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≡ The Oxford Handbook of
**U.S. WOMEN'S SOCIAL
MOVEMENT ACTIVISM**

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Edited by

HOLLY J. McCAMMON, VERTA TAYLOR,
JO REGER,

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THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

U.S. WOMEN'S
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ACTIVISM

INTRODUCTION

The Long History of Women's Social Movement Activism in the United States

HOLLY J. McCAMMON, VERTA TAYLOR, JO REGER,
AND RACHEL L. EINWOHNER

WHAT is women's social movement activism? We know that social movements are groups of individuals who collectively challenge authorities over a sustained period of time, often using public means to express their grievances and resistance. Activists in social movements typically coordinate their efforts through social movement organizations, networks, and communities. We know as well that activism can also take place inside institutions using persuasive methods to convince institutional leaders to change their practices and policy. When looking back over the last 200 years in the United States, one can find a multitude of instances of women engaging in social movement activism. Women's activism has a long history and takes myriad forms, from public marches and rallies, such as the suffrage parades in the 1910s and the Women's March in 2017, to women's leadership in the civil rights and environmental justice movements, to women's influence in the U.S. labor movement, to congressional lobbying by women's organizations over the course of the twentieth century, to women's self-help health organizations, to name just a few examples of women's social movement activism (Cobble 2007; Goss 2013; McCammon 2003; Rainey and Johnson 2009; Robnett 1997; Taylor 1996; White 2011). Some of the earliest collective actions by women date back to 1800 with women's efforts in benevolent societies and early labor activities, and today one can observe women's feminist activism virtually "everywhere" (Reger 2012). Women have coordinated their activist efforts in a variety of types of organizations and have long participated in social movement activism in U.S. history.

The scholarly literature on U.S. women's social movement activism today is broad. The work considers feminist activism in its numerous forms, as well as women's contributions to other social movements, including conservative movements that have opposed greater equality and rights for women.¹ Scholarship on women's collective action

examines the social movement participants as well as their organizations, their collective identities and common interests, their modes of action, and the often far-reaching influences of their efforts. This growing body of research makes women's activism visible, and it places women at the center of investigations of social movements, greatly augmenting what we know about movement mobilization. This *Handbook* provides an in-depth and extensive examination of scholarly research on U.S. women's social movement activism, as well as a detailed look at the activism itself. To date, there have been few attempts to summarize and characterize this scholarship and to determine what has and has not yet been investigated.² Our volume thus provides a much-needed appraisal of the literature. Each chapter in the volume, in addition to exploring research on women's collective efforts, discusses avenues for future research. A key goal of this edited volume is to guide next steps in women's activism scholarship, helping researchers identify what we still do not know about women's collective action, all toward further expanding the study of women's activism.

Here, in the Introduction, we do not attempt to summarize the long history of women's social movement activism. Rather, the chapters, written by prominent scholars in the field, offer thoughtful and thorough accounts of the literature and a detailed consideration of women's activism itself. Our Introduction, instead, provides a broad or "aerial" overview of the long history of the scholarly study of women's activism itself, tracing the contours of the field's unfolding, from some of the earliest accounts to its rich and plentiful variety of investigations today. We conclude our discussion with an overview of the *Handbook's* five major sections and a brief look at the chapters within them.

STUDYING WOMEN'S SOCIAL MOVEMENT ACTIVISM

The Earliest Accounts

The earliest written accounts of U.S. women's activism date back to the turn of the nineteenth century and come from newspapers, letters shared between movement participants, reports from early organizational meetings, and tracts published by the activists themselves. For instance, New York City's Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children offered minutes from its meetings in 1803 (Boylan 2002). Melder (1977) discusses these early women's benevolent groups as primarily religious organizations, led by middle-class, White women to minister to the needs of the urban poor. Lydia Maria Child, a member of the American Anti-Slavery Society, published her 1833 tract against slavery, *An Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans* (Salerno 2005). Today we would call these available written accounts primary documents, and such materials provide scholars with vivid glimpses into women's earliest collective struggles.

The first attempts to characterize women's activism in published work, or what might be referred to as the earliest scholarship—although these accounts could be limited and sometimes biased—were likely to be biographies of individual actors, such as Sarah Hopkins Bradford's 1869 biography of Harriet Tubman, titled *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman*. Tubman, a former slave herself, was a leader in the abolitionist movement's efforts to free slaves in the 1850s, engaging in what today is referred to as a form of "high-risk" activism, guiding individuals in their escape from human slavery in the South via the Underground Railroad. Many early accounts of women's activist efforts were autobiographical. Harriet Hanson Robinson in 1898 published *Loom and Spindle: Or Life among the Early Mill Girls*, in which she describes her participation as a child worker in the 1836 Lowell, Massachusetts, textile mill strike, a "turn out" of female factory workers and a labor action that was at the forefront of a growing tide of industrial strikes in the nineteenth century. The Lowell women and girls protested an increase in rent at mill-owned boarding houses, an increase that was effectively a wage reduction. The strikers formed the Factory Girls' Association and succeeded in pressuring the mill's owners to revoke the rent increase. Women's early collective action, as the benevolent societies, abolitionism, and labor strikes illustrate, did not specifically address women's rights, but rather occurred as women participated in and led movements opposing racial and class oppression.

By the latter half of the nineteenth century, the woman suffrage movement mobilized on a growing scale in the United States to demand a formal political voice for women (Flexner 1959). This was the first mass wave of feminist activism in the United States. Late in the nineteenth century, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, leaders in the movement, began publishing the six-volume *History of Woman Suffrage*, detailing the events, words, and actions of this mass mobilization (Stanton et al. 1881–1922). The final two volumes would not be published until after Anthony and Stanton's deaths. DuBois (1998: 213) remarks that the *History* was a "deliberate effort on the part of activists to ensure their place in the historical record." But, as can be true of accounts written by movement participants themselves, the *History* contained limitations. As DuBois discusses, divisions and tensions within the suffrage movement were not included in the volumes' 5,600 pages of text. Stanton's daughter, Harriot Stanton Blatch, noticed an important omission when reading a draft of one of the earlier volumes: Anthony and Stanton excluded mention of the American Woman Suffrage Association, the rival movement organization to their National Woman Suffrage Association (Blatch and Lutz 1940).³ Blatch, with leave from Stanton and Anthony, wrote the missing chapter, which appears in volume 2. In time, other suffragists published their accounts of the movement, including Carrie Chapman Catt, who led the National American Woman Suffrage Association to victory in 1920, and Doris Stevens, who recounted the political imprisonment of National Woman's Party (NWP) suffragists as a result of their protest outside the White House during World War I (e.g., Catt and Shuler 1923; Rupp 1989; Stevens 1920). During their incarceration, the NWP women held a hunger strike and were force-fed by prison officials. These written works by suffragists, while certainly limited in some respects, provide a critical body of work documenting this important period of women's rights activism.

Until the late 1950s, such accounts offered virtually the only insights into U.S. women's collective feminist efforts.⁴

Contemporary Scholarship

Eleanor Flexner's *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States*, first published in 1959, ushered in the contemporary era of scholarly writing about U.S. women's activism. Flexner herself was not a university scholar, a profession difficult to enter for many women in these earlier years (Graham 1978), but her account of the suffrage movement is detailed and accurate, and it usefully situates the movement in its broad historical context (DuBois 1991). Rupp (1992: 159) considers the politics of Flexner's work, citing "Flexner's implicit assumption that history can be used as a feminist tool." Teaching the history of women's struggle for greater rights can help readers understand and respond to the gender bias they themselves confront, and Flexner's writing provides a turning point, opening the door for a substantial body of work on women's activism that would follow. Flexner wrote in the 1950s, at a time when women's collective action—just as in the era prior to the Civil War—was not much focused on gaining greater equality for women. In the 1950s the national feminist movement was in abeyance (Taylor 1989), and women's activist attention was often elsewhere, fighting for racial equality in the civil rights movement and lobbying Congress for national laws concerning defense and national security, education reform, and consumer safety (Goss 2013; Robnett 1997; although see McCammon 2012 and Rupp and Taylor 1987 for exceptions to the lack of women's rights activism).

With the rise of the second wave of feminism in the 1960s, scholars by the 1970s began to consider women's organized efforts for social change with greater frequency.⁵ By the 1980s, increasing numbers of women were moving into the professoriate, including in history, political science, and sociology, fields in which scholars were likely to assess women's social movement activism, and this demographic shift in the academy, too, added to the interest in women's politicized collective action (Beckwith 2001; Curtis 2011). Moreover, women's studies programs were emerging in universities, with additional scholars predisposed to ask the "woman question" (Boxer 1998). Table I.1 provides citation counts for searches in various scholarly electronic databases using the term "women's movement." These searches largely reflect journal article citations, although some citations are for book reviews published in journals.⁶ The increase in number of "women's movement" citations between the 1960s and 1970s is dramatic. Admittedly, this is only an approximate indicator of scholarly attention to women's activism. Books are not fully included. Further, the term "women's movement" focuses the search on movements largely populated by women, to the exclusion of other types of movements in which women mobilize side by side with men. Additionally, the term "women's movement" could certainly appear in articles not focused on women's activism, so a citation does not necessarily indicate a study specifically of women's collective efforts. But a review of the types of titles listed in these search results shows that a substantial number of the articles are focused

Table I.1 Citation Counts from Scholarly Electronic Databases Using Search Term "Women's Movement," 1950s to 2000s

Decades	America History and Life	Gender Studies	Sociological Abstracts	Worldwide Political Science Abstracts	Total
1950s	2	2	0	0	4
1960s	3	6	3	0	12
1970s	97	493	196	21	807
1980s	157	928	369	108	1,562
1990s	193	1,484	613	126	2,416
2000s	212	1,353	601	327	2,493

on women's social movement activism. Moreover, a parallel search for articles with the term "women's movement" appearing in the article title itself reveals the same dramatic increase from the 1960s to the 1970s.

The mass mobilization of women in the 1960s and 1970s in the feminist movement and other social movements, along with an increase in the number of female academics, unleashed a torrent of scholarly investigation into women's collective action, investigations of both contemporary and past struggles. A number of studies published in the 1960s and 1970s show scholars following in Flexner's footsteps, probing even more deeply into the suffrage movement's history (DuBois 1978; Kraditor 1965; Scott and Scott 1975; Strom 1975). Others, in an important turn, began to consider women's collective efforts more broadly, with Rose Schneiderman's (1967) *All for One* portraying the Women's Trade Union League, Gerda Lerner's (1967) *The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina* examining Angelina and Sarah Grimké's leadership in the abolitionist movement as well as their early feminism, and Alfreda M. Duster's (1970) edited autobiography of her mother, Ida B. Wells, *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*.

This period also witnessed substantial attention to the second mass wave of feminist mobilization. Jo Freeman's (1975) *The Politics of Women's Liberation* provides an early treatment, tracing the liberal and radical branches of women's collective action, including the generational differences among women in the movement. At the same time, critiques of this wave of feminism emerged, with assessments that the movement centered on White, middle-class women's issues and could be exclusionary of women of color, working-class women, and lesbians (Koedt, Rapone, and Levine 1971; Moraga and Anzaldúa 1981).

By the 1980s and 1990s, research on U.S. women's activism exploded. The 1980s saw a number of examinations of the emergence and failure to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) (Becker 1981; Berry 1986; Mansbridge 1986), close looks at abortion politics (Luker 1984; Staggenborg 1986, 1988), and cross-national comparisons between

the contemporary U.S. women's movement and mobilizations in Western Europe (Katzenstein and Mueller 1987). By this time and continuing into the follow decades, the number of scholarly projects on U.S. women's activism so increased that it becomes difficult to characterize its primary trends with any real specificity. Here we describe just two main themes, given their importance and scope, in the recent development of this body of scholarship: the scholarship's increasing diversity and theoretical sophistication.

Diversity in Women's Activism Scholarship

Scholarship on women's social movement efforts became far more diverse by the end of the twentieth century. The growing diversity in scholarship was a much needed shift. With few exceptions, earlier studies emphasized White women's activism, and, for the most part, White women who were middle-class feminists. The widened lens of scholarly study late in the twentieth century occurred in a variety of significant ways. One such way was investigating the activism of women of color. Pauli Murray in 1970 identified the "historical neglect" of the struggles of Black women, stating that

[o]f the many books published on the Negro experience and the Black Revolution in recent times, to date not one has concerned itself with the struggles of black women and their contributions to history. Of approximately 800 full-length articles published in the *Journal of Negro History* since its inception in 1916, only six have dealt directly with the Negro woman. Only two have considered Negro women as a group: Carter G. Woodson's "The Negro Washerwoman: A Vanishing Figure" (14 *JNH* 1930) and Jessie W. Pankhurst's "The Role of the Black Mammy in the Plantation Household" (28 *JNH* 1938). (1970: 91)

Many heeded Murray's call. Sharon Harley and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn published their edited volume, *The Afro-American Woman: Struggles and Images*, in the late 1970s. Cynthia Neverdon-Morton's chapter in the volume, "The Black Woman's Struggle for Equality in the South, 1895–1925," describes women who led efforts in their local communities to improve education, sanitation, and social services, often when a White-dominated city government would not respond to the needs of African-American neighborhoods.

In the early 1980s, bell hooks wrote *Ain't I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism*, discussing racial and class biases in the largely White, middle-class feminist movement. Paula Giddings published *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America*. Her volume's broad scope begins with anti-lynching campaigns in the late nineteenth century and moves forward to the civil rights and women's liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Giddings uses a moment during the 1970 Women's Strike for Equality to encapsulate strains in the relationship between Black and White women in the women's movement. Frances Beal, leader in the Third World Women's Alliance, carried a sign reading, "Hands Off Angela Davis," which motivated a White participant to tell her that "Angela Davis has nothing to do with the women's liberation." Beal replied, "It has nothing to do with the kind of liberation you're talking about, but it has everything to do with the kind of liberation we're talking about" (Giddings

1984: 305). More recently, a number of researchers (Breines 2006; Gilmore 2008) help us understand the tensions between Black and White women during the second wave feminist movement.

The 1980s and 1990s brought further examinations of women's roles in the civil rights movement, with Septima Clark and Jo Ann Robinson both publishing their first-person accounts (Clark's *Ready from Within: Septima Clark and the Civil Rights Movement* [1986], and Robinson's *The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Women Who Started It: The Memoir of Jo Ann Gibson Robinson* [1987]). Belinda Robnett's (1997) pivotal investigation into women's civil rights movement leadership began to move the literature beyond basic accounts of activism and to theorize the forms of women's contributions in the civil rights movement. Robnett develops the concept of bridge leadership, revealing the ways in which women in the movement linked African-American community members to the movement's male religious leadership. Mary Pardo's (1998) *Mexican American Women Activists* conceptualizes Latinas' agency in their communities as women act to protect families and their local environments. Benita Roth (2004) also builds a theoretical framework as she follows the rise of Black and Chicana feminist organizing in groups separate from largely White feminist groups. She posits a movement process of "organizing one's own," as social movement groups compete with one another in an increasingly dense social movement field. Chow (1987) identifies a related process as Asian-American women choose to unite with Asian-American men to combat ethnic discrimination that often went unnoticed by White feminists.

Other scholars diversify the study of women's activism in numerous additional ways, examining poor women's mobilizations (Feldman, Stall, and Wright 1998; West 1981), lesbian feminism (Stein 1997; Taylor and Whittier 1992), radical feminism (Echols 1989; Whittier 1995), third wave and community-level feminism (Gilmore 2013; Naples 1998; Reger 2005, 2012), reproductive rights mobilizations (Staggenborg 1991), insider activists (Banaszak 2010; Katzenstein 1998), women's self-help (Taylor 1996), a growing global focus in U.S. women's activism (Paxton and Hughes 2007; Rupp 1997; Taft 2010), and women in the environmental movement (Gomez, Shafiei, and Johnson 2011; Krauss 1993; Peeples and DeLuca 2006), to name just some of the richness in a rapidly growing literature.

One concentrated area of research concerns working-class women's organizations, their feminist consciousness, and within-movement strategies, with early work by Foner (1979) sketching women's history in the American labor movement. Milkman (1985) describes the limited success of women union members in gaining positions of leadership and altering union policy agendas in the 1970s and 1980s. Today, in addition to demonstrating the benefits of union membership for women workers, studies of unionized women theorize the circumstances under which women can make significant gains in the union movement (Bronfenbrenner 2005; Milkman 2007). Recent scholarship on women in the labor movement and, increasingly, in a broader workplace justice movement examines women workers at the intersections of race, ethnicity, and gender, and how coalitions among women (and men) spanning racial and ethnic groups can be formed and maintained (Bronfenbrenner and Warren 2007; Kurtz 2002; Rose 1998; Roth 2003).

Not all women's activism is an attempt to increase women's political presence and power, however, and not all women's activism takes a liberal stand. Anti-feminists and other conservative women have mobilized in numerous ways, including upper-class, White women's organizing against woman suffrage at the turn of the twentieth century (Marshall 1997), later women's mobilizations against the ERA (Critchlow 2005; Marshall 1985), and women's participation in the Ku Klux Klan (Blee 1991). Such mobilizations have not received the same amount of attention as movements to expand women's equality, but in a recent spate of research, scholars increasingly document conservative women's mobilizations in the contemporary period (Benowitz 2015; Blee 2002; Nickerson 2012). Researchers explore the motivations and identities of female conservative activists, orientations often rooted in conservative religious traditions, including women in the contemporary Tea Party (Rosen 2012). Deckman (2016), in fact, finds unprecedented leadership for women in Tea Party organizations and offers an explanation of their rise to power. McGirr (2001: 4) describes women who identify as suburban housewives mobilizing large-scale petition drives by working out of their homes, pointing to their "kitchen-table activism" and their concerns with societal challenges to their conservative Christian beliefs. She links the efforts of these women to the larger conservative political movement, calling the movement as a whole "one of the most profound transformations of 20th-century U.S. politics." Others investigate anti-feminism, women organizing specifically against the feminist movement (Critchlow 2005). Schreiber (2008) details the activities of two groups, Concerned Women for America, a large, national grassroots group, and Independent Women's Forum, formed by economically conservative, professional women. Others (Rohlinger 2015; Ziegler 2013) explore conservative women's mobilizations against the contentious issue of abortion rights.

Theorizing Women's Social Movement Activism

The second major development in women's activism research is its substantial theoretical development. Scholars conceptualize and theorize factors linked to the emergence of women's collective action, the significance of gender processes for understanding dynamics fundamental to all social movements, and the cultural and political contexts influencing women's activism. Again, an aerial view of scholarship in the field shows that earlier studies were often "compensatory," simply re-excavating the past and bringing women into the history and sociological study of social movements. Even late in the twentieth century, scholars (Stacey and Thorne 1985; Taylor and Whittier 1998) continued to lament that "mainstream" social movement studies often did not incorporate or consider women's activism. The task of writing women into our study of activism has not yet ended, but today, most major overviews of social movement activism include consideration of the gendered dynamics of struggle and of women's activism itself (e.g., Snow et al. 2004, 2013). A clear trend in the current study of women's collective action is that the field is increasingly sophisticated theoretically. Instead of simply bringing women into studies of social movements, scholars now explicitly theorize their activism, as well as the role of gender in collective action, and we have learned much from this effort.

Some of the earliest theoretical statements along these lines (Einwohner, Hollander, and Olson 2000; Taylor 1996; Taylor and Whittier 1998) assert the often highly gendered processes and structures of activism, and invite researchers to consider that both the broad external context of activism and internal movement dynamics can be gendered. Gendered processes can advantage or disadvantage women activists, and scholars now recognize that exploring the impact of these dynamics on women activists opens up a series of important research questions. Additionally, investigating women's power and capacity to influence political and institutional structures, cultural norms and discourses, and the distribution of collective goods also points scholars toward a series of critical research questions pertaining to women, social movements, and agency (McCammon 2012). In the late 1990s, Taylor and Whittier (1998) invited researchers of women's social movement activism to "reconceptualize" the study of social movements by placing women and gender at the center and revising core theoretical questions about opportunity structures, movement resources, tactical repertoires, and discursive framing. To date, many have engaged in such scholarship, and here we briefly consider just some of these developments, particularly those concerning opportunity structures, internal movement cultural dynamics including collective action framing, and the mobilizing structures of activism.

One line of analytic work considers women's collective action in light of broader political and cultural opportunity structures. Gendered state structures that exclude women necessitate—especially early on in the United States, when women were denied voting rights and the ability to hold political office—that women seek alternative methods of political action. Zaeske (2003) describes U.S. women's early use of petitioning to collectively pressure political leaders when the political opportunity structure was largely closed to women. Even with ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, African-American women (and men) continued to be excluded from the electorate, and Black men and women joined forces in the civil rights movement to press for voting rights.

While exclusionary state structures invite challenges of that exclusion, mobilizations to resist are more likely to occur when at least a segment of political power holders signal a degree of openness to the challenge. McAdam (1982) theorizes political opportunity structures to explain the emergence of social movement activism, and a number of scholars apply this theoretical framework to the women's movement. Costain (1992), for instance, utilizes an opportunity structure logic to explore the emergence and legislative successes of the 1960s and 1970s women's movement, telling us that a receptive political environment at the time, more so than women's mobilization itself, explains the political victories. Soule and Olzak (2004), in a study of state ratifications of the ERA, find that women's organizations are more likely to succeed when the broader political environment is favorable. Others move beyond application of a political opportunity framework to women's mobilization and expand our theorizing to see gendered processes at work in opportunity structures. McCammon et al. (2001) posit that state-level woman suffrage movements were successful in winning voting rights not only because of political opportunities, but also because of a gendered opportunity structure, one in which shifts in (male) political elites' views toward women and gender roles were already

liberalizing, and gendered opportunities led male leaders to support votes for women. McCammon goes on to show how women as active and strategic collective agents adapt to and seize moments of political and cultural opportunity, and how this combination of women's strategic agency and a broader context of political receptiveness can result in favorable outcomes for movement actors (McCammon et al. 2008; McCammon 2012).

Internal women's movement cultural dynamics prove particularly ripe for generating new conceptualizations regarding social movements and, again, we learn much theoretically from investigations of women's activism. Taylor and Whittier (1992) examine lesbian feminist movement communities and further our theoretical insight by distilling core facets of movement collective identity, pointing to boundaries, oppositional group consciousness, and the ongoing practices (or negotiations) that allow members to affirm their shared identity. Whittier (1995) follows different generations in feminism's second wave and defines the concept of social-movement "political generations," groups whose experiences at formative life-course moments defined by specific historical contexts result in important shared group understandings. Staggenborg (1998b) develops the idea of social-movement community by investigating a local women's movement and how the movement-community's culture fosters recruitment and movement maintenance. The emotion culture within movement groups can serve to unify actors or may splinter them, and scholars note that such cultures contribute importantly to the construction of collective identity (Freeman 1998; Guenther 2009; Taylor 1996, 2000; Taylor and Rupp 2002). Studies of internal group dynamics in women's activism help us understand how differences in racial, ethnic, and sexual identities, class backgrounds, and issue salience can be considered to foster stronger mobilizations and broad coalitions (Kretschmer 2014; Naples 1998; Roth 2004; Taylor and Whittier 1992). Others (e.g., Einwohner 1999) examine how the gender and class composition of movement groups influences the public's perceptions of activism, and still others examine the gendered nature of social movement tactics, demonstrating that women's movements have frequently used tactics that derive from women's distinctive cultures (Hurwitz and Taylor 2012; Taylor and Van Dyke 2004).

Study of women's activism has also helped movement scholars theorize the meaning making done by activists, that is, their social movement framing. Einwohner et al. (2000) theorize gender as a cultural construct that can be deployed by social movement actors, with varying meanings attached. Activists can formulate gendered frames that take advantage of widely accepted ideational elements about women's accepted roles to further the movement's goals, and empirical studies of the women's movement demonstrate the influential role of activist framing. During the U.S. suffrage movement, for instance, researchers find that more radical arguments elevating equal rights for women had some difficulty taking hold in the public's mind when many accepted the traditional separate-spheres ideology that women's place was in the home (Buechler 1990; Kraditor 1965). However, when the movement emphasized "expediency" rationales, or those arguments that explained the need for a women's vote in terms of how women's political action could help children, families, and homes, the movement was far more successful in its organizing and in achieving its political

goals (McCammon 2001; McCammon et al. 2001). A number of scholars trace the influence of a maternalist frame in women's collective work, when women harness the power of motherhood to make their collective claims (Carreon and Moghadam 2015; Kutz-Flamenbaum 2011; Reese 1996). Others examining women's activism note the importance of strategically matching movement framing to the broader discursive context (Ferree 2003; McCammon 2012; McCammon et al. 2007).

Numerous scholars explore the internal dynamics of movements even further, as women and men work side by side in activism. They theorize and document gendered divisions of labor within social movements (Culley and Angelique 2003; Kuumba 2001; Marshall 1998; Melcher et al. 1992; Wrigley 1998). Fonow (1998) writes of the exclusion of female steelworkers from picket lines during the Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel strike in the 1980s and calls the strike a "deeply gendered" protest. Women challenged their exclusion from the picket lines, and Fonow's research, like that of others (Barnett 1993; Evans 1979; Roth 2003; Schrepfer 2005), illuminates that women's struggles in social movements—in social movements of many types—often must take different forms than that of men because of a need to combat sexism in movements.

Social movement scholars generally have paid limited attention to movement leadership, and women's leadership especially has been understudied (for exceptions, see Hanisch 2001; McCammon 2012; Reger 2007; Reger and Staggenborg 2006; Robnett 1997). Barnett (1993) describes how women leaders in the civil rights movement remain invisible to many researchers. A focus on women's collective action leadership, however, can reveal a variety of forms of leadership and thereby expand our understanding of these pivotal movement roles. Robnett's (1997) examination of women in the civil rights movement is a case in point. Robnett reconceptualizes leadership by developing the idea of "bridge leaders" who connect social-movement organizational leadership to grassroots members. Without bridge leaders, a movement's ability to mobilize can be undercut. In addition, women leaders may perceive the power of their role differently from men, in that leadership for men may stress "power over others," while for women, leadership power highlights "empowering others" (Darlington and Mulvaney 2003; Ferguson 1987). Latinas emerge as leaders in local political action, where neighborhood and local environmental improvements are sought (de la Garza, Menchaca, and DeSipio 1994; Pardo 1998), and Black women have long been leaders in the environmental justice movement, often invoking racial identities in their activism (Prindeville 2004; Rainey and Johnson 2009). In these mobilizations by women of color, the female group leaders often emphasize the need to empower local residents for the benefit of families and communities.

Scholars have learned much from examining the mobilizing structures of women's activism, including how women's organizations navigate multiple, intersecting identities (Reger 2002; Springer 2005); the variety and benefits of differing forms of organizing structures (Clemens 1993; Polletta 2002); how abeyance organizations can maintain a movement, even in unreceptive political climates (Taylor 1989; Taylor and Rupp 1993); the processes influencing movement organizational change (Minkoff 1999); the professionalization of feminist organizations (Staggenborg 1988); and how culture, as well as

gender, is inherent in movement organizational structures (Barakso 2004; Einwohner et al. 2000; Robnett 1997). One significant line of movement theorizing considers contemporary feminists' "insider" activism, that is, shifting activism from "outsider" status because the activism stems from social movement groups to "insider" status because the activism is conducted by institutional actors and takes place inside dominant institutions. Banaszak (2010) details feminist institutional actors in the federal government, as members of Congress and agency leaders ("insiders") work toward policy that benefits women (see also Santoro and McGuire 1999). Katzenstein (1998) considers feminist insider activism and its influence in the Catholic Church and the U.S. military. She theorizes that the institutional environment helps shape the types of insider activist strategies used successfully to alter institutional culture and practices.

The study of women's movements and women's activism has resulted in a substantial body of new knowledge. But the study of women's activism has also transformed the understanding of social movements more generally in profound ways. Studies of women's movements have demonstrated that gender plays a central role in the emergence, trajectory, and outcomes of virtually all social movements, not just women's movements. Research on women's activism has also challenged dominant conceptions of power as residing primarily in the state and the economy by arguing that gender difference and inequality emanate from multiple sources and myriad institutions (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008). By adopting a less state-centered conception of collective action, scholars of women's activism have contributed new conceptual tools for studying a range of collective actions that challenge a variety of state and non-state targets, including institutions, everyday practices, cultural norms, and knowledge systems (Wulff, Bernstein, and Taylor 2015).

THE VOLUME'S CHAPTERS

Women's social movement activism has had profound influences on society, shifting gendered norms and practices, fighting oppressions based on race, ethnicity, class, and sexual identity, and creating new law and policy (e.g., Andersen 1996; Cobble 2007; Freeman 1975; Giddings 1984; Hartman 1989; McCammon et al. 2001; Rosen 2000; Taylor and Leitz 2010; Rupp and Taylor 1987, 1993; Wolbrecht 2000). The field of scholarly study of women's activism has grown dramatically, and today a diverse and theoretically advanced body of knowledge exists. The chapters in our volume provide in-depth examinations of this scholarship in the rich variety of areas in which women have engaged in collective action efforts. The history of this activism is a long one, and the issues motivating women's efforts are wide ranging. Women employ a variety of social movement strategies in a diverse set of forums. Yet, there is much that can still be learned through the study of women's collective efforts, and one of our volume's goals is to further expand the study of women's collective action. Each chapter, in addition to surveying the literature, also points readers toward key remaining research questions. This blueprint for

future research should prove helpful in guiding researchers in the next important steps in women's activism scholarship.

Our volume is divided into five parts, with each focusing on a different aspect of activism. In Part I, chapters consider U.S. women's collective efforts through time, following a rich historical trajectory of women's collective engagement in a variety of domains over a 200-year period. It opens with Corrine McConnaughy's Chapter 1, on collective action efforts by women in the nineteenth century, a time McConnaughy describes as an "era of layers of activism." She shows how "layers" of identities and organizations shaped women's activism in the abolition, suffrage, and anti-lynching movements, all movements which then carried women's collective action for political rights into the twentieth century. In Chapter 2, Kristin Goss picks up where McConnaughy leaves off, tracing women's activism from the early part of the twentieth century just after suffrage until the mid-1960s. By documenting the "swell" between the first two "waves" of feminist activism in the twentieth century, Goss shows that, contrary to well-known narratives, this period was characterized by a tremendous amount of activism among white middle-class women, as well as working-class women and women of color. Kelsy Kretschmer and Jane Mansbridge, in Chapter 3, follow the campaign for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) that both mobilized and divided the U.S. feminist movement from its inception in the 1920s, through its defeat in the 1980s. Those divisions developed around race and class, as well as political ideology, with more radical feminist groups questioning the amendment's usefulness. Ultimately defeated by anti-ERA forces, some feminists continue to work for its ratification. In Chapter 4, Beth Schneider and Janelle Pham consider socialist, radical, and lesbian feminism in the late twentieth century, illustrating how these three strands of feminism emerged from a core critique of liberal feminism, yet each developed a specific ideology that pinpointed the roots of oppression in society. They trace how each of these strands was criticized for their lack of attention to women of color, setting the stage for Black feminist theorizing and Chicana feminists' concept of "borderlands" to describe their marginalized position in women's movements.

Jo Reger's Chapter 5 brings us up to the present with an examination of the contemporary U.S. feminist movement. She finds that contemporary feminists exist in a changed political and social landscape; while they continue to work on the issues of the past, they also deal with different concerns and create innovative tactics and modes of mobilization in a new millennium. Benita Roth, in Chapter 6, traces the history of the development of "intersectionality," first as a concept to explain the lives and activism of women of color and then as an academic theory used in multiple disciplines. She notes both its benefits and drawbacks in academic applications and points to future avenues for expansion. Deana Rohlinger and Elyse Claxton, in Chapter 7, explore conservative women's mobilizations, delving into the religious, family, and friendship networks underpinning these efforts, as well as their use of religious frames to mobilize supporters. Heidi Rademacher and Kathleen Fallon, in Chapter 8, close this first section with an examination of U.S. feminist activists' participation in global feminist movements from the late nineteenth century forward. Beginning with the "international first wave"

of feminism, they describe transnational activism by women on topics such as suffrage and peace and, later, women's political representation, development, and reproductive rights. While global feminism has a number of challenges due to the diversity of women's experiences and interests worldwide, the authors see hope for the future as U.S. feminists continue to adopt a transnational perspective.

Part II of the volume explores a variety of issues that mobilize women's social movement activism. In Chapter 9, Eileen Boris and Allison Elias consider workplace discrimination, equal pay, sexual harassment, and pregnancy and parenthood. They show that while feminist activism in the 1960s and 1970s resulted in workplace protections for women, these policies follow from a "single-axis" framework that is inadequate for addressing the needs of women in the workplace as they are shaped by race, citizenship, age, sexual orientation, and disability. In Chapter 10, Suzanne Staggenborg and Marie Skoczylas survey scholarship on feminist mobilizations for abortion and reproductive rights, including consideration of movement/counter-movement dynamics, as opponents mobilize against abortion rights. Framing has played an important role in conflict over abortion, and these authors pay close attention to the movements' ideational work. The concept of framing is also central to Chapter 11, by Ellen Reese, Ian Breckenridge-Jackson, and Julisa McCoy, who present scholarship on maternalist mobilizations and women's community politics. They show that "maternalism" and "community" have proven to be flexible frames, used to facilitate women's mobilizations on both the left and the right, on a variety of topics (including peace and war, welfare rights, and gun violence), and among different communities of women characterized by race, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation/identity.

Chapter 12 by Melinda Goldner examines scholarship on women's health movements, considering women's activism particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, which typically took the form of grassroots educational efforts, and in the 1990s and following years with mobilizations often by professionals focused on specific diseases, health policy, and medical research. In Chapter 13, Gretchen Arnold writes about the battered women and anti-rape movements, pointing to their substantial successes, but also some current criticisms of the movements. Violence against women is a pressing social problem, and Arnold's chapter describes women's important collective efforts in this area. Rose Ernst and Rachel Luft, in Chapter 14, address the broad swath of women's activism around issues of welfare, poverty, and low-wage employment. They note that social movement scholarship is often lacking in theories and concepts to capture the nature of women's collective efforts around economic aspects of their lives. Ronnee Schreiber's Chapter 15 concludes this section with an examination of anti-feminist, pro-life, and anti-ERA women. She shows that, in what might seem paradoxical to feminists, women anti-feminist activists couch their activism in terms of women's interests (e.g., suffrage opponents believed that giving women political power would detract from their more important work in the home and family). By doing so, these activists bring a certain legitimacy to a conservative movement that is otherwise seen as hostile to women's issues.

Our contributors consider a myriad of forms of women's collective resistance, mobilization, and strategies in Part III. The section begins with Pamela Aronson's Chapter 16, drawing distinctions between the development of gender consciousness, feminist consciousness, and feminist identities. She argues that understanding these as existing on a continuum allows for multiple levels of women's consciousness and identities to emerge. Nella Van Dyke's Chapter 17 examines both the first and second waves of feminism to explore key organizations, their structures, women's leadership, and movement coalitions. Her investigation finds clear parallels across the two mass mobilizations. Nancy Whittier, in Chapter 18, addresses the ways in which consciousness-raising and identity formation are a part of women's activism. She explores how women construct and display collective identities and how identity politics in the women's movement has been immersed in conflict and controversy. Chapter 19, by Anne Costain and Douglas Costain, contrasts protest and direct action with conventional politics, and documents women's direct action in all three waves of the women's movement as well as in other notable movements in U.S. history. These authors note the important role of context in understanding women's use of protest and direct action, arguing that when women are severely restricted in their ability to use conventional politics, virtually everything that they do in public may be labeled as protest.

Christine Mallinson, in Chapter 20, illustrates how language can be the site of women's activism. She divides what she calls "the revolutionary potential of language" into three forms of activism: challenging, creating, and disrupting. She argues that these tactics not only educate about bias, but also have the potential to bring about social reform. Shae Miller, in Chapter 21, attends to the ways that new social formations of gender and sexuality impact politics, tactics, and identities in contemporary women's movements. Miller argues that the notion of gender and sexuality fluidity, influential in transgender, critical race, and disability studies, has led activists to treat the body as a site for social activism to challenge restrictive gender, sexual, and racial categories. Chapter 22 by Heather McKee Hurwitz provides a close look at how women activists utilize both mainstream and alternative forms of media, including social media, in their activist efforts. Social media, in particular, is at the cutting edge of social movement activism, and Hurwitz's discussion provides substantial insight into this emerging domain.

Part IV situates women's activism in a variety of forums and describes many of the targets of women's collective action. In Chapter 23, Lee Ann Banaszak and Anne Whitesell review studies on "insider" activism, that is, institutional activists inside government, particularly in the legislative branch and executive agencies. Chapter 24, by Nancy Burns, Ashley Jardina, and Nicole Yadon, explores women's use of electoral politics. The authors begin by noting that early scholarship on gender differences in electoral politics had to work against the notion that women were apolitical and were characterized by "slothfulness." Since then, research has come a long way; notable advances include empirical and methodological innovations for understanding the ways in which context matters in gender differences in electoral politics. In Chapter 25, Holly McCammon and Brittany Hearne document women's judicial activism in the United States, showing how women successfully brought down barriers to their participation in the judicial system

(e.g., as plaintiffs and jurors, and later as lawyers and judges) and then used those opportunities to litigate for feminist policies.

Tiffany Sanford-Jenson and Marla Kohlman examine sex discrimination in the U.S. military in Chapter 26, outlining changes necessary to achieve full inclusion for women in the armed forces (e.g., by giving women access to combat positions and ensuring that their workplace is free of sexual harassment). While scholarship in this area is limited, the authors show that women's collective action efforts are achieving change in the military, which they deem "one of the most male-dominated institutions in the United States." Rachel Einwohner, Reid Leamaster, and Benjamin Pratt, in Chapter 27 on women's activism and religious institutions, explore how religion provides both a "push" and a "pull" for women's activism, by creating grievances for women as well as providing the inspirational frames and organizing skills needed for collective action. They also introduce the concept of "fusion," showing how women activists targeting aspects of religious institutions navigate the potential tensions between their activism and their religious identities. In Chapter 28, Alison Crossley, through tracing the history of women's organizing in educational settings, argues that activists have successfully organized for accessibility and resources, expanded the legal rights of women and girls, and incorporated scholarship on women into the academy. Cheryl Cooky then provides, in Chapter 29, an examination of women's efforts in sports to promote opportunities for women and gender equality. She emphasizes that, for the most part, studies of women's sport advocacy and feminist activism have remained distinct, which creates opportunities for future research that combines insights from these two bodies of theory and research.

Part V's chapters explore scholarship on women's efforts in a variety of other social movements, those not focused solely on women's issues. Aisha Upton and Joyce Bell, in Chapter 30, divide women's activism in the modern Black liberation movement into three periods: civil rights, Black power, and radical Black feminism. They document the importance of Black women in each period and how issues of race, privilege, and diversity continue in contemporary feminism. In Chapter 31, Mary Pardo examines Latina activism in U.S. social movements, a group whose activism frequently has been overlooked in social movement scholarship. She problematizes the pan-ethnic term "Latina," which covers individuals with a vast array of national origins and political and economic backgrounds, and calls for more attention to the legacies of colonialism in order to understand the experiences and activism of Latina activists in the United States. In Chapter 32, Leila Rupp, Verta Taylor, and Benita Roth explore the history of women's participation in the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) movement from the 1950s to contemporary queer activism. They document how women's activism has shifted from fighting for women's issues within male-dominated organizations to creating separatist groups to collaborating with gay men in mixed-gender organizations.

Kayla Stover and Sherry Cable write about women in the environmental movement in Chapter 33. They provide a broad overview as well as specific focus on studies of women in the environmental justice movement, including both the anti-toxics and anti-environmental racism branches of environmental justice. Chapter 34 focuses on

the U.S. peace and anti-war movement, with Lisa Leitz and David Meyer detailing how women's activism grew out of the abolition and suffrage movements. They document the discrimination and prejudice that women faced, as well as the leadership skills and abilities they acquired from participating in the movement. Mary Margaret Fonow and Suzanne Franzway's Chapter 35 on women's activism in U.S. labor unions shows that women have actively participated in the labor movement as both workers and as feminists, and that women are using their activism to convince the movement to be more supportive of women's issues. The authors note that women labor activists face challenges in both the masculine culture of labor in general and in the broader set of global economic factors that affect workers worldwide. They call for more scholarly attention to the "laboring body," which refers to the fact that women bear the brunt of responsibility for taking care of home and family, even when they are workers themselves. Finally, Kathleen Blee and Elizabeth Yate's Chapter 36 on women in the white supremacist movement closes the volume. The authors address this troubling yet theoretically important case, showing how women are rarely leaders in this movement yet are nonetheless crucial to its existence, both symbolically (as a sign of purity, to be protected from predatory men of non-White races) and instrumentally (as those who can reproduce with White men and therefore repopulate the White race). Their chapter ends with a call for more research on women's roles in White supremacist movements, including examinations of the ways in which women exit the movement.

As readers turn to the chapters, they might recall Mary Beard's important work, published in 1946, titled *Woman as Force in History*. Beard argued that women's influence on society is far-reaching. She states that "[w]omen have been a force in making all the history that has been made" (1946: vi). Women's collective action provides women with a powerful tool for social change, and as the scholarship on women's activism demonstrates, women have wielded the tool over a long history and have done so as highly effective agents. We as editors join our contributors' call for more research on women's activism, both in the United States and around the globe.

NOTES

1. See Beckwith (2001) for a discussion of women's movements, feminist movements, and women in political movements.
2. Most such summaries, while usefully detailed, focus largely on feminist activism (Ferree and Mueller 2004; Reger and Taylor 2002; Staggenborg and Taylor 2005), exceptions include Beckwith (2001), Kuumba (2001), Staggenborg (1998a), and Taylor and Whittier (1998).
3. In 1890 the two organizations would merge into the National American Woman Suffrage Association.
4. A few exceptions exist where non-suffragists offer published accounts of the movement (see, e.g., Graham 1934).
5. See Reger (forthcoming) for a discussion of the wave analogy regarding U.S. women's feminist activism.

6. Citations may be counted more than once across the search engines, and thus our total counts do not represent unique publications. We offer these totals merely to illustrate the increase over time in citations listed in these databases. Our search allowed the term “women’s movement” to appear anywhere in the cited source, including the article title, abstract, and text. In our searches, we used the term “women’s movement” in quotation marks to rule out citations including the words “movement” and “women’s” merely in proximity to one another.

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P A R T I

U.S. WOMEN'S
SOCIAL MOVEMENT
ACTIVISM
THROUGH TIME

CHAPTER 1

LAYERS OF ACTIVISM

Women's Movements and Women in Movements Approaching the Twentieth Century

CORRINE M. MCCONNAUGHY

IN 1848, a convention in Seneca Falls, New York, precipitated the organized social movement for women's voting rights in the United States. That movement took full organizational form with the constitution of the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) and the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) in 1869. In 1874, at a convention in Cleveland, Ohio, the national women's movement against liquor formally began with the establishment of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). With roots in the earlier women's club Sorosis, the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC) emerged from an 1889 convention in New York City of women's clubs. The GFWC in turn developed into an organizational force for greater opportunities for women's self-improvement and involvement in community affairs. These three organizations have together conventionally been treated as "the women's movement" (or at least the heart thereof) of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—the organizational basis for women's challenge to political and social inequality based on gender. While such treatment has its utility, I advocate in this chapter for greater consideration of the depth and breadth of women's involvement in a variety of social movement organizations within this time period. Such consideration, I argue, shows great promise for increasing our understanding of how women were drawn into public and collective action, how the movements they built developed strategies for organizational capacity, and how and why women's collective demands were met with policy responses from the state.

"The women's movement" emerged at a time of ballooning political organization in the United States. In the post-Civil War era, the American political system developed an increased role for interest groups as conduits of citizen participation (McCormick 1986). As Skocpol, Ganz, and Munson (2000) have documented, this era produced a swell of large-scale, national member associations. The WCTU, AWSA, NWSA, and GFWC, then, were elements in a pattern of rising organization of individuals tied together by

some common interest—be it social identity, occupation, or commitment to a social cause—in the form of a large and often-federated structure. This fact alone suggests that “the women’s movement” holds explanatory potential for our general understanding of the proliferation of social movements and their role in the development of the American state. Yet, there is more potential than this fact suggests. This was not just a time of growing organization, but also, as I term it, an era of *layers of activism*. Individuals were funneling their own interests through an array of organizations—sometimes in sequence and sometimes simultaneously. Organizational repertoires and political demands, therefore, developed in the context of both interconnections and disjunctures, through processes of learning and borrowing as well as rejection and distancing. Studying women’s social movements and women in social movements of this layered era, in particular, illuminates how social identities—such as gender—shape these processes and thereby determine what form movement organizations take, how movement actors formulate and articulate their demands from the state, and the potential for organizations to work together to effectively extract policy concessions.

Social movement research has made increasing room over the last several decades for the idea of social identity as influential on the essential elements of resource mobilization and political opportunities for movement successes (Taylor and Whittier 1992; McCammon 2001b; Reger 2002). Such scholarship now supports claims that the social identities of those who are involved in the cause of the movement are consequential for how the movement organizes itself, what the movement demands, and what it can achieve. Take, for example, Elisabeth Clemens’s (1993, 1997) work on organizational repertoires, which connects political success for outside groups such as those of “the women’s movement” with their ability to borrow familiar organizational structures from private organizations, like clubs and unions, and to use them as the basis of new political action. Consider also Belinda Robnett’s (1997) work on Black women in the modern civil rights movement, which emphasizes how the social location of individuals within an aggrieved population shapes the work they can and need to do to facilitate movement growth and effectiveness. Robnett highlights how gender hierarchy and gender roles within the Black community made Black women simultaneously essential leading actors in successful grassroots mobilization efforts and effectively invisible among the movement’s formal leadership ranks. It is in this vein that I argue that women’s participation in social movement activism through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries sheds particular light on the ways in which social identities shape what form movement organizations take, how movement actors formulate and articulate their demands from the state, and the potential for organizations to work together to effectively extract policy concessions.

Suffrage and anti-lynching organizations, as my central cases for consideration, illustrate the range of models of organization and tactics that can develop from the organizational and social experience of a cause’s political entrepreneurs. They also make clear that such initial organizational structure matters for the potential of political tactics that influence partisan politicians—most centrally, the development of an outside lobbying strategy that effectively communicates the constituent preference pressure necessary to

leverage concessions from policymakers (Kollman 1998; McConaughy 2013). I begin by discussing how membership, internal organizational structure, and the form of activism might be seen as products of the layers of identities and organizations from which they were built. I then move to the idea of coalitional strategies, including the importance of bridge actors, as elements of social movements that women's activism in the layered era may uniquely illuminate. Finally, I connect the coalitions of the layered era to policy outcomes and concessions from the state.

Two caveats are made to the reader. First, although I advocate the study of women's social movement activism in this era in a way that takes full advantage of its depth and breadth, I do so while reflecting the reality that the existing scholarship—including my own—is disproportionately centered on activism in “the women's movement,” particularly the woman suffrage movement. Thus, the chapter is centered on the suffrage movement literature, but also draws on other scholarship to reframe what we know and to highlight where a broader focus would open new questions or could provide more answers. To this end, I focus on anti-lynching activism as a sort of parallel product to suffrage activism from Black women's involvement in civil rights work of the era. Second, I note that scholarship about women's movements and women in movements in this era naturally spans quite a range of disciplines—sociology, history, political science, women's studies, Black studies, law, and more—each with its own theoretical and empirical approaches. I write here for the social scientist with interests in generalizable claims, and as a political scientist inescapably interested in the interactions of individuals with the state and the outcomes thereby produced. Though I use work outside my disciplinary realm, I cannot attempt or claim to do sufficient service to the vast and productive literatures with other aims and foci.

THE FIRST LAYER: FROM ABOLITIONISTS TO SUFFRAGISTS

The cause that first pulled American women collectively from the private to the public sphere was the abolition of slavery. Credit for the first testimony by a woman to a U.S. legislature is given to Angelina Grimké for her address to the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 1838 on the issue of anti-slavery petitions that had been presented to that body. Grimké was a last-minute replacement for her elder sister and fellow abolitionist, Sarah. The sisters, daughters of a wealthy plantation owner, had come to disdain slavery through their personal experiences in the South, but had embraced abolition as a cause through their experiences with Quakerism during their time in Philadelphia. As members of the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, they joined other notable Quaker women, including soon-to-be suffrage leader Lucretia Mott. Even in that first legislative address, a connection between women's involvement in the anti-slavery movement and a growing sense of need for their own political rights emerged, as

Grimké's testimony connected women's signatures on anti-slavery petitions to the idea of their own need for political liberation:

I hold, Mr. Chairman, that American women have to do with this subject [of abolition], not only because it is moral and religious, but because it is political, inasmuch as we are citizens of this republic and as such our honor, happiness, and well-being are bound up in its politics, government, and laws. (quoted in Lerner 1967)

If the seeds of collective action for women's rights were sowed in anti-slavery activism experiences, a sensible first question is how those seeds came to be. Although there is still much to learn about how rank-and-file activism developed, scholarship on key leaders suggests the potential of religious experience to provide both consciousness and skill capacities to enable women's collective action. As a number of excellent biographical treatments of women abolitionists like the Grimkés (Browne 1999; Lerner 1967) and Mott (Faulkner 2011) have documented, tools from their particular experiences of femininity and Quaker religious practice were employed in this turn from private to public sphere. From Quakerism came autonomy for women through the religious tenet that *all* human beings were endowed with God's divine light, which has been connected to the early acceptance of women as ministers within the Society of Friends (Larson 1999). These abolitionist women also relied on their femininity as incentive for collective consciousness and as an early tool for enabling their political participation. Illustrative of this tactic is a call issued by the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society that urged women to participate in petition campaigns out of special obligation to enslaved women, arguing that "it is to *us, as women*, that the captive wives and mothers, sisters and daughters of the South have a particular right to look for help" (quoted in Faulkner 2011). Faulkner (2011) also argues of Mott that her inculcation of feminine traits of moral virtue, motherliness, and demure self-presentation was a strategy to make decidedly radical stances on both immediate abolition and women's rights more tolerable to and potentially influential upon her audiences.

This work also reveals how the Quaker experience provided an opportunity for practice of the skills of the public political life, as well as a network that facilitated political action. Active involvement in the religious order—which for some, such as Mott, included preaching—was practice for public political speech, building oratory skills of public presence and the fashioning of arguments for the persuasion of a public audience. Stephen Howard Browne's (1999) work on Angelina Grimké's rhetoric is particularly enlightening on this point, connecting her rhetorical strength on abolition and women's rights to her use of religiously salient imagery and themes in a style that spoke of a personal conversion experience. Faulkner (2011) ties Mott's preaching experience to her readiness for anti-slavery public speeches and organizational work. Beyond skills, the social networks of the Society of Friends connected women like the Grimkés and Mott to each other, as well as to men who could facilitate their entrée into the public discourse. Angelina Grimké's first known public political statement, for example, was made by the publication of her letter to William Lloyd Garrison in his abolitionist

newspaper, *The Liberator*. These connections seem ever more important in light of the well-documented pushback these women received for their public involvement in anti-slavery organization from the more conservative wing of the Society of Friends. Indeed, Sklar (2000) links the insufficient development of pro-women's rights abolitionist networks in smaller New England locales to their failure to sustain a turn toward women's rights within the abolitionist cause, while the more established networks, such as those of Philadelphia and New York, were uniquely able to forge this transition.

Susan Zaeske's (2003) work on petitioning in the anti-slavery era more broadly connects women's private and religious experiences to their turn to the public realm of collective action (see also Sklar 2000). As Zaeske notes, petitioning was a tactic well-designed to pull women from private to public because "a petition is a request for redress of grievances sent from a subordinate (whether an individual or group) to a superior (whether a ruler or representative)," (2003: 3). Petitioning was thus well suited for developing a logic for the collective participation in politics by women without a fundamental reordering of the understanding of women's place relative (i.e., subordinate) to men's. Moreover, the petition was a tool with which some women had personal experience precisely because of their gender. Without other political standing, women had relied on private petitions of state legislatures and Congress for redress of their personal needs—from petitions for divorce to petitions for financial relief as widows of fallen soldiers (see also Skocpol 1995). Thus, petitioning by women of legislatures for the cause of abolition began with a very gendered strategy of female petitioning—women gathering the signatures only of other women, on petitions crowded with language of "humility and disavowal" and descriptions of their petitioning action "as motivated by Christian duty and as an extension of the religious speech act of prayer" (Zaeske 2003: 48). And yet this was a chance for both the signatories and the signature collectors to transcend the public/private divide, one that came with the potential for political awareness and efficacy that could become foundations for further political interest and activity.

More recently, Carpenter and Moore's (2014) analysis of anti-slavery petitions to Congress during the 1830s and 1840s systematically links anti-slavery petitioning activity to other political activity, including participation in the Seneca Falls women's rights convention and later woman suffrage activism. That anti-slavery petition canvassers were empowered to invest in later reform movements speaks to the human interconnection of such movements, and to the idea that being an abolitionist informed being an early suffragist. Indeed, as Carpenter and Moore note, the suffrage movement's founding document, the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments, is not merely narrowly reminiscent of the Declaration of Independence, but more broadly a document that "mimicked structurally the form of a petition of grievance, with a list of complaints and a signatory list" (2014: 493). More to the point, woman suffrage organizers were borrowing an already borrowed tactic. A "Declaration of Sentiments" was an anti-slavery movement product; the American Anti-Slavery Society had issued their own at their formational meeting in Philadelphia in 1833. Petitioning legislative bodies for their cause became a central activity for new suffrage organizations, as it was for anti-slavery organizations. That this organizational similarity reflected an enduring abolitionist

identity of the early suffrage organizers is captured in one of the most impressive accomplishments of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony's organizational work: the amassing of nearly 400,000 signatures on an 1863 petition for a constitutional amendment to ban slavery, circulated by Stanton and Anthony's wartime organization, the National Women's Loyal League (Buechler 1986; Flexner 1959). The identity of suffragists as abolitionists was central to how early activists organized their new movement in part because it was one they were still actively practicing. This is the essential implication of the layered era—that movement repertoires were being developed in unavoidably interconnected ways.

Connection of the early American woman suffrage movement to the abolitionist movement is exceedingly well-documented. Flexner's (1959) seminal history provides rich detail about the origins of the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention in its organizers' anti-slavery organizational experiences. DuBois (1978) further explores the common anti-slavery roots of women active in the first decades of the suffrage movement, arguing that anti-slavery movement experience was the key that unlocked the political potential of women's discontent. In addition to the political skills learned within the abolitionist movement, DuBois points to the importance of common experiences of gender discrimination within the anti-slavery movement for fomenting abolitionist women's collective political consciousness. Suffrage activism, at its start, reflected both the experience and the identity of being women of the anti-slavery movement.

MOVEMENT DIVERSIFICATION: THE PRODUCT OF LOCAL LAYERS

Though the early suffrage movement was structurally a reflection of its abolitionist beginnings, the growth of the movement brought diversification of membership and thereby diversity in organizational structure and tactics. McCammon (2003) has linked the localized diversification of suffrage movement tactics to state-specific diversity in the structure of movement organization. Regional and state-specific histories of suffrage organization further illustrate how localized circumstances shaped the movement, pointing to key roles for the constellation of social identities brought to bear in organizing for the suffrage cause. Steven Buechler's (1986) thorough treatment of the Illinois movement, for example, traces its development from reform-oriented social clubs and women leaders drawn from the "old middle class." Buechler links their lived class experience with the belief that barriers to economic success were generally permeable, which informed an individualistic approach to reformist demands. Suffragism developed within a pattern of legal demands to change the individual legal status of women, including rights to individual earnings and custody of children (1986: 91–97). In an organizational sense, these identities enabled suffrage politics that were fairly open in form. Illinois suffragists held open mass meetings and well-publicized conventions—some

strategically in proximity to state legislators in session or party leaders in convention in Chicago (Buechler 1986: Ch. 4).

Further west, however, a transplanted logic of the open mass meeting brought by Eastern and Midwestern suffrage activists met with failure as an organizational strategy out of context. As I recount (McConaughy 2013) in the case of Colorado, for example, an AWSA organizer sent to the territory in 1875 reported back failure repeatedly, with bewilderment. Of one such failure, she wrote to AWSA leaders that “we were told in Central—one of the places where we could not get a hearing—that we must advertise a *dog fight*, then we could get a crowd” (quoted in McConaughy 2013). Unsurprisingly, that campaign was unsuccessful—generating neither significant woman suffrage organization in the state nor support among Colorado politicians. In contrast, the successful 1893 Colorado suffrage campaign drew from local expertise, with NAWSA organizers following local Colorado suffragists’ lead in connecting woman suffrage and monetization of silver as reformist initiatives. The movement in turn found itself with unprecedented public support among the Colorado press and political leaders.

Perhaps nowhere in the suffrage movement was the influence of social identity on organizational structure clearer than in the Southern states. As Green (1997) observed, organization of any sort was slow to come to the South because women of the social stature that led the organizational charge in the North and West—“white women of the upper and middle classes”—were constrained in the South from the experiences that gave women sufficient political capital for suffrage organization. There was no abolitionist cause and little opportunity to join missionary societies or reform organizations. Women’s organization in spaces such as “prayer circles or quilting bees” was likely to reproduce patriarchal power, not challenge it (Green 1997: 6). In short, the Southern women who had sufficient access to material resources were missing the organizational experiences that had given their Northern and Western counterparts the key resources of collective political identity and organizational repertoires easily adaptable to political goals.

But the woman suffrage movement did eventually come to the South. As Wheeler (1993: 39) details, it emerged with a leadership drawn from “the South’s social and political elite.” Both Wheeler (1993) and Green (1997) draw on biographies of White Southern suffrage activists to point to the emergence of a “New Woman” in the South—educated, and well-traveled beyond the South—as the basis of the suffrage organization and activism that emerged in the 1880s and 1890s. Green traces a connection from suffragists back to women’s clubs. Wheeler highlights the recruitment of Southern women to the cause by national leadership figures, including Susan B. Anthony, noting the specific attention often paid to the political and social connections that the potential suffragist would provide through her family’s standing. Laura Clay of Kentucky (daughter of abolitionist Cassius Clay and descendant of Henry Clay), the Gordon sisters of Louisiana, Nellie Nugent Somerville and Belle Kearney of Mississippi—all were noted by national leadership for their utility to the cause of Southern suffrage due to their well-connected political families.

New Women of the South also brought a new model for doing suffrage organization. Southern organizations were modeled on the emergent Southern version of women's social clubs, which were drawing together (White) women of social standing in the South to address civic concerns suited to gendered concerns of *noblesse oblige*—caretaking responsibility for the basic needs of the lower classes—with reforms such as the provision of kindergartens and public health campaigns (Wheeler 1993). Reflecting the New Woman social identity, emergent Southern suffrage organizations were likely to be called suffrage “societies” or “clubs”—and to function as such. Notably, A. Elizabeth Taylor's overviews of the movement in Southern states, including Texas (1951) and South Carolina (1976), commonly refer to suffrage organizations in the language of “society” and “club,” a language befitting organizations with reported membership counts regularly in the range of sixty or fewer members.

The organizational records of Louisiana's Era Club provide a clear view of how the “Southern lady” social identity shaped organizing for woman suffrage in the region. Originally founded as a women's social club, the organization took on suffrage in 1914 with a dedication to a states' rights version of woman suffrage, its leadership having purged members willing to support a federal woman suffrage amendment (McConaughy 2013). Detailed organizational records make the model of the Era Club as foremost a “society” for appropriate Southern ladies clearly evident. Meeting minutes reveal that would-be members were required to submit an application for membership and quickly ante up annual membership dues. Its 1914 membership totaled just seventy. Its main recruitment mechanism was sending judiciously targeted letters of invitation to apply to the club. Even the club's “open meeting” activity was effectively circumscribed in societal terms. While such a meeting in other locales would be a speech-filled open-forum affair, the Era Club hosted an invitation-only literary reading, followed by a “most delightful social hour.”¹

INTERSECTIONAL LAYERS: THE IMPORTANCE OF MAKING RACE CENTRAL IN ACCOUNTS OF THE SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT

Despite the interconnection of the woman suffrage movement to the American experience of race, the degree to which race as social identity shaped the organizational structure, activity, and success of the woman suffrage movement remains understudied. That the movement was marked by racial segregation and politics that moved commitments to truly universal suffrage off the national agenda are well-documented facts. Yet, they are also under-investigated facts. Certainly, there are several excellent treatments of the development of racialized logics of feminism and women's rights within this time period. Kraditor (1965) links the rise of racially conservative suffragist arguments to growing recognition of the political expediency of avoiding “the Negro question” of

Black suffrage in the South. Newman (1999) traces the connection between assimilationist logics of imperialism and the development of a White (suffragist) feminist logic of *future* equality for women of color (whenever they became like White women). Lacking are systematic comparative studies of membership and organizational practices that locate race in the practice of *doing* suffrage organizing. Particularly helpful would be studies that explain how Black women's early presence influenced suffrage organizing work and what the organizational changes were as women of color were increasingly pushed out of the mainstream movement.

Consider the well-documented split among White suffragists over the Fifteenth Amendment, which (fleeting)ly enfranchised Black men before women. This divide is credited with the 1869 separation of the national suffrage movement leadership, which had been united in 1866 through the gender- and race-integrated American Equal Rights Association (AERA). That schism is marked with the intersection of race and gender: division over the racial policy of the Fifteenth Amendment brought forth the first explicit *woman* suffrage organizations. The AERA was replaced by the Fifteenth Amendment-supporting AWSA, headed by Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell, and the Amendment-rejecting NWSA, headed by Cady Stanton and Anthony (Wheeler 1995). Still, we know little about the organizational meaning of this split. How did this disagreement become so organizationally central to a set of movement actors originally drawn together through abolitionist work? How were potential suffrage organization members affected by the division? Did the racial meaning shape decisions about affiliation with a particular organization, or with the suffrage cause more generally? We know that prominent Black women suffragists were divided on how to proceed, which at minimum complicates a simple narrative about the meaning of race in this organizational division. Frances Ellen Watkins Harper sided with the AWSA. Mary Ann Shadd Carey and Hattie Purvis affiliated with the NWSA. Sojourner Truth continued a relationship with both organizations (Collier-Thomas 1997; Terborg-Penn 1995). Terborg-Penn (1995, 1998) documents continued interest from Black women in affiliating with both the AWSA and the NWSA, as well as their organizational successor, the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), over the following decades. How do we explain the continued interest from Black suffragists? What were the organizational implications of continued acceptance of Black members during this time?

With the early integration of Black suffragists, the woman suffrage movement seemed poised for some degree of agency for Black women. And yet by the 1890s, there is clear evidence that White suffrage leaders united within NAWSA were more reticent to include Black women in positions of organizational importance or leadership. Scholars have pointed to new interest in suffrage organization among White Southern women as the likely impetus for this development (Terborg-Penn 1995). But as the work of both Terborg-Penn (1995, 1998) and Carle (2013) illuminates, the meaning that Black women were bringing to their suffrage movement work was also changing in this same time period, suggesting that increasing political divergence on their part may also have played an important role. Notably, Black women were developing

new meanings for the woman suffrage struggle related to the challenges they faced as Redemption unfolded and the Jim Crow order took hold. They were drawn into newly forming civil rights organizations—the National Afro-American Council (AAC), the Niagara Movement, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). And they were developing their own organizations around their own interests, populating a growing Black women’s club movement, interconnected in 1895 under the umbrella of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW). Black women’s organizations developed unique models of both interests and activism, molded by Black women’s joint experiences of racism and sexism. In tangible ways, then, the social and political identities of Black and White women activists, once connected through abolitionism, were diverging *from each other*—suggesting that collaboration would likely have grown more difficult even without an emerging interest in organizing Southern White women. Further investigation into this piece of the suffrage movement puzzle thus seems particularly likely to bear insights about how collective identity resources of social movements can be undone by forces that push social identities to diverge.

ANTI-LYNCHING AS WOMAN’S CRUSADE: SEEING THE LAYERS FROM ANOTHER VANTAGE POINT

Lynching activity in the United States swelled in same era as the women’s movement—and so did activism to combat it. Thus, women’s anti-lynching activism ought to be an important parallel case to the suffrage movement for understanding the development of movement activism in the layered era. It is also an extremely understudied case, particularly by social scientists. Thus, I explore here how what we do know about anti-lynching activism makes the case for greater study of it, both as an important movement in its own right, and a useful comparative case for the suffrage movement.

Numbers from the Archives at Tuskegee Institute put the need for anti-lynching activism into stark relief: between 1882 and 1920, there is record of 4,312 lynchings, 71% of which were of African Americans.² The use of lynching as a tool of racial violence, particularly in the South, instigated anti-lynching activism as civil rights activism. From the start, this particular strain of civil rights activism was a space for women activists. As Terborg-Penn (1991: 148) has written, “African-American women, called ‘spokeswomen’ in their communities, formed the backbone of the anti-lynching crusade.” Although scholarship on the movement remains insufficient in part due to inordinate focus on male leaders and the White women’s Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (ASWPL), it does offer important questions and tentative conclusions about the origins and implications of Black women’s advocacy for the cause. Most notably,

there is the question of whether anti-lynching would have remained a viable piece of the civil rights agenda in this era without Black women's advocacy. Gendered perceptions of the plight of Black America seemed to push men of the early civil rights movement to prioritize work against disenfranchisement. Black women activists, already disenfranchised due to their sex, stood better positioned to see lynching and disenfranchisement as equal and intertwined threats to the community. Secondly, there is the question of whether anti-lynching coalitions with White activists would have been viable without Black women.

One need look no farther than the anti-lynching movement's most recognizable figure—Ida B. Wells-Barnett—to develop the question of whether anti-lynching would have been organizationally viable without Black women's perspective and effort. Wells-Barnett was an outspoken public voice against lynching and for government action to curb it, notably through publication of her investigative reports on lynching; these included *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases*, published in 1892, and *The Red Record: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynching in the United States: 1892, 1893, and 1894*, published in 1895. But Wells-Barnett was also a central figure in maintaining a place for anti-lynching work in the organizational priorities of several civil rights organizations. In her detailed history of national racial justice organizations, Susan Carle (2013) recounts Wells-Barnett's efforts to promote anti-lynching advocacy within the AAC, the organizational predecessor to the NAACP. Wells-Barnett is credited with initiating an AAC anti-lynching campaign in 1898 and packing the AAC's 1899 national meeting held in Chicago with speakers from the organization's more "radical" wing, including one of her own anti-lynching collaborators (2013: 103–105).

What Carle's work does not deal with, but certainly suggests, is a set of questions about the peculiar formal integration of Black women into the organizational structure of the AAC, which she notes elected Wells-Barnett as an inaugural officer and made the "strikingly modern gesture" to require state-affiliate organizations to include at least one woman in their own executive committees (2013: 101). What instigated such "striking" organizational structure in gender terms is an important unanswered question—particularly since the AAC was clearly making organizational choices in full cognizance of the need to avoid the organizational fate of the recently lapsed Afro-American League (AAL). The integration of women into leadership was most certainly a decision made quite carefully and with strategic considerations in mind. Further, there is the crucial question of whether the AAC would have retained anti-lynching as one of its stated core issues if it had not integrated Black women into leadership positions. A simple comparison to the next national civil rights organization to form, the Niagara Movement founded in 1906, suggests the answer: perhaps not. The Niagara Movement did not make a similar commitment to women as leaders—and indeed, by their membership dues policies, made it difficult for women to even become full voting members—and also did not make similar commitments to anti-lynching work (Carle 2013: Ch. 9). Moreover, as Carle notes (2013: 95), the rise of the disenfranchisement issue at this same historical moment meant that civil rights

leaders were making choices about their agendas in the face of ever-increasing crises. Black male leaders, who found themselves personally facing the loss of political rights—and some of them the loss of political office—may have been more likely than Black women in the movement to see reasons to disconnect the issue of disenfranchisement from—and elevate it over—the issue of lynching at this moment. Thus it seems that more systematic research into civil rights organizations' gender structures could yield valuable insight into just how crucial Black women were to institutional commitments to the anti-lynching cause.

Wells-Barnett's leadership on anti-lynching as a Black woman also contributed an essential insight for the movement about the problem of lynching: it was her observation that the targeting of Black men because of (alleged) assaults on White women was based on myth; *Red Record*, in particular, highlighted that only one-third of the documented lynchings could be connected to any claim of rape—and that a not insignificant number were connected to claims of petty offense, or to no particular offense at all. This observation led to her to advocate the strategy of dismantling the rape myth to weaken the White public's acceptance of the practice of lynching. Wells-Barnett astutely observed that part of the problem for the movement was that while lynching was morally distasteful to a broader set of reformers, even the most progressive White reformers were blinded by the racial narrative, enabling their inaction on the issue. As Bettina Apthekar's (1977) documentation of correspondence between Wells-Barnett and her ally Jane Addams reveals, even Addams believed the narrative that lynching was promulgated in the South as a means of punishing the crime of rape of White women by Black men. It took the social location of Black women such as Wells-Barnett to perceive rape crime as a politically constructed myth of justification. The reality of race constructed a social location for Black women that all too often afforded them personal experience with the practice of lynching via the loss of a friend or loved one, where personal observation was at odds with the dominant cultural narrative. Such was certainly the case for Wells-Barnett, who began writing about lynching in response to the lynching of a friend whose "offense" had been protection of his successful grocery business from extra-legal attack by local Whites (Brown 2000; Wells 1991). Simultaneously, race prevented the likelihood of such lived experiences for progressive Whites. And so White activism on the issue of lynching did not come until Black women had done the work of forwarding a new narrative.

That this new narrative was key to promoting anti-lynching activism is a prime example of the power of frames, or interpretive devices, as social movement resources (Snow et al. 1986). The framing of the issue enabled political salience and coalitional partnerships, which culminated in the formation of White women's organization against lynching through the ASWPL. The point here, however, is that the emergence of successful frames may depend in important and still misunderstood ways on the interconnections between activists of differing social identities. The extremely understudied case of nineteenth-century women's anti-lynching activism stands particularly well-poised to offer important insight into this issue.

FORGING COALITIONS FROM LAYERS: THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF SOCIAL IDENTITIES

As the campaign that would ultimately deliver voting rights to the women of Colorado unfolded in 1893, Susan B. Anthony admonished the local Colorado suffrage activists to “know nothing—push nothing—but suffrage” (quoted in McConnaughy 2013). It was a message against the advisability of coalitional politics, a position to which Anthony had come in the wake of repeated defeats for woman suffrage following campaigns that often involved significant organizational backing from a movement partner, the WCTU. Anthony had come to understand that partnership as detrimental to the suffrage cause, entwining it in the contentious politics of prohibition and apparently earning it adversaries in the well-resourced liquor industry. She seemed to generalize from the WCTU lesson that coalitions *always* were more politically costly than beneficial, as she continued to push for an independent and non-partisan movement. And yet, a look over the seventy-plus year history of the movement, embedded as it was in an era of growing organized interest group politics, easily reveals that suffrage activism was often intertwined with other movements and interests, including some of the biggest political players of the time: farmers’ organizations, labor unions, the Populist Party, the Progressive Party. So how did suffrage coalitions form? How did suffragists navigate the coordination of effort required of political partnership? Were coalitions the political drain Anthony envisioned, or essential assets for the disenfranchised to extract policy concessions from the state?

Answers to those questions are not as thorough as they should be. This shortcoming of the literature is reflective of a general pattern in the study of social movements. As Van Dyke and McCammon (2010) argue, both the formation and the effectiveness of social movement coalitions have been under-studied within social science. It also likely reflects the impetus of the early development of suffrage movement research, which was in reaction to a near refusal by scholars in any field to seriously study this movement (largely) of women for women for decades after the Nineteenth Amendment was won. Indeed, Eleanor Flexner’s (1959) groundbreaking history of the movement did not appear until some forty years after the Amendment passed. Thus, researchers who paved the way for a literature on woman suffrage first developed a scholarship that consciously focused on placing the suffrage activists, themselves, into the political history from which they had been missing, and on illuminating the suffrage movement from the vantage point of its own (female) leadership. Such a focus, while more than reasonable as a corrective, has kept questions about the potential importance of other actors in the movement’s development and ultimate success at the periphery.

Pulling together what does exist in the social movement literature generally, and the suffrage literature more specifically, points to several possibly significant roles for social identity in effective suffrage coalitions. In general, we know coalitions can hinge on social ties

across potential partner movements (Corrigall-Brown and Meyer 2010; Rose 2000) and shared political ideologies (Bandy and Smith 2005). We also know that otherwise “sensible” coalitional partnerships—those that might seem to share similar political goals—may fail to materialize because of social identity divergence (e.g., Roth 2010). Whether and how these social identity factors may be conditioned by context—notably the presence or absence of political opportunities and/or heightened political threats to the interests of the potential partners—is something McCammon and Van Dyke (2010) argue is not yet well understood. While the literature on women’s movements in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is certainly similarly hampered, the empirical context of these movements seems particularly ripe for examination of this potential conditionality of the role of social identity in social movement coalitions.

On the one hand, the multilayered social reform environment of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries produced ample potential for coordination of effort across common causes—both through the proliferation of interest organizations and the patterns of individuals’ tendencies to involve themselves in more than one cause. Lucretia Mott, for example, held leadership positions in abolitionist societies, equal rights organizations, women’s rights organizations, and peace societies. On the other hand, we know that the realization of such potential was far more limited than the rich landscape might suggest, and often episodic even when realized. Here again, what we do know points to the constraints of social and political identity to help explain the limitations, while overlapping and intersecting identities help explain the not insignificant successes. The former helps us see how coalitional politics were not only often fraught but also often missing in moments and places where they “should” have been. The latter engenders a narrative of the particularly essential role of *bridge actors*—activists who were sufficiently self-aware of their location in and/or understanding of multiple organized constituencies to do the complicated work of coalition building and navigation.³ Still, I highlight that the literature would be well served by asking more complex and conditional questions of this data-rich era.

We do know that the suffrage movement and the women’s temperance movement, organized through the WCTU, were true coalition partners, both at the level of national leadership and through connections of state and local movement organizations that were tied to the national bodies through a federated structure. McCammon and Campbell (2002) note how well this partnership adhered to Zald and Ash’s (1966: 335) classic definition of a coalition as a coordination of organizations that results in “new organizational identities, changes in the membership base, and changes in goals” within at least one of the partners. Not only did the WCTU change structurally by forming official franchise departments within their organizations, but support of the suffrage cause by the WCTU was followed by a shift among the originally conservative WCTU toward the endorsement of a more progressive vision of women’s roles. But McCammon and Campbell’s findings about how the coalition developed are nonetheless quite consistent with Anthony’s anti-coalition admonishment. They find a consistent pattern of lopsided cooperation, as WCTU members increasingly entered the ranks of suffrage organizations and WCTU organizations expended resources for the suffrage cause, but flows of

members and resources did not run from suffrage organizations back to the temperance movement. Juxtaposing this pattern and Anthony's coalition position with an additional finding that political defeats for temperance and prohibition measures sparked greater cooperation with suffragists only in places visited by Frances Willard—the WCTU leader most vehement about temperance activists' need for political rights to combat liquor interests (Szymanski 2003)—suggests that strategic leadership decisions mattered. Whether leadership was likely to see cost or benefit in coalition work may help explain whether coalitional partnerships were cultivated, merely accepted, or actively rejected by suffrage organizations. Yet that explanation begs the question of how leaders developed their beliefs.

Lee Ann Banaszak's (1996) work comparing the U.S. and Swiss woman suffrage movements shows the location of movement leaders within coalition networks to be essential to the development of effective coalition politics because of its influence on leaders' beliefs about how the movement should act. Most important, her work suggests that coalition connections enabled the suffrage movement to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the processes through which they could (and needed to) develop mechanisms for direct pressure on legislative decision-making. She traces how the American movement developed new tactical strategies with each new coalition partnership, as suffrage leaders developed new beliefs about the propriety and potential of political tools through social ties across the partner organizations. From temperance organizing came both a belief in women's need for the vote as a tool of protection of the home and the development of targeted legislative lobbying strategies learned from WCTU campaigns to change state-level liquor laws. Also from WCTU experience came the strategy of organizing explicitly by electoral districts. Both would later become key elements of NAWSA president Carrie Chapman Catt's "winning plan," the final push for support of the federal amendment through a series of state-level suffrage achievements meant to exert new electoral pressure on congressional decision-making. Banaszak also links suffrage coalitions with the populist and progressive movements to new perceptions about who the important opposition was. Both populism and progressivism offered perceptions of the political process as unduly and illegitimately controlled by corporate and political machine interests, which brought suffrage movement leaders a new willingness to see the issue of women's voting rights as tied to other issues of "good government" and social welfare reform (Banaszak 1996: Ch. 8). The latter may have helped suffragists begin to see new coalitional possibilities beyond the bounds of middle-class interests.

My own work on coalitions within the suffrage movement more explicitly argues that both social identity and organizational location help explain suffrage leaders' willingness to work in coalition with other movements or political organizations. Suffrage leaders who also held leadership positions in potential partner organizations were more likely to push for cooperation. For example, I have documented the central role that Jane Addams played in brokering reciprocal support between the suffrage movement and the emergent Progressive Party in her home state of Illinois and at the national level (McConnaughy 2013: Chs. 4 and 6). Addams was the quintessential bridge actor, being

a leader in both the settlement house movement and several connected organizations working for workers' rights, as well as in the suffrage movement. From that position, she was clearly important to the development of a coalition between organized labor and suffragists in Illinois politics. Such a coalition was difficult to sustain because of the divergent identities of other central activists: the middle- to upper-class native White women within the suffrage cause and the working-class, often immigrant, men and women of the labor movement held incredibly divergent beliefs across a wide variety of political dimensions. Nonetheless, Illinois became the example of the effectiveness of such coalitional work when labor helped push suffrage onto the Progressive Party agenda there, leading to passage of Illinois's 1913 suffrage bill. Addams's role in the Progressive-suffrage alliance is even more clearly evident in the work she did as head of the national Progressive Party's women's division, where she drew scores of women, including many suffragists, into the organizational work of the new political party (see also Addams 1914). Yet, while Addams was clearly pushing for a reciprocal arrangement between these new coalition partners, suffrage leaders without similar organizational positions were far more likely to accept help than to offer it. Indeed, the president of the Illinois suffrage organization made the fatal mistake of accepting financial support from the anti-union William Randolph Hearst, effectively fracturing the coalition immediately after the 1913 suffrage bill passed.

The Addams narrative is not an isolated anecdote. I found analogous patterns of suffrage leadership's location within potential partner organizations and the emergence of coalitions in my work on Michigan and Colorado (McConaughy 2013). Going back to the early suffrage movement, Faulkner (2011) made a similar suggestion about Lucretia Mott's demand that suffragists should be equally committed to abolition and the political rights of free Blacks. Though many early suffragists shared an abolitionist experience, Faulkner observes that Mott's level of organizational involvement as an officer in a number of abolition and equal rights organizations far surpassed notable suffrage leaders who increasingly saw more cost than benefit in connection between suffrage and "the racial cause," including Anthony and Cady Stanton. Banaszak (1996: Ch. 5) also points to the overlap in personnel, including key leadership, between suffrage organizations and their coalition partners as explanatory of those coalitions' strength. Still, the case for the necessity of bridge actors remains tentative and the phenomenon an understudied one. There are certainly questions about how involved in the potential partner organizations bridge actors need to be in order to effectively create coalitional partnerships, particularly those of a reciprocal nature. And though McCammon and Campbell (2002) found threat to the temperance movement particularly predictive of its interest in coalitional politics, their work documenting the one-way nature of the coalition resource exchange between temperance and suffrage organizations also raises questions about how the structure of threats and opportunities might differentially affect movements' inclination to do coalitional work dependent upon the nature of their political goals (i.e., political rights versus regulatory policy goals). Given that coalitions emerged unevenly between the organized suffrage movement and farmers' organizations, labor unions, and the Populist

and Progressive parties, there is ample opportunity to enrich our understanding of the coalition-building process by capitalizing on this empirical variation—that is, the layered era seems particularly likely to offer sufficient empirical leverage on questions about the conditional circumstances under which leadership, threat, and opportunity can forge true movement coalitions.

Turning the coalition politics question on its head, this literature would be served as well by a clearer sense of what makes coalitions *impossible*. My own work on the suffrage movement (McConnaughy 2013) shows how this is a key question to ask in order to understand why Southern states were so unlikely to adopt woman suffrage. That the social identities of Southern suffragists were defined by strong circumscriptions of race and class suggests that bridge actors would be an asset nearly impossible to find. But also important was the reality that racial politics in the South built a more circumscribed politics, generally speaking. In short, race meant the South was decidedly un-layered in comparison to other places in this era. More generally, bridges are impossible without end points to connect.

CONCLUSIONS: IMPLICATIONS OF LAYERED MOVEMENTS FOR SUCCESS AND FAILURE

In this chapter I have presented research on the “layered activism” of women in U.S. movements approaching the twentieth century. It would seem that the outcomes of women’s movements of the layered era are generally well-known. Prohibition of alcohol came in 1919 with ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment. Woman suffrage quickly followed in 1920 with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. A federal anti-lynching bill passed in 1922. Fixation on these pinnacle policy achievements, however, misses the reality that these movements were meeting policy successes and failures repeatedly throughout the era, most notably through won and lost campaigns for changes to state and local laws. Variation in the patterns of the movements’ successes and failures across state and local jurisdictions is not only inherently interesting, but is also an important resource for empirical leverage on the question of why these movements succeeded or failed. Work leveraging this subnational variation in outcomes forwards important new ideas about how social identities shape how policymaking elites perceive the political importance of demands of a movement and thus are incentivized to respond—or not.

Holly McCammon and her co-authors (2001a, b) use state-level variation in suffrage outcomes to demonstrate the influence of *gendered opportunity structures*. This concept suggests that the political tools that are available to activists because of their salient social identities—here, gender—matter not only for what political demands they will make and how they will make them, but also for the likelihood that policymaking elites will view those demands as politically important. Suffragists, they show, were

unlikely to succeed as long as gender structures defined women as unimportant in the public spheres of economics and politics; dismissing their claims to greater rights was politically simple. As women not only increasingly entered the paid workforce, but also entered the more elite spaces therein, the relevance of their claims to political power stood positioned to take on greater consequence to policymaking elites. Woman suffrage was more likely to be adopted in states where and when women made these sorts of gains.

There is room, however, to use the gendered opportunity structure concept and variety of mass activism within the layered era to further unpack the determinants of movement success and failure. There are, for example, important remaining questions about the mechanism behind the influence of gendered opportunity structures on suffrage outcomes. Was it due to changes in elite perception of women's political potential? Of their economic interests? Of suffragists' capacity for disrupting the political agenda? Of their potential for alliance with other disruptive political causes? One way the layered era reality could be leveraged here is by looking for a *unique* influence of changes in gendered opportunity structures on the success of suffrage and other causes connected to women's increasing claims on the state. If gender is doing the important work, then these changes should *not* explain the outcomes of the public causes of the era that were *not* intertwined with women's activism. Attending to the layered era also highlights that an extension of the gendered opportunity structure concept to other identities, such as race, ethnicity, or social class, could importantly change how we understand the waxing and waning policy potential of civil rights, labor rights, and immigrants' rights—all of which were in contention in this era. Importantly, the layered era provides sufficient overlapping of causes to offer leverage on the question of whether and how intersectional opportunity structures mattered. Causes that crossed identities, it seems, could be helped or hurt by changing power structures that differentially empowered relevant populations depending upon whether those opportunities encouraged further advancement of the cause or new political divergence. Was the labor movement, for example, helped or hurt when woman suffrage gains brought new political rights for its female membership?

My own work on the outcomes of the suffrage movement pushes further into the incentive structures of policymaking elites to answer some of these questions about how gender—and its entwinement in other social identities—differentially shaped the likelihood of policy concessions in different political contexts. I demonstrate that partisan interest in the definition of the electorate meant that women's voting rights were unable to gain significant political traction until partnerships with electorally powerful interest organizations—including the labor and farmers' movements—were forged and leveraged. Movement success, in other words, was impossible outside of a layered context. The obvious question this leaves us with is whether coalitional work was similarly essential to other movements or uniquely important to suffrage in this era. And that question is particularly important given what we know about the potential for coalitions to be difficult and costly.

Indeed, a paramount question that emerges from centering the suffrage movement within its layered era context is whether and how working for suffrage encouraged or stalled the policy goals of the movement's layered-era partners. Would labor unions have achieved more protections of workers' rights if they had not used some of their political capital on the cause of woman suffrage, which offered so little reciprocal support? Would the Populist or Progressive parties have left greater legacies of economic reform? Seeing the fate of woman suffrage as intertwined with these partnerships brings into starkest relief the idea that the fate of the other great policy demands of the era surely depended in some part on the suffrage movement. Put quite simply: understanding the women's movements of the layered era tells us most clearly that we cannot explain the development of the American state and contentious American politics without them.

NOTES

1. Quotation from Era Club meeting minutes, November 28, 1914. Meeting also discussed on November 14, 1914. Application process and dues discussed on October 27 and December 10, 1914.
2. "Lynching, Whites & Negroes, 1882-1968," Tuskegee University Archives. <http://192.203.127.197/archive/bitstream/handle/123456789/511/Lyching%201882%201968.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.
3. Other names for these actors include *coalition brokers* or *bridge builders* (Van Dyke and McCammon 2010).

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CHAPTER 2

THE SWELLS BETWEEN THE “WAVES”

American Women's Activism, 1920–1965

KRISTIN A. GOSS

THE story of twentieth-century American women is defined by iconic images from popular culture. The 1920s woman was a carefree flapper in a fringed dress who sipped gin in an illegal speakeasy. The 1940s woman was “Rosie the Riveter,” the patriotic helpmate who temporarily stepped out of the home to support the war effort while the men were away. The 1950s woman was Betty Crocker or June Cleaver, a White, middle-class homemaker caring for her breadwinner husband and the children of suburbia. In many people’s minds, these three images define American women between the “first wave” women’s movement, which delivered the constitutional right to vote in 1920, and the “second wave” movement, which transformed culture and policy from the mid-1960s through the early 1980s.

No doubt some women’s lives approximated these popular images, but most women’s did not. Even though they are spread across different eras, and portray very different images of womanhood, these narratives are united by two common and very misleading themes. The first theme is that women’s natural domain is the private sphere of home and leisure, not the public sphere of politics and policy influence. The second theme is that when women do move into public roles, they do so out of temporary necessity, not by choice.

Historians and social scientists have spent at least three decades scrutinizing these narratives and systematically dismantling them. In the era “between the waves,” American women were not exclusively focused on the private sphere, nor were they reluctant activists. On the contrary, as the studies reviewed in this chapter show, the inter-wave era was a vibrant and exciting time for American women’s collective action. Women of diverse classes, races, and ideologies created organizations, forged coalitions, and sought social and policy change through a wide range of strategies on a dizzying array of issues. Virtually every issue was a “women’s issue.” In the decades after suffrage, women of all stations embraced their new civic status and used it as a platform for grand policy ambitions.

Scholarship on women's activism in the middle decades of the twentieth century is developing rapidly. This chapter provides a brief and necessarily incomplete overview of some of the most interesting research. It is organized around two perspectives that characterize scholarship on the inter-wave period. The first perspective involves "correcting the record" on privileged women. These studies challenge the caricature of White, middle-class homemakers as consumed with wifely and motherly duties and divorced from public activism. The second perspective might be termed "filling out the record." Looking beyond well-known White, progressive women's associations, these studies document the activism of women of color, working-class women, and right-wing women.

This chapter reviews women's collective political engagement from 1920 until the mid-1960s. The inquiry focuses on women's participation through women's mass membership associations, women's labor organizations, mixed-gender movements and unions, political parties, and even the bureaucracy. As research shows, women were far more politically active and consequential *as a group* than the historical arc of flappers, riveters, and homemakers would suggest. To be sure, women in the inter-wave period faced formidable obstacles, including discriminatory laws and patriarchal social norms that limited women's opportunities to lead change. For many women, gender-based marginalization was compounded by race- and class-based oppression. However, women found ways to leverage their roles as voters, consumers, mothers, workers, and skill-bearing citizens to press their concerns.

CORRECTING THE RECORD: ACTIVISM BY MIDDLE-CLASS WHITE WOMEN

In the modern imagination, privileged White women between the waves were focused on the private sphere. The 1920s flappers dated and danced, while 1950s mothers cooked, cleaned, and cared for the family. Although these iconic female figures engaged in different lifestyles, they seemed to share a desire to be removed from the public sphere of politics and policy. In this account, neither newly enfranchised women nor mid-century homemakers appeared interested in challenging the social order through collective action. These women might do charity work, but they were not geared toward broad-scale change. However, scholarly work conducted in recent decades has put these narratives to rest. Here, I review what research reveals about the serious, robust civic action conducted by women in the "roaring" 1920s, as well as in the "placid" 1950s.

Suffrage as a Platform: Women's Public Engagement in the 1920s

The Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified in 1920 and guaranteed American women not otherwise disqualified the right to vote in local, state, and

federal elections. Although other avenues of participatory citizenship remained largely closed to women, gaining the right to cast a ballot constituted a momentous turning point in women's history. Women had a rich tradition of organizing for community betterment and banging on lawmakers' doors for policy change. Now they had electoral clout to support their agendas.

Yet, early accounts of the post-suffrage era held that women's groups failed to take advantage of their newfound political power and build upon the “woman movement” already in place. As the story went, women simply declared victory and went home. Nancy Cott (1992: 154), an early critic of this narrative, summarizes its key tenets:

After the achievement of the vote, the large coalition movement among women disintegrated; now insiders rather than outsiders, women (ironically) lost influence within the political process. Suffragists' predictions of transformation in politics through women's contributions were not realized. No longer operating from strong women-only voluntary organizations nor avidly showing their strength as unified voices, women were not as aggressive as men in pursuing political advantage in a still highly male-dominated system.

Careful scholarship, including Cott's, has documented the many faults with this conventional narrative. Rather than “declaring victory and going home,” women's leaders of the 1920s used the suffrage amendment as a rhetorical and organizational springboard for the next stage of feminist activism and policy reform generally. By almost any metric, the post-suffrage decades were boom years for women's organizations: the number of groups grew, memberships increased, policy coalitions continued to form, and Congress increasingly sought out women's point of view (Cott 1992; Goss 2013). Even when one women's group faded from view, another took its place (Cott 1992).

Elsewhere I have argued that the Nineteenth Amendment evoked two different understandings of women's citizenship and thereby offered a broad platform for their public engagement:

The amendment embodied the duality of American citizenship, which encompasses both rights (to ballot access) and responsibilities (to take part in collective decision making). In incorporating rights and responsibilities, the amendment also embodied the parallel constructs in women's political history: the rights derived from doctrines of human equality and the caregiving responsibilities derived from patterns of gender difference. (Goss 2013: 169)

By simultaneously honoring women's equality claims and inviting women's public engagement, the amendment gave new legitimacy to both the feminist and reformist strains of female activism. Women could do either, or both. In the 1920s and beyond, they did both.

Feminist activists recognized that the Nineteenth Amendment was an important step toward political equality, but just a first step. Women's political equality involved more than the right to vote. The National Woman's Party, which had dominated the confrontational wing of the suffrage movement, immediately took up the cause of an

Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which was introduced in nearly every Congress during the 1920s. The party also worked with other groups, including the newly formed National League of Women Voters, to push for women's right to serve on juries (Kerber 1998; McCammon 2012). Nine states and territories acceded between 1921 and 1929 (McCammon 2012: 38). Another focus of women's rights advocates was the Cable Act (1922), which allowed American women to keep their citizenship upon marriage to a foreign national. The act excluded women who married foreigners not eligible for U.S. citizenship, but women's groups kept up the pressure until Congress eliminated the provision a decade later. Thus, by the early 1930s, women's groups had persuaded lawmakers to decouple American women's citizenship from that of their husband (Cott 1987: 99).

The main driver behind the Cable Act was the Women's Joint Congressional Committee (WJCC). The committee belies the conventional wisdom that the women's movement splintered after suffrage. Emerging three months after the Nineteenth Amendment's ratification, the Committee was formed by ten national women's organizations and more than doubled in size within five years. At its zenith, the WJCC spoke for 12 million women and "was recognized by critics and supporters alike as 'the most powerful lobby in Washington'" (Wilson 2007: 1, citing Selden 1922: 5, 93–96). Although it had largely dissolved by 1930, it left a significant policy legacy. Beyond the Cable Act, the WJCC secured passage of the Sheppard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Act of 1921, which provided federal funds to states to reduce mortality among mothers and children. WJCC member organizations also successfully lobbied for consumer legislation and civil service laws at the national level (Wilson 2007: 66). At the state level, the WJCC supported passage of more than 400 state and local laws in the realms of child welfare, women's rights, "social hygiene," education, and good government, among other issues (Andersen 1996: 154).

As the WJCC's experience suggests, women's reformism flourished in the 1920s. The National American Woman Suffrage Association successfully birthed the National League of Women Voters in 1920. The League quickly assumed a central role in women's policy coalitions and would become the dominant women's group on Capitol Hill throughout much of the twentieth century (Goss 2013). The National Congress of Parents and Teachers Associations, founded as the National Congress of Mothers in 1897, also became a mighty force for female reformism, quintupling its membership to 1.5 million in the decade after suffrage (Cott 1992: 162). In addition, the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, formed in 1919, grew to 1,100 clubs by 1931 (Cott 1992: 163). Meanwhile, at least two other federations of working women's clubs, Zonta International and Quota International, were founded during this period (Cott 1992: 163). After suffrage, these and many other women's groups continued to descend on Capitol Hill to press their policy claims. During the 1920s, women's group appearances before congressional committees increased slowly, in both absolute terms and after adjusting for the number of hearings, then took off in the 1930s and 1940s (Goss 2013: 35). Clearly, these trends are inconsistent with a crumbling "woman movement."

Most women's activism was channeled through independent voluntary organizations. Even after winning the right to vote, many women hesitated to pursue their goals

through political parties, which continued to carry a taint of self-interest and impurity at odds with norms of female virtue. However, women did make inroads through the party structures. Women constituted 6%–10% of Republican delegates and 10%–15% of Democratic delegates at the national party conventions from 1924 to 1948 (Andersen 1996: 83). As early as 1928, women also had changed the image of parties as all-male bastions: “the idea of women as canvassers, telephoners, campaign aides, convention speakers, poll watchers and election officials was now an accepted part of American politics” (Andersen 1996: 109).

Nancy Cott (1987) was among the first to question the puzzling orthodoxy that the expansion of women’s political rights in 1920 had doomed women’s collective action. To the contrary, she suggested, “nothing is further from the truth” (1992: 161). Accumulating evidence lends considerable weight to this verdict. No doubt some suffragist leaders rested on the movement’s laurels and retreated from public life, and certainly some young women—caricatured as ditzy “flappers”—didn’t bother to take up the movement mantle bequeathed to them by their mothers. But as demonstrated earlier, the record shows that women’s organizations were buoyed by suffrage. They and their leaders took women’s enhanced citizenship status and made the most of it. The Nineteenth Amendment served as a launch pad for an even more expansive form of female activism, rather than as the culmination of women’s political aspirations.

The Not-So-Homebound Homemaker: Elite Women’s Engagement in the 1950s

Besides debunking the notion that women got the vote and then went home, scholars have uncovered deep flaws in a second narrative, namely that there wasn’t much going on with women in the placid 1950s—a period that Rupp and Taylor (1987) term “the doldrums” of women’s activism. Challenges to this narrative take two forms. First, scholars have demonstrated that the narrative conflates womanhood with *middle-class, White, suburban* womanhood and in so doing neglects not only the experiences of working-class women and women of color, but also their activism. This activism is discussed in the section on “filling out the record” later in this chapter. The second challenge, discussed here, is that even White, middle-class, suburban women were considerably more politically engaged than popular imagery suggests. As the title of Joanne Meyerowitz’s (1994) groundbreaking volume reminds us, most women were “not June Cleaver.”

Indeed, White women’s activism flourished in the middle decades through scores of federated, mass membership organizations, as well as smaller, single-issue groups and campaigns. In his famous study of interest groups at mid-century, David Truman found that women’s groups were “both influential and numerous,” the dominant players in the citizen group sector (1951: 58, 100). Robert Putnam’s influential study of social capital identifies the 1950s as a high point for American civic engagement, with women’s activism at the center (Putnam 2000). These were good years for mass membership groups in particular. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs counted 800,000 dues-paying members in 1955 (Meltzer 2009: 57). The League of Women Voters grew by 44% between 1950 and

1958 (Ware 1992; Young 1989). Betty Friedan, whose book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) identified middle-class women's malaise as "the problem that has no name," noted in a separate article that the real source of these women's frustration was an overload of volunteer activities (Ware 1992: 290).

My own study of women's advocacy on Capitol Hill found that by one important measure, testimony at congressional hearings, women's organizations were actually more prominent in the late 1940s and 1950s than they were in the 1980s and 1990s (Goss 2013: 70). Throughout the middle decades, the number of women's groups appearing before Congress rose, as did the range of issues on which they spoke. These issues included education, environmental conservation, consumer protection, military readiness, foreign trade, and women's equality.

In the years after World War I and through the Cold War, women's groups were an especially formidable presence on questions of foreign policy (Goss 2009). They advocated for some of the most important proposals on Congress's agenda, including the reconstruction of Europe after World War II and the creation of the United Nations. In the 1950s, roughly 30%–45% of women's group appearances in any given Congress concerned foreign policy (Goss 2013: 94). Most of the better-known women's groups—the League of Women Voters, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and Women Strike for Peace—shared an internationalist outlook. They saw the United States' engagement in the world and the development of international organizations as the best mechanisms for preventing global conflict. However, two world wars and the rise of communism provided fertile ground for the creation of right-wing nationalist and isolationist women's groups, described later in the chapter. Their approach challenged the dominant female traditions of pacifism and cooperative engagement.

Beyond the global context, many factors help explain women's activism in the middle decades. Women were more educated than ever, and they had developed leadership skills and confidence during the war. Congress was expanding the reach of the federal government. The explosion of specialized interest groups had yet to occur, so lawmakers looked to multi-issue women's groups for policy input and political cues across a wide range of issue domains. Equally important, the suffrage amendment—and female leaders' interpretations thereof—bequeathed to women's groups a wide array of resonant discursive frameworks to use in recruiting women and orienting their collective action. Three frameworks dominated the era: the maternal framework, the egalitarian-feminist framework, and the "good citizen" framework (Goss 2013). Because each framework resonated with *some* subpopulation of mid-century women, women's groups as a whole could have broad appeal. The diverse menu of available frameworks also allowed women's groups to speak to policymakers across the ideological spectrum.

The Maternal Framework of Civic Action

The June Cleaver narrative holds that privileged White women chose a private life of domestic caregiving over a public life of civic action. In reality, the opposite was just as likely to be true: women used their identity as homemakers as the foundation for their political engagement. Representing this type of activism was the General Federation

of Women's Clubs (GFWC). The GFWC, which emerged in 1890, believed that women “were first and foremost wives and mothers and therefore homemakers,” an identity that the organization's “American Home” department sought to reinforce and professionalize (Meltzer 2009: 63). At the same time, the GFWC proudly noted that one-quarter of its national leaders held important positions in political parties and thus were “not women of leisure” (Chapman and Galvin 1955, cited in Meltzer 2009: 58).

Clubwomen's “gendered notion of citizenship deftly forged a consensus of maternalist politics that defied easy left-right political distinctions and brought women together as mothers defending America's liberty and future” (Meltzer 2009: 52). These predominantly White, middle-class women “accepted responsibility for preventing another world war and making the country safe for democracy” (Meltzer 2009: 52). In the Cold War era, these efforts focused on buttressing traditional American values, defined as self-reliance, private enterprise, and democracy.

Clubwomen's activism took many forms. On the educational front, they hosted naturalization ceremonies for immigrants, helped restore Independence Hall in Philadelphia, held “What America Means to Me” essay contests in high schools, and sponsored cultural exchange projects (Meltzer 2009). Clubwomen's work was also charitable, including providing food and other goods to Korea, Germany, and Greece to promote peace and encouraging members to develop community improvement projects (Meltzer 2009).

Importantly, women's clubs were political. They advocated for a U.S. history requirement in American high schools (Meltzer 2009). They urged members to run for public office (Meltzer 2009). And they lobbied Congress on a wide range of issues, testifying more than 250 times in the 1940s and 1950s.¹ Although Meltzer (2009: 54) argues that the GFWC veered right in the New Deal era and abandoned the state as a reform ally, my data suggest that women's clubs remained very much engaged with federal policymakers. All told, the GFWC and its affiliates appeared more times before Congress in the twentieth century than any other women's group except the League of Women Voters.²

The Egalitarian-Feminist Framework of Civic Action

The two decades following the end of World War II were challenging ones for feminist organizations. They faced an environment in which opinion writers and scholarly theorists, some of them female, portrayed non-traditional women as angry, neurotic, and a threat to the American family (Rupp and Taylor 1987: 12–20). Although numerous tracts put forward a pro-feminist point of view, the drumbeat of anti-feminism combined with the “atmosphere of conformity and consensus to discourage women from voicing protests about gender inequality in American society” (Rupp and Taylor 1987: 23). Even liberal female leaders, such as Eleanor Roosevelt, and progressive women's groups, such as the League of Women Voters, took pains to distance themselves from feminism (Rupp and Taylor 1987: 49).

That said, the women's rights agenda did not disappear in the postwar era. The National Woman's Party, which had played an especially public role in the suffrage campaign, continued to carry the torch for the ERA, as it had since the early 1920s. To be sure, the

party's membership had dwindled to perhaps 4,000–5,000 members and only a handful of state affiliates in the immediate postwar period (Rupp and Taylor 1987: 26). However, it had an outsized influence thanks to deep bonds among members, strong feminist commitments, and a shared space in Washington, D.C. (Rupp and Taylor 1987: 38, 45). The Republican Party put the ERA in its platform in 1940, and the Democrats followed in 1944 (Mansbridge 1986: 9).

The equal rights agenda between the waves extended beyond the ERA. Women's coalitions worked state by state to change policies that barred or discouraged women from serving on juries. The coalitions brought together local and state affiliates of the League of Women Voters, state women's parties, business and professional women's clubs, and women's bar associations. And they were successful: between the 1930s and the mid-1950s, roughly half of the states expanded jury service to women (McCammon 2012: 38). The jury service movement proved that women's activists of the inter-wave era were shrewd tacticians, learning from failed approaches and adjusting their strategies accordingly (McCammon 2012). Beyond jury laws at the state level, women's groups worked at the federal level on issues such as equal pay, employment non-discrimination, and opportunities for women in the military.

However, many organizations associated with feminism of the 1940s and 1950s had ideological positions that prevented them from expanding their base beyond privileged White women. The groups were typically segregated by race, and Black women's attempts to join often caused internal turmoil and resulted in rejection (Rupp and Taylor 1987: 155–156). Support for the ERA also isolated feminist groups from women's labor organizations and many mainstream female-led advocacy groups, which feared that the amendment would undermine laws that protected women from harm. As I show later, however, women pursued feminist goals through labor unions and worker activism in ways that scholars are just now bringing to light.

The Good-Citizen Framework of Civic Action

Perhaps the most politically active middle-class women's group of the middle decades—and the one that most defied the “quiet homemaker” narrative—was the League of Women Voters. Formed in 1920 as the successor to the National American Woman Suffrage Association, the League dedicated itself to preparing newly enfranchised women for good citizenship. The organization promoted democratic practices: careful study of the issues, consensus-based deliberation, nonpartisanship, clean elections, and robust citizen engagement. The League and its state and local affiliates developed an expansive issue agenda and testified before Congress more often than any other women's group in the twentieth century (Goss 2013: 100). Although it had the suffrage movement winds at its back, the League really hit its stride in the immediate postwar era. Membership rose sharply between the mid-1940s and mid-1960s, and its presence on Capitol Hill rose accordingly. In these years the League served as an important springboard for women interested in running for public office.

The League’s appeal arose in part from the niche it could fill in an age of residential mobility. Educated women arriving in a new community could plug into the local League to gain a quick education on local issues and a means of influencing decision-makers. The League’s appeal also was rooted in its ability to be all things to all women. Besides welcoming women of all partisan stripes, the League was, interestingly, both a women’s organization and not a women’s organization. “Women” was in its name, and its membership was all female, but members “do not think of their organization as a ‘woman’s organization,’ but rather, as a citizen organization whose work is carried on by women simply because they happen to be able to organize their time and energies in a convenient working pattern” (Stone 1946: 16). Even as it distanced itself from a gender-based identity, the League nevertheless subtly drew upon and creatively combined the caregiving-woman orientation of the maternal framework and the empowered-woman orientation of the egalitarian-feminist framework. These ideas combined to form a “good citizen” identity for the League, denying women’s difference from men but simultaneously signaling that women were superior to them—more conscientious, less brazenly political, and more public-interest oriented (Goss 2013: 117). Groups like the League conveyed the notion that women were better caretakers of the polity and had at least an equal claim to influence public policy.

FILLING THE GAPS: WORKERS, WOMEN OF COLOR, AND CONSERVATIVES

Besides dismantling the “June Cleaver” narrative about White middle-class reformist women, historians and social scientists have filled out women’s history between the waves by documenting the robust activism of labor women, women of color, and conservative women. Early research acknowledged these women’s work, while more recent studies have provided a fuller and more textured picture.

Workers Unite: Union Women, Working-Class Homemakers, and Their Allies

Scholars of the feminist movement have long noted an interesting historical puzzle. Three landmark federal policies advancing women’s rights—establishment of the President’s Commission on the Status of Women (1961) and enactment of the Equal Pay Act (1963) and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (1964)—came into being *before* the second-wave movement, not in response to it. Dorothy Sue Cobble (2004) argues that labor women’s unrelenting activism “between the waves” helps us reconcile this paradox. These federal efforts “were the culmination of some twenty-five years of political

activism, made possible in part by the political ascendancy of labor liberalism and the increasing assertiveness of women within that movement” (Cobble 2004: 145).

The women’s labor movement consisted of four sets of actors: women’s unions, women’s divisions within predominantly male unions, women’s auxiliaries of male unions, and the Women’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor, which served as both a coordinator of and an advocate for women’s labor organizations. These actors frequently worked together, but they occupied different niches within the broader labor movement.

In the early twentieth century, working women had a collective voice through the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union and the Women’s Trade Union League. The National Consumers’ League, led by the legendary Florence Kelley, also fought for working-class women’s interests. Although the 1920s were not kind to these groups or unions generally, they continued to agitate and enjoyed the company of new allies.

In the decade after suffrage, women’s labor auxiliaries advocated for health and social welfare programs for women and children (Abramovitz 2001). The United Council of Working-Class Women protested the high cost of food, fuel, housing, and education, and the Brooklyn Tenants Union led rent strikes in New York (Abramovitz 2001). Of enduring significance, in 1920 the Women’s Trade Union League and other women’s groups were instrumental in persuading Congress to create the Women’s Bureau within the U.S. Department of Labor. The Bureau’s mission was to improve the welfare, working conditions, and opportunities of wage-earning women. The Bureau would go on to support women’s labor activism by supplying authoritative research, by serving as a convening force for women’s labor groups to network and establish priorities, and by advocating for policies to benefit women. By the 1940s, the Women’s Bureau served as a hub for labor women’s organizations (Cobble 2004: 51).

During the Depression, poor and working-class women united in a homemakers’ movement that protested high prices and low benefits in cities such as Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, and Seattle. Many of the leaders of these movements had been tradeswomen before they married, so they brought a labor consciousness to their work (Orleck 2000: 379). These militant homemakers benefited from the fact that older groups, such as the Women’s Trade Union League and the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union, were looking to organize women as consumers (Orleck 2000: 380).

The homemakers’ tactics included staging sit-ins at relief centers, blocking evictions, and staffing Communist Party–led Unemployed Councils (Abramovitz 2001: 123; Stein 1975). In 1935, homemakers’ groups held meat strikes, shutting down butchers in Los Angeles, Detroit, and New York, and engineered boycotts in at least six other cities (Orleck 2000: 384). Congress called hearings on the meat industry’s structure, and activists visited Capitol Hill each year from 1935 to 1941 to press for lower food prices (Orleck 2000: 387–388). Homemakers staged another round of nationwide meat strikes in 1948 and 1951, also garnering congressional attention (Orleck 2000: 387). As Annelise Orleck (2000: 382) notes, the Depression-era homemakers “moved quickly from self-help to lobbying in state capitals and Washington, D.C.” and distinguished themselves from their predecessors “by the sophistication and longevity of the organizations [they]

generated.” Indeed, homemakers movement activists in Michigan and Washington state went on to win public office (Orleck 2000: 386).

The female labor movement gained strength during World War II, when working-class women assumed jobs and leadership roles that men otherwise would have occupied. The iconic woman of the 1940s, Rosie the Riveter, captures this shift; the famous poster’s slogan, “We can do it,” conveys a sense of women’s collective purpose. But as noted at the beginning of this chapter, Rosie simultaneously conjures an image of women as helpmates, pressed into patriotic service when needed but ready to return to their traditional roles. Americans viewing the poster in the 1940s could not have imagined how the movement of women into the wartime labor force would change unions, public policy, and women themselves.

After the United States’ entry into the war, women’s union membership nearly quadrupled, reaching 3 million by 1944 (Dickason 1947: 71). In the mid-1940s, women constituted 28% of United Auto Workers members and 40% of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (Dickason 1947: 72). Nearly every union became gender-integrated during this era (Dickason 1947: 72).

During the war, many women went into union jobs, and male workers often greeted their arrival with resentment (Milkman 1987: 170–171). Yet the unions needed these new female recruits to maintain their memberships, meaning union leaders had strong incentives to pay attention to women’s successful integration and acculturation. Unions such as the United Electrical Workers and the United Auto Workers hired female staff members and encouraged local tradeswomen to strive for leadership positions (Milkman 1987: 172). Unless the unions developed female leaders, the United Electrical Workers president said in 1943, “the men of this union are going to find themselves in a position where the structure of the union will be weakened” (Milkman 1987: 173, citing *Proceedings of UE Convention*, 1943: 228).

Biases held firm, however, and women did not occupy the top leadership positions. Unions also hesitated to develop programs focused on women’s concerns for fear of seeming divisive (Milkman 1987: 176–180). Nevertheless, women often held second-tier posts and managed women’s divisions, giving them leverage in deliberations over institutional priorities and practices (Cobble 2004: 26). The influx of women into union jobs, coupled with the National War Labor Board’s endorsement of equal pay for equal work, resulted in the proliferation of contracts guaranteeing women’s pay equity and other protections from discrimination (Dickason 1947: 73). Although women’s union membership dropped immediately after the war, it had strongly rebounded by the early 1950s (Cobble 2004: 17).

Women’s wartime experiences had profound effects on their civic capacity. Participation in the higher-status world of unionized male work gave women new confidence in their abilities and taught them political skills—both of which would prove valuable for future activism. Women also became intimately aware of community problems and, at the unions’ behest, had the opportunity to join service organizations that were normally the province of elite women (Dickason 1947: 75–76). Such collaborative engagement promoted cross-class understanding and respect.

Women's divisions within male-dominated unions constituted another key player in the labor movement. These units were instrumental in securing resolutions on behalf of women's interests—for example, directing locals to reject contracts that allowed married women to be laid off first and investigating and redressing discrimination against African-American women in hiring (Cobble 2004: 73, 80). Labor feminists were also active in the 1940s and 1950s on the issue of child care. In 1954, they succeeded in securing a modest federal tax deduction to benefit low-income employed women.

Women's auxiliaries, which were female support organizations for male unions, constituted a third important set of actors. In the 1940s and 1950s, they had nearly as many female members as did unions themselves (Cobble 2004: 23). Their advocacy included union label campaigns; boycotts of goods produced in non-union shops; organization of strikes, lockouts, and picket lines; and provision of charitable and support services to laborers (Cobble 2004: 23). Conventions of these auxiliaries took policy stances favoring equal pay, national health insurance, free day care for working mothers, maternity leave, an end to race discrimination, abolition of poll taxes, and a federal statute outlawing lynching (Cobble 2004: 24–25). The CIO Auxiliary considered congressional testimony to be a priority (Cobble 2004: 25).

A fourth key advocate for working women was the Women's Bureau, housed within the U.S. Department of Labor. Congress created the Bureau in 1920 to “formulate standards and policies which shall promote the welfare of wage-earning women, improve their working conditions, increase their efficiency, and advance their opportunities for profitable employment” and to “investigate and report to the U.S. Department of Labor upon all matters pertaining to the welfare of women in industry” (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.). Under the leadership of Mary Anderson in the 1920s and 1930s, the Bureau conducted wide-ranging studies on women in fifteen industries, including private household employment, canning, office work, and shoemaking. The Bureau also studied working conditions for Black women in the 1920s (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.).

The Bureau played a key convening and advocacy role in securing the first feminist victories of the 1960s. In 1961, President Kennedy named Esther Peterson, a former AFL-CIO lobbyist, to head the Bureau. She immediately set out to champion the creation of a women's commission, an idea that had germinated for two decades. Peterson commissioned a draft proposal from female labor leaders and then persuaded the Labor secretary to take the proposal to the president, who signed an executive order during his first year in office to create the commission. The Bureau was also the central node in the women's coalition that secured the Equal Pay Act, and Bureau staff members forged the compromises necessary for the legislation to pass (Harrison 1988: 91, 104). Although the act was a watered-down version of what women had sought, it constituted a significant first step by enshrining the principle of gender non-discrimination into law (Cobble 2004: 167). As I argue, these and other early federal policies helped to channel women's organizational energies toward issues of gender inequality for decades to come (Goss 2013).

From her position at the Bureau, Peterson also advanced civil rights for Black women. She recruited Dorothy Height, head of the National Council of Negro Women, to serve

on the president's commission. They then set up a project on the “Problems of Negro Women,” which laid bare systems of oppression that White women had failed to appreciate (Cobble 2004: 174). Peterson then convened some 200 women's organization leaders at the White House to found the National Women's Committee for Civil Rights, in which labor women were quite active. Peterson and Height later created a National Committee for Household Employment to champion the interests of domestic workers (Cobble 2004: 174).

Working women and their organizational allies constituted a potent force from the 1920s through the 1960s. World War II marked an especially important turning point. Women who enjoyed relatively good wages, union protections, and status while filling traditionally male jobs during the war were jolted upon their return to the “blue- and pink-collar ghetto of women's work” after the war (Cobble 2004: 13). This new self-confidence, experience with institution building, and rising feminist consciousness “gave wage-earning women a new vocabulary and an ideological framework within which to justify their demands” (Cobble 2004: 15). In that way, the transformed labor movement of the 1930s and 1940s helped lay the groundwork for the women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s (Cobble 2004).

At the same time, as Cobble notes, the labor-feminist network splintered in the mid-1960s. Some labor leaders joined Betty Friedan and the torchbearers of the second wave women's movement, while other labor women remained skeptical of the new feminism's tactics and goals. At this time many leaders of the labor women's movement were reaching retirement. Younger women did not rush to take their place, instead gravitating toward the newly emerging movement for women's liberation.

Women of Color: Bridging Gender, Labor, and Minority Causes

Women of color were intersectionally disadvantaged by gender and race and often by class, as well. Much of their organizational history between the waves remains to be documented, but a growing body of work reveals that women of color pressed their claims and policy goals via their own intersectional organizations and in male-dominated institutions and movements. Here I discuss activism by two groups, African-American women and Mexican-American women.

African-American Women

Racial segregation was either an official policy or a de facto practice among most White women's associations for at least the first half of the twentieth century. To be sure, a handful of White women's groups, namely the Young Women's Christian Association and the Women's Trade Union League, had been forward looking on racial integration (Scott 1991: 180). But even as the civil rights movement was shattering legal barriers and shifting public opinion, civil society organizations, including women's groups, remained organized along racial lines.

Early on, African-American women had developed their own organizations to parallel those of White women. White women had the Association of Collegiate Alumnae (founded in 1881), which became the American Association of University Women in 1921; three years later, Black women founded the National Association of College Women, which grew to eight branches and nearly 300 members by the early 1930s (Cott 1992: 164). The National Colored Parent-Teacher Association was founded in 1926 in response to an effective ban on race mixing within the PTA (Cott 1992: 162). Black sororities became fixtures on college campuses in the 1920s and ensuing decades, and these organizations continued to engage women in policy advocacy long after their graduation.

Perhaps the best-known women-of-color organization was the National Council of Negro Women, founded by Mary McLeod Bethune in 1935 to bring African-American women's groups together around common agendas. In my study of women's organizations, the Council accounts for 43% of all appearances by women-of-color groups at congressional hearings through 2000. For most of its history, the Council was led by Dorothy Height, whose activist career took her from leadership roles at YWCAs in Harlem and Washington, D.C., in the 1930s to the national YWCA from the 1940s through the late 1970s. In 1955, she became president of the Council, shored up its finances, and built it into an activist powerhouse. Often working in coalition with women's and civil rights groups—and bridging these different sets of interests—the Council worked on issues ranging from the struggle for freedom in the South to poverty and inequality (Height 2003).

During the Depression and postwar eras, African-American women also worked through less-known organizations and movements to advance social justice. As part of a wider homemakers' movement, Black women staged protests against the high price of meat and closed 4,500 butcher shops in New York City (Abramovitz 2001: 122). Meanwhile, Black homemakers in at least four cities organized "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" boycotts to protest unemployment among African-Americans (Abramovitz 2001, citing Hine 1994).

During and after World War II, African-American women formed radical organizations to promote causes that mainstream labor, civil rights, and women's groups neglected. Radical Black women, whose ranks included investigative journalists publishing through leftist and Black publications, foreshadowed the discussion of intersectional oppression taken up within parts of the academy in recent years (Gore 2011). These women worked through mixed-gender groups, including Communist Party organizations, but they also formed their own organizations, including Negro Women Incorporated (1942) and Sojourners for Truth and Justice (1951) (Gore 2011). Sojourners forged a cross-racial alliance with the Emma Lazarus Federation of Jewish Clubs, founded in 1951. Believing that Jews and African Americans shared a common enemy in the reactionary right, the "Emmas" provided financial assistance to women-of-color groups and became activists against segregated housing and schooling (Antler 2000: 528).

African-American women were also leaders in groups such as the National Negro Labor Council (1951), through which women successfully advocated for Sears Roebuck

to open sales clerk positions to Black women (Gore 2011: 121). As radicals operating amid the Red Scare to advocate for the most marginalized of the marginalized, these groups remained small and often had a short-lived existence. But these leaders enjoyed occasional victories and succeeded in calling attention to issues, including through investigative journalism, that otherwise would have remained off mainstream organizations' agendas.

During the 1950s and early 1960s, African-American women played important roles in the civil rights movement, though not in top leadership positions. Probably the best-known female civil rights figure, Rosa Parks, was a trained, seasoned activist and secretary of her local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (Morris 1984). Mrs. Parks's orchestrated refusal to give up her bus seat provided the basis for the successful bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955. She became a household name and celebrated historical figure, but she never led either a civil rights or a women's organization in the movement years.

Scholars of feminism and the civil rights movement have noted that the movement's male leaders, including revered figures such as Julian Bond and the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., opposed handing the reins of power to women: "there was a general belief that women were capable of doing the job but that they should not do it" (Robnett 1996: 1675). Denied formal leadership positions at the top of organizations, women dominated "bridge leader" roles at the intermediate level, connecting the Black community to movement organizations and linking these groups to rural and isolated regions (Robnett 1996). These women included Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Victoria Gray Adams (Robnett 1997).

Mexican-American Women

From 1910 to 1930, more than one million Mexicans arrived in the United States and settled mostly in the Southwest. World War II heightened minority groups' awareness of systemic inequalities in the United States (Rose 2000). These developments laid the groundwork for the beginnings of Latina organizing and leadership (Ruiz 2008: 4). As was the case with African-American women, Latinas didn't often occupy the top positions in Mexican-American organizations or movements, but women did bring distinctive skill sets and policy agendas to these groups' advocacy efforts (Rose 2000: 179).

Much like White women, Latinas formed auxiliaries within male-dominated associations (*mutualisitas*) to arrange public forums and provide food and other support to the men (Ruiz 2008: 100). Mexican-American women also worked through mixed-gender groups, such as the Community Service Organization (CSO) in Los Angeles. During the 1940s and 1950s, the CSO worked on issues traditionally associated with women's caregiving, such as health, education, and neighborhood improvement (Rose 2000: 179). Increasingly politicized, women in the organization came to lead voter registration drives and citizenship-education initiatives. Two female leaders of the 1960s movement of California farmworkers, Dolores Huerta and Helen Chávez, cut their teeth in the CSO (Rose 2000: 195).

Indeed, as was the case with African-American women, Latina engagement spanned community-betterment work and union activism. A labor-activist woman, Luisa Moreno, was the driving force behind the first national conference of Latinos in the United States, *El Congreso de Pueblos de Hablan Española*, which brought together more than 1,000 delegates, representing at least 120 organizations, in 1939 (Ruiz 2008: 109). The congress focused on jobs, housing, education, health, and immigrant rights. Another woman, Josefina Fierro de Bright, later assumed a co-leadership role (Ruiz 2008: 109). Mexican-American women engaged in labor strikes in New Mexico (1951) and San Antonio (1937, 1938, and 1959–1963), among other places. A Mexican-American woman, Sophie Gonzalez, organized the four-year “Tex-Son” garment workers’ action in San Antonio. She and her fellow leaders activated “Cold War ideologies of femininity and domesticity” to soften opposition and gained support from Anglo women, male union members, and the Catholic Church (Flores 2009: 371–372).

The leadership of Moreno, Bright, Huerta, and Chávez was exceptional in the context of the times. Organizing around worker rights was difficult enough during the Red Scare of the 1950s, when conservative forces cast such efforts as “un-American.” Organizing workers who were also Latino and Latina immigrants multiplied the challenges: Latinos had no electoral clout and were constantly at risk of deportation. Indeed, by one estimate, 3 million Mexicans were deported in the early 1950s (Rose 2000: 1987). The oppressive political context makes the work of Latina activists all the more remarkable.

Conservative Women: Organizing Against the “-isms”

Women’s activism during this period was not limited to progressive causes. Conservative women were also active throughout the twentieth century, including in the 1920–1960 period. These women drew on diverse ideologies that were sometimes in tension with each other: isolationism and anti-communism, patriotism and anti-Semitism, nationalism and anti-statism. Conservative women’s groups included support organizations of male veterans’ organizations (e.g., the American Legion Auxiliary) and traditional women carrying on the patriotic legacy of male ancestors (e.g., Daughters of the American Revolution). But the conservative women’s movement of the inter-wave period also featured many right-wing upstarts that grounded their activism in maternal watchfulness: the Mothers of Sons Forum; the National Legion of Mothers of America; We, the Mothers Mobilize for America; and Mothers of the USA; to name a few (Goss 2013; Nickerson 2012).

As Glen Jeansonne has documented, the right-wing mothers’ movement arose in 1939 to oppose the United States’ entry into World War II. Motivated by “an ironic mix of maternal love and fanatical prejudice,” the mothers’ movement may have encompassed 5 to 6 million members organized in fifty to one hundred groups spanning the country (Jeansonne 1996: 1). Among the most prominent was the National Legion of Mothers of America, whose cause was championed by William Randolph Hearst and his newspapers (Nickerson 2012: 53). Mid-century mothers’ groups were populated