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Political Culture and Suffrage in an Anglo-American Women's West

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I. INTRODUCTION

The seventy-fifth anniversary of the passage of the Equal Suffrage Amendment1 to the United States Constitution passed with little fanfare in the summer of 1995. At the site of the first2 U.S. women’s rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York, the August 26th anniversary provided an occasion for a Women’s Equality Day celebration in People’s Park. White House UPI Bureau Chief Helen Thomas presented the keynote address in which she promised the crowd of 1,000 that when she returned to Washington she would “make sure President Clinton pardons Susan B. Anthony”3 for her convicted felony of attempting to vote in 1906, fourteen years before the U.S. Constitution provided for it.4 Other activities that day at Seneca Falls included a farewell concert by the rock group the Washington Sisters, a reenactment of the first March for Suffrage by 300 costumed feminists, and a special sale of the 1995 U.S. Postal Service’s Suffrage Stamp, issued in commemoration of the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment as well as the Equal Rights Amendment that failed in the late 1970s.5 On the other end of the political spectrum, the anniversary gave conservative Phyllis Schlafly an opportunity to criticize the production and use of the new postal stamp.6 Schlafly devoted her entire July 1995 newsletter to attack it, and admonished Americans to “reject any letter that uses” the stamp, and suggested storing any unsold stamps with the Susan B. Anthony dollars, “another attempt by the radical feminists to impose their ideology on us that was rejected by the American people” [sic].7

While these conflicting appraisals of the meaning of suffrage legislation reflect contemporary popular attitudes towards women’s social and political status, they also point to the contradictory appraisals of the historical meaning and impact of suffrage in the academic literature on the subject, a topic of continuing interest, especially among women’s historians. Ann Douglas, for instance, came out in 1995 with her Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s,8 in which she argues that late Victorian white female suffragists were the primary impediment to racial justice in 1920s America.9 At the very least, the seventy-fifth anniversary of the passage of the Amendment provides a moment in which to pause and “regroup” some of the literature on suffrage, and particularly to reflect on its meaning for Western American history and geography, since it was in the West where women were first enfranchised.10 In fact, by the time the Sixty-sixth Congress of the U.S. approved the sis seems to ignore the role of white men in oppressing both. See id.

9. See id. at 254.

10. See A.F. Scott & A.M. Scott, One Half the People: The Fight for Woman Suffrage 166-68 (1975). See also E. Flexner, Century of Struggle: The Women’s Rights Movement in the United States 159-81, 317-37 (7th ed. 1982). As the maps, table, and discussion that follows indicate, other states had passed ‘lesser’ forms of suffrage before 1920, including presidential and primary suffrage legislation. See infra Maps, pp. 33-37 and Table, p. 21.

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Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution on May 20, 1920, fifteen states had ratified the full suffrage amendment in their state constitutions, and of these, thirteen, or eighty-seven percent, were west of the Mississippi River.¹¹

While it seems that women's historians, especially western women's historians, have so completely analyzed the subject that little remains to be said about it,¹² geographers have generally not paid much attention to regional or international patterns of women's suffrage. Geographers' contributions to the study of American women's suffrage has been primarily in mapping the "contact diffusion" of suffrage legislation in the West, or in mapping the diffusion of Anglo-American political cultures from the East that led to the adoption of particular kinds of legislation, such as suffrage, in the West.¹³ Because these diffusionist arguments tend to ignore state-by-state explanations offered by western women's historians (such as those relating to western political or economic opportunism, or political agitation by suffragists), they obscure compelling questions about why suffrage legislation first appeared in the West rather than in the East where, arguably, its main advocates were located. This article opens an interdisciplinary dialogue that synthesizes historical, cultural, and geographic arguments about suffrage in the American West. Drawing from a rich literature on the subject, I begin by recounting the spatial diffusion of western women's voting rights up to 1920. I then address some competing theories about the success of suffrage in the West, and argue that to gain a better explanation for the phenomenon, a matrix of theories from several different arenas must be considered. The significant and complementary forces behind the success of suffrage in the West included: the diffusion of "moralistic" and "individualistic" Anglo-American political cultures; distinctive demographics combined with unique western political and economic imperatives; and influential political activism by women.¹⁴

It should be noted at the outset, however, that the study of suffrage is not without complications. On the one hand, suffrage was a clear indicator of women's rights; many women perceived it as such, and even died for it.¹⁵ Certainly early suffragists saw voting rights as having a clear political purpose.¹⁶ Though the vote was only one among many other important indicators of women's political status (others would include property rights and child custody rights), it was among the most important.¹⁷ Without the vote, women had no formal means to challenge the host of political, social, and economic inequalities with which they were faced.¹⁸ On the other hand, in many countries around the world and in many American states, suffrage was not granted as a "women's rights" issue but was rather a cynical and opportunistic political gesture of elite men.¹⁹ "Women's rights" were not necessarily advanced by suffrage either.²⁰ Historian Joan Wallach Scott and Virginia Scharff argue that public, institutional-
ized forms of politics and government such as voting rights are limited in the extent to which they can reflect women’s status historically.\textsuperscript{21} Scott argues for moving beyond the notion that politics is related to formal operations of government to a definition that more broadly assesses all contests for power.\textsuperscript{22} To Scott, history is not a study of “what happened”, to be discovered and transmitted by the historian, but rather is a set of practices for producing knowledge.\textsuperscript{23} The writing of history then is a political exercise that “both reflects and creates relations of power.”\textsuperscript{24} In questioning the fruitfulness of a study about women’s suffrage, Scott’s analysis raises poignant questions about larger-scale, particularly cross-cultural, relationships of power in early twentieth century America. The fact is, not all women were granted suffrage even when some were.

“Western women” in the 1890s included well over 200,000 Native Americans and Mexican Americans, the two largest non-Anglo groups west of the Mississippi River.\textsuperscript{25} The study of suffrage has much less to contribute to the study of these and other minority women’s political status in the West than it does to Euro-American middle-class women.\textsuperscript{26} Suffrage does not say anything about many Indian women’s relatively powerful social positions in terms of land ownership, independent control over property, and opportunities to play culturally and politically influential roles in old age.\textsuperscript{27} Nor does it bring to bear on the fact that Indian women as a whole were federally disfranchised until 1924 or later in western states, and were disproportionately subjected to the intersection of different and overlapping legal traditions and jurisdictions at the tribal, state, and federal levels.\textsuperscript{28} Mexican Americans officially became citizens (with voting rights) with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the Mexican-American War.\textsuperscript{29} However, in much of the Southwest their suffrage and political rights were often curtailed by the simple expedient of allowing only English speakers to vote, or they remained foreign nationals intending to return to Mexico and never applied for citizenship.\textsuperscript{30} Castaneda\textsuperscript{31} notes the problems with trying to incorporate women of color into a discussion of women’s suffrage, and argues that the topic has little to offer many African American, Chicana, Native American, Puerto Rican, and Asian American women who look not to American women’s liberation movement(s) but to third-world liberation movements for their political forebears.\textsuperscript{32}

It is important to acknowledge that the study of suffrage is fraught with such contradictions, and that western women’s history and geography should follow what Scharff has called a “politics of inclusiveness.”\textsuperscript{33} However much the single-issue, the white middle-class women’s suffrage campaign only benefited some women, though it did arguably establish feminist discourse in this country. Early suffragists enjoyed the freedom to start challenging

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{21}{See J.W. Scott, History in Crisis? The Others’ Side of the Story, 94 Ann. Hist. Rev. 680, 680-81 (1989); Scharff, supra note 12.}
\footnotetext{22}{See Scott, supra note 21.}
\footnotetext{23}{See Scharff, supra note 12, at 537.}
\footnotetext{24}{See Scott, supra note 21, at 681.}
\footnotetext{25}{See R.G. del Castillo, Commentary on Anglo Women and Domestic Ideology in the American West in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries, in Western Women, Their Land, Their Lives 44 (R.L. Griswold ed., 1988).}
\footnotetext{26}{See id.}
\footnotetext{27}{See id.}
\footnotetext{28}{See Jensen & Miller, supra note 12, at 207. The Dawes Act of 1887 (General Allotment Act) broke up tribal lands into individual land holdings. Deeds to the lands were to be retained by the federal government for 25 years. See A.T. Sorokin, The Urban American Indian 2-3 (1978). At the end of this period the titles to land were to be given to Native Americans along with citizenship. See id. The Dawes Act retained the instrument of federal Indian policy for 30 years, although in 1934 it was repealed by the Indian Reorganization Act. See id. In the meantime, all Indians were granted citizenship of the United States under the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924; along with citizenship, all Indians born within the territorial limits of the United States were granted the right to vote in state and federal elections and were subjected to serving in the Armed Forces. See id.; see also C. Niethammer, Daughters of the Earth: The Lives and}
\footnotetext{29}{See J. Jensen, Disfranchisement is a Disgrace: Women and Politics in New Mexico 1900-1940, N.M. Hist. Rev.; see also R. White, It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West 354 (1991). White notes, for instance, that in the first decades of the twentieth century, most (90%) of El Paso citizens hoped to return to Mexico and thus did not seek U.S. citizenship. See id.}
\footnotetext{30}{See generally supra note 29.}
\footnotetext{32}{See id.}
\footnotetext{33}{See Scharff, supra note 12, at 555.}
\end{footnotes}
gender constructs, and in that sense they ultimately helped open the door to wider interpretations of feminism which today do in fact challenge other forms of oppression, such as racism, even if their own social and cultural milieu precluded them from doing so. Thus, the study of enfranchisement through formal political channels is important and merits our attention, although I acknowledge that this interpretation is not entirely unproblematic.

II. THE STATUS OF SUFFRAGE, 1869-1920

For the Long Work Day,
For the Taxes We Pay,
For the Laws We Obey,
We Want Something to Say.34

The California Equal Suffrage Association used this slogan on political posters during its 1909 campaign to gain women’s right to vote.35 California went on, in 1911, to become the nation’s sixth state to grant full universal women’s suffrage, and in so doing was one of the first eleven states—all in the West—to grant it.36 Maps 1-5 show the spatial extent of suffrage up to 1918, the last year that any state ratified a full suffrage amendment in its constitution prior to ratification of the federal constitutional amendment.37

As Map 1 shows, the Wyoming Territorial Legislature was the first to pass the suffrage bill in 1869.38 Legislator William H. Bright introduced the bill, which stated that “every woman of the age of eighteen years, residing in this Territory, may, at any election to be held under the laws thereof, cast her vote.”39 After amending the bill to read twenty-one years of age instead of eighteen, the totally Democratic legislature adopted the Woman’s Rights Bill on December 10, 1869.40 Soon thereafter, neighboring Utah adopted it in 1870.41 It was not until almost a quarter of a century later, in 1893, however, that the third state, Colorado, approved the legislation.42 The fourth state to do so, Idaho, followed Colorado in 1896.43 By 1914, eleven western and one midwestern state had passed women’s suffrage.44 In addition to the original four, Washington in 1910, California in 1911, Arizona, Kansas, and Oregon all in 1912, and Montana, Nevada and Illinois all in 1914, had adopted the measure.45 By 1918 a total of fifteen states had added a constitutional amendment guaranteeing women’s suffrage, and of these, thirteen, or eighty-seven percent, were west of the Mississippi River.46 These states granted full suffrage by constitutional amendment, ensuring women’s right to vote in all types of elections, including presidential elections.47 However, by 1918 other states had also passed presidential or primary suffrage for women in their state legislatures.48 As Map 4 indicates, by 1918 a total of twenty-one states had passed some form of national women’s suffrage, and of these, sixteen, or seventy-six percent, were west of the Mississippi River.49 Table 1 lists these dates, states, and conditions of suffrage in a tabular form.50

As the table indicates, an additional nine states, all east of the Mississippi, passed presidential suffrage in their state legislatures during 1919-1920, just prior to the federal constitutional amendment mandating it in May of 1920.51 These legislative acts clearly foreshadowed the impending federal amendment, though they are not “mapped into” the present discussion because they appear so late,

34. Poster is reproduced in Myres, supra note 12, at 196.
35. See Myres, supra note 12, at 196.
36. See infra Table p. 21.
37. It should be noted that the political units of territories and states have been generalized as states on the maps, although it was Wyoming’s and Utah’s territorial, not state, governments that first adopted women’s suffrage. See Beeton, supra note 28, at vi. In both cases, women’s as well as men’s suffrage was limited; citizens could not vote in gubernatorial or presidential elections until statehood. See id. Wyoming became a state in 1890, and Utah in 1896, thus these are the ‘official’ dates of women’s full suffrage, although I retain a focus on the earlier dates as the more ‘effective’ dates of the women’s vote. See id.
38. See infra Map 1, p. 33.
40. See id.
41. See infra Table p. 21.
42. Washington Territory was actually third to adopt the legislation, in 1883, but its supreme court later ruled it unconstitutional. See Myres, supra note 12, at 226-27.
43. See infra Table p. 21; see also Map 2, p. 34.
44. See infra Table p. 21.
45. Not included on the map is Alaska, whose governor approved the suffrage bill as his first legislative act in the territory in 1913. Though Alaska is arguably another “western state,” it is not included in the present discussion. Canadian women’s suffrage followed a similar pattern to that of the U.S., with three western provinces first passing the enfranchisement. See E. Jameson, Toward a Multicultural History of Women in the Western United States, 13 SIGNS: J. WOMEN CULTURE SOC. 761, 764 (1988). See also Map 3, p. 35.
46. Table is after Scott & Scott, supra note 10, at 166-68. See also Map 5, p. 37.
47. See generally supra note 46.
48. See id.
49. See id.
50. See id.
51. See Scott & Scott, supra note 10, at 166-68.
TABLE 1: WOMEN’S SUFFRAGE TO 1920

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>Full suffrage with admission to statehood; had as territory since 1869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>Full suffrage by constitutional amendment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>Full suffrage by constitutional amendment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>Full suffrage with admission to statehood; had as territory since 1870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>Full suffrage by constitutional amendment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>Full suffrage by constitutional amendment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>Full suffrage by constitutional amendment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>Full suffrage by constitutional amendment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>Full suffrage by constitutional amendment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>Presidential suffrage by legislative enactment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>Full suffrage by constitutional amendment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>Full suffrage by constitutional amendment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>Presidential suffrage by legislative enactment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>Presidential suffrage by legislative enactment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>Presidential suffrage by legislative enactment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Full suffrage by constitutional amendment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>Primary suffrage by legislative enactment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>Full suffrage by constitutional amendment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>Primary suffrage by legislative enactment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>Full suffrage by constitutional amendment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>Full suffrage by constitutional amendment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>Presidential suffrage by legislative enactment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>Presidential suffrage by legislative enactment</td>
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<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>Presidential suffrage by legislative enactment</td>
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<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>Presidential suffrage by legislative enactment</td>
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<td>1919</td>
<td>Minnesota</td>
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<td>1919</td>
<td>Ohio</td>
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<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>Presidential suffrage by legislative enactment</td>
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<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>Presidential suffrage by legislative enactment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>Presidential suffrage by legislative enactment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and also because they indicate less commitment to women’s rights. Suffrage guaranteed by legislative act can be revoked easily, whereas a constitutional amendment cannot.

Many states had granted partial or limited voting rights to women on matters of schools, taxes, and bond issues at the same time universal suffrage was being defeated.52 Flexner notes that as early as 1838 Kentucky had provided “school suffrage” to widows in country districts who had school-aged children—the first instance of women’s suffrage on record.53 Kansas gave women the “school vote” in 1861, and a total of nineteen states did likewise by 1890, while three others granted tax and bond suffrage.54 Kansas provided female municipal suffrage in 1887, allowing women to vote in town council meetings.55 Kansas went on to lead the nation in electing women to its municipal governments and also elected the first female mayor in the country (as well as in the world)—Rosalind Urbach Moss.56 In 1877, women in Colorado could also vote in school elections and hold district offices.57 The poster of the California Equal Suffrage Association quoted above indicated that by 1909 women and men voted equally in four states, but in twenty-five other states women had various levels of partial suffrage.58

III. WHY THE WEST? “HISTORICAL” EXPLANATIONS

Historians of women’s suffrage have advanced a number of related yet distinct explanations that attempt to explain the early enfranchisement of women in the western half of the United States.59 These arguments can be grouped around the themes of: 1) western demographics; 2) the political-economy of the West, focusing particularly on the relationship of suffrage to nascent political structures and/or raw economic opportunism; and 3) agitation by women’s rights advocates.60 These arguments, outlined below, each provide valid yet partial explanations for western suffrage and apply better to some states than others. As Matsuda asserts, the West itself is variously seen as “more populist,

52. See Flexner, supra note 10, at 179-80.
53. See id.
54. See id.
55. See Riley, supra note 39, at 187, 253-54.
56. See id.
58. See Myres, supra note 12, at 196.
59. See Jensen & Miller, supra note 12; Myres, supra note 12; Beeton, supra note 28; see also M.J. Matsuda, The West and the Legal Status of Women: Explanations of Frontier Feminism, 24 J. W. 47, 47-56 (1985).
60. See generally supra note 59.
feminist, republican, or egalitarian” depending on which of these arguments is adopted.\textsuperscript{61}

A. The Demographic Imperative

Flexner, Myres, and White all assert that because there were few women in the western states, they were granted voting and other economic rights as incentive to migrate.\textsuperscript{62} In this line of argument, the earliest successes of suffrage in some states, most notably Wyoming, were due to demographics rather than to pressure from women themselves.\textsuperscript{63} There were simply few women in the states that adopted suffrage.\textsuperscript{64} The Wyoming Census of 1870 showed, for example, 1,049 non-Indian women over age 10 and 6,107 males in the same age group.\textsuperscript{65} If settlement of Wyoming and other western states was to succeed, men needed women with whom to marry and establish families.\textsuperscript{66} As Flexner sees it, “women gained prestige by their very scarcity.”\textsuperscript{67} She notes that in 1865 there were three men to each woman in California, four men to each woman in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho, eight men to each woman in Nevada, and as many as twenty men to each woman in Colorado.\textsuperscript{68}

While the demographic argument seems to apply aptly to the case of Wyoming, opinions vary as to the commitment of Wyoming legislators to attract women settlers with suffrage.\textsuperscript{69} Just two years after adopting the legislation, the Democrats voted to repeal it, since so many women supported their Republican opponents.\textsuperscript{70} There is also no evidence that the women’s vote actually did attract any settlers.\textsuperscript{71} Nevertheless, some scholars agree that Wyoming legislators saw a political opportunity in using suffrage to promote the territory, and had little fear that the women’s vote would substantially change the outcome of Wyoming politics.\textsuperscript{72} As a writer for \textit{Harper’s Weekly} suggested, “Wyoming gave women the right to vote in much the same spirit that New York or Pennsylvania might vote to enfranchise angels or Martians.”\textsuperscript{73}

B. Political and Economic Opportunism

Western historians also posit several political and economic arguments that parallel the demographic one. Some have argued that because there were no entrenched political structures yet established in the West, territories and states there were more likely to consider women’s rights.\textsuperscript{74} Since political systems in the West were newer than those in the East, the West was riper for social and political change.\textsuperscript{75} Many laws in the late nineteenth century were being created “from scratch,” and reform politics were thus easier to consider.\textsuperscript{76} T.A. Larson argues that the success of suffrage was owed to the “fluid” political situation in the West.\textsuperscript{77} As a Vermont immigrant to Kansas, Clarina H. Nichols commented, “[i]t [is] a thousand times more difficult to procure the repeal of unjust laws in an old State, than the adoption of just laws in the organization of a new State.”\textsuperscript{78} Beeton also notes that it was easier to pass legislation in territories than in states.\textsuperscript{79} For one thing, the legislative bodies were small.\textsuperscript{80} In the case of Wyoming, “a total of fourteen people acting in their official capacities brought the law into existence.”\textsuperscript{81} The legislation passed with little organized support or opposition.\textsuperscript{82} On the other hand, territorial governors, such as in Dakota Territory in 1885, feared that suffrage legislation would hurt chances of statehood and so killed the measure.\textsuperscript{83} However, as Matsuda points out, in states where organized opposition had time to develop, “reforms were hard won and long in coming.”\textsuperscript{84}

The legal historian Kermit Hall argues that a change in women’s status was “far more welcome”

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{61} Matsuda, supra note 59, at 47.
\item \textsuperscript{62} See Flexner, supra note 10, at 160; Myres, supra note 12, at 220; White, supra note 29, at 356.
\item \textsuperscript{63} See generally supra note 62.
\item \textsuperscript{64} See id.
\item \textsuperscript{65} See Myres, supra note 12, at 220.
\item \textsuperscript{66} See generally supra note 62.
\item \textsuperscript{67} Flexner, supra note 10, at 160.
\item \textsuperscript{68} See id.
\item \textsuperscript{69} See Beeton, supra note 28, at 15; Riley, supra note 39, at 189.
\item \textsuperscript{70} See generally supra note 69.
\item \textsuperscript{71} See Beeton, supra note 28, at vi, 4, 15; Myres, supra note 12, at 220.
\item \textsuperscript{72} See Myres, supra note 12, at 220.
\item \textsuperscript{73} Id.
\item \textsuperscript{74} See infra pp. 25-28.
\item \textsuperscript{75} See id.
\item \textsuperscript{76} See id.
\item \textsuperscript{77} See T.A. Larson, \textit{Woman Suffrage in Western America}, 38 Utah Hist. Q. 7, 10 (1970).
\item \textsuperscript{79} See Beeton, supra note 28, at 7; Matsuda, supra note 59, at 51-53.
\item \textsuperscript{80} See Beeton, supra note 28, at 7.
\item \textsuperscript{81} Id.
\item \textsuperscript{82} See id.
\item \textsuperscript{83} See id.
\item \textsuperscript{84} Matsuda, supra note 59, at 53; Beeton, supra note 28, at 7.
\end{itemize}
in the Great Plains than in the East, but the motives were mixed at best, involving a mixture of morality and economic expediency.\textsuperscript{85} He agrees with Matzuda that the emerging economic dynamics of the region helped suffrage, and that the legal reforms instituted in advance of capitalism were in the interests of a small elite group of men who sought women as consumers but also as producers—entrepreneurs, miners, ranchers, and prostitutes.\textsuperscript{86} If they were not granted voting and other rights, they would be kept out of the mainstream of the developing western economies.\textsuperscript{87} Thus the male power structure had economic interests in attracting women to the region, and one way they attempted to do this was by granting voting rights.\textsuperscript{88} In fact, a bill was introduced in the 1868 U.S. Congress to grant across-the-board suffrage to women in all the western states, but it failed.\textsuperscript{89} As Myres points out, Congressman Hamilton Wilcox of New York testified that "such a measure would attract women to the territories."\textsuperscript{90} Historian Dee Brown notes that suffragists themselves also argued that voting rights would induce women to migrate West, replacing and disciplining transient bachelor societies with a stable family community.\textsuperscript{91}

The raw political opportunism of elite Church men is frequently cited as an explanation for the success of suffrage in Utah.\textsuperscript{92} Many historians argue that a small group of Church of Latter-Day Saints (Mormon) leaders had much at stake in expanding their political power base in the face of growing opposition to the practice of polygamy.\textsuperscript{93} The Church hierarchy supported suffrage primarily because votes from women would double the votes for Mormons.\textsuperscript{94} It would thereby secure the legal status of polygamy while at the same time prove that Mormon treatment of women was progressive, not abusive.\textsuperscript{95} White argues that as large numbers of non-Mormons started entering Utah, "Mormon women's votes would add significantly to the church's electoral strength, while the few 'gentile' women would add little strength to the anti-Mormon bloc."\textsuperscript{96} The Utah Territorial Government passed suffrage for women in 1870. The U.S. Congress's Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887, however, withdrew it as part of its attempt to abolish plural marriage.\textsuperscript{97} It was later reinstated with the state constitution in 1895.\textsuperscript{98}

Assumptions that the Church's male hierarchy used the women's vote to consolidate its power base tends to obscure the fact that Mormon women themselves were very well organized politically and fought for enfranchisement on their own behalf.\textsuperscript{99} Mormon women's active leadership in suffrage campaigns in Utah, Idaho, and later Arizona have been well documented. Mormon women participated extensively in their own suffrage organizations, produced the widely-read Woman's Exponent suffrage newspaper, and worked with eastern suffrage organizations to establish coalitions with non-Mormon women.\textsuperscript{100}

C. Women's Rights Activism in the West

As in the case of Utah, suffrage was won in many western states due to the extensive and arduous agitation by women suffragists and women's rights activists, often in conjunction with other moral reform campaigns such as temperance and abolition. While Myres argues that the success of suffrage in the western states was due to the work of male leaders in western state governments along with eastern suffrage leaders, plenty of examples provide evidence that western women themselves worked effectively for suffrage.\textsuperscript{101} Several scholars argue that even in Wyoming women campaigned privately for suffrage. Wyoming women's rights activists Julia Bright and Esther Morris probably influenced Bright's husband William to introduce the

\textsuperscript{85} See K. Hall, The Legal Culture of the Great Plains, 12 Ga. PLAINS Q. 86-98 (1992). Hall goes on to argue that the Great Plains states were in general 'strongholds of conservatism' trying to maintain an agrarian social order against an industrializing world economy, despite claims of Plains radicalism by easterners. See id.

\textsuperscript{86} See id.

\textsuperscript{87} See id.

\textsuperscript{88} See id.

\textsuperscript{89} See Myres, supra note 12, at 221-22.

\textsuperscript{90} Id.


\textsuperscript{92} See e.g., Myres, supra note 12, at 222-23; White, supra note 29, at 356-57; Jensen & Miller, supra note 12, at 205.

\textsuperscript{93} See generally supra note 92.

\textsuperscript{94} See id.

\textsuperscript{95} See id.

\textsuperscript{96} White, supra note 29, at 357.

\textsuperscript{97} See id.

\textsuperscript{98} See id.

\textsuperscript{99} See Jensen & Miller, supra note 12, at 205. See also B. Beeton, Woman Suffrage in Territorial Utah, 46 UTAH HIST. Q. 100, 100-20 (1978).

\textsuperscript{100} See generally supra note 99.

\textsuperscript{101} See Myres, supra note 12, at 219, 235.
bill to the Wyoming legislature. Esther Morris, who went on to become the first U.S. female Justice of the Peace, is considered by some the "Mother of Woman Suffrage." Other strong and articulate western leaders are often cited as key to suffrage's success in the West. These include Abigail Scott Duniway of Oregon, who began her career as an agrarian reformer before committing herself to suffrage and who started her own women's rights paper, the New Northwest, in 1871; Caroline Nichols Churchill of Colorado, who published the "Colorado Antelope" during the 1890s; and Jeanette Rankin of Montana, who would become the first woman elected to Congress.

The suffrage movement began in the U.S. in conjunction with a number of other moral reform movements of the 1830s and 1840s, including abolitionism, temperance, and health reform. By the mid-1830s women reformers had especially become involved in antislavery agitation, although by the end of the Civil War conflicts arose within the abolitionist movement about the role of women's suffrage and within the women's rights movement over the role of abolition. By the 1860s two distinct camps had evolved: Lucy Stone, heading the 'moderates', who argued that antislavery agitation should take center stage; and Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, heading the more radical wing, insisting that women's rights should come first. Soon after founding the National Woman Suffrage Association in 1869, Stanton and Anthony began to travel through the western states speaking on women's suffrage, including taking a transcontinental railroad trip together in 1871.

As middle-class white women's domain was confined more and more exclusively to the home in the nineteenth century, activism in reform movements became one of the few accepted "careers" open to them. Women's participation in reform movements in many ways did not violate the separate-spheres division of society, since many women's involvement in political reform concentrated on the "home extended outward"—focusing on better schools, health care, and other public social services. Baker refers to this movement of women's political subculture from the domestic sphere out into the public domain as "public motherhood.

Dominant middle-class ideologies held that women were superior to men in moral character and virtue, and hence arguments were made that women's suffrage would help reform politics and thus "civilize" western communities. In Grimes's classic study, the success of suffrage depended on "puritanical and Machiavellian men" who believed that providing women the vote would help domesticate the West by eradicating such evil influences as liquor and prostitution. Though suffrage did not win its first victories in the northeastern states where the reform movements were strongest, the reform conditions in individual western states can help pinpoint some corresponding strongholds for suffrage.

In Kansas, for example, middle-class white women were active in politics and their struggle for the vote was tied to their morality, especially to the temperance and abolitionist movements. Flexner asserts that "many New England women had come with their menfolk to try and make Kansas 'free soil', bringing with them the ideas sown by Mar-

102. See V. Scharff, The Case for Domestic Feminism: Woman Suffrage in Wyoming, 56 ANNALS WYO. 29, 29-37 (1984). E. Jameson, Women as Workers, Women as Citizens: True Womanhood in the American West, in THE WOMEN'S WEST 157, 145-64 (S. Armitage and E. Jameson eds., 1987). Jameson argues that it is problematical to look only at legislative structures and public forums—from which women were excluded—to women's political influence. See id. at 157. She notes that Julia Bright and Esther Morris influenced the Wyoming legislation. See id. at 156; see also RILEY, supra note 39, at 188 (further arguing that it was Morris who "reportedly pushed" legislator William H. Bright to introduce the bill in the Wyoming Territorial Legislature).

103. See RILEY, supra note 39, at 188-89.

104. See Matsuda, supra note 59, at 53; MYERS, supra note 12, at 216; Jensen & Miller, supra note 12, at 205; WHITE, supra note 29, at 357.

105. See generally supra note 104.


108. See id.

109. See generally supra note 12.

110. See infra pp. 28-29.


112. See id. at 78.

113. See A.P. GRIMES, THE PURITAN ETHIC AND WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE (1967), as discussed and quoted in R.G. del Castillo, supra note 25, at 43-48. Pascoe finds little connection between suffrage and the "female moral authority" of middle-class white reformers who were trying to protect Chinese prostitutes in San Francisco, since the latter were not allowed to vote. To Pascoe, the vote was "hardly... a practical tool for advancing female values." See PASCOE, supra note 28, at 47.

114. See GRIMES, supra note 113.

115. See FLEXNER, supra note 10, at 157-59.
garet Fuller and Lucy Stone. The Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was also strong in Kansas. The WCTU, the largest women's organization in existence in America up to 1890, made temperance the basis for a wide range of social demands associated with child protection, health, education, and eventually suffrage. Many women leaders in Kansas took temperance reform to include the doing away with dance halls, saloons, and prostitution, in "defense of homes they had helped build and which they feared were threatened by male expenditures for alcohol." In Kansas, then, women's rights were tied to the hope that women's vote would promote temperance and other moral causes. Suffrage leaders in other states, such as Duniway in Oregon, wanted to distance suffrage from temperance so as to not alienate male voters; nevertheless initial defeats in Oregon, Washington, and California have been attributed to the intertwining of the two issues. After 1910, however, when prohibitionist sentiment was stronger, it became an asset to suffrage.

Jameson submits that women's suffrage was also tied to women's participation in rural agrarian reform in Kansas, such as The Grange, the Farmer's Alliance, and the Populist party, which came into power in 1893. Likewise, these organizations supported women's issues, such as in opposing margarine as a substitute for their cash product, butter. Jameson argues that some western women "became interested in politics when they realized that the farms and homes they had helped build were endangered by public policy or could be sold by their husbands without their consent." In contrast to Grimes, Jameson contends that western women organized for suffrage on their own behalf, and further argues that "male support seems to have come less from the genteel upper classes than from farmers and miners who endorsed political philosophies that supported equality." Jameson cites the populism of Colorado and Idaho as other cases in point, and many other historians as well have argued that Colorado's rural populist roots, combined with its urban radical labor movement, led to the related movement for women's suffrage. When suffrage passed in Colorado in 1893, a wide coalition of support had been established among white middle-class suffrage leaders, men and women in organized labor, and rural supporters of agricultural reform parties. The coalition included suffrage leaders, other club women (who had not previously associated themselves with the suffrage cause), the WCTU, populist farmers and miners, urban organized labor (including working class women in the Labor Union Party), and socialists. Populist and labor organizing was not as critical in Idaho, although in both states suffrage leaders such as Duniway had waged major campaigns and eventually won the support of one or more major party (Populist and Republican in Idaho).

IV. WHY THE WEST? GEOGRAPHICAL EXPLANATIONS

A. Political Cultures in the American West

While western historians seem generally to have concluded, as Richard White puts it, that the success of suffrage in the West was "the sum of state victories," he correctly observes that analyzing each state does not explain the regional pattern. Geographers and other social scientists who have entered the discussion about western suffrage have attempted to explain the phenomenon at the regional scale as the product of a diffusion process. In their terms, suffrage is treated as a product of a "contact" diffusion originating in the West, or as the product of eastern political and cultural proclivities that diffused westward after the colonial period.
Brunn argues that the late nineteenth and early twentieth century suffrage campaign provides a good example of how political ideas and legislation are diffused spatially.133 Brunn characterizes this contact diffusion process as one in which an initial state adopts a proposal, then nearby states or states in the same section of the country follow suit, and eventually "pave the way" for a constitutional amendment or new social policy.134 In early America, political innovations typically began in the East and spread to the West.135 But an argument can be made that in the case of suffrage, the innovation itself began in the West and spread eastward.136 Though the first American women's rights convention was held in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848, and though the founders of the National Woman Suffrage Association were easterners with large eastern audiences, suffrage found its first concrete expression in the West and the innovation subsequently spread eastward.137

Others argue that suffrage was an eastern idea, an eastern innovation or cultural proclivity that spread westward.138 As Daniel Elazar and many others after him, including Kincaid139 have argued, "political culture" is an important determinant of political behavior, and types of political cultures can be associated with the passage of particular legislation such as the enfranchisement of women.140 To Elazar, there are three main political cultures in the United States, each with roots in the three main sections of the original thirteen colonies, and each manifestations of the ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic differences that existed among them.141 Each culture is a synthesis of a group's view of the purpose of government and the role of politics, reflecting its own particular vision of the marketplace and commonwealth.142 These political cultures codify the heritages and philosophies of the ruling elite, who subsequently lead settlement and occupancy of the continent.143 Elazar's three cultures are the moralistic, individualistic, and traditionalistic.144 These reflect "the streams and currents of migration that have carried people of different origins and backgrounds across the continent in more or less orderly patterns," to roughly the north, middle, and south sections of the country with blending and overlap in some places.145

To those in the moralistic political culture, politics is a means to establish a "just commonwealth," and government is viewed positively as an instrument for promoting social and economic welfare for all.146 Elazar asserts that this culture had its roots with the Puritans and other religious groups who sought to create "covenanted communities" in America.147 In this culture, moral issues are considered important components of politics, and nonpartisan participation in politics and government is encouraged.148 Politics is intended to increase the public or common good, and thus the individual good is de-emphasized.149 The moralistic culture had its roots in New England and the Mid-Atlantic, and spread with migration throughout the northern midwestern states, the northern Plains, parts of the Rocky mountains, and to the Northwest.150

In the individualistic political culture, government and democracy are viewed as a marketplace of competing interests.151 Government's role is utilitarian, intended to keep the marketplace in working order, and involvement in it is viewed as necessary to protect the individual's rights and privileges.152 Since politics is a "necessary evil" to protect private concern, politicians can be expected to reward their supporters.153 Elazar associates this political culture with settlers interested in individ-

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134. See BRUNN, supra note 13, at 19-21.
135. See ELAZAR, supra note 13.
136. See BRUNN, supra note 13, at 19-21; see also Maps 1-5, pp. 32-37.
137. See supra Table p. 12 and Maps.
138. See ELAZAR, supra note 13, at 85-104; Kincaid, supra note 13, at 6-23. Kincaid adds that while political culture is only one determinant of political behavior or governmental process (others including cultural, structural, or socioeconomic variables), the structure of the political system is significant insofar as it "encourages, channels, restrains, and blocks various courses of action and expressions of interest." See id.
139. See Kincaid, supra note 13, at 6-23.
140. See generally supra note 138.
142. See id. at 93.
143. See id.
144. See ELAZAR, supra note 13, at 93; Kincaid, supra note 13, at 9-12. Kincaid adds that while political culture is only one determinant of political behavior or governmental process (others including cultural, structural, or socioeconomic variables), the structure of the political system is significant insofar as it "encourages, channels, restrains, and blocks various courses of action and expressions of interest." See id.
146. See id. at 96-98.
147. See id. at 108.
148. See id. at 97-98
149. See id. at 97.
150. See id. at 104-13.
151. See id. at 94-96.
152. See id.
153. See id.
ual opportunities for material wealth and personal freedom through frehold farms, banking, commerce, and manufacturing, those for whom "politics [is] just another means by which individuals may improve themselves socially and economically." This political culture originated in the Mid-Atlantic region, and spread with westward migration to the central midwestern states, parts of the Great Plains including Nebraska and South Dakota, and into the West in places such as Wyoming, Nevada, and northern California (for instance, during the Gold Rush). Elazar's traditionalistic political culture has roots in the South’s plantation agrarianism, and as such reflects what he considers a preindustrial or precommercial social order. Individual opportunity in this culture was through an agribusinnerly that depended upon cheap, indentured, or slave labor, which eventually evolved into an American version of the landed gentry, or "old boy" political network. In this culture, social and family ties are more important than individual advancement, and politics is the domain of a small powerful elite who "inherit" the right to govern. This culture takes a paternalistic and custodial view of politics and government; those at the top of the hierarchy take the dominant role and prefer to limit participation to themselves; individual citizens are not expected to participate. This culture spread from the South, throughout the other southern states and border states (to the southern parts of Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and West Virginia), and to portions of the Southwest including New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas. This culture remains more regionally compact than the other two, though, in the American South.

Elazar’s broad patterning suggests that the Puritan emphasis on religious life led to a political focus on moral issues such as education and abolition, which eventually evolved into a more secularized Yankee moralism that spread west. In the upper midwestern states it was combined with northern Europeans’, especially Scandinavians’, shared religion and progressive political orientation, resulting in a moralistic stronghold in the northern states and in pockets of northern California, Kansas, Utah, and Colorado. The second broad migration stream included settlers from Pennsylvania and other Mid-Atlantic states, mainly non-Puritan English, German, Irish, and other central European settlers united in their search for opportunity in America, and who eventually established strongholds across the middle of the country. As Elazar notes, people kept moving after these broad migration streams had been established, but after the turn of the twentieth century these were primarily from rural to urban areas within the same section of the country (and thus did not lead significantly to change in political culture prior to the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment). In Elazar’s quite ethnocentric scheme, the only departures from this east-west system were when immigrants encountered mountains. The Appalachians deflected and ultimately isolated a few pockets of the moralistic culture in the South, and the Rocky Mountains likewise deflected the neat westward spread of all three cultures, creating pockets of each throughout the West. Some states, therefore, are predominantly one political culture while others are a mix or an amalgam of one, two, or all three.

Elazar argues that these three political cultures “left residues of population in various places to become equivalent to geological strata.” His mapping of these three political cultures provides a starting point for understanding why women’s suffrage succeeded in some places and not in others. In his framework, the moralistic and individualistic political cultures dominated and overlapped in the West, and this particular convergence led to the

154. See id. at 94, 109.
155. See id. at 104-13.
156. See id. at 99-102; Kincaid, supra note 13, at 11; see also Brunn, supra note 13, at 264-65, for additional insights.
157. See generally supra note 156.
158. See Elazar, supra note 13, at 99-102.
159. See id. at 99.
160. See id. at 104-13.
161. See Elazar supra note 13, at 99-113. Elazar actually maps nine variations on the three base political cultures: M, M1, M2, T, IM, IT, and T1, TI, and TM. Two letters together indicate either a synthesis of two subcultures, or the existence of two separate subcultures in the area, with the first dominant. See id. at 104-13.
162. See id. at 109.
163. See id. at 109-12.
164. See id. at 109.
165. See id. at 114.
166. See Elazar, supra note 13, at 113. Certainly much could be made of Elazar’s blindness to the contributions of non-Anglo and non-European cultures to American politics and government. The extensive bibliography in Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women’s History (V.L. Ruiz and E.C. DuBois eds., 1994) provides a good starting point for investigating such contributions.
167. See Elazar, supra note 13, at 113.
168. See id. at 113; 117 fig. 13; see generally supra note 165 and 166.
169. Elazar, supra note 13, at 103.
early enfranchisement of women there.\textsuperscript{170} Both the moralistic and individualistic political cultures tend to favor progressive legislation that fit its larger interests, and women’s suffrage would find an easy fit within both.\textsuperscript{171} In the moralistic vision, women’s voting would be in the public interest because it would increase political and governmental participation and involvement of the citizenry, particularly on moral issues. In the individualistic vision, women’s freedom as individuals, particularly as individual entrepreneurs deserving of economic opportunity, would be favored. Elazar reiterates his colonial model of American sectionalism in his later work, \textit{The American Mosaic: The Impact of Space, Time, and Culture on American Politics}.\textsuperscript{172} Here he argues that the West’s “unique character” was produced by a predominantly \textit{laissez-faire} form of economics, a populist approach to politics which was “intrinsically different from the traditional or elitist approaches that characterized other spheres,” and a social system that “allowed and even expected greater and rapid mobility both vertically and laterally within it.”\textsuperscript{173}

Conversely, states falling within Elazar’s traditionalistic political culture corresponded to restrictive suffrage regulations.\textsuperscript{174} None of the nine traditionalistic southeastern states, from Louisiana to Maryland, enfranchised women before 1920, and the southern states in the West (except Arizona) also lagged behind their western counterparts.\textsuperscript{175} The same section of the country was likewise resistant to the proposed Twenty-Seventh Amendment to the Constitution—the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)—in the 1970s, while it found clear support among the moralistic and individualistic states.\textsuperscript{176}

By 1980 the ERA had been passed by thirty-five of the fifty states, leaving it just three short of the required thirty-eight.\textsuperscript{177} Among the fifteen states that failed to ratify the ERA were the nine that opposed suffrage.\textsuperscript{178}

B. “Gender” Cultures in the American West

Paralleling Elazar’s work, the historian D.H. Fischer takes a geographic diffusionist approach to delineating the origin and expansion of four Yankee “gender culture” groups in the United States, all with roots in Britain that were transplanted first to the eastern seaboard in the seventeenth century and then expanded gradually across the continent over the next four centuries.\textsuperscript{179} Fischer takes a traditional “germ theory” approach to the study of American history that views the West as a transplanted Anglo-American East.\textsuperscript{180} The location and spread of Fischer’s gender cultures roughly correspond to Elazar’s political cultures: Fischer’s New England Puritans correspond to Elazar’s moralistic culture; his Mid-Atlantic group dominated by Quakers correspond to the individualistic culture; and his “southern aristocracy” and “Appalachian backcountry” groups combine to correspond to Elazar’s traditionalistic culture. Fischer uses qualitative indicators of ideas and language to look at what he terms “gender ways” of the culture regions, which he says can account for differing views of women’s rights among the regions.\textsuperscript{181}

The first of Fischer’s gender culture regions began with the seventeenth century American Puritans who believed that women and men were spiritual equals—a revolutionary idea for the time.\textsuperscript{182}

170. See id. at 110-11.
171. See id. at 94-96.
173. Id. at 141.
174. See I. SHARKANSKY, THE UTILITY OF ELAZAR’S POLITICAL CULTURE: A RESEARCH NOTE, 2 POLITY 66, 83 (1969). Sharkansky converted Elazar’s nominal classification into a uni-dimensional scale ranging from moralism to individualism to traditionalism. See id. He found that of the 48 continental states, high scores on traditionalism were significantly related to lower voter participation, restrictive suffrage regulations, less developed government bureaucracies, and lower government expenditures, tax efforts, public services, and public employee salaries. See id.
175. See supra Table p. 21.
176. The 15 states that had not ratified the ERA by 1980 were Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Mississippi, South Carolina, Virginia, Arizona, North Carolina, Missouri, Nevada, Illinois, and Utah. See Kincaid, supra note 13, at 20. E. H. WOHLBENGER, CORRELATES OF EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

Ratification, 60 Soc. Sci. Q. 676-84 (1980) also studied the ERA and hypothesized that states in the forefront of adopting certain other pieces of legislation would also be leaders in ratifying the ERA. He ranked states on a liberal-conservative continuum and found that patterns of ratification of the ERA were related more strongly to cultural-type variables such as religious and political conservatism than to political structural variables. See id. He also found support for the ERA among the individualistic and moralistic states, with the important exception of Utah. See id.; see also D. H. FISCHER, ALBIONS’S SEED: FOUR BRITISH FOLKWAYS IN AMERICA 893-94 (1989); a comparative mapping of suffrage and the ERA. Fischer argues that the fact that this pattern has persisted for so long is evidence of “deep-seated differences in regional cultures.” See id. at 894.
177. FISCHER, supra note 176, at 894.
178. See id.
179. See FISCHER, supra note 176, at 6-7.
180. See id. at 5-7.
181. See id. at 8-11.
182. See id. at 83-86.
Though women were required to be subservient to their husbands, the Puritan ideology also gave them equal protection under the law, including allowing women to own property and execute contracts. The culture was brought West with people who migrated throughout New York, northern Ohio, Indiana, much of Michigan and Wisconsin, through the northern Plains states, and to Denver, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, and the Pacific Northwest. Fischer’s second gender culture group, from the mid-Atlantic Delaware Valley, was initiated by Quakers, who more than any other British group that settled in America believed in equality of the sexes. Quaker women preached and participated in missionary activities with men, and were considered equal partners in the household and as heads of the family. This culture diffused West with people who moved inland through the middle latitudes from Pennsylvania to the Pacific. The coastal South comprises Fischer’s third gender culture region, which originated in Virginia and then spread to Florida along the Atlantic Coast and then to the Gulf of Mexico. The original Britishers who settled this region were the “second sons” of England’s southern aristocracy. Fischer argues that more so than in the first two culture groups, men in this group considered themselves to be masters of the household, and double standards of behavior, as well as physical abuse against women, were more commonplace. The interior back-country of the Appalachians formed the core of Fischer’s fourth gender culture region, a region formed by settlers from Ireland, the Scottish Highlands, and northern Britain. Fischer characterizes men in this group as possessing the least favorable attitudes toward women; they adhered to a belief that “men were warriors, women were workers,” and though women worked alongside men in heavy manual labor, they were also objectified by men and totally subservient to and dependent upon them. This culture group moved west from the Appalachians to portions of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and southern California.

Fischer maps the spread of these gender cultures almost identically to the way that Elazar maps the spread of political cultures. Fischer thus argues that Yankees who migrated to the western states and readily adopted suffrage had origins in eastern cultures that held comparatively favorable attitudes toward women. Conversely, southern states that strongly resisted women’s suffrage had roots in cultures holding the most unfavorable attitudes toward women. In mapping the similar patterns between the suffrage amendment and the ERA, Fischer argues that these “regional patterns cannot be explained by any material factor. Here [is] a question that turned primarily on cultural values. Many other Progressive measures showed similar voting patterns.”

V. TOWARDS AN HISTORICAL- GEOGRAPHICAL SYNTHESIS

While both the Elazar and Fischer rubrics offer plausible hypotheses for why the South and South-west resisted supporting women’s enfranchisement, they are not helpful in clarifying why it was the western states in particular that first enfranchised women, or why, more pointedly, in Fischer’s terms, the eastern “germ” states lagged behind the states they “germinated.” These theorists have posited the existence of political and gender cultures in the West that fostered a positive ideology toward women’s rights. However, an important question arises when applying Elazar’s or Fischer’s scheme to suffrage: if suffrage was successful in the western moralistic and individualistic sections, why would it not likewise have been successful “across the board” in corresponding sections of the Midwest and East in an east-to-west pattern? The serious question that arises for these diffusionist explanations is that if suffrage was successful in the western culture regions that looked favorably upon women’s rights, why was it not equally (and indeed, first) successful in the corresponding culture regions in the northern and middle states to the east? Ultimately, the Elazar and Fischer rubrics are only partially helpful in understanding the regional dynamics associated with suffrage, since suffrage did not diffuse along the north and middle corridors

183. See id. at 84.
184. See id. at 783-898.
185. See id. at 490-98.
186. See id. at 491-97.
187. See id. at 753-98.
188. See id. at 286-97.
189. See id. at 214-19.
190. See id. at 287, 295.
191. See id. at 675-80.
192. See id.
193. See id. at 178.
194. See id. at 783-98.
195. See id.
196. See id. at 83-84, 490-98.
197. See id. at 286-97, 675-80.
198. See id. at 868.
of the country, from east to west, as did the political and gender cultures of Elazar and Fischer.

As it turns out, Elazar’s and Fischer’s explanations for the rise of women’s suffrage are not a lot unlike Turnerian explanations for the rise and nourishment of supposed democratic values on the American frontier. Frederick Jackson Turner argued late last century that the frontier imposed hardships upon, but created opportunities for, westward-moving pioneers and that the outcome of this frontiering process was the “American character,” patterned on the traits of individualism, freedom, and democracy. Many scholars have noted that these popular trademarks of the West during the great migrations may have led men as well as women to hope for a more egalitarian society in the West, and to believe that the West opened particular opportunities for women not available in the East. Many women’s rights advocates themselves, from the East as well as the West, hoped and expected that a freer, more gender-equal society in the West would become the setting for women’s enfranchisement. Oregon suffrage leader Abigail Scott Duniway, for instance, expressed this view in her memoirs:

Nowhere else, upon this planet, are the inalienable rights of women as much appreciated as on the newly settled borders of these United States. Men have had opportunities, in our remote countries, to see the worth of the civilized woman, who came with them, or among them, to new settlements, after the Indian woman’s day. And they have seen her, not as the parasitic woman who inherits wealth, or the equally selfish woman who lives in idleness upon her husband’s toil, but as their helpmates, companions, counsellors and fellow-homemakers, rejoicing with them in the homes they have earned together.

Such ideological arguments surrounding suffrage are often premised on the notion that social roles for middle-class white women in the West were in fact expanded and less rigidly defined compared with those in the East. Matsuda notes that western women enjoyed property rights in many cases long before they were available to other American women. Other scholars likewise assert that western women participated more than eastern women in agricultural production, pointing out that widespread land ownership by women came to the West before the East. This was partly due to the Homestead Acts of 1860 and 1890, which encouraged land ownership by women, but was also due to widowhood or other familial circumstances. Work on Mormon women’s participation in agricultural production in Utah is very relevant here. Many female homesteaders on farms and ranches were involved in every aspect of farm production, such as keeping books, gardening, poultry raising, butter production and other small-scale commodity production, to mending fences and helping with the planting and harvest. Thus the realities of everyday life clashed with the “cult of true womanhood”; as Jameson notes, “women learned to take off their gloves and cook with buffalo chips.” Norwood claims that a close study of western women’s writing would reveal that most were engaged “in undermining the code [of domesticity].” Wohenberg further asserts that between 1870 and 1920 women were more “equal partners” in family businesses in the West than in the East, due in part to labor shortages. He maintains that this “incubator of female independence” provided the climate for suffrage to develop: since women were expected to shoulder equal responsibilities, they began to demand equal rights. If the realities


200. For discussions of connections between the Turner thesis and women’s suffrage see E. Jameson, supra note 45, at 761-91; Brunn, supra note 13, at 20-21; Myres, supra note 12, at 216, 233-34; Matsuda, supra note 59, at 51-52.

201. See Myres, supra note 12, at 216, 233-34.


203. See Matsuda, supra note 59, at 47-49; see also S. Myres, Women in the West, in Historians and the American West 369-86 (M. Malone ed., 1983) [hereinafter Women in the West].

204. See Matsuda, supra note 59.

205. See, e.g., Women in the West, supra note 203, at 258.

206. See id.


208. See Women in the West, supra note 203, at 258-62; Kay, supra note 207; Jameson, supra note 102, at 149-154.

209. Jameson, supra note 102, at 159.

210. V. Norwood, Women's Place: Continuity and Change in Response to Western Landscapes, in Western Women: Their Land, Their Lives 165 (L. Schlissel et al., eds., 1988).

211. See Wohenberg, supra note 176, at 679.

212. See id.
of western life did not encourage the idea that women should be sheltered and dominated, women in turn became more involved in the family decision-making process and, therefore, more knowledgeable about and involved in the social, political, and economic affairs affecting their lives. Nevertheless, these arguments can become quite problematic, not least in the ways that they assume that all western people were farmers or ranchers, ignoring the growing urbanization of the West at the turn of the century. Deficiencies of the Turner thesis in explaining the development of the American West, and by extension the “germ” theories of Elazar and Fischer, have now been well documented by revisionist western historians such as Limerick, White, and Worster.217 These scholars begin the study of American and American West history and geography not with the thirteen colonies and their cultural traits, but in the Indian and Spanish Southwest, centuries before the American Revolution.218 They characterize the West as a meeting place of many races and cultures and as a place of vast Euro-American exploitation and conquest of Native peoples and natural resources.219 These arguments take the emphasis off of the westward diffusion of Anglo-American cultural traits; instead, the development of the West is seen as a product of capitalistic pursuit of wealth and the establishment not of democracy, but of conquest and ruin.

Nevertheless, if one is theorizing about an Anglo-American cultural phenomenon such as suffrage, the diffusionist arguments retain some cogency. Although the Elazar and Fischer rubrics do not explain why suffrage progressed in a west-to-east rather than an east-to-west pattern, their schematics do aptly describe what might be considered the setting of a cultural “stage” upon which the historical demographic, political, economic, and social reform exigencies were played out. In Elazar’s schematic, states with strong moralistic centers, such as Kansas, Utah, Colorado, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, Montana, and North Dakota, and states with strong individualistic centers such as Wyoming, Nebraska, South Dakota, Nevada, California, and Oklahoma, all were early adopters of suffrage. While the political cultural proclivities of these states did not produce suffrage, they arguably established a cultural milieu in which it was likely to succeed. The early enfranchisement of women in the western states represented a unique coming together of diverse forces set upon the political cul-

213. See Norwood, supra note 210, at 165.
214. See Matsuda, supra note 59, at 52; J.R. Jeffrey, Frontier Women: The Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-80 (1979); White, supra note 29, at 358; Baker, supra note 110, at 66-91.
215. See Jeffrey, supra note 214.
216. See id.
218. See generally supra note 217.
219. See id.
tural stage of moralism and individualism; few women, nascent political structures, economic opportunism, and women's rights activism all were specific forces that came together to operate on this stage. Together, the diffusionist arguments, superimposed with arguments offered by western historians, provide a satisfactory answer to the question of why suffrage succeeded in the American West before the East.

VI. CONCLUSION

My analysis of the early success of suffrage in the American West has synthesized a range of historical, cultural, and geographic arguments. The diffusion of suffrage in America was a complex process, with roots in the East but concrete expression in the West. This essay demonstrates that a matrix combining geographic and historical arguments is needed to satisfactorily account for the early adoption of suffrage in western states. I have argued that the diffusion of eastern (mostly Anglo) political and gender cultures set the stage upon which a number of social and historical phenomenon unique to the West played out in the adoption of suffrage.

While Scott argues that the study of suffrage is limited in its ability to reflect women's rights and status historically, and while Scharff notes that the field is ripe for more inclusive cross-cultural analysis, the study of the Anglo-American women's suffrage movement should not be dismissed as irrelevant or belabored. Even though women's voting patterns ultimately were similar to men's, and the social improvements they fought for failed to materialize, the women's vote forever changed the way politics in this country were conducted. As Baker explains,

In a sense, the antisuffragists were right. Women left the home, in a symbolic sense; they lost their place above politics and their position as the force of moral order. No longer treated as a political class, women ceased to act as one. At the same time, politics was unsexed. Differences between the political involvement of men and women decreased, and government increasingly took on the burden of social and moral responsibility formerly assigned to the woman's sphere.

Suffragists were instrumental in advancing social and moral issues to the forefront of American political debate. Middle-class women's movement from the private to the public sphere was key to the success of suffrage, and in that sense much remains to be researched concerning official channels of politics and government and their relationships to the larger ordering of social and spatial structures. My research points to the need for more analysis of the geographic aspects of women's movements. While the subject of suffrage has been extensively studied by women's historians, geographers have lagged behind in analyzing it from a regional, gender-based perspective. Of particular importance to the study of suffrage and other women's rights movements are questions related to the differences in gender roles and how these variations affect women's political status. The field is ripe for further such research on the study of regional differences in suffrage and other women's rights movements.

220. See J.W. Scott, supra note 21; Scharff, supra note 12, at 555. 221. Baker, supra note 110, at 99; see also Banner, supra note 15, at 114-15.