, urging him to vote for suffrage and telling him “Don’t forget to be a good boy.

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and help Mrs. Catt.” When Burn changed his vote from “no” to “aye,” suffragists and anti-suffragists reacted in shock and sent the legislative session into an uproar. The Nineteenth Amendment was ratified, and suffragists across America rejoiced at the victorious end of an eighty-year struggle for a federal amendment.²⁶²

Sometimes, all you need is one brave man to make a difference.

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