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## MILITANCY, POWER, AND IDENTITY: THE SILENT SENTINELS AS WOMEN FIGHTING FOR POLITICAL VOICE

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*In 1917, National Woman's Party members waged a silent protest outside the White House for woman suffrage. This essay argues that these protesters, the "Silent Sentinels," drew strength from restricting ideological forces to constitute a militant identity. First, the Sentinels enacted early twentieth-century gender ideology and provided political voice to women. Second, the Sentinels appropriated the authority of the rhetorical presidency and constituted themselves and American women as part of the U.S. democratic process. Last, the Sentinels incorporated President Wilson's militaristic doctrine into their militant logic, motivating their fight for woman suffrage as soldiers liberating the oppressed.*

On January 9, 1917, members of the National Woman's Party (NWP) departed the White House after a disheartening meeting with President Woodrow Wilson. One member recalled his parting words: "Ladies, concert public opinion on behalf of woman suffrage."<sup>1</sup> After crossing Lafayette Square to their headquarters, the dejected NWP members brainstormed their next

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move. Harriot Stanton Blatch, daughter of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, hatched a plan. Her words were recorded in the NWP's weekly organ, *The Suffragist*. She declared:

We must go to him every day, we must have a continuous delegation to the President of the United States, if he is to realize the never-ceasing, insistent demand of women that he take action where he is responsible.

We may not be admitted within the doors, but we can at least stand at the gates. We may not be allowed to raise our voices and speak to the President, but we can address him just the same, because our message to him will be inscribed upon the banners which we will carry in our hands. Let us post our silent sentinels at the gates of the White House.<sup>2</sup>

The following day at 10:00 AM, a dozen women planted themselves before the White House gates, stood silently, and held up banners asking, "MR. PRESIDENT, WHAT WILL YOU DO FOR WOMAN SUFFRAGE?" and "MR. PRESIDENT, HOW LONG MUST WOMEN WAIT FOR LIBERTY?"<sup>3</sup> After years of defeat, the NWP emerged with silent strength to bolster the fight for woman suffrage.

The "Silent Sentinels," as the protesters were christened by the NWP, stood firmly day after day throughout 1917 and 1918.<sup>4</sup> Most protesters were dressed in proper ladies' attire of the day—long sleeves, long skirts, and hats—and they all wore sashes bearing the party's colors of purple, gold, and white.<sup>5</sup> NWP delegations from almost every state in the nation took a turn at the picket line, forming groups of about 12–15 protesters each day.<sup>6</sup> Some women held flag-like banners with stripes of the NWP's colors, and others held banners with messages to President Wilson, including: "MR PRESIDENT, YOU SAY LIBERTY IS THE FUNDAMENTAL DEMAND OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT" and "MR PRESIDENT, YOU SAY WE ARE INTERESTED IN THE UNITED STATES, POLITICALLY SPEAKING, IN NOTHING BUT HUMAN LIBERTY."<sup>7</sup> Thus, while the protesters stood in silence, their critiques of President Wilson and demands for liberty were clear.

The NWP embraced the silent protest strategy as an extension of its militant approach toward social change. The NWP's brand of militancy has been characterized as "aggressive defiance" and the willingness to resist authority without the use of violence.<sup>8</sup> Since the group's inception in 1913, the NWP enacted its militant philosophy through petitioning, parading, lobbying, and heckling President Wilson. The NWP's leader, Alice Paul, earned her militant training with England's suffrage movement and used it to thrust the U.S. movement forward by holding the political party in power responsible for social change. After briefly working for the National American Woman

Suffrage Association (NAWSA), Paul found its suffrage campaign strategies too moderate and established the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage in 1913, which ultimately became the NWP in 1917.<sup>9</sup> Although only a tenth the size the NAWSA, the NWP earned its name as the militant branch of the U.S. suffrage movement by using more forceful means of persuasion to fight for woman suffrage.<sup>10</sup>

The Silent Sentinels's sense of militancy empowered the protesters by providing a strong, shared identity. As George Lakey argued, "One way in which the militants set themselves off from the larger suffrage movement was by pointing to their strength."<sup>11</sup> Such strength was necessary to endure severe opposition, which often manifested itself in physical and psychological harm such as beatings, arrests, imprisonment, and force-feedings. Yet such abuses strengthened the Silent Sentinels. As one protester said, "This sense of comradeship always comes from suffering and toiling together."<sup>12</sup> Through adversity, the Sentinels honed and constituted their militant identity.

This essay centers on how the Silent Sentinels fashioned a militant identity that strengthened their resolve to achieve woman suffrage. In support of their suffrage goals, the Silent Sentinels drew strength from restricting ideological forces to constitute their militant identity. More specifically, the Sentinels empowered themselves by appropriating prevailing gender, presidential, and wartime ideologies into their militant identity as women with political voice.<sup>13</sup> First, by protesting silently, the Sentinels enacted the shift in gender ideology toward new womanhood and provided voice to politically voiceless women. Second, reflecting Wilson's recommendation of "concerting public opinion," the Sentinels appropriated the authority bound up in the rhetorical presidency and constituted the Sentinels and American women as part of the U.S. democratic process. Whereas the study of the rhetorical presidency generally centers on the role of presidential leadership, this study instead punctuates the ways in which sectors of the American public, constituted as citizens by the bully pulpit, actually responded to the president for their own political gain. Third, the Sentinels modeled President Wilson's militaristic doctrine and constructed themselves as soldiers fighting to liberate the oppressed. The Silent Sentinels empowered themselves through the rhetorical negotiation of these prevailing ideologies, which provided them with the motivation to continue the fight for suffrage.

The Sentinels constituted their group's identity both performatively, through their actions, and discursively through their newspaper, *The Suffragist*. Studying the way in which *The Suffragist* constructed the Sentinels not only reveals the prevalence of key ideologies, but more importantly, it reveals how these ideologies permeated the Sentinels's militant logic and militant identity. Although *The Suffragist* was intended for mass circulation, its subscription

peaked at just over 20,000 issues in 1917.<sup>14</sup> Further, most copies went to party members, advertisers, branch headquarters, and NWP organizers, which strongly suggests that the suffragists themselves were a key audience of the publication. Studying the way in which *The Suffragist* constructed the Sentinels reveals, in part, how the Sentinels's militant identity was formed and promulgated throughout the organization. Certainly, the Sentinels targeted President Wilson and the U.S. public, but as this essay demonstrates, it was the very process of targeting these audiences that helped to constitute the Sentinels's militant identity. As such, this essay considers the Sentinels as one of the primary audiences, both of their protest activities and of their discourse in *The Suffragist*. The rhetorical dimensions of their bodily protest in concert with the rhetoric of their newspaper contributed to solidifying a shared, militant identity for the NWP.

### THE SILENT SENTINELS AS WOMEN WITH POLITICAL VOICE

On the most fundamental level, the Silent Sentinels were women seeking political voice through the right to vote. Because they were denied the right to vote *as women*, the Sentinels appropriated the political dimensions of femininity into their militant identity. More specifically, the Sentinels enacted the gender ideology of the early twentieth century by embracing the brash spirit of the "New Woman" and through their ironic performance of the politically silenced woman. In doing so, the Sentinels expanded the public/private limitations placed on women's political participation and enacted the political change they sought.

By the 1910s, more than ever before, women worked outside the home, attended college, participated in social reform movements, and were eligible to own property.<sup>15</sup> As Vanessa B. Beasley argues, the sharp distinction between the public and private spheres was becoming "slightly less discrete."<sup>16</sup> However, nineteenth-century notions of femininity and a woman's "proper sphere" lingered, allocating domestic concerns to women and viewing the public as a space reserved for men.<sup>17</sup> Further, because active citizenship involved voting, debating, petitioning, and legislating, the public sphere was predominantly a male preserve. By actively seeking suffrage, the Sentinels demanded the right to this coveted space. Jean Bethke Elshtain argues that "innovative and revolutionary thinkers are those who declare politics to exist where politics was not thought to exist before."<sup>18</sup> This the Sentinels did. However, Susan D. Becker argues that the Sentinels needed to couch their militancy in socially accessible terms: "their feminism was reformist, not revolutionary—they merely wanted to close the gap between the ideals of marriage, motherhood, and work and the realities of most women's lives."<sup>19</sup> Thus, the Sentinels's revolutionary action

toward suffrage demanded the rhetorical negotiation between their sphere-threatening public action and prevailing ideals of feminine behavior.

As seen through *The Suffragist's* description of the protest, the Sentinels's complex gendered performance was an integral part of their militant identity. *The Suffragist's* preoccupation with the Sentinels's attractiveness, for example, demonstrates the prevalence of more conservative gendered values. To begin, *The Suffragist* reported that President Wilson, upon first seeing the picketers, was unprepared for "such a gorgeous and unexpected spot of color," and in response, the president "laughed openly at the battery of earnest eyes."<sup>20</sup> *The Suffragist* also described the Sentinels as "demure," "a lovely sight," and as one of the "most beautiful sights that has been seen in the Capitol for many days."<sup>21</sup> *The Suffragist* also referred to the Sentinels as "plucky young women" who appeared "serene," while engaged in a "pageant-like procession" held in honor of Susan B. Anthony's birthday.<sup>22</sup> By describing the Sentinels as "gorgeous," emphasizing the sincerity of their eyes, and invoking the performance of a "pageant," *The Suffragist* constructed the Sentinels's protest as an exhibition of feminine behavior.

*The Suffragist*, however, incorporated "the spirit of the new woman" into the gendered aspects of their militant protest.<sup>23</sup> The "New Woman" ideology emerged at the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century as more women felt liberated from conventions of marriage, motherhood, and domesticity. As such, the New Woman ideology inspired women to attend college, to achieve financial independence as wage-earners, to participate in women's clubs, trade unions, and the suffrage movement, and to explore their sexuality and independence.<sup>24</sup> Most certainly, the New Woman threatened conservative ideals of feminine decorum—a threat the Sentinels enacted as they entered the political sphere. Consider, for example, how an article from the *Philadelphia Jewish World*, reprinted in *The Suffragist*, described the protesters: "Rebels of freedom are they, who have shattered old rusty traditions, discarded the old concepts and forever banished the laws under which their bread-winners have created for them."<sup>25</sup> Thus, whereas the Sentinels's appearance may have been reminiscent of the nineteenth-century "true woman," their protest functioned as a performance of the defiant, New Woman. As such, the Sentinels's militant identity was strengthened by the sense that they were breakers of tradition.

Part of the Sentinels's New Womanhood was their invitation and celebration of positive attention from onlookers. *The Suffragist* reported of the protest: "our aim is to symbolize, to dramatize."<sup>26</sup> In doing so, the Sentinels performed what Herbert W. Simons considers, "'body rhetoric,' designed to dramatize issues, enlist additional sympathizers, and delegitimize the established order."<sup>27</sup> Although the Sentinels's feminine appeal partly legitimized the

social order, their public “body rhetoric” enacted the liberating social change they desired. *The Suffragist* celebrated the Sentinels’s dramatic appeal, reporting that the “passers-by [were] plainly struck by the dignified line” and the “sentinels’ eyes were frequently amused by seeing engrossed gazers.”<sup>28</sup> *The Suffragist* also reported that congressmen would “stop and congratulate the girl pickets on their pluck and to bid them be of good cheer. ‘You are on the right track! Keep it up!’”<sup>29</sup> The Sentinels enjoyed the attention the protest garnered, even while such attention relied on the construction of the Sentinels as “girls” whose defiance was reconstructed as “pluck.” Enjoying the public’s gaze defied the submissiveness expected of women throughout the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, *The Suffragist* constructed the onlookers as an audience unable to deter their gaze from the irresistible sight of the female protesters. The Sentinels’s gendered performance allowed them simultaneously to invite attention to the woman suffrage movement (even if cosmetically) and to constitute a militant identity through the defiant nature of their actions.

A closer look at how *The Suffragist* constructed the Sentinels’s gendered identity reveals that the Sentinels’s femininity provided them the means to deploy their militant message. Consider how, in the following examples, *The Suffragist* notes the Sentinels’s peacefulness and beauty, but only insofar as these feminine characteristics emphasize their militant message. One article reported: “In appearance the ‘Silent Sentinels’ are peaceable. Their weapon is nothing more than banners bearing inscriptions. They are, however, the embodiment of a gigantic army, which is waging a war for peace, for right and equality.”<sup>30</sup> Their warlike militancy was magnified by the Sentinels’s “peaceable” nature. Also, *The Suffragist* is careful not to replace an emphasis on femininity with the fierceness of their militancy: “The picket had seemed to them, at first glance, without the purpose in spite of the dash, the sheer beauty of it. But there is nothing frivolous about the sober truth of this reply [to Wilson].”<sup>31</sup> Here, the Sentinels’s feminine appeal allowed them to call attention to and constitute their militant identity.

Part of what strengthened the Sentinels’s gendered militancy was their strategic use of silence. The Sentinels’s silence represented a dynamic rhetorical shift in the woman suffrage movement. Certainly the Sentinels maintained a tradition of creating a spectacle to attract attention and publicity.<sup>32</sup> Jennifer L. Borda argues that suffragists previously used public protests such as pageants and parades “to explain their cause to the uninformed citizen and to influence public opinion.”<sup>33</sup> For almost 70 years prior to the Sentinels, numerous suffrage leaders and organizations garnered public attention by literally raising their voices through conventions, petitions, parades, lobbying, soapbox speeches, and weekly organs. The NWP’s most recent persuasive tactics included interrupting Wilson’s speeches, circling the White House while

chanting demands for suffrage, and holding public meetings. Carrie Chapman Catt, president of the NAWSA, pledged “to keep so much ‘suffrage noise’ going on all over the country” by lobbying at state and federal levels.<sup>34</sup> Other suffrage and even anti-suffrage organizations literally raised their voices within the suffrage drama of 1917.<sup>35</sup> Thus, according to Barry Brummett, the Sentinels’s silence proved politically strategic because “the expectations it violates are strongly established and rigidly upheld.”<sup>36</sup> The Sentinels’s silent protest drummed up publicity, in part, because it marked a new rhetorical strategy within the national suffrage movement as well as within their own arsenal of protest strategies.<sup>37</sup>

The Sentinels’s silence was not only a unique rhetorical strategy, but also part of a gendered political performance. Their silence suggested a degree of passive participation, wherein the Sentinels were not actors, but acted upon. Thus, the Sentinels’s silence evoked the legacy of the politically powerless and voiceless nineteenth-century woman. However, the Sentinels drew strength from this relinquishment of voice. One essayist in *The Suffragist* described the women as “Mute, but resolute, stepping boldly, they are marching on. They can be seen but not heard. And yet they speak millions of tongues—theirs is the language of the storm wind and the volcano.”<sup>38</sup> In a gendered sense, the Sentinels’s nonverbal acts defied the submissive characteristics associated with silence and asserted a new agency through which to recreate social and political boundaries for women. As such, their silence rang indignant: their banners directly addressed President Wilson, their location directly confronted the president, and their public demonstration enacted the freedom they sought. Furthermore, the Sentinels’s ability to transform silence into a strategy of confrontation and to negotiate the shifting gendered terrain of the early twentieth century constituted part of their militant identity.<sup>39</sup>

### THE SENTINELS AND WILSON’S RHETORICAL PRESIDENCY

The Silent Sentinels’s protest on the president’s doorstep illustrated how they rhetorically assimilated another prevailing ideology into their militant logic—the rhetorical presidency. The NWP’s theory of agitation directed its protests toward the political party in power—and in the early twentieth century, political power became more centralized in the office of the presidency. The rhetorical presidency emerged as twentieth-century presidents, unlike many of their nineteenth-century counterparts, began to appeal to the American people more so than to Congress. Within the context of the Progressive Era, the rhetorical presidency, in part, empowered and constituted the political voice of the American people. President Wilson in particular transformed his presidential role into that of a speaker and activist for the people.<sup>40</sup> Considering the

Sentinels's protest as a move to respond to President Wilson's rhetorical turn reveals that their militant identity was strengthened by the presidency as that institution evolved from a constitutional office to a rhetorical one. More specifically, the Sentinels's protest functioned as part of a symbolic dialogue initiated by Wilson, in which the Sentinels responded to and appropriated his turn toward a more rhetorical relationship with the American public.<sup>41</sup>

The rhetorical presidency allowed the Sentinels's protest to function as a symbolic response to Wilson's refashioning of presidential leadership. As citizens answering their leader's call, the Sentinels identified themselves as politically competent members of Wilson's democracy. On the other hand, the rhetorical presidency functioned as a model of direct communication with the American public. In fact, the Sentinels credited Wilson for the strategy: "The President asked us to concert public opinion before we could expect anything of him; we are concerting it."<sup>42</sup> Thus, the Sentinels made two rhetorical appeals: one to President Wilson as worthy citizens with political voices; and one to the American public, which reflected Wilson's move to appeal directly to the American public. The rhetorical presidency, therefore, not only facilitated the Sentinels's development of direct and indirect appeals to President Wilson, but it also allowed them to assert voice and realize their militant identity.

Reflecting Wilson's vision of the presidency that hailed the American people as the principal actors of democratic precepts, the NWP responded by constructing themselves as empowered citizens consulting their president. *The Suffragist* stated, "the women of the nation are holding [President Wilson] responsible for the non-passage of the federal suffrage amendment," which clearly shows that the Sentinels considered the protest a legitimate call for dialogue with their nation's leader.<sup>43</sup> The Sentinels's banners directly asked Wilson, "HOW LONG MUST WOMEN WAIT FOR LIBERTY?" which recognized the power of the president to grant liberty and granted the Sentinels the political voice to question the president. Lastly, as a way to put President Wilson's proverbial foot in his mouth, *The Suffragist* published an excerpt of the former professor's work, *Constitutional Government*, entitled, "A Word to Agitators": "Agitation is certainly of the essence of a constitutional system."<sup>44</sup> Here, the Sentinels legitimized their protest as the constitutional behavior Wilson valued. The excerpt also provided an a priori argument that constituted women as citizens, which further legitimized the Sentinels's militant mission.

The Sentinels further empowered themselves by framing their protest as an appeal to the public, developed on cue from President Wilson's advice. For example, the NWP hoped its parade, held on the day of Wilson's inauguration, would "visualize to the President *and* to men and women from many states the nation-wide demand for the passage of the federal suffrage amendment."<sup>45</sup> Although the issue of woman suffrage received very little

press coverage before 1912, the Silent Sentinels garnered weekly coverage from publications such as the *Philadelphia Press*, the *Chicago Evening Post*, the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, and the *New York Evening Post*, demonstrating that news of the Sentinels circulated throughout the United States.<sup>46</sup> While the NWP's previous protests were similarly designed to stimulate the suffrage discussion in the public arena, the Sentinels's protest addressed the public as empowered women with political voice. As such, the Sentinels reinscribed the power relationships embedded in Wilson's rhetorical leadership by assuming a leadership role of their own with American citizens and thereby decentering Wilson's role in the suffrage drama. As such, Wilson was rendered a mere onlooker to the Sentinels's interaction with the American public. The Sentinels's public appeal also hailed forth an empowered political response from the public, which in turn constituted American women as citizens. One NWP supporter wrote,

I believe the work you women are doing down in Washington is the best "bit" of real *advance work* being done in the country. You can never know the *joy* it is to me to have this share in this special moment . . . I believe that each day those banners are unfolded visualizing woman's demand for "liberty" there is being released through that simple act great spiritual forces which are sweeping our country from coast to coast.<sup>47</sup>

The Sentinels managed to turn the president's penchant for consulting public opinion into a source of power as they carried on as leaders of the American public and established a political voice for American women. In this appeal to their fellow citizens, the Sentinels also worked to dislodge President Wilson as a central figure in the suffrage drama.

The Sentinels, representing politically voiceless women, strategically modeled the rhetorical presidency to appeal to Wilson and to the American public. As one *Suffragist* article reported, "Pickets dramatized *for the country* from coast to coast the truth that women . . . are waiting upon a reactionary President for democracy."<sup>48</sup> Here, "the country" is the Sentinels's primary audience, although it was the President whose attention they demanded. The Sentinels's White House location, banners addressed to "Mr. President," and philosophy of agitation all functioned as direct appeals to presidential power. While Wilson seemed to be the Sentinels's greatest opponent, he was also their greatest potential ally. As such, the rhetorical presidency facilitated the generation of direct and indirect appeals to President Wilson.

More significantly, the Silent Sentinels's negotiation of Wilson's rhetorical presidency strengthened their militant identity as agitators and as effective communicators. The Sentinels demonstrated their rhetorical acuity by

challenging presidential power and appealing to the public's political influence. These appeals revealed a complex understanding of power relationships. Although the presidency shaped the NWP's militant philosophies and tactics, the Sentinels demonstrated they were not victims of structural forces—they summoned the agency to sap strength from dominance. To enact agency is to possess “a means to an end” or the power within oneself to effect change.<sup>49</sup> As feminist theorist Arlene Elowe MacLeod argues, “women, even as subordinate players, always play an active part that goes beyond the dichotomy of victimization/acceptance, a dichotomy that flattens out a complex and ambiguous agency in which women accept, accommodate, ignore, resist, or protest—sometimes all at the same time.”<sup>50</sup> The Sentinels's protest embodied these complex actions as the structural power of the presidency both lent and withheld power from the protesters, just as the protesters both subverted and reinforced the power of the presidency. Ultimately, the ideological potency of the rhetorical presidency allowed the Sentinels to act both as citizens influencing their leader and as leaders joining forces with their fellow citizens. This layered appeal facilitated an exchange of power that strengthened the Sentinels's militant identity as women citizens and further constituted their political voice.

### THE SILENT SENTINELS FIGHT FOR DEMOCRACY

The Sentinels strengthened their identity and motivated sacrifice by infusing their militant philosophy with America's wartime ideology. The protesters most obviously reflected a sense of militarism by identifying themselves as sentinels—those who keep watch or stand guard. However, this sense of vigilance was not fully realized until the more violent chapters of the Sentinels's protest began. Shortly after the United States entered World War I, onlookers, police, and soldiers did not take the Sentinels's attacks on President Wilson lightly. In fact, between June and November of 1917, the Sentinels endured repeated abuses, creating the exigency to harden their militant identity and remain steadfast in the fight for woman suffrage. Wilson's militaristic ideology provided the Sentinels with the necessary rhetorical resources to do so. More particularly, the Sentinels appropriated Wilson's war ethos into their militant logic and constructed themselves as soldiers joining the fight for democracy.

The Sentinels's banners most prominently reflected a heightened sense of militarism. For example, after four months protesting without incident and shortly after the United States entered WWI in early April 1917, the Sentinels held up an inflammatory banner that read:

TO THE ENVOYS OF RUSSIA. President Wilson and Envoy Root are deceiving Russia. They say, “We are a democracy. Help us win a world war so that democracies may survive.” We, the Women of America, tell you that America is not a democracy. Twenty million American Women are denied the right to vote. President Wilson is the chief opponent of their national enfranchisement. Help us make this nation really free. Tell our government that it must liberate its people before it can claim free Russia as an ally.<sup>51</sup>

The Sentinels identified themselves as an army 20 million strong, positioned to fight Wilson as America fought enemies of democracy. Further, the Sentinels's banner created an alliance with Russian women, who had recently been granted the right to vote.<sup>52</sup> This alliance mirrored the United States' wartime alliance with Russia, and suggested that the disenfranchisement of American women was inconsistent with Wilson's democratic values. Reflecting such sentiments, another banner read:

“WE SHALL FIGHT FOR THE THINGS WHICH WE HAVE ALWAYS HELD DEAR TO OUR HEARTS—FOR DEMOCRACY, FOR THE RIGHT OF THOSE WHO SUBMIT TO AUTHORITY TO HAVE A VOICE IN THEIR OWN GOVERNMENTS.” PRESIDENT WILSON'S WAR MESSAGE, APRIL 2nd 1917.<sup>53</sup>

The Sentinels's appropriation of Wilson's war message first begged the question of U.S. woman suffrage as it pointed to the irony of Wilson's call to give voice to politically voiceless people. In addition, the banner read as the Sentinels's pronouncement of their own militaristic philosophy toward securing political voice for American women.

The Sentinels's appropriation of U.S. militarism became more necessary as violence against the protesters peaked. First, it is noteworthy that the Sentinels maintained the protest over the course of a year with delegations of women standing in winter snow or summer heat or “in the face of bitter wind and driving rain.”<sup>54</sup> Many women fell ill, were frost-bitten, and found “the sockets of their arms aching from the strain” of holding banners for hours on end.<sup>55</sup> The real wounds, however, were not sustained because of the weather or exhaustion, but because of the attacks by police and bystanders. As arrests increased and the Sentinels remained at the White House gates, passersby began to expect confrontation: “The police made no attempt to disperse the crowd, but directed their attack upon the women marching, . . . the majority, taking their attitude from the police, also attacked the women, snatching their flags.”<sup>56</sup> By November, a total of 218 women had been arrested, often for “obstructing traffic,” 97 of whom went to the District prison or to the Occoquan workhouse,

incurring notable abuses from the wardens.<sup>57</sup> NWP leader Lucy Burns's hands were shackled above her head one night.<sup>58</sup> Mobs and sailors attacked the returning free Sentinels by throwing eggs and tomatoes at them and, worse, by hitting, choking, and dragging them.<sup>59</sup> Those who remained imprisoned endured smothering temperatures in the sewing rooms and freezing temperatures into the winter months.<sup>60</sup> Alice Paul, after being dragged for a block by a sailor, was sentenced to seven months in solitary confinement.<sup>61</sup>

As the violent stages of the protest continued, the Sentinels's militant identity formed into that of soldiers engaged in battle. *The Suffragist's* construction of the Sentinels was shaped by military metaphors, identifying the women as "chivalrous," aligned in "squads," and "comrades patrolling the same beat."<sup>62</sup> Following the first six arrests for "inciting to unlawful assembly and riot," *The Suffragist* reported that these women remained in a "spirit of revolt, of rebellion."<sup>63</sup> By late August and after many more arrests, *The Suffragist* constructed the Sentinels as soldiers maintaining their post, standing "brave in the sunshine, flanked by the worn standards that have become the battle flags of suffrage."<sup>64</sup>

The Sentinels rhetorically claimed their imprisonment, hunger strikes, and force-feedings as part of America's revolutionary heritage, revealing the permeation of U.S. militarism into the Sentinels's sense of just cause and militant identity. While imprisoned, the Sentinels wished to be treated as political prisoners, remaining steadfastly militant. By mid-October, 18 Sentinels were imprisoned in the District jail, where they hardened their militant, soldierlike identity: "In spite of the dampness and chill of the old stone building, which forces the women to wrap themselves in newspapers, a practice borrowed from the trenches in Europe, their spirit is undaunted."<sup>65</sup> Additionally, while in the workhouse's sewing room, Alice Paul defiantly broke a window with a book of Elizabeth Browning's poems, saving the lives of a few elderly women by restoring air ventilation.<sup>66</sup> Paul was ultimately placed in the psychopathic ward, where she endured force-feedings—and subsequent vomiting and dizziness—three times daily.<sup>67</sup> Paul and the other prisoners were released after Representative John Baer launched a congressional investigation of the abuses inflicted upon the women.<sup>68</sup> Wilson denied ever knowing of the abuses.<sup>69</sup> Reflecting on her imprisonment, Paul questioned:

But one thing I did keep wondering about as I lay in the jail hospital: How is it that people fail to see our fight as part of the great American struggle for democracy; a struggle since the days of the Pilgrims? We are bearing on the American tradition, living up to the American spirit. Americans must sympathize, and grant us victory.<sup>70</sup>

The Sentinels considered their militancy to be part of America's revolutionary spirit and ultimate quest for democracy. As Linda Lumsden said, "The picketing of the White House was American women's Boston Tea Party. It symbolized their revolt against male tyranny."<sup>71</sup>

The Sentinels's militarism also reflected a wartime shift in gender ideology. As Nira Yuval-Davis argues, "Personal identities and modes of interpersonal and intergendered behaviour cannot but spill over into the civil society once the military gains prominence in society."<sup>72</sup> The prominence of U.S. militarism, particularly as the country began its participation in WWI, expanded women's participation in the public sphere through national service. The Sentinels's campaign for woman suffrage incorporated this ideological expansion into their rhetoric of just cause. One *Suffragist* article said, "The conviction spreads that it is irrational to keep women disenfranchised when their work has grown more obviously necessary than ever before to the continued existence of the nation."<sup>73</sup> Part of this "work" included cultivating families with great civic virtue as a way of making a political contribution to America's democratic society. As Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott argue, "War transforms motherhood from a social to a political factor."<sup>74</sup> Although the NWP never supported the war effort, in part because of many members' Quaker faith and values, it argued that if women were considered an integral part to the nation's unity and democratic identity, then they should be given true democratic power.

Although the Sentinels justified their protest as part of expanding wartime gender roles, the Sentinels's femininity may have protected them from more severe abuses during a time of war hysteria. According to Haig A. Bosmajian, "it cannot be ignored that it was the practice of selective enforcement which resulted in the Espionage Act never being applied to the women pickets . . . Socialists, anarchists, were being sentenced to ten- and fifteen-year prison sentences for saying less."<sup>75</sup> Lumsden argues that the Sentinels's feminine, white, middle-class identity protected them from extreme punishment.<sup>76</sup> The Sentinels's silence also may have protected them insofar as it functioned as a performance of their femininity. Nonetheless, the Sentinels's gendered identity was strengthened by their increased sense of militarism.

In the same way the Sentinels appropriated Wilson's rhetorical turn, the Sentinels adopted the president's wartime ethos and fought for suffrage as liberators of oppressed citizens. With this key turn, the militaristic, nationalist, and gender ideological forces specific to wartime America collided to empower the Sentinels during their most trying episodes. The rhetorical interplay of these forces allowed the NWP to construct a unifying, militant identity that justified personal sacrifice and legitimized their protest.

### CONCLUSION: SUFFRAGE SUCCESS AND THE POWER OF A MILITANT IDENTITY

On January 9, 1918, less than two months after the Sentinels were released from prison, President Wilson publicly endorsed woman suffrage. The next day, the amendment was passed in the House of Representatives, suggesting that the Sentinels's public protests may well have provided Wilson with the exigency to endorse the movement. Further, the House's swift endorsement suggested that Wilson's political influence was as strong as the Sentinels believed. The Senate did not pass the amendment as quickly as the House, which prompted the NWP to continue protesting Wilson throughout 1918 and into early 1919, when President Wilson finally called a special session of Congress to address the amendment.<sup>77</sup> Eleanor Flexner and Ellen Fitzpatrick consider the Sentinels's protest and the NAWSA's lobbying to be the two forces that paved the way to woman suffrage.<sup>78</sup> Lumsden maintains that the Silent Sentinels actually hastened the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment.<sup>79</sup>

The NWP considered the Silent Sentinels's protest an integral tactic toward the enfranchisement of American women. At an NWP conference held in late 1917, party member Mabel Vernon identified four effects of the picketing. First, it generated publicity. Of the Sentinels's debut appearance, Vernon argued: "If our pickets had not done anything more, . . . through the press millions and millions of people were reached on that one day to think of national woman suffrage." Second, the Sentinels forced woman suffrage into Wilson's consciousness. Vernon asked, "Was it not worth even going to prison for, to have national woman suffrage daily in the mind of the President?" Third, the picketing and banners "kept alive the woman suffrage question in the war session of Congress." Last, the NWP believed the Sentinels allowed them to enact their rights as citizens. Vernon concluded: "certainly we can go on demonstrating, giving right here in Washington the visualization of all this sentiment which does exist, we know it exists, in all parts of our country."<sup>80</sup> Vernon pointed out that, through the act of protest, the Sentinels realized their militant strength and "sentiment"—the basis of a shared, militant identity.

The Silent Sentinels ultimately constituted a militant identity as women fighting for political voice. The Sentinels's simultaneous incorporation and subversion of dominant ideologies empowered and shaped their militant identity and generated a unique brand of militancy. Appearing in the public, political sphere, addressing the president, and motivating sacrifice reflected key components of 1917's ideological context that infused the Sentinels's militant identity. Thus, the Sentinels called on prevailing notions of femininity, the rhetorical presidency, and U.S. militarism to empower themselves as worthy opponents of institutional and social forces conceivably greater than they.

Appropriating power from the powerful strengthened the Sentinels's identity and motivated their exhausting fight for woman suffrage.

### NOTES

1. Quotation taken from a speech delivered by Mabel Vernon in 1917, "The Picketing Campaign Nears Victory": Speech of Mabel Vernon at National Advisory Council Conference, December 7," reprinted in *The Suffragist*, December 22, 1917, 9–10.
2. Harriot Stanton Blatch quoted in "The Picketing Campaign Nears Victory," 9.
3. "Suffragists Wait at the White House for Action," *The Suffragist*, January 17, 1917, 7. Commas were added to the text of the banners for syntactical clarity.
4. The Sentinels's picket line stopped at brief intervals when arrests began in June 1917, but continued throughout the summer months and into fall of 1917. The pickets stopped shortly after prisoners were freed in November 1917 and began again in spring of 1918 when NWP members felt President Wilson did not pressure the Senate to pass the federal amendment. By early 1919, the picket lines transformed into a different form of protest, "watch fires," during which President Wilson's speeches were burned in Lafayette Park, across the street from the White House. This essay limits its analysis to the beginning of the Silent Sentinels protest, on January 10, 1917, until January 9, 1918, when President Wilson publicly endorsed suffrage.
5. The protesters' appearance is described based on the photos of the Sentinels provided in 1917 issues of *The Suffragist*.
6. The NWP had a chairman and a delegation of members in each state at the time. Within the first two weeks of the pickets, for example, delegations from Maryland, the District of Columbia, New York, and Virginia protested Wilson. *The Suffragist* lists names of NWP members participating in the pickets, which range between 12 and 15 women per day, although the photos of these delegations suggest more women participated. See "State Delegations Join the Picket Line at the White House," *The Suffragist*, January 31, 1917, 4; "Suffrage Sentinels Still Wait at the White House," *The Suffragist*, January 24, 1917, 4.
7. "State Delegations," 4. Commas were added to the text of the banners for syntactical clarity.
8. Linda Ford, "Alice Paul and the Politics of Nonviolent Protest," in *Votes for Women: The Struggle for Suffrage Revisited*, ed. Jean H. Baker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 175.
9. On March 2, 1917, at the National Convention for the Congressional Union of Woman Suffrage (CUWS), the CUWS officially became the National Woman's Party. "The National Convention," *The Suffragist*, March 3, 1917, 12.
10. At its largest during the suffrage movement, the NWP had approximately 48,000 members, while the NAWSA remained 500,000 strong.
11. George Lakey, "Technique and Ethos in Nonviolent Action: The Woman Suffrage Cause," *Sociological Inquiry* 38 (1968): 41.
12. "Woman Suffrage in Wartime," *The New Republic*, October 27, 1917; reprinted in *The Suffragist*, November 24, 1917, 7.
13. This paper adopts a constitutive understanding of rhetoric. As James Jasinski has argued, rhetoric should be appreciated for its power to constitute identity. This constitutive process takes place in the following manner: "Texts invite their audience to experience the world in

certain ways via concrete textual forms; audiences, in turn, appropriate, articulate, circulate, and/or subvert these textual forms in ways that release and transform their potential constitutive energy." This essay considers the Sentinels's protest a "text" that freights the symbolic values of the prevailing ideological forces of 1917. James Jasinski, "A Constitutive Framework for Rhetorical Historiography: Toward an Understanding of the Discursive (Re)Constitution of 'Constitution' in *The Federalist Papers*," in *Doing Rhetorical History: Cases and Concepts*, ed. Kathleen J. Turner (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 74–75. Additionally, this essay argues that identity is formed through the intersection of multiple ideological forces. As Nira Yuval-Davis says, "Studying citizenship, however, can throw light on some of the major issues which are involved in the complex relationships between individuals, collectivities and the state, and the ways gender relations (as well as other social divisions) affect and are affected by them." Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 69.

14. According to *The Suffragist's* financial reports, disbursements of the publication were counted in the following categories: "Addressograph lists," "Advertisers copies," "To branch headquarters," and "To organizers." In December 1917, copies disbursed totaled 20,828. Dorothy Bready, "Report of the Suffragist Office Department, Month of December, 1917," reel 26, National Woman's Party Papers: The Suffrage Years, University of Maryland Library, College Park.
15. For a discussion regarding the expansion and restriction of women's participation in the public sphere during the 1910s, see Vanessa B. Beasley, "Engendering Democratic Change: How Three U.S. Presidents Discussed Female Suffrage," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 5, no. 1 (2002): 79–103. Also see Sara Hayden, "Negotiating Femininity and Power in the Early Twentieth Century West: Domestic Ideology and Feminine Style in Jeannette Rankin's Suffrage Rhetoric," *Communication Studies* 50 (1999): 83–102.
16. Beasley, "Engendering Democratic Change," 84.
17. Beasley, "Engendering Democratic Change," 85; Hayden, "Negotiating Femininity," 85–87.
18. Jean Bethke Elshstain, *Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 295.
19. Susan D. Becker, *The Origins of the Equal Rights Amendment: American Feminism Between the Wars* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1981), 279.
20. "Suffrage Sentinels Still Wait," 5.
21. "Suffragists Wait," 7; "Suffrage Sentinels Still Wait," 4.
22. "Suffrage Sentinels Still Wait," 4; "State Delegations," 4; "The Seventh Week of the Suffrage Picket," *The Suffragist*, March 3, 1917, 5.
23. A. Sussman, "The Silent Sentinels," *Philadelphia Jewish World*, reprinted in *The Suffragist*, October 27, 1917, 5.
24. Winnifred Harper Cooley, *The New Womanhood* (New York: Broadway, 1904); Jean V. Matthews, *The Rise of the New Woman: The Women's Movement in America, 1875–1930* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003); Judith N. McArthur, *Creating the New Woman: The Rise of Southern Women's Progressive Culture in Texas, 1893–1918* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998).
25. Sussman, "The Silent Sentinels," 5.
26. "State Delegations," 6.
27. Herbert W. Simons, "Requirements, Problems, and Strategies: A Theory of Persuasion for Social Movements," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56 (1970): 8.
28. "State Delegations," 4.
29. "Suffragists Wait," 8.
30. "Suffragists Wait," 8.
31. "Suffragists Wait," 8.
32. Becker, *The Origins of the Equal Rights Amendment*, 277.
33. Jennifer L. Borda, "The Woman Suffrage Parades of 1910–1913: Possibilities and Limitations of an Early Feminist Rhetorical Strategy," *Western Journal of Communication* 66 (2002): 32.
34. Carrie Chapman Catt, "Report of Survey Committee to National Board of NAWSA," March 1916, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.
35. Kristy Maddux argues that 1917 marked a powerful rhetorical transformation in the anti-suffrage movement. Kristy Maddux, "When Patriots Protest: The Anti-Suffrage Discursive Transformation of 1917," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 7, no. 3 (2004): 283–310.
36. Barry Brummett, "Towards a Theory of Silence as a Political Strategy," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66 (1980): 295.
37. According to Eleanor Flexner and Ellen Fitzpatrick, "The technique of the 'Silent Sentinels' had been employed by the Women's Political Union in Albany in attempting to get a suffrage referendum bill before the New York legislature in 1912. However, picketing the White House was novel." Eleanor Flexner and Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States*, enlarged ed. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1996), 275.
38. Sussman, "The Silent Sentinels," 5.
39. Robert L. Scott identifies the power of silence to threaten with what is unsaid. Robert L. Scott, "Rhetoric and Silence," *Western Speech* 36 (1972): 146–58. Further, Charles A. Braithwaite argues that silence can protect and expand socially recognized boundaries, particularly when social roles are ambiguous. Charles A. Braithwaite, "Communicative Silence: A Cross-Cultural Study of Basso's Hypothesis," in *Cultural Communication and Intercultural Contact*, ed. Donal Carbaugh (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1990), 321–27. Similarly, Thomas J. Bruneau argues that "socio-cultural silences" allow one "to show respect (or disrespect) for a socio-political position or station." Thomas J. Bruneau, "Communicative Silences: Forms and Functions," *Journal of Communication* 23 (1973): 39. Lester C. Olson investigates silence as a product of gendered socialization, wherein African American women have historically been silenced or "spoken for." Lester C. Olson, "On the Margins of Rhetoric: Audre Lorde Transforming Silence into Language and Action," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 83 (1997): 49–70.
40. For a thorough discussion of Woodrow Wilson's rhetorical presidency, see Mary E. Stuckey and Frederick J. Antczak, "The Rhetorical Presidency: Deepening Vision, Widening Exchange," *Communication Yearbook* 21 (1998): 405–41. Further evidence of Wilson's rhetorical turn can be seen as he was the first chief executive since John Adams to address Congress directly rather than sending a written message; he has also been noted for his strategic use of the motion picture and the mass media. Mary E. Stuckey, "'The Domain of Public Conscience': Woodrow Wilson and the Establishment of a Transcendent Political Order," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 6, no. 1 (2003): 1–24.
41. Jeffrey K. Tulis says, "Nineteenth-century presidents directed their rhetoric principally toward Congress in written messages that framed their partisan preferences in self-consciously constitutional language. By contrast, twentieth-century presidents regularly

- appeal over the heads of Congress in oral performance designed for popular appeal." Jeffrey K. Tulis, "Revising the Rhetorical Presidency," in *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1996), 4. David Zarefsky argues that presidents have appealed to the American people since George Washington's time in office. David Zarefsky, "The Presidency Has Always Been A Place for Rhetorical Leadership," in *The Presidency and Rhetorical Leadership*, ed. Leroy G. Dorsey (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 20–41. Nonetheless, Wilson has been noted for his strategic use of the presidency to reshape the president's relationship with the American public and rhetorically construct a shared meaning of America. See James R. Andrews, "Presidential Leadership and National Identity: Woodrow Wilson and the Meaning of America," in *The Presidency and Rhetorical Leadership*, 129–44; and Glen E. Thurow, "Dimensions of Presidential Character," in *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency*, 15–29.
42. "Suffragists Wait," 8.
  43. "Suffrage Sentinels Still Wait," 4.
  44. Woodrow Wilson, "A Word to Agitators," quoted in *The Suffragist*, November 10, 1917, 7.
  45. "The National Convention," 12.
  46. Beasley, "Engendering Democratic Change," 85. The named publications printed the following articles about the Silent Sentinels, which were reprinted in *The Suffragist*: "Watchful Waiting," *Philadelphia Press*, January 18, 1917, reprinted in *The Suffragist*, January 24, 1917, 11; "Women Understand," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, January 14, 1917, reprinted in *The Suffragist*, January 31, 1917, 6; "Putting the White House on the Map," *Chicago Evening Post*, January 18, reprinted in *The Suffragist*, January 31, 1917, 10; "The Evening Post Cautious but Encouraging," *New York Evening Post*, May 16, 1917, reprinted in *The Suffragist*, May 26, 1917, 10. Throughout 1917, *The Suffragist* also reprinted articles and political cartoons about the Silent Sentinels from the following publications: *Bay City Tribune* (Michigan), *Boston Journal*, *New York Tribune*, *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, *Indianapolis News*, *Dallas News* (Texas), *Paducah Democrat* (Kentucky), *Augusta Journal* (Maine), *Des Moines Tribune* (Iowa), *New York Evening Mail*, *Birmingham News* (Alabama), *Lowell Evening Citizen* (Massachusetts), and *The Washington, D.C., Star*. This list is not exhaustive, which further demonstrates that the Sentinels's messages circulated throughout the United States.
  47. V. Grice, "Correspondence," February 8, 1917, reel 2, National Woman's Party Papers: The Suffrage Years, University of Maryland Library, College Park.
  48. "Forty-One Suffrage Pickets Answer the Attempt by the Democratic Administration to Crush Suffrage," *The Suffragist*, November 17, 1917, 6 (emphasis added).
  49. Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (1945; rpt., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), xx.
  50. Arlene Elowe MacLeod, "Hegemonic Relations and Gender Resistance: The New Veiling as Accommodating Protest in Cairo," *Signs* 17 (1992): 534.
  51. "Suffrage Sentinels Arrested by the Government," *The Suffragist*, June 30, 1917, 6.
  52. On March 13, 1917, four days after Tzar Nicholas II was forced to abdicate, Russian women were granted the right to vote.
  53. "A Red-letter Week on the Picket Line," *The Suffragist*, April 28, 1917, 4.
  54. "President Asked to Open Second Term with Action on Suffrage," *The Suffragist*, March 10, 1917, 7.

55. Ernestine Evans, "An Hour on the Suffrage Picket Line," *The Suffragist*, April 14, 1917, 5.
56. "The United States Convicts Eleven More Women for Demanding Democracy," *The Suffragist*, July 14, 1917, 4.
57. Matilda Hall Gardner, "Occoquan," *The Suffragist*, July 28, 1917, 5; Flexner and Fitzpatrick, *Century of Struggle*, 277.
58. "Prison Congress Asked to Investigate Occoquan," *The Suffragist*, November 24, 1917, 10.
59. "A Congressional Investigation of the Lawless Attack on the Suffrage Picket Demanded," *The Suffragist*, August 25, 1917, 5.
60. "President Onlooker at Mob Attack on Suffragists," *The Suffragist*, August 18, 1917, 7.
61. "Seven Months in Jail for National Suffrage Leader," *The Suffragist*, October 27, 1917, 4.
62. "Suffrage Sentinels Still Wait," 4; "State Delegations," 4; "The Seventh Week," 5.
63. Lavinia Dock, "The Young are at the Gates," *The Suffragist*, June 30, 1917, 5.
64. "The Administration Versus the Woman's Party," *The Suffragist*, August 25, 1917, 7.
65. "Seven Months in Jail," 4.
66. Florence Brewer Boeckel, "Why They Put Alice Paul in Solitary Confinement," *The Suffragist*, November 10, 1917, 7.
67. Boeckel, "Why They Put Alice Paul in Solitary Confinement."
68. Representative John Baer of North Dakota witnessed first-hand the attacks upon the Sentinels in front of the White House, sponsored a congressional investigation of the abuses, and introduced the Baer Resolution on August 17, 1917. The full text of the resolution is reprinted in "A Congressional Investigation," 5.
69. "The Government Releases Suffrage Prisoners," *The Suffragist*, December 1, 1917, 9.
70. "The Government Releases Suffrage Prisoners."
71. Linda Lumsden, "Suffragist: The Making of a Militant," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 72 (1995): 147.
72. Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*, 106.
73. "Woman Suffrage in Wartime," *The New Republic*, 7.
74. Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott, "Introduction," in *Gendering War Talk*, ed. Cooke and Woollacott (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), xii.
75. Haig A. Bosmajian, "The Abrogation of the Suffragists' First Amendment Rights," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 38 (1974): 230.
76. Linda J. Lumsden, *Rampant Women: Suffragists and the Right of Assembly* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 149.
77. See note 4 for a summary of the NWP protest tactics after 1917.
78. Flexner and Fitzpatrick, *Century of Struggle*, 276.
79. Lumsden, *Rampant Women*, 139.
80. Vernon, "The Picketing Campaign," 9–10.

**Holly J. McCammon, "Stirring Up Suffrage Sentiment: The Formation of the State Woman Suffrage Organizations, 1866-1914," *Social Forces* 80.2 (2001) 449-480.**

Abstract

In nearly every state around the turn of the twentieth century, suffragists mobilized in grassroots suffrage organizations to secure the vote for women. While movement researchers have theorized that political opportunities are important in explaining why movements emerge, the results from an examination of the emergence of the state suffrage movements show that the mobilization of various resources along with the way in which pro-suffrage arguments were framed were instrumental in stirring up suffrage sentiment. Political opportunities did little to explain the emergence of the suffrage movements. The article concludes that movement researchers need to consider that historically contingent circumstances may determine which factors bring about movement mobilization.

As they passed through Nevada in 1895 on a western speaking tour, Susan B. Anthony and Anna Howard Shaw lectured numerous times on why women should have the right to vote. They urged those attending their talks to form their own state-wide suffrage organization to work toward broadening the franchise to women. Not too long after their visit, a sizable group met in Reno to form the Nevada State Equal Suffrage Association (Earl 1976; Smith 1975). In the decades around the turn of the twentieth century across the U.S., individuals -- mainly women, but some men as well -- joined together, just as did the women and men of Nevada, [End Page 449] to seek formal political rights for women. In fact, in every state except Wyoming, suffragists organized state suffrage associations. 1 In some states, like South Carolina, these organizations remained relatively small with at most 500 dues-paying members in the 1910s, but in other states, like Massachusetts and New York, thousands joined state organizations to work for woman suffrage (National American Woman Suffrage Association 1912, 1915-19).

This state-level, grassroots suffrage organizing presents an opportunity for a comparative study of the circumstances in which individuals decide to mobilize to pursue a collective goal. An examination of suffrage organizing across states shows that some suffragists organized early in the overall movement, while others organized later (greater detail on this is given below). In the work here, I compare the emergence of these state-level suffrage movements to explore the circumstances that foster movement formation. Although social movement researchers have long been interested in movement emergence (McAdam, McCarthy & Zald 1988), there are surprisingly few empirical studies that offer extensive comparisons to explore why collective action occurs in some circumstances but not in others (for exceptions see Amenta & Zylan 1991; Hedstrom, Sandell & Stern 2000; Khawaja 1994; McCarthy and Wolfson 1996; Minkoff 1995, 1997; Soule et al. 1999).

On the other hand, in the theoretical literature on movement emergence a theme of growing prominence is that political opportunity is an important -- if not the most important -- circumstance that allows organized movements to arise (McAdam, McCarthy & Zald 1996). Tarrow (1994:17-18) argues simply that "people join in social movements in response to political opportunities," even those with "mild grievances and few internal resources." Kriesi et al. (1992:239) seem also to imply that political opportunities provide the best explanation of why movements emerge when they state that "overt collective action . . . is best understood if it is related to political institutions, and to what happens in arenas of conventional party and interest group politics." Amenta and Zylan's (1991) empirical study offers support for these claims. These researchers compare multiple movements and consider the influence of a variety of factors on movement mobilization. They conclude that political opportunities are highly important in fostering collective action.

While political opportunities currently play a dominant role in the theorizing on movement emergence, resource mobilization theorists

(Jenkins 1983; McCarthy & Zald 1977) have long argued that the amount of resources individuals and groups are able to draw on explains why and when movements arise. Empirical studies support this assertion (Khawaja 1994; McCarthy et al. 1988). Minkoff (1995), in her examination of the organization of various women's and racial-ethnic organizations, finds that not only did political opportunities spur organizing, but movement resources did as well. McCarthy and Wolfson (1996) find that skilled leadership in local organizations of Mothers Against Drunk Driving was pivotal in increasing membership and activism in these groups. Soule and her colleagues (1999) compare the influences of the political context and movement resources [End Page 450] on protest activities for various women's groups. They find only mixed support for the role of political opportunities but substantial evidence that the organizational resources of movements led to a greater level of protest activities. These last findings run counter to claims that political opportunities are the best predictors of movement mobilization.

In addition, recently researchers have turned their attention to the ways in which activists frame the arguments that justify their goals (for a review, see Benford & Snow 2000). Movement actors construct arguments to appeal to specific audiences -- for instance, potential movement members or those with the power to grant movement demands. Yet, in the literature on movement emergence, to my knowledge, no comparison of the emergence of multiple movements considers the role of framing. Koopman and Duyvendak (1995:241) state that "an important issue to be resolved concerns the success or failure of framing efforts by social movements," particularly the impact that ideas have in launching movements.

At this juncture, then, even after much scholarly attention has been devoted to movement formation, we continue to have few systematic and comprehensive assessments of the dynamics shaping movement emergence (see the exceptions listed above), and, of the few empirical investigations that exist, none have simultaneously examined the roles of political opportunities, resource mobilization, and ideological

framing. In the work that follows, I investigate the impact of all three of these factors on the formation of the state suffrage organizations. Although suffrage organizations formed in all states except Wyoming, there are many points in time included in the analysis here in which no state suffrage associations emerged, allowing for a comparison of the circumstances that did and did not foster mobilization.

Organizing a state suffrage association typically was one of the first steps in launching a suffrage movement in a state. In fact, in most states there was little or no suffrage activity before the state association was formed, but once the organization existed suffragists engaged in a myriad of activities designed to promote suffrage (McCammon et al. 2001). The focus of this paper then is on one measure of movement mobilization, organizational mobilization (Kurzban 1998 also uses this term), that is, the formation of significant movement organizations committed to working toward broadening the vote to women. Gamson (1975:15) says that "mobilization is a process of increasing the readiness to act collectively," and forming state-wide suffrage organizations positioned the suffragists to engage in various strategies designed to persuade lawmakers and the electorate that women should have voting rights.

Other researchers have concentrated on other possible indicators of the emergence of collective action. For instance, McCarthy and Wolfson (1996) and Soule et al. (1999) both consider the activities of movement participants, typically after initial movement organizing has occurred. Others (e.g., McAdam & Paulsen 1993) concentrate on the micro mobilization processes involved in recruiting specific individuals into the movement. Organizational mobilization, however, has [End Page 451] received scant empirical attention. Three studies provide exceptions. McCarthy et al. (1988) examine the formation of local groups against drunk driving. Minkoff (1995) studies the organizational foundations of women's and racial-ethnic groups in the late twentieth century, and Hedstrom et al. (2000) investigate the organization of local groups of the Social Democratic party in Sweden at the turn of the

twentieth century. But, again, none of these studies offers a comprehensive assessment of all factors currently theorized as important in spurring movement organizing. Minkoff's scope is the most inclusive, but she does not consider cultural framing. Yet, as she tells us, "the expansion of organizations represents a particularly important dimension of movement strength and effectiveness" (p. 3).

In the following discussion, I first describe the organizational mobilization of the suffragists as they established state suffrage associations. I then outline in greater detail the various theoretical understandings of the circumstances expected to result in movement emergence, discussing them in light of the suffrage movements. Finally, I use event history analysis to examine the utility of these various explanations and draw theoretical conclusions toward building a model of movement emergence.

### Organizing to Win the Vote

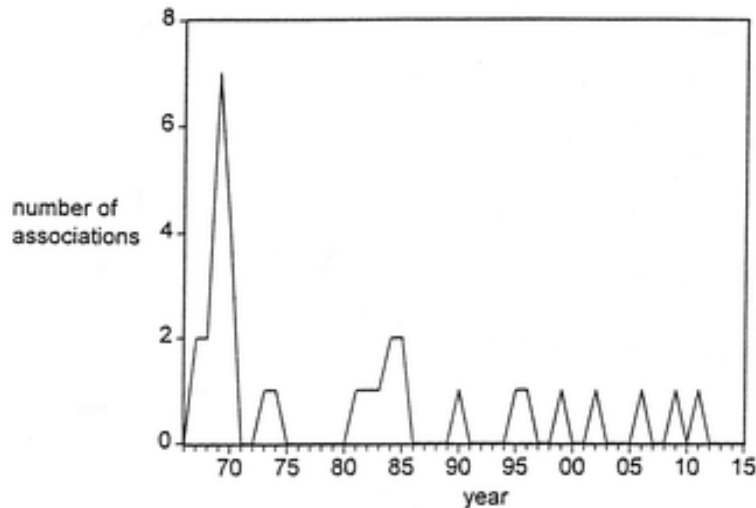


Figure 1. Number of State Suffrage Associations Organized per Year, in the East, 1866-1915

While there are numerous accounts of the national suffrage movement and its appeals to Congress to pass the federal suffrage amendment (e.g., DuBois 1978; Flexner 1975; Graham 1996), researchers have yet to compare the state-level mobilizations of the suffragists. <sup>3</sup> In fact, some passing references to grassroots suffrage mobilization in the general histories suggest that suffragists were active especially in the earlier years of the movement only in the eastern states (Flexner 1975:162; Giele 1995:136). This is not entirely true. Although the eastern states, including the Northeast and the Midwest, organized earlier on average, a number of western states and even a few southern states also spawned early organizations. Figures 1-3 plot the total number of state associations formed in any given year for the East, West, and South respectively. <sup>4</sup> In some states, a state suffrage association organized and then later disbanded but in a still later year reorganized; thus the figures may include the formation of more than one organization per state.

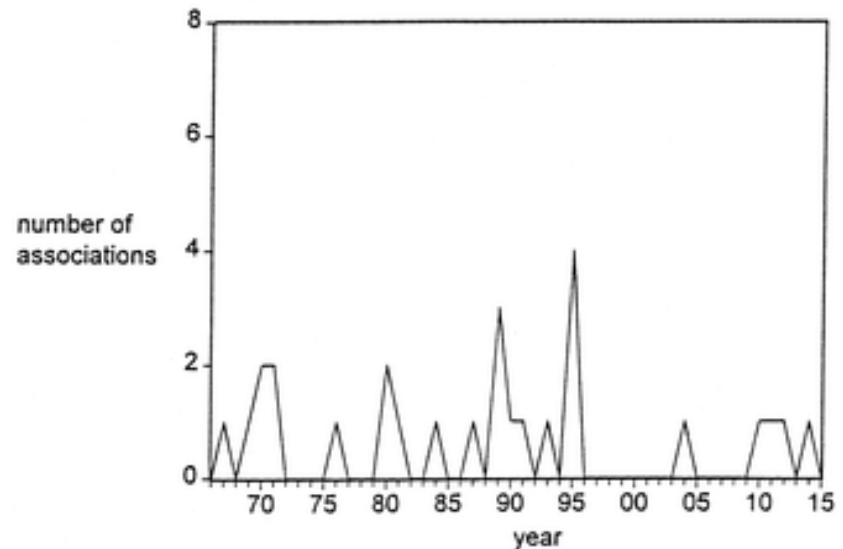


Figure 2. Number of State Suffrage Associations Organized per Year, in the West, 1866-1915

Figure

The earliest state organizations formed in 1867 when suffragists established state associations in four states: Kansas, Maryland, Missouri, and New Jersey. A number of eastern states followed suit in these early years, and, in fact, the bulk of organizing in the East took place in these earliest years of the movement, just after the Civil War (Figure 1). The West was somewhat different. Organizing in the western states occurred throughout most of the years of suffrage activism (Figure 2), although a peak in organizing occurred there in 1895, when state associations emerged in four states. 5 The South, while most of its suffrage organizing was after [End Page 452] 1885, can point to a handful of early organizations (Figure 3). Of these, however, only the Kentucky Woman Suffrage Association, founded in 1881, lasted until 1920 when the federal amendment was ratified ending suffrage activism (Fuller 1992). The other early southern organizations lasted only a few years, but suffragists in those states organized again in later years, many in the 1890s. By the end of 1914, all states that had not yet enacted woman suffrage had a state suffrage organization. 6 The data in these figures show that substantial variation exists in terms of when state suffragists organized.

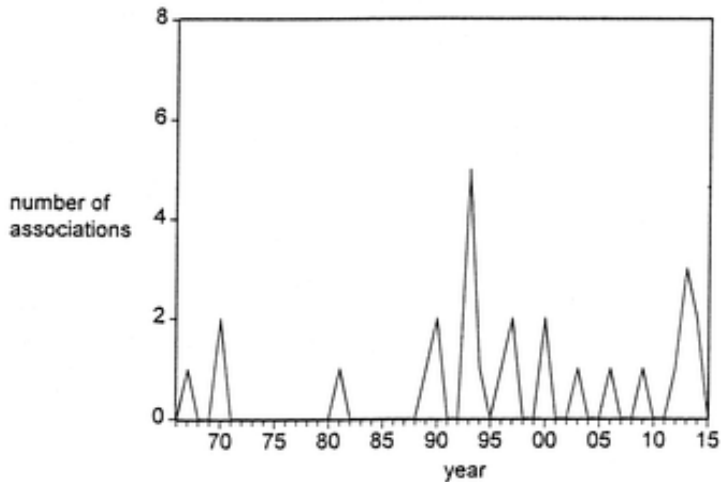


Figure 3. Number of State Suffrage Associations Organized per Year in the South, 1866-1915.

Although from just after the Civil War until the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified national suffrage organizations existed working in part to convince Congress to give women formal political power, throughout the period of suffrage activism a substantial portion of the effort to secure the vote was exerted at the state level. Attempts were made to convince state lawmakers and state electorates that state laws and constitutions ought to be changed to enfranchise women. Before 1890, the national movement was led by two competing organizations, the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) and the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA). The explicit policy of the AWSA was to focus its efforts at the state level, encouraging state-level suffrage organization and activism (Flexner 1975:156). With the merger of these two organizations in 1890 to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), efforts at the state level became even more pronounced. NAWSA leaders appointed vice presidents from each state to build the movements in their respective states (Grammage 1982), and in 1893, NAWSA decided to hold its annual conventions outside Washington, D.C., every [End Page 453] other year in order to use the annual convention to mobilize other parts of the country. Much of the dynamism, therefore, of suffrage activism occurred at the state level, indicating the importance of studying mobilization in the states. The question for the purposes here then becomes: what prompted individuals in particular states to begin mobilizing for the cause; in particular, what circumstances led them to form state suffrage organizations? Also, the various states did not organize all at once; in fact, the West and South did lag behind the East in many respects, suggesting that there may be regional differences in the dynamics of organizing. 7

### Theoretical Understandings of Why Movement Mobilization Occurs

As noted, researchers have pointed to three general circumstances that give rise to social movements (Amenta & Zylan 1991; Koopmans & Duyvendak 1995; Zuo & Benford 1995): political opportunities and the resources and ideological arguments that actors are able to mobilize and

utilize to recruit participants. I discuss each of these in turn. [End Page 454]

### **Political Opportunities**

Political opportunities, which have been widely discussed recently in the movements literature, are characteristics of states and of party politics that can indicate to potential activists that the time is ripe for challenge (McCammom et al. 2001). A number of theorists outline the types of political circumstances that suggest such a conduciveness to reform (e.g., Kriesi et al. 1992; McAdam, McCarthy & Zald 1996; Tarrow 1994). One key circumstance is when powerful political elites show a willingness to consider and perhaps even act on the sorts of issues with which the movement would be concerned (Schennink 1988). Often political opportunity theorists say that this form of opportunity exists when potential movement members have allies in the polity (Kriesi 1989; Tarrow 1994). There are a number of ways in which such a circumstance may have existed during the years of suffrage activity.

For instance, some state legislatures debated woman suffrage bills and resolutions prior to the formation of state suffrage organizations. Sometimes such bills and resolutions were introduced in the legislature by individual suffragists; in other cases they were introduced by a particular legislator. Either way, the very fact that lawmakers were willing formally at least to consider granting women the vote may have suggested to potential movement recruits that the polity was "open" [End Page 455] to such a demand and that there were suffrage allies in the legislature. This may have prompted suffrage organizing.

State governments may also have indicated that they were open to reform by previously passing a suffrage bill granting women some form of partial suffrage. Skocpol (1992:58) refers to this as a policy feedback effect. Quite simply, state legislatures that had already expanded voting rights to women may have suggested to potential suffragists that the legislature would be receptive to further demands. A number of states

gave women the right to vote in school elections prior to suffrage organizing (NAWSA 1940). The Montana territorial government, in fact, allowed women to vote for school officials beginning in 1887 and in 1889 the new state government allowed women to vote on tax issues, but the Montana Woman's Suffrage Association was not formed until 1895 (Anthony & Harper [1902] 1985). No one lobbied the legislature for voting rights when school suffrage was passed and only a few individuals attempted to sway the 1889 Constitutional Convention that conferred tax suffrage (Larson 1973). But as Larson (1973:27) states, the passage of partial suffrage "whetted the appetite" of individuals in the state and, in time, a state organization was formed.

Finally, legislatures may also have signaled openness to the idea of woman suffrage when third parties held a significant number of legislative seats. In later years, after the state suffrage movements were established and seeking political support, the Populists, Progressives, Prohibitionists, and Socialists were substantially more likely to endorse woman suffrage than were the major parties (state-specific sources [see below]; Berman 1987; Marilley 1996). Third parties typically were challengers themselves, attempting to wrest political control from either the Democrats or Republicans. Their presence in the state legislature, therefore, in addition to signaling a readiness to act on suffrage, also may indicate a period of political realignment -- another circumstance that political opportunity theorists (Piven & Cloward 1977; Tarrow 1994) say may encourage movements to form. During such periods of political instability, not only may potential movement recruits perceive an opportunity to be heard, but government or party officials themselves may search for greater political support by revising their stance on a contentious issue. This, too, may spur organizing.

Political opportunity theorists (Cuzan 1990; Koopmans 1996) also suggest that periods of political conflict may spark movement organization. Third party successes in a two-party system, in addition to indicating political instability and realignment, also can imply a period of political conflict as third parties compete with major parties for votes.

Party competition, of course, can also take place between the two major parties. Perhaps when races were close between Democrats and Republicans, suffragists were more likely to organize because competitive politics suggested that those in power would be more receptive to demands for reformed voting rights because of a need among politicians to build their constituency base. Periods of party competition, then, may also lead to movement organization. [End Page 456]

A third type of political opportunity theorized by movement scholars exists when outsiders to the polity have greater institutional access to participation in the polity (Brockett 1991; Tarrow 1994). During the years of suffrage activity, states were similar in many ways in terms of access points for their citizens. All states, even the territories, had elected legislative bodies debating and determining law. While women in most cases did not possess full voting rights and thus were formally excluded from politics, they sometimes lobbied and otherwise informally pressured state officials. But aside from these similarities in institutional access to lawmaking, there were important differences in the processes involved in reforming suffrage laws in the states. For instance, to change suffrage laws in Pennsylvania, a resolution in the legislature needed favorable votes in two consecutive legislative sessions and the legislature met only every other year. Then, the reform had to be voted on positively by the electorate in a referendum. In Delaware, on the other hand, an easier reform process existed. Voting rights could simply be changed by a single vote of the legislature and no public referendum was required (state-specific sources). It may be that where the process of reforming suffrage laws was simplest, suffragists were more likely to organize, anticipating an easier time in winning the franchise.

One final political opportunity for suffrage organizing in a state may have occurred when a neighboring state enacted voting rights for women. Some individuals in the particular state (in the state without voting rights) may have felt that if the legislature or the electorate in the

neighboring state was willing to broaden democracy to women, the time had come when their own legislature or electorate would be willing to do the same, and thus these individuals formed a suffrage association to agitate for the vote. 8

### **Resource Mobilization**

A number of resource mobilization theorists (Freeman 1973; Oberschall 1973; Tilly 1978) argue that movements are likely to emerge where preexisting networks and collectivities exist, particularly those whose members hold beliefs and values that are consonant with those of the incipient movement. Such organizations and the actors participating in them can offer the necessary resources such as members, money, leaders, skills, and knowledge to launch collective action.

A number of suffrage historians, particularly those writing about the western and southern suffrage movements, have linked the rise of the state suffrage movements to the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), and other religious and civic women's groups of the time (Scott 1970, 1987; Stefanco 1993; Stone-Erdman 1986). In such organizations, women's political consciousness grew, and more women became aware not only of current societal problems but of women's lack of formal political power to address the problems. Activity in these organizations also provided civic-minded leaders trained in the art of collective action, whether it be directed toward [End Page 457] reforming liquor laws or improving public education for children. The move from working for these sorts of reforms to agitating for woman suffrage was not difficult, and where such organizations existed, state suffrage associations may have been more likely to spring up, particularly so in the West and South. This was less likely to be the case in the East, however, because many (but not all) eastern suffrage associations formed before these other women's organizations. For instance, many eastern state suffrage associations organized in the late 1860s, but the WCTU did not organize until the 1870s.

It is possible that other groups in the East facilitated suffrage organizing there in the early years, for instance, abolitionist groups and various moral and religious reform organizations. Unfortunately, data on the presence of these groups are unavailable by state. However, McDonald (1987), in a detailed study of the New York suffrage movement, finds that prior to the 1880s, New York suffragists had few ties to other groups, in large part because their ideas concerning political equality for women and men were perceived as too radical. Moreover, Merk's (1958) examination of the northeast movement shows that while the AWSA and the NWSA emerged from an abolitionist organization (the American Equal Rights Association), the state-level organizations in the Northeast were largely the result of the efforts of these national suffrage organizations and were not outgrowths of non-suffrage groups. Thus, it may be that these other organizations did not prompt suffrage organizing.

The suffrage histories, however, are replete with instances of the national suffrage organizations helping to form state suffrage organizations, typically with the assistance of one or a few local suffrage proponents (e.g., Graves 1954; James 1983; Knott 1989; Larson 1973; Reed 1958). Thus, the national movement itself can also be considered a preexisting organization that fueled state-level mobilization. Freeman (1973:806), theorizing generally about key resources, mentions the importance of organizers in movement emergence. The National and American Woman Suffrage Associations and, beginning in 1890, NAWSA all sent paid organizers to the states in attempts to bring about suffrage organizing. In addition, leaders of the national organizations -- such as Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Anna Howard Shaw, and Carrie Chapman Catt -- routinely traveled to the states giving speeches to promote suffrage activism. In addition, the national organizations sent money, literature for public distribution, press releases for newspapers, and other resources to the states to aid organization and the suffrage cause there. And, as mentioned, beginning with its formation in 1890, NAWSA began a concentrated effort to mobilize at the state level (Catt & Shuler [1923] 1969; Graham 1996).

Frustrated with a U.S. Congress unwilling to grant voting rights to women, NAWSA began holding its annual conventions every other year outside Washington, D.C., to promote organizing elsewhere. NAWSA leaders paid particular attention to the South where they perceived staunch resistance to woman suffrage. In 1892 NAWSA established a Southern Committee to focus on that region and in 1895 Susan B. Anthony and Carrie Chapman Catt embarked on a lengthy [End Page 458] tour of the South, in addition to touring the West (Larson 1972a; Wheeler 1993:115-16). In all regions, then, resources from the national movement should increase the likelihood of state-level organizing.

In addition to preexisting organizations that can lead to movement mobilization, mobilization theorists, especially those who have studied women's movements, sometimes consider demographic shifts that can produce a potential resource for movements, specifically, a population that is willing to join a movement (Buechler 1990; Chafetz & Dworkin 1986; McCarthy et al. 1988). In the decades around the turn of the century, women in the U.S. were increasingly attending colleges and universities with their male counterparts and were moving into the world of paid employment, including into the professions of law and medicine. Women were divorcing more, marrying less, and having fewer children. 9 This "new woman," in many cases, provided the ready audience for those espousing the suffragist agenda (Giele 1995). DuBois (1998:39) states that suffrage could only become a mass movement when women led more independent lives and when they were already moving into the public sphere, which allowed them to become more receptive to the idea of woman suffrage. Where these trends were most pronounced, then, suffrage mobilization should be greater.

Moreover, specific regions may have provided populations more willing and/or able to mobilize. More urban as opposed to more rural states may have fostered mobilization. As a number of scholars (Furer 1969; Johnson 1970; Young 1982) have noted, urban areas afforded nascent suffrage movements greater resources with which to organize. Flexner ([1959] 1975:162), speaking of the rural West, says that "[g]eography

made the problems of arranging conventions and establishing a cohesive organization nearly insuperable." Urban areas, on the other hand, offered denser communities of middle- and upper-class women who typically had more leisure time than their rural (and working-class) counterparts, and their proximity to one another in cities facilitated discussions and, in many cases, ultimately suffrage organizing.

### **Ideological Framing**

Another circumstance that may have influenced where and when the suffragists organized state associations concerns the types of pro-suffrage arguments that were used. Movement researchers (Snow & Benford 1988; Snow et al. 1986; Zuo & Benford 1995) theorize that the way in which actors frame ideological arguments, that is, arguments that justify the demands of those seeking change, may influence the mobilization of movements. Snow et al. (1986:477) state that not all frames are equally likely to mobilize movements. Yet researchers have not systematically compared mobilization attempts to determine which frames are more likely to spur individuals to movement activism. Koopmans and Duyvendak (1995:242) also raise the question of whether framing efforts have an independent effect on movement formation or whether the power of such argumentation works in [End Page 459] conjunction with structural opportunities. That is, they ask whether movements are more likely to form when, for instance, a political opportunity exists in combination with effective frames of discourse -- when, in their words, activists can "translate structural conditions, constraints, or opportunities into articulated discontent and dispositions toward collective action." It may also be the case that framing efforts are more effective in bringing about movement organizing when resources to launch a movement are plentiful, for instance, when co-optable networks exist. The mobilization of the state-level suffrage movements provides an opportunity to assess the utility of the different kinds of arguments used by the suffragists to justify their demand for voting rights and to explore whether the role of framing works independently of or in combination with other

circumstances.

Representatives from the national suffrage organizations, including its top leaders, journeyed to the states and spoke in public forums about why women should have the vote. In some states, one or a few local suffragists also traveled the state attempting to raise interest in woman suffrage. For instance, Abigail Scott Duniway, a well-known western suffragist, traveled in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington spreading the word about suffrage (Moynihan 1983). As Kraditor ([1965] 1981) points out, the suffragists used different types of arguments in their attempts to convince possible participants that they should join the movement. One argument (or frame) that was widely used was the "justice" argument. This argument held that women were citizens just as men were and, therefore, deserved equal suffrage. Suffrage was simply their natural right.

Another type of argument used by the suffragists is what Kraditor calls the "expediency" argument. With this, suffragists argued that women should have the vote because women would bring special, "womanly" skills to the voting booth. Because of their traditional roles as wives, mothers, and housekeepers, women would know how to solve societal problems, particularly problems involving women, children, and families. Women could bring their nurturing abilities into the political realm to help remedy poverty, domestic abuse, child labor, and inadequate education. Also, in keeping house at the turn of the century, women were increasingly participating in the public sphere in that they were purchasing more and more commercial goods and services. Suffragists argued that women ought to have a say in how these businesses were regulated. One suffragist put it in these terms: "The woman who keeps house must in a measure also keep the laundry, the grocery, the market, the dairy, . . . and in asking for the right to vote they are following their housekeeping in the place where it is now being done, the polls" (quoted in Turner 1992:135).

Justice and expediency arguments, however, may not have been equal in

their ability to mobilize potential suffragists. Justice arguments -- unlike expediency arguments -- directly challenged widely held, traditional beliefs about the separation of women's and men's roles into the private and public spheres. This separate spheres ideology held that women should be confined to the duties of the private sphere, such as child rearing and housekeeping; men, on the other hand, [End Page 460] should be engaged in the public sphere activities of business and politics (Kerber 1997). Justice arguments took the bold step of attempting to convince individuals to support woman suffrage by positing that women, too, had a right to participate in the public (in this case, political) sphere. But such an argument may not have resonated with those subscribing to the separate spheres ideology -- and many at the time believed in it quite firmly.

Expediency arguments, on the other hand, did not present such a direct challenge to these traditional beliefs. Expediency arguments stressed women's unique and feminine abilities, extolling the virtues that women would bring to politics, because women were different from (and not necessarily equal to) men. Expediency arguments also pointed out that increasingly the private and public spheres overlapped, with women turning to the marketplace for many items and services for the household. Expediency arguments simply did not challenge the separate spheres ideology with the same directness that the justice arguments did. For this reason, in a time when many still subscribed to the separate spheres ideology, expediency arguments may have been more successful in mobilizing suffrage movements.

## Data and Methods

I use discrete-time event history analysis to examine the utility of these various explanations of suffrage organizational mobilization. Event history analysis allows one to assess the impact of various measures on the likelihood of a state suffrage association being organized in a state. Years included in the analysis are from 1866, just after the Civil War and one year prior to the formation of the first state suffrage

associations, to 1914, the last year in which any associations were organized. Arkansas, New Mexico, and South Carolina were the last states to form associations in 1914. (All three, however, had had prior state organizations.)

The dependent variable used in these analyses is an indicator of whether a state suffrage association existed within a state in a given year. The measure equals 0 for years in which no association existed and 1 for the year in which an association was formed. 10 Years following the year of organizational formation are excluded from the analysis because the state is no longer "at risk" of forming a state association. 11

Information on the organization of the state suffrage associations comes from an extensive review and content analysis of over 650 secondary and primary accounts of suffrage activities in the states (see McCammon et al. 2001). 12 In some states, prior to the formation of the state association, a few individuals worked for woman suffrage. In other states, local organizations were formed. The locals were concentrated only in particular communities, however, and often had only a few members. The formation of state associations is the best measure of widespread organizing in a state. [End Page 461]

As noted, however, in some states state organizations disbanded and reorganized at a later date. After the disbanding, the state again becomes at risk of forming a state association and thus is again included in the analysis with the dependent variable equal to 0 until a new state suffrage association is formed. Allison (1984) warns, however, that if repeated events occur for a unit (in this case, a state) and if the repeated events are not independent of one another, the standard errors for the coefficients may be biased. The formation of multiple state suffrage associations in a state may not be independent events because the organization of an earlier association may influence the likelihood of the formation of a later association. Allison recommends including two measures indicating the past history of the state (or unit) in the model to control for this interdependency. I include, therefore, two variables as

controls in the models below: (1) the number of prior state suffrage associations formed and (2) the number of years since the last state association existed.

Six measures indicating political opportunities for suffrage mobilization are examined in these analyses. The first, an indicator of how receptive state legislatures are to the demand for voting rights for women, is a dichotomous measure indicating years in which suffrage bills or resolutions were introduced into the state legislatures (equal to 1 in years suffrage was introduced and 0 otherwise; state-specific sources). This measure is lagged one year because the reverse causality is possible: newly formed state suffrage associations themselves might be responsible for the introduction of a suffrage bill. The second measure, also an indicator of the openness of state legislatures to woman suffrage, is a count of the number of types of partial suffrage passed in a state. This measure is also lagged one year, again because newly formed state suffrage associations could be instrumental in winning a form of partial suffrage. Types of partial suffrage included in the measure are tax and school suffrage, the only forms enacted prior to the formation of suffrage organizations (state-specific sources).

The third measure, an indicator of periods of political realignment and party competition, is the percentage of seats in both houses of the state legislature held by third parties (Burnham n.d.; World Almanac 1868-76, 1886-1918).<sup>13</sup> The fourth political opportunity indicator, also a measure of party competition, is a dichotomous variable indicating years in which the Republican party held more than 40 percent but fewer than 60 percent of the seats in both houses of the state legislature (Burnham n.d.; World Almanac 1868-76, 1886-1918). The measure equals 1 if the percentage falls between 40 and 60 and 0 otherwise. This is a measure of the legislative outcome of a period of electoral competition between the Democratic and Republican parties in a state.<sup>14</sup> The fifth political opportunity variable is a measure of the ease or difficulty in a state of reforming voting rights. The measure varies from 1 to 5, where 1 designates the easiest reform process (one legislative

vote and no referendum) and 5 indicates the most difficult type of process (typically involving the legislature calling a constitutional convention) (state-specific sources). The final measure of political opportunity is the proportion of neighboring [End Page 462] states passing suffrage for women, including both full and partial suffrage (NAWSA 1940).

Preexisting organizations that may have fueled suffrage organizing are indicated with two sets of measures. The first set includes (1) a dichotomous variable indicating whether the WCTU was organized in a state (coded 1 where such an organization exists and 0 otherwise; state-specific sources) and (2) a count of the number of other prominent women's organizations existing in a state. The organizations included in this latter measure are: the Consumers' League (Nathan 1926), the General Federation of Women's Clubs (Skocpol 1992), and the National Congress of Mothers (Mason 1928).

The national suffrage organizations were also preexisting organizations that may have fostered mobilization in the states, particularly by sending resources to assist organizing. These resources are measured dichotomously in three ways: (1) whether the national sent an organizer to the state, (2) whether the national organization sent other resources to the state, such as speakers, literature, and money, and (3) whether the national organization held its annual convention in the state. These measures equal 1 if the national sent an organizer or other resources to the state or held its convention in the state in a particular year and 0 otherwise. I also include an indicator of the years in which NAWSA existed (equal to 1 for those years, 0 otherwise). The measure is constant across states. Demographic shifts among women are captured with two measures: (1) percentage of all women who are college and university students (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1975; U.S. Department of Commerce 1919, 1920, 1922, 1923; U.S. Office of Education 1872-1914, 1916, 1917) and (2) the percentage of all women who are physicians or lawyers (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1872, 1883, 1897, 1902, 1914, 1923, 1975). Data for these measures are only available

beginning in 1872 and 1870 respectively. A number of state suffrage organizations were formed before these years (see Figures 1-3). Including these measures in the analysis left-censors the data and this can result in biased parameter estimates (Yamaguchi 1991). Analyses including these measures thus must be viewed with some caution. 15 The final demographic measure is the percent of a state's population living in urban areas (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1975). 16

Two dichotomous measures of the type of argument or frame used to convince potential suffragists to join the cause are (1) suffragists' use of a justice argument in a public forum, such as in a public speech or in a newspaper column and (2) suffragists' use of an expediency argument in a public forum (state-specific sources). Both of these variables are coded 1 if the argument was used publicly in a given year and 0 otherwise. Both measures are also lagged one year to avoid confounding the analysis with justice and expediency arguments made by suffragists in a newly organized state association.

One final control measure is included in these models. It is possible that through a diffusion process suffrage mobilization in a neighboring state influenced [End Page 463] [Begin Page 465] organizing in a particular state. For instance, Illinois organized its state association in 1869. Iowa organized the following year. Perhaps the activities in Illinois influenced those in Iowa. To gauge the impact of this diffusion process, I include a measure of the proportion of neighboring states in which state suffrage associations have been formed. This measure is lagged one year on the assumption that diffusion would take some time to have an effect. 17 [End Page 465]

## Results

Table 1 provides the results of an event history analysis of the factors influencing state-level suffrage organizing. Column 1 contains results for the entire U.S. 18 and columns 2-4 provide separate analyses for the eastern, western, and southern regions respectively to determine whether

the processes leading to movement mobilization differed by region. Columns 5-7 contain variations on the U.S. model which I discuss below.

Beginning with the results for the whole U.S. in column 1, one can see a clear pattern. Political opportunities seem not to influence suffrage movement mobilization. None of the measures are significant in this model. But looking across the columns at the regional analyses, one can see that there are two exceptions to this. In the West (col. 3), the greater the proportion of neighboring states that passed either full or partial suffrage, the less likely a particular state was to form a state suffrage association. This, though, is the opposite effect of that predicted by the theory of political opportunities. The theory predicts that passage of suffrage in a neighboring state -- a political opportunity -- should increase the likelihood that suffragists will mobilize in the particular state. The finding is puzzling, but it may reflect the fact that while some western states granted rights to women quite early (e.g., Colorado, Idaho, and Utah), a number of others did not even organize for suffrage until later, and thus these two dynamics in the end are negatively related.

The other exception to the lack of results for the political opportunity measures is in the southern model (col. 4). Here, the results show that in the South suffrage associations were likelier to emerge when third parties held legislative office, and this is predicted by the political opportunity model. The Populist and, to a somewhat lesser extent, the Progressive parties were active in the South during the years in which much suffrage activism occurred there, the Populists in the 1890s and the Progressives primarily after the turn of the century (Goodwyn 1978; Tindall 1967). The Populist party, a party supported by small farmers, in fact, was able to secure numerous legislative seats in southern state governments (Woodward [1951] 1971). The successes of this third party in the 1890s coincide with heightened suffrage organizing in the South. Southern Populists, though, unlike their western and mid-western counterparts, were unlikely to endorse the demands of the suffragists (state-specific sources; Jeffrey 1975; Marilley 1996). Thus, while the

presence of the Populists in political office in southern states in the 1890s may have fueled suffrage organizing because it defined a period of political instability and conflict -- particularly as Democrats tried to reassert their dominance in the South -- it is unclear that the Populists were willing allies of the suffrage cause. What appears to have helped stir suffrage activism was the period of political uncertainty.

This finding for the South, however, should not detract from the larger pattern in the findings for the political opportunity measures. With one exception, none of the political opportunity measures indicate that political opportunities fueled [End Page 466] suffrage organizing. Political circumstances had little and, in many cases, no influence on suffragists' decisions to organize.

On the other hand, the results show substantial support for resource mobilization theory. For instance, one claim made by resource mobilization theorists is that movements emerge where preexisting organizations pave the way for movement formation. The results show evidence of this. The findings, though, reveal that most (although not all) of this catalyst effect stems from the presence and activities of the national suffrage organizations, rather than from the WCTU and other women's organizations. States with WCTU organizations or with other women's organizations (the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the Consumers' League, and the National Congress of Mothers) were no more likely to organize suffrage associations than were states without these organizations (cols. 1, 2, and 4), except in the West (col. 3).

In the West, both the WCTU and other women's organizations helped ignite suffrage organizing. Both measures are positive and statistically significant. The historical record coincides with these findings. In South Dakota, for instance, the WCTU gathered hundreds of signatures on a pro-suffrage petition in the 1880s, just before the state association was organized (Reed 1958), and in Kansas in the early 1880s just prior to the formation of a state association there, the WCTU was responsible for converting many to the suffrage cause (Stanton, Anthony & Gage [1886]

1985:703).

But, the WCTU variable is not significant in the southern model. A number of southern suffrage historians have commented that the suffrage movement in the South grew out of the WCTU with a shared leadership and membership (Goodrich 1978; Scott 1970). But Turner (1992:146-48; see also Wheeler 1993:11) suggests that this may not have been the case everywhere in the South. Turner draws upon evidence from the Texas woman suffrage movement and finds that in some regions tension rather than collaboration existed between the WCTU and suffrage activists. The WCTU agenda, particularly in the South, remained far more conservative and religion-based than the suffragists' more progressive demands for political equality. The results from the current analysis appear to support Turner's claim. The presence of the WCTU in the southern states had no impact on whether the suffragists organized there. It may be that in some regions the WCTU did motivate individuals to get involved in suffrage activism. But in other areas of the South, just the opposite may have occurred. The WCTU's conservative influence may have even stymied suffrage organizing. The net effect in the analysis, then, is no effect of the presence of the WCTU on suffrage organizing. Perhaps a similar dynamic was at work producing the lack of effect for the other women's organizations.

In the East as well, women's organizations did not help suffrage mobilization (col. 2). This is probably the case because many of the eastern suffrage associations organized earlier than did the WCTU, GFWC, and other organizations. A number of the eastern suffrage organizations were the earliest to form in the U.S., coming [End Page 467] together in the late 1860s. Most eastern WCTUs, on the other hand, organized a bit later in the 1870s. The GFWC made its greatest inroads in the eastern states in the 1890s, and the Consumers' Leagues and the National Congress of Mothers often did not organize at the state level until after the turn of the century. While some suffragists did mobilize later in the eastern states and evidence shows that, at least in some cases,

they benefited from prior organizing among these other women's groups (e.g., McBride 1993:102-3), many other suffragists simply organized too early in the East to have profited from these groups.

What is clear from the results in Table 1 is that the activities and resources of the national suffrage movement played an important role in state-level suffrage mobilization. For the U.S. as a whole and in each of the separate regions, national organization variables are significant. From column 1 we learn that when the national organizations sent organizers to a state, when they sent resources such as suffrage speakers, literature, and funding to a state, and when they held their annual conventions in a state, a state suffrage organization was significantly more likely to form in the state. Moreover, during the years in which NAWSA was organized, states were more likely to mobilize for the vote.

Both the presence of organizers and resources increase the likelihood of mobilization in the East and West (cols. 2 and 3). While the convention measure is significant in the eastern model, it drops out of the western model because no national convention was held in a western state prior to the formation of state suffrage organizations there. In the South, only the resource and NAWSA measures are significant; national organizers and conventions had no impact on mobilization in the South. It may be that during the years of suffrage activism, when the Civil War, in many ways, still influenced southern thinking about northerners, literature and funding from the (northern) national movement was effective in fostering organizing in the South. But organizers and conventions (and maybe even speakers as well) -- that is, the presence of northerners in the South telling southerners what to do -- still caused discomfort among southerners. This may have lessened the impact that these activities of the national could have on mobilization in the South (Goodrich 1978).

But the general pattern in the results is clear: assistance from the national, at least in some form in all regions, fostered state suffrage organizing. This makes the national suffrage movement a key

preexisting organization for the state-level movements. The national movement in most states, however, was not an "indigenous" organization; that is, it came from outside the state. 19 Although some movement researchers have found that indigenous organizations provide an important resource for movement emergence, such as the black churches and colleges in southern states during the civil rights movement (McAdam 1982), the results here suggest that prior organizations that provide the resources and skills that fuel mobilization do not have to be indigenous to a particular community or region. They can come from outside that community. McCarthy (1987), for instance, suggests that in circumstances of "social infrastructure deficits," that is, [End Page 468] where local social networks are unlikely to join the movement spontaneously and easily, professional movement organizers may be necessary to ignite movement activism. The national suffrage organizations, typically coming from the outside, indeed, played this role in the state-level movements. All of this, though, suggests a need in future research for particular attention to the circumstances in which different kinds of organizational networks may aid movement formation.

Because the indicators of shifts in women's demographic circumstances are available beginning only in the early 1870s (rather than in 1866), measures of the percentage of women in college and the professions are included in a separate analysis in column 5. This analysis censors the formation of state associations in a number of states and thus the results must be viewed with caution (Yamaguchi 1991). But the results reveal that neither variable is significant. State organizations were not more likely to emerge where there were more women in these less traditional arenas (i.e., in higher education and in the professions of law and medicine). This pool of women, these results suggest, did not provide a resource that particularly helped advance suffrage organizing in the states.

However, in the noncensored models (cols. 1-4), the results show that suffragists were, for the most part, more likely to organize in the more urban states. The urbanization measure is significant and positive in the

U.S. model (col. 1) and in the eastern and western models (cols. 2 and 3). The variable narrowly misses being significant in the southern model (col. 4). Urban areas were more likely to foster organizing simply because they offered a denser population, often a population with more middle- and upper-class women with greater leisure time, all of which made it easier for women to get together and share their ideas (Furer 1969). In rural areas during this time period, especially in the West, traveling distances to meet with just one or two neighbors could be quite difficult.

Finally, the results also provide a clear indication that the way in which activists framed ideas also mattered for suffrage organizing, and, moreover, the results show that justice and expediency arguments did not have the same effect on suffrage organizing (cols. 1-4). Where expediency arguments were used as the rationale for woman suffrage, individuals were more likely to organize state suffrage associations. But where justice arguments were used, individuals were not more likely to mobilize. Justice arguments had no significant effect on suffrage mobilization. This pattern in the results holds true for the U.S. model and for each of the regional models. The likely reason for this is the challenge that justice arguments presented to existing beliefs about women's and men's roles in society. Such arguments called for equal voting rights for men and women and questioned the accepted wisdom of separate spheres for women and men. Justice arguments held that women, just like men, had a natural right to participate in politics. Expediency arguments, on the other hand, did not present the same kind of direct challenge to a separate spheres ideology. Rather, expediency arguments held that women's unique abilities, developed through their work in the home and in child rearing, could be an asset in politics. Women would bring knowledge to the ballot box about how to solve [End Page 469] social problems that concerned families and children. Rather than a direct challenge of separate spheres for women and men, such arguments gently blurred the distinction between public and private spheres. And this is likely why they were more successful in mobilizing suffragists.

Koopmans and Duyvendak (1995) raise the possibility that for ideological arguments to work in mobilizing movements, activists must offer such arguments in circumstances where structural opportunities or organizational resources that will also foster recruitment exist. I constructed a set of interaction terms by multiplying the expediency measure by each of the political opportunity measures and by each of the resource measures and, in separate analyses, examined whether any of these interaction terms significantly predicted when the suffrage movements organized. None of the terms, however, were significant. Examples are presented in columns 6 and 7. In column 6, the interaction term gauges whether the movement was more likely to organize when activists used an expediency argument in the period just after the state legislature had passed a form of partial suffrage (a political opportunity for suffrage mobilization). As with the other interactions, this measure is not significant. The results in column 7 show that movements were not more likely to mobilize where expediency arguments were used and where the WCTU was organized. The findings then tell us that framing efforts can and do have an independent influence on movement emergence. To be effective in recruiting suffragists, the expediency argument did not require particular conditions to be present.

Among the control variables (cols. 1-4), mobilization in one state does not influence whether the suffragists mobilized in a neighboring state. On the other hand, the number of previous suffrage organizations and the length of time since a previous suffrage organization do sometimes influence organizational mobilization. The significant results for these measures suggest that organizing "events" within a state are dependent to some degree. Controlling for this dependency with the inclusion these two measures minimizes the chances of bias in the standard errors. 20  
Discussion and Conclusions

In the years around the turn of the twentieth century, women and men came together to form state suffrage associations. They hoped through their work in these organizations to broaden democracy by winning the formal inclusion of women in the polity. This grassroots organizing

occurred in nearly every state in the union. By 1920 when the federal amendment giving women the vote was ratified, the movement had lasted well over 50 years, making it one of the longest lasting social movements in U.S. history. Rarely, though, have researchers investigated the reasons why individuals mobilized in all parts of the country to work for woman suffrage. Was it simply because, in a nation that prides itself on being democratic, the cause [End Page 470] was a just one? Interestingly, the evidence here suggests otherwise. The reasons individuals across the U.S. came together to fight for woman suffrage appear to be rooted largely in the very instrumental ways in which the national suffrage organizations worked to mobilize state-level constituencies. Where and when the national suffrage organizations sent resources -- including skilled organizers, rousing speakers, and financial help -- this grassroots organizing caught on. In fact, it may well be the activities of the national that explain, at least to some degree, why the South and the West often lagged behind the East in organizing to win the vote: the national organizations simply arrived to foment activism in these regions later than they did in the East. The data show that this is the case when comparing the East to both the West and South (state-specific sources). It was, for example, not until the 1890s that the national organizations began a conscious effort to mobilize southern women.

Moreover, the analyses here show that justice arguments for suffrage -- that is, the argument that women should be allowed to vote because it was their natural right as citizens to do so -- did not bring about movement mobilization. When these arguments were used, individuals were no more likely to organize than they were otherwise. Rather, what lured individuals to the cause were expediency arguments about women's special place in politics. When organizers and leaders of the national movement argued that women would bring their unique "womanly" perspective to the ballot box to help solve the country's social ills, individuals were far more likely to be persuaded to join the suffrage bandwagon. The results here make clear that to launch a movement, activists need to use arguments that will resonate with

widely held beliefs (Snow et al. 1986). Arguments that do not resonate in this way are simply not as effective in spurring mobilization.

Although social movement researchers have pointed to the importance of political opportunities in explaining the emergence of movements (McAdam, McCarthy & Zald 1996), the analyses here show that the political context played at best only a minor role in suffrage organizing, leaving the emergence of these movements to be explained by other factors. It may be that researchers need to rethink how they conceptualize the processes that lead to movement formation. Perhaps there is no one set of factors that can always explain when movements arise. For those joining the suffrage cause -- most of whom were women in a time when women were formally excluded from politics -- party politics, past legislative actions, and the degree of difficulty in voting rights reform appear to have had little influence on decisions about mobilization. Other factors had a more definite impact. The suffragists, in fact, had a widely stated nonpartisan approach to their efforts to win the vote (Kraditor [1965] 1981). It may be that their separation from much of formal politics of the time simply made political opportunities for the suffragists less relevant than they have been shown to be for other movements (Amenta & Zylan 1991). McGerr (1990:881) states that women were "cut off from the parties [and] cut off from the ballot." Other scholars have also noted women's isolation from party politics, especially during the nineteenth century (e.g., Clemens [End Page 471] 1993; Freeman 2000). Perhaps social movement researchers need to consider that the effects of particular circumstances on movement emergence, such as political opportunities, may be contingent on historical circumstances (Quadagno & Knapp 1992). That is, in some situations political opportunities may be crucial in determining when movements arise. In other circumstances, where there is "distance" between the activists and the state and politics (Davis 1999), for instance, political opportunities may be far less important. The same may be true for organizational resources. This leaves researchers with the task of discerning in which sorts of contexts the different factors will be instrumental.

Researchers should also consider that there are a variety of indicators of movement mobilization. The emergence of movement organizations, which is examined here, is only one measure of collective action. Other forms of mobilization include protest events (Soule et al. 1999; Minkoff 1997) and even volunteering and contributing financially to a cause (McCarthy & Wolfson 1996). The research literature is at a juncture now where we need to explore whether the same dynamics that produce organizational mobilization also foster protest activity and other forms of collective action.

What clearly mattered, however, for grassroots suffrage organizing were two things: the way in which early activists framed rationales for voting rights for women and the resources offered particularly by the national suffrage organizations. And this pattern varied little across regions. In fact, the similarities in the circumstances leading to movement formation were quite striking across the eastern, western, and southern regions. Moreover, these analyses reveal some of the specific features of the way in which these two dynamics work. First, framing efforts have an impact on mobilization independent of that of contextual opportunities. The success of the use of expediency arguments in recruiting members to the cause did not depend, for instance, on the existence of a political opportunity or the presence of pre-existing networks. Second, indigenous organizations, such as a state WCTU, did not provide the spark that launched suffrage organizing. Rather, for the most part, outsiders to the state, from the national suffrage organizations, provided the initiatives that induced organizing. The organizational networks and resources that can lead to movement formation then, these results suggest, do not have to be home-grown, they can come from outside the region.

But perhaps even most importantly, the strong role of the national suffrage organizations and that of ideological framing shows that agency matters in the formation of movements. Just as McCarthy and Wolfson (1996) have found, I find, too, that the resources and arguments that actors use to motivate others to join in a collective effort to bring about

social change can have a decided impact. The efforts and arguments of Susan B. Anthony and other suffrage leaders, organizers, and supporters as they traveled across the country along with the other resources that the national used to stir up suffrage sentiment were largely responsible for the [End Page 472] grassroots organizational mobilization of the movement. These women did not need to wait for opportunities to emerge. They made the movement happen.

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#### Notes

This work benefited from funding from the National Science Foundation (SBR-9631520), the University Research Council at Vanderbilt University, and the Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics at Iowa State University. In addition, I am grateful to Karen Campbell, Wayne Santoro, and anonymous reviewers at Social Forces for helpful comments and to Ellen Granberg and Chris Mowery for their careful research assistance. Please direct correspondence to Holly McCammon, Department of Sociology, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN 37235. E-mail: [mccammhj@ctrvax.vanderbilt.edu](mailto:mccammhj@ctrvax.vanderbilt.edu).

1. Wyoming was the first state to grant women full voting rights, although it was a territory when it did so in 1869. No state suffrage organization was ever formed in the state, but a handful of individuals were active in seeking woman suffrage there (Larson 1965).
2. There are, however, a number of case studies of collective action framing in this literature (e.g., Jasper 1999; Zuo & Benford 1995).
3. A number of studies explore the development of suffrage activism in particular states (e.g., Clifford 1979; Larson 1972b; McBride 1993; Tucker 1951). These studies primarily give coverage of the main events of the state-specific suffrage campaigns; few, however, provide focused accounts of movement emergence per se. Some exceptions to this, however, are for the southern states, where historians have attempted to explain why the South generally lagged behind the East and West in mobilizing for the vote (Green 1997; Scott 1970; Turner 1992).
4. The information in these figures comes from a variety of state-specific sources on the suffrage movements which I discuss below. The East includes: Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. The West includes: Arizona, California,

Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. The South includes: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

5. A zero value on these plots does not mean that no associations existed, only that no new organizations were formed in a particular year.

6. Prior to 1915, eleven states passed full voting rights for women (Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming) and there was little or no suffrage activity after this in these states until the campaigns to ratify the federal amendment (state-specific sources).

7. There could also be differences in the processes leading to organizing in the earlier years compared with organizing in the later years. This, too, is explored below.

8. When a neighboring state passed suffrage, some individuals in adjacent states may have experienced an intensification of their frustration in not having voting rights and thus a sense of relative deprivation as they compared their circumstance to that of their neighbors (Geschwender 1964). While such grievance theories have not fared well empirically (Amenta & Zylan 1991; Khawaja 1994) and thus they are not considered further here, it is possible that the mechanism underlying the workings of a political opportunity of this nature is that the opportunity increases grievances and frustrations in a segment of the population. I thank a Social Forces reviewer for pointing out this possibility.

9. Sources for these trends include: Giele 1995; Matthews 1992; U.S. Bureau of the Census 1872, 1883, 1897, 1902, 1914, 1923; U.S. Department of Commerce 1919, 1920, 1922, 1923; U.S. Office of Education 1872-1914, 1916, 1917.

10. In the analysis, this binary dependent variable is transformed into the hazard rate of organizational formation (McCammon 1998).

11. Wyoming, which did not form a state association, is excluded from the analysis after the passage of full voting rights for women in that state in 1869.

12. Additional measures used in the analysis come from this data collection effort. Such sources are labeled "state-specific sources."

13. This measure has missing data for the early years for some states, but the missing data do not censor any events.

14. Voting data for all legislative races in states for this time period, a more direct measure of electoral competition, are unavailable. I also examined a similar measure for the percentage of seats held by Democrats but the results were no different than those for the Republican measure (analyses not shown).

15. Also, data on female professionals are available only in census years. The values for intervening years are linearly interpolated.

16. The U.S. Census defines urbanization as the percentage of the population living in cities with more than 2,500 residents. The Census figures for urbanization are available only in decennial years. Intervening years were linearly interpolated.

17. Results from analyses including a spatial effect term suggested by Deane, Beck, and Tolnay (1998) did not differ in any meaningful way from those in which the more straightforward neighboring states term was included.

18. Alaska and Hawaii are not included in these analyses due to a lack of data.

19. The national organizations originated in the East, primarily in Massachusetts and New York (DuBois 1978).

20. Correlations among all independent variables in the analyses show that multicollinearity is not present. In addition to the interaction terms discussed above, other interactions (e.g., between the political opportunity and resource measures) were examined and found not to be significant predictors of suffrage organizing. The impact of a number of additional factors was examined, including: the presence of suffrage opposition organizations (or "antis"), the role of the liquor industry (which also opposed woman suffrage), and the percentage of women in paid employment. None of these measures were significant (analyses also not shown). Finally, I also compared results from an analysis of suffrage organizing in only the earliest years (1866-79) and all later years (1880-1914). The results of these two analyses are substantively the same, suggesting that little over time variation exists in the processes shaping suffrage organizing.

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## THEORETICAL ISSUES

### *Jane Grey Swisshelm, Elizabeth Keckley, and the Significance of Race Consciousness in American Women's History*

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*In the recent past, feminist attempts to document women's participation in all aspects of American life have been complicated by a disagreement over the meaning of "woman" as a category of inquiry and the relationship of that category to other categories of analysis, such as race, class, ethnicity, or sexual preference. Using the autobiographies of Jane Grey Swisshelm, a white newspaper editor, and Elizabeth Keckley, a former slave, as a case study, this article argues that focusing on diversity and difference has tended to obscure the ways in which the lives of all kinds of women are linked to each other and how women have exploited the differences among themselves to contextualize their experiences, to anticipate the ways those experiences might be understood by others, and to create their own public personas to suit their own purposes.*

In the midst of the Great Depression, an Associated Press article appeared on one of the back pages of the *Washington Star* entitled, "Bizarre Lincoln Story is Traced, 'Sob Sister' Revealed as Writer of Tragic Tale of Widow." According to the story, David Rankin Barbee, identified as "a close student" of the Civil War period, was making the claim that a book published in 1868 entitled *Behind the Scenes, or Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House* by "Elizabeth Keckley, Formerly a Slave, But More Recently Modiste, and Friend to Mrs. Abraham Lincoln" was, in fact, written by Jane Grey Swisshelm, a well-known white, nineteenth-century abolitionist newspaper editor and woman's rights advocate from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Elizabeth Keckley, Barbee proclaimed, was a figment of Swisshelm's imagination.<sup>1</sup>

Barbee offered two explanations for his allegations concerning *Behind the Scenes*. First, he claimed that a Washington newspaper correspondent named George Alfred Townsend had referred to Swisshelm as "the author of the Mme. Keckley book." This reference, combined with Jane's writing style, her commitment to antislavery, her experience as a dressmaker, her presence in Washington during the Civil War, and her friendship with Mary Todd Lincoln, convinced Barbee that Swisshelm was the author of the Keckley book.<sup>2</sup>

Barbee's speculations about the authorship of Keckley's book were reminiscent of charges made by whites a century before when Northern