

EQUALITY, Y'ALL: NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF
FIRST WAVE FEMINISM AND SUFFRAGE
IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH

by

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ABSTRACT

The American South has long been characterized by institutionalized racism and highly traditional Christian values. It would be easy to assume that the Women's Suffrage Movement would not have been welcomed in this particular region of the United States; however, newspapers that covered the seventy-year fight for women's right to vote indicate this is not completely true. This paper will examine the presentation of this first wave of feminism in southern newspapers. It is vital to examine the ways the southern media portrayed feminism's first wave for two reasons. The first is the perpetual need for society to look back and recognize mistakes made in the past and think about ways to avoid remaking them in the future; the second is to discover how the South specifically reacted to and treated this social movement, considering the cultural and religious context present in the newspapers of the time.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the many wonderful people who helped and guided me along my path at The University of Alabama over the past six years. In particular, my family, friends, and professors who believed in me from day one.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“In the spirit of democracy and honoring the champions of human rights, dignity, and justice who have come before us, we join in diversity to show our presence in numbers too great to ignore. The Women’s March on Washington will send a bold message to our new government on their first day in office, and to the world that women's rights are human rights. We stand together, recognizing that defending the most marginalized among us is defending all of us.”

Our Mission, 2017 Women’s March on Washington ¹

On January 20, 2017, Donald J. Trump was sworn in as the 45th president of the United States.² The next day was the Women’s March on Washington, a protest against the new president and a list of general continued inequalities many modern women face. There was much discussion, both positive and negative, concerning the march as it was promoted and shared through social media, especially Facebook.³ Some women distanced themselves from the Movement, stating that women should protest “an actual wrong” instead of holding what they considered to be a “pre-emptive protest” against the new president.⁴ Other women cited

¹ "Mission & Vision," Women's March on Washington, accessed February 2017, <https://www.womensmarch.com/mission/>.

² "Presidential Inauguration 2017," Presidential Inauguration 2017 | USA.gov, accessed February 2017, <https://www.usa.gov/inauguration-2017>.

³ Jia Tolentino, "The Somehow Controversial Women's March on Washington," *The New Yorker*. January 18, 2017. The inequalities include the wage gap, controversy surrounding Planned Parenthood, and the well-being of non-white and LGBTQ persons.

⁴ "Girls don't need the Women's March | Commentary," *Dallas News*. January 23, 2017. This article proved to be highly controversial following its publication, as those in favor of the march considered the author to be unaware of the issues being protested.

President Trump's past comments concerning women as reason enough to protest.⁵ The full scope of the event could be seen many ways, though the large number of airplanes filled with women in pink hats on their way to the march provided a particularly memorable picture.⁶

Not surprisingly, the Women's March on Washington drew many comparisons to another female-led march that occurred more than 100 years earlier. While there was no Inez Milholland Boissevian astride a white horse at the most recent march, there were numerous similarities between the two events.⁷ The 1913 Women's Suffrage March on Washington had very different goals than its modern sister, but the spirit of the Movement and the way it was carried out was just as shocking and controversial to society as the march in 2017.⁸ The march in 1913 was characterized by high drama, that included bands and floats, along with spectators attacking the parade participants, with more than 100 women being hospitalized by the day's end.⁹ To say that the notion of women's suffrage was unpopular among many American men would be an understatement; however, the women of the Suffrage Movement persevered and earned the right to vote seven years later.

This attention to the idea of women's rights has been echoed through the centuries. First Lady Abigail Adams – wife of the second President of the United States and mother of the sixth President of the United States – once wrote to her husband, "... I desire you would Remember

⁵ Claire Cohen, "Donald Trump sexism tracker: Every offensive comment in one place," *The Telegraph*, June 04, 2016. This article provides a year-to-year breakdown of events in President Trump's past that many consider to be sexist.

⁶ Mary Bowerman Network, "Planes full of women head to D.C. for Women's March," *USA Today*, January 20, 2017.

⁷ "1913 Women's Suffrage march in Washington, D.C.," *USA Today*, January 21, 2017.

⁸ "5,000 Women March, Beset by Crowds," Mar. 4, 1913," *The New York Times*, January 19, 2017. Men, alone and in groups, set upon the women who were in the parade as well as those acting as spectators with surprising force.

⁹ "This Day in History: The 1913 Women's Suffrage Parade," National Archives and Records Administration, accessed February 2017, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2016/03/03/this-day-history-1913-womens-suffrage-parade>. The nineteenth amendment would not be passed for six more years, but the visibility of the Women's Suffrage Movement and its elevation during this march at least increased widespread awareness of the suffragettes.

the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors.”¹⁰ Despite such early ruminations, the first historically recorded wave of American feminism began with the Seneca Falls Convention in New York more than seventy years later in 1848, where Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott would host one of the first noted women’s rights meetings.¹¹ Nearly 120 years later, in 1966, during the Third National Conference of Commissions on the Status of Women, a small group who were impassioned by what had been discussed that day founded the National Organization for Women (NOW).¹² Fifty years later, in 2017, participants of the Women’s March on Washington took to the streets. Each of these instances is representative of a wave of feminism – first, second, and third, respectively – led by women located in the Northeastern United States.

While the Movement was certainly most prominent and active in the North, the Women’s Suffrage Movement (first wave feminism, 1848 – 1920) was reported on in southern newspapers. The beginning of the first wave is credited to the Seneca Falls Convention held on July 19 and 20, 1848, which is considered to be one of the first organized meetings in the United States to discuss women’s issues and rights.¹³ This wave ended with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, which read: “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex. Congress shall have power to

¹⁰ Alice S. Rossi, *The Feminist Papers: From Adams to de Beauvoir* (New York: Columbia Press, 1973), 8. These sentiments made Adams an uncommon woman for her time, as she would be viewed as an early feminist starting around the 1970s.

¹¹ Alice S. Rossi, *The Feminist Papers*, 413. The convention, which started on July 19, 1848 and ended the following day, was mainly organized by local Quaker women. Frederick Douglass, the only non-white person in attendance, helped to establish women’s suffrage as a tenant of the group’s core principles.

¹²“Founding: Setting the Stage,” National Organization for Women, accessed February 2017, <http://now.org/about/history/founding-2/>.

¹³Paul Buhle and Mary Jo Buhle, *The Concise History of Woman Suffrage* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 89–98. This conference would begin the organized Women’s Suffrage Movement in the United States, which would span more than seventy years.

enforce this article by appropriate legislation.”¹⁴ This paper will analyze and report the ways in which newspapers in the American southern states portrayed the Women’s Suffrage Movement, keeping in mind the context of the times examined.

It is vital to examine the ways the southern media portrayed the first wave of feminism for two reasons: the first is the perpetual need for society to look back and recognize mistakes made in the past and think about ways to avoid remaking them in the future; the second is to discover how the South specifically reacted to and treated this wave of feminism, considering the cultural and religious context present during the time in this region. This paper provides a legitimate analysis of regional media representation of a gender specific social movement. The position of women, especially in terms of their cognitive abilities and emotional and mental states in comparison to males, has always been precarious; yet feminism puts women at the center of research and discourse as a subject instead of an object.¹⁵ The southern United States, as a region and space often characterized as racist, sexist, and inhospitable to change, is an ideal environment in which to observe the recorded reactions and thoughts associated with this feminist movement.

¹⁴ “United States of America 1789 (rev. 1992),” Constitute Project, accessed March 2017. https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/United_States_of_America_1992.

¹⁵ Alexandra Rutherford and Michael Pettit, “Feminism And/In/As Psychology: The Public Sciences of Sex and Gender,” *History of Psychology* 18, no. 3 (2015): 223–237. Feminism and feminist thought are highly varied subjects, though they are all based in the definition of feminism: the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

To fully examine this topic, it is important to initially determine what is considered a southern state. For the purposes of this paper, “southern” will be synonymous with “confederate.” The reasoning for this is simple: personal pride in one’s state or in the idea of “southern-ness” is highly subjective. Some credit the Mason-Dixon Line with being the line of demarcation between the North and the South, while others view it as only a pre-nineteenth century solution to a border dispute that has nothing to do with the South.¹⁶ However, there is little disputing that the Confederate States of the Civil War were all southern. The Confederate States of America were formed in early February 1861 in Montgomery, Alabama, and this created not only a new government system and, essentially, country, but also fashioned a new identity that was almost separate from a purely American one.¹⁷ Eleven states formally seceded from the Union (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia) though two others, Kentucky and Missouri,

¹⁶ "Town of Rising Sun, Maryland," History of the Mason-Dixon Line / Rising Sun, MD, accessed February 2017, <http://www.risingsunmd.org/department/division.php?structureid=51>. The “line” originated in the 1760’s when Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon surveyed the land that separated modern Maryland from Pennsylvania.

¹⁷"Civil War Timeline," National Parks Service, accessed February 2017. <https://www.nps.gov/gett/learn/historyculture/civil-war-timeline.htm>.

never fully left the Union.¹⁸ This thesis will fall in line with the organized eleven Confederate States as the sites for newspapers to be examined.

In literature and other media, the women of the South have been represented as fragile, reliant, foolish, attractive, elegant, and innocent over the course of the existence of the “southern idea.”¹⁹ Anya Jabour, southern historian, said: “Americans’ ideas about the South – and particularly about southern women – continue to be shaped by Margaret Mitchell’s Depression-era account of the Civil War South and by David Selznick’s tremendously popular film adaption of the novel.”²⁰ *Gone with the Wind*, along with other movies and books like it, have painted the South as a picturesque pastoral scene, a depiction that disregards history and fact.

According to southern scholar Caroline Matheny Dillman, the religious overtones and cultural norms of this region made it differ from the mixture of religions and cultures prevalent in the northern states during the first wave of feminism from 1848 to 1920. Women in the South were trapped in a patriarchal world that molded them into dependent, incapable figures who carried on these traditions and passed them down to the following generations.²¹ However, it is important to recognize that southern women were not completely without self-determination.

¹⁸ "Confederate States of America," Confederate States of America - New World Encyclopedia, accessed February 2017, http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Confederate_States_of_America. Kentucky did not formally succeed from the Union, as the state itself was split between the state government attempting to maintain its place in the Union, and a “rival faction” that the Confederate States accepted. Missouri’s placement in the war is more confusing, but is generally considered a border state that did not technically declare a side in the Civil War.

¹⁹ Caroline Matheny Dillman, *Southern Women* (New York: Hemisphere Publishing Corporation, 1988), 19 - 32. Misconceptions concerning southern culture from pre-antebellum America persist into the current century; the ideas associated with the South generally stem from over-glorified stories and beliefs that hold little to no basis in reality.

²⁰ Anya Jabour, *Scarlett's Sisters: Young Women in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 1. The book and movie *Gone with the Wind* offered a highly stylized, highly fictional account of a conniving southern belle during the Civil War. While there are many discrepancies between the book and film, the visual elements of Selznick’s work seem to have made the largest impact over time. The book itself, a nearly thousand page monster, painted the main character, Scarlet O’Hara, as a particularly crass young woman in a rather unimpressive family; the movie changed this completely, turning the O’Hara’s into a relatively respectable group.

²¹Dillman, *Southern Women*, 19–32. The connections between traditional Christianity and patriarchal social systems have been in place since biblical times. The combination of these two structures can create an environment in which any progression of female thought or agency is generally considered taboo or undesirable.

Historian Thavolia Glymph states that southern “white women’s agency has been profoundly underestimated.”²² They were the capstone of white power in the plantation household and, often, were just as violent toward slaves as their husbands, if not more so. Though violence went hand in hand with maintaining enslavement, these “violent mistresses undermined patriarchal authority.”²³ However, this does not diminish the fact that white southern women were still “simultaneously privileged and oppressed.”²⁴ To an extent, the Civil War changed this patriarchal control. Southern women had to step into new roles as more men left to fight for the Confederacy and never came back, confronting gender norms and changing them out of sheer – though sometimes forced - necessity.²⁵

Feminist scholar Alice Rossi explained how northern women – before, during, and after the war – ignored southern women for the most part because of what they considered antiquated

²² Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 31. Glymph’s assertion concerning the amount of personal agency white women did have in comparison to black enslaved women challenges all previous thought concerning the relationship between these two sectors of people. Glymph explains on page 29, “The psychological and political needs of masters and mistresses to see themselves as honorable, just, and loved by their slaves no doubt encouraged a kind of blindness to inconsistencies that could be sated in expressions of ambivalence as well as justified by religious teaching, racist thinking, or paternalism.” This insight into the psyche of white southern slave owners is both startling and important.

²³ Ibid, 46. When challenging patriarchal systems, women are generally viewed unfavorably; this was no different when white women acted violently and defied the teachings of appropriate feminine behavior, which included treating all (even slaves) with patience and gentility. By ignoring these guides, violent mistresses defied the system that defined them. Glymph states on page 35 that “Mistresses’ violence against slave women in the plantation household ran along a continuum: Bible-thumping threats of hell for disobedience, verbal abuse, pinches and slaps, severe beatings, burnings, and murder.” While it is no secret that the plantation was a space of extreme brutality, the role of southern white women in this barbarism is rarely acknowledged; Glymph’s work brings this often ignored aspect of slavery to light most effectively.

²⁴ Jabour, *Scarlett’s Sisters*, 11. The statement “simultaneously privileged and oppressed” may seem like an oxymoron, but actually describes how perceived social status can be spread along a spectrum of, in this case, oppression; while southern white women did not have the same social, political, or economic status as white men, they were also not enslaved in the same capacity as the black women that they managed. Jabour explains on page 36 that “The myth of the southern lady was defined for – not by – southern daughters in an extensive set of interlocking ideals that assumed male dominance, denied female agency, and defined womanhood in terms of self-denial and service to others.” This is a perfect example of patriarchal control over southern white women.

²⁵ Dillman, *Southern Women*, 63 - 69. The Civil War meant lack of food, materials, and men. As women were forced to adapt, they found themselves becoming more self-reliant and independent – characteristic that are directly at odds with true patriarchal control.

ideas on slavery and women's rights.²⁶ In 1836, abolitionist and women's rights advocate Angelina Grimke wrote "Appeal to the Christian Women of the South," calling southern women, like their northern counterparts, to stand up for Christian values in relation to slavery. She wrote, "Northern women may labor to produce a correct public opinion at the North, but if Southern women sit down in listless indifference and criminal idleness, public opinion cannot be rectified and purified at the South."²⁷

The issue at hand was exacerbated by certain differences in northern and southern Christianity. In *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity*, Charles F. Irons explains how the notion of paternalism and Christianity merged in the South to create a religious culture that not only promoted slavery, but also viewed it as God utilizing the enslavement of an entire race "to accomplish great and noble ends."²⁸ While this theological perspective assisted in the continuation of slavery, it also served to reconcile possible white guilt with the practice by viewing themselves as Christ-like in their efforts to bring slaves to God.²⁹ From a purely religious perspective, they succeeded in their efforts to Christianize slaves, as "African American evangelicals following the Civil War made ecclesiastical autonomy a signpost of their new freedom."³⁰ Southern women were part of these endeavors, with some becoming involved in

²⁶ Rossi, *The Feminist Papers*, 407. Northern women, a generally more progressive group, were often involved in abolitionist societies and suffrage groups. The lack of southern women interested in these endeavors did not endear them to their northern counterparts. This lack of social involvement, in addition to the already well established perception of southern ladies as lazy and silly, furthered the divide between the two groups.

²⁷ Ibid, 296.

²⁸ Charles F. Irons, *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity: White and Black Evangelicals in Colonial and Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 209. Paternalism, a term most effectively applied to southern Christians as a weak justification for slavery, essentially regards slaves as child-like barbarians in need of spiritual guidance and a firm hand to fulfill their potential.

²⁹ Ibid, 42. It is important to recognize that "it was evangelical whites who built the strongest defense of slavery" (Irons, 2). Christianity, so often associated with the poor and enslaved, utilized as a means of continuing a system that brutalized slaves in every way, shape, and form can be difficult to come to terms with.

³⁰ Ibid, 250. The solely black church enabled freed slaves to create a relatively homogenous community post-Civil War. While the initial conversion of slaves to Christianity can be credited to white slave owners, it is important to recognize that slaves, and then free blacks, found ways to merge their own cultural practices with the religion itself. Some of these practices even made their way into predominately white churches over time.

antislavery efforts to transport freed slaves to the African country of Liberia.³¹ However, this same theological framework was used to promote a “southern women’s culture of resignation” that perpetuated notions that were particularly anti-female, such as reduced mental capacity and emotional instability being natural to women.³²

The issue of women’s suffrage had been addressed multiple times in different ways leading up to the formalized Suffrage Movement that characterized the first wave of feminism. Various states had offered different types of suffrage to particular groups of women (such as single women and widows) starting with Kentucky in 1845. Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming, and many other states followed in these footsteps over the next fifty years, providing similar legislation that permitted limited suffrage for some women.³³ For women living in states where there was no legal precedent to allow women to vote, or those who did not qualify in the states with limited suffrage, there seemed to be one light in the darkness: women’s organizations. Women’s suffrage groups in the North had come into creation following the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, but were preceded by women’s clubs and organizations where parties were planned and sewing circles stitched.³⁴

It was not until 1884 that a southern state had its first organization strictly devoted to women’s issues; the Woman’s Club of New Orleans was the first southern club of its kind, opening the door to the establishment of other clubs, such as the Portia Club, which was the

³¹Jabour, *Scarlett's Sisters*, 102.

³²Jabour, *Scarlett's Sisters*, 184. Aspersions considering the cognitive abilities of women of all races and backgrounds have long been common. Widespread beliefs that women’s intellectual abilities and aspirations were both limited and inferior to men’s quest for fame and fortune” were quite common (Jabour, 109). The likening of slaves to children also happened to white women, but in a much more limited capacity. While white women were seen as naturally dependent and a little foolish, they were not viewed as barbarians as black women often were.

³³ “Progress of Woman Suffrage,” *Harrisonburg Rockingham Register*, April 2, 1897. This limited suffrage often pertained to voting that impacted schools and education, not heavily political matters.

³⁴ Rossi, *The Feminist Papers*, 241. These groups, while not heavily entrenched in politics, allowed women a space free of husbands and fathers where they could discuss more taboo subjects.

state's first suffrage organization.³⁵ Scholar and student Linda Bird detailed that, though it took time and the efforts of many, the South would eventually catch up to the North during the first wave of feminism, following the text of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution that gave women the right to vote. However, it had a very slow start:

Just as the majority of American slaves did not engage in armed warfare, the majority of southern white women did not join the women's rights movement that emerged in the antebellum North and that was closely tied to the growing abolitionist movement. But this does not mean that southern women unquestioningly accepted the South's social order and their place in it, any more than the lack of large-scale armed rebellions among American slaves indicates that black people accepted their enslavement.³⁶

This distinction serves as an indicator for the troubles that would plague the southern Women's Suffrage Movement. Racism, in particular, was one of the main contributing factors for women's hesitancy to join suffrage groups in the South, as northern assumptions concerning the black vote tied it to the women's vote. While these connections were not accurate, seeing as the majority of national suffrage leaders had no desire to assist in the enfranchisement of non-white people, they still heavily impacted the Movement's success in the South.³⁷

The Suffrage Movement on a national scale was interested in public service as well as promoting its message of equality. National conferences provided suffragettes with the opportunity to share ideas, work on and perfect plans, and to spread their message and goals to

³⁵ Linda Bird, "Campaigning for Woman's Suffrage and Beyond in Northwest Louisiana, 1913 – 1920," *North Louisiana History* 42, no. 3 (2011): 129–138. These political female-driven groups allowed a certain amount of freedom that was not common in such a patriarchal society. However, New Orleans was a true city at this time and was more similar to cities like New York than the small rural towns that dominated the rest of the South. This more cosmopolitan environment would have been more welcoming to such an organization than a more rural location.

³⁶Jabour, *Scarlett's Sisters*, 12. While Jabour's assessment here compares apples to oranges (as outright slavery is simply not effectively comparable to women eschewing patriarchal but comfortable control), the sentiment is appreciated; the thought of more southern women at the very least believing in their own cognitive ability to vote is quite heartening.

³⁷ Paul Buhle and Mary Jo Buhle, *The Concise History of Woman Suffrage* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 89–98. Well-known suffrage leaders, such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, were openly quite racist. Other leaders, such as African American journalist Ida B. Wells-Barnett and early feminist Alice Paul, did not abide by antiquated ideas of racial inferiority and campaigned for women's suffrage for all women, not just white ones.

new people and places.³⁸ Though these conventions did not meet in the South before or immediately after the Civil War, they became almost commonplace by the turn of the century. Nashville hosted the forty-sixth annual meeting for the National American Woman Suffrage Association in 1914.³⁹ Suffrage organizations were well known for assisting in the war effort during World War I by raising funds and donating their time.⁴⁰ Some groups even created hospitals in the affected areas, such as in France where the National American Woman Suffrage Association expanded their efforts.⁴¹ The efforts of the suffrage groups and societies also extended to association-centered works that recorded what was deemed important and necessary. In 1917, the *Miami Herald* reported that the National Woman Suffrage Publishing company created a yearbook, stating:

It is by no means easy to issue under the cover illuminating information on Suffrage events in 1916, suffrage history, arguments, statistics, charts, bibliography, international alliance, federal amendment, presidential suffrage, state referenda, lists of associations in the United States, suffrage planks in party platform, effect of women voters, laws affecting women and children, persons excluded from suffrage, jury service and poll tax, facts for suffrage workers, sentiments of favor, cost of elections – as we were saying, it is by no means easy to do.⁴²

The National American Woman Suffrage Association had a membership of roughly two million people in 1916. The *Miami Herald* also stated the full reach of this large, impactful organization: “It has an organization in every congressional district in the country, a state organization in each state, and auxiliary organizations in all large cities.”⁴³

The key to the creation of women’s interest groups and clubs in the South was a leading lady; Kate Gordon fit into this role as a prominent member of New Orleans society who openly

³⁸ “Called to the Colors: Suffragists to Confer on National Service,” *Miami Herald*, February 21, 1917.

³⁹ “Woman Suffrage Ass’n Convention,” *Middlesboro Pinnacle News*, October 22, 1914.

⁴⁰ “Women’s Organizations Play Important Part in the War,” *Daily Fayetteville Democrat*, August 3, 1915.

⁴¹ “Women’s Oversea Hospital, U.S.A., Now In France,” *New Smyrna Daily News*, May 3, 1918.

⁴² “Woman Suffrage Yearbook,” *Miami Herald*, February 21, 1917.

⁴³ “Woman Suffrage,” *Miami Herald*, February 21, 1917.

believed women's suffrage was an inherent right.⁴⁴ Gordon was known throughout the state for her stance on women's suffrage and often gave presentations and speeches to persuade others on the need for the ability for women to vote.⁴⁵ She and her fellow suffragettes were highly active in Louisiana, often planning and participating in parades, as well as using their connections and money to open doors for themselves that would not have been easily opened to someone else.⁴⁶ Others, such as the president of the Georgia Woman's Suffrage Association, Mary L. McLendon, teamed up with Gordon and other suffragettes to spread the message of suffrage across the South.⁴⁷ However, Gordon believed in equal voting rights for only white women. The "race question" only motivated her to push harder for the voting rights of her compatriots.⁴⁸

The component of race in the fight for women's suffrage would never be truly fleshed out, even after the passing of the nineteenth amendment. The South was even more polarized as it entered Reconstruction and was faced with eligible African-American voters for the first time; while southern states went to certain legal (and non-legal) lengths to keep them from voting, there was a fear that allowing women to vote would also enable the "negro vote."⁴⁹ Surprisingly, southern newspapers of the time negated this notion. The *Cullman Times Democrat* (AL) in 1919 wrote: "It would be impossible to raise the color issue on the suffrage amendment because there

⁴⁴ Linda Bird, "Campaigning for Woman's Suffrage and Beyond in Northwest Louisiana, 1913 – 1920," *North Louisiana History* 42, no. 3 (2011): 129–138.

⁴⁵ "For Sale," *Monroe News Star*, June 18, 1914.

⁴⁶ "Mayor Behrman Will Not Halt Suffragists," *Monroe News Star*, November 21, 1918.

⁴⁷ Mary L. McLendon, "The Political Rights of Women," *Atlanta Constitution*, April 19, 1914.

⁴⁸ Kenneth R. Johnson, "Kate Gordon and the Woman-Suffrage Movement in the South," *The Journal of Southern History* 38, no. 3 (1972): 365–392. Gordon, like Anthony and Stanton, believed in racial inferiority. Her sentiments were shared by most southern women of the time. The argument that women's suffrage would only apply to white women only appealed to the southern masses in a limited capacity because of the omission of African American women.

⁴⁹ C.C. O'Brien, "'The White Women All Go for Sex': Frances Harper on Suffrage, Citizenship, and the Reconstruction South," *African American Review* 43, no. 4 (2009), 605–620. The apparent fear of allowing blacks to vote can be viewed as a manifestation of both white guilt, and white fear. White voters of the time were aware of the treatment suffered by slaves at their hand; the thought of allowing them to vote would have seemed like an attack on whites or a possible way of disenfranchising them.

is no mention of color, and color cannot be dragged in by the utmost strain of construction.”⁵⁰ The *Biloxi Daily Herald* (MS) in 1919 echoed this point, stating, “Every law of every southern state that restricts a negro man in the right of suffrage under the Fifteenth Amendment will restrict in exactly the same way every negro woman when the suffrage amendment is passed.”⁵¹ Alabama Judge Samuel D. Weakley was quoted in the *Cullman Times Democrat* as saying, “If after considering the question carefully, I believed that Woman Suffrage would endanger white supremacy and destroy our State Constitution I would not support it, but after careful study, I can see no ground for taking that view.”⁵²

Despite the evidence that it would have had no impact whatsoever, some speculate that the “race question” influenced some lawmakers to resist approving women’s suffrage. There was a noted connection between the national movement for women’s suffrage and abolitionism; southern legislators viewed these ties as directly combative to their beliefs and way of life, alienating them and their constituents.⁵³ Regardless of racist fears, the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified and became law. The national process reached its pinnacle on August 18, 1920 when Tennessee became the much needed thirty-sixth state to ratify.⁵⁴ However, Tennessee and Alabama would be the only southern states to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment in the 1920s, as

⁵⁰ “Race Question,” *Cullman Times Democrat*, August 7, 1919.

⁵¹ “Woman Suffrage And The Race Problem From The New Orleans Item,” *Biloxi Daily Herald*, August 13, 1919.

⁵² “Endorses Suffrage,” *Cullman Times Democrat*, August 7, 1919.

⁵³ Matilda Butler and William Paisley, *Women and the Mass Media: Sourcebook for Research and Action* (New York: Human Sciences Press, 1980). Archaic views of both women and non-white people made these two groups into a perceived threat against white male supremacy. When this supremacy is confronted in a highly patriarchal society like the South, certain types of pushback can be expected; in this case, it involved continued attacks against female intelligence and ability, open disparagement of those involved with the Suffrage Movement, and continued attempts to maintain control over African Americans.

⁵⁴ Scott Bomboy, “The vote that led to the 19th amendment,” Constitution Center, accessed May 2017, <https://constitutioncenter.org/blog/the-man-and-his-mom-who-gave-women-the-vote>. The ratification vote in Tennessee has become the stuff of feminist lore, with multiple retellings and embellishments being added over the years. In short, 24-year-old Harry T. Burn, the youngest Tennessee legislator, initially intended to vote against the Nineteenth Amendment, as he had worn a red “anti” rose to the vote that day. However, a letter from his mother, Febb E. Burn, changed his mind. The letter instructed him to “be a good boy” and to vote in favor of women’s suffrage.

all of the other southern states symbolically ratified between the years 1941 and 1984.⁵⁵

Mississippi was the final state to symbolically ratify on March 22, 1984, nearly sixty-five years after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ “Ratification of the 19th Amendment,” Learn NC, accessed May 2017, <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/multimedia/12992>.

⁵⁶ Marjorie Julian Spruill & Jesse Spruill Wheeler, “Mississippi Women and the Woman Suffrage Amendment,” Mississippi History Now, accessed May 2017. <http://www.mshistorynow.mdah.ms.gov/articles/245/mississippi-women-and-the-woman-suffrage-amendment>

CHAPTER 3

THEORY

In order to better understand the importance of newspaper representations of the Women's Suffrage Movement in the South, it is important to discuss the theory of gatekeeping. The general premise of gatekeeping theory is that those who control the release of information can seek to establish what will or will not be considered important to those who consume the information. In this sense, news organizations make vital decisions to decide what news and information should be significant to their consumers, making them the gatekeepers who select what facts and information to distribute.

The theory was first recorded by Kurt Lewin, a Jewish German-American scholar. His work in social psychology at the University of Iowa led him to study wartime meat consumption.⁵⁷ Lewin's theorized that wives acted as family gatekeepers of food through channels of production. This idea morphed into the modern understanding of gatekeeping theory. While many disagreements concerning the theoretical components and its general applicability still abound, the theory itself is still considered to be one of the more prominent and familiar communication concepts.⁵⁸

When it comes to applying the theory to southern newspaper coverage of the Women's Suffrage Movement, certain terminology must be universally understood. Barzilai-Nahon

⁵⁷ Chris Roberts, "Gatekeeping theory: An evolution" (paper presented at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Communication Theory and Methodology Communication, San Antonio, Texas, 2005).

⁵⁸ Silviu Serban, "On the Origin of the Gatekeeping Theory and its Application to Journalism," *Annals of Spiru Haret University. Journalism Studies* 16, no. 2 (2015): 12-24.

compiled a list of “base vocabulary” that establishes the crucial verbiage needed to suitably comprehend and explicate gatekeeping theory in action. The most important terms are gatekeeping (“the process of controlling information as it moves through a gate”), gated (the entity subjected to gatekeeping), gatekeeping mechanism (“a tool, technology, or methodology used to carry out the process of gatekeeping”), and network gatekeeper (“an entity – people, organizations, or governments – that has the discretion to exercise gatekeeping through a gatekeeping mechanism in networks and can choose the extent to which to exercise it contingent upon the gated standing”).⁵⁹ The use of this terminology in this thesis will not be particularly cumbersome.

For the purposes of this examination, the network gatekeepers are the many writers and editors of the southern newspapers presented, most unnamed and unknown as bylines were rarely included. The gatekeeping mechanism is the printed newspaper. The gated are the readers of each of the articles included; this is not limited to those who were alive and literate at the time of publication, as gatekeeping has no expiration date. The actual act of gatekeeping is done throughout the entirety of each article as information is selectively introduced to the gated by the network gatekeepers. This process, while often unacknowledged, is omnipresent in every form of communication and should always be approached with a certain amount of skepticism and suspicion.

In this thesis, gatekeeping is closely tied to the concept of paternalism.⁶⁰ This notion stresses the role of the ruling male class over others, namely women and slaves. Just as those in power were adept at “recognizing and regulating the humanity of the people they bought and

⁵⁹ Karine Barzilai-Nahon, "Toward a Theory of Network Gatekeeping: A Framework for Exploring Information Control," *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 59, no. 9 (May 13, 2008): 1493-1512.

⁶⁰ Genovese, Eugene, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974).

sold,” they also fostered a culture of child-like dependency that directly impacted women and slaves in the South.⁶¹ The gatekeepers of southern newspapers during this time were all members of the paternalistic class, meaning they were all men and all in a position of social, economic, and political power. These men wielded this power over those who read their papers and articles, which were also written mostly by men. It is important to recognize this aspect of both gatekeeping and southern newspapers as this thesis progresses in order to ensure a full representation of the social standings of the southern classes during this time.

Another highly applicable theory that assists in examining portrayals of the Women’s Suffrage Movement in southern newspapers is agenda-setting theory. This theory, in short, asserts, “people devote more thought to issues and objects that are more salient in the media coverage.”⁶² However, the theory also illustrates that “media coverage can affect how citizens think about issues” as the manner in which topics are covered by the media can directly influence, and even create, the ways media consumers think about covered topics.⁶³ The agenda-setting theory was initially proposed in 1972 by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, two University of North Carolina journalism professors. In the abstract, the authors state:

In choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality. Readers learn not only about a given issue, but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position.⁶⁴

Originally applied to media coverage of political candidates, agenda-setting theory can be applied to most communications related topics. It should be acknowledged, however, that this is

⁶¹ Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 47.

⁶² Lindita Camaj, “The Consequences of Attribute Agenda-Setting Effects for Political Trust, Participation, and Protest Behavior,” *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 58, no. 4 (2014), 634 – 654.

⁶³ Ashley Muddiman, Natalie Jomini Stroud, and Maxwell McCombs, “Media Fragmentation, Attribute Agenda Setting, and Political Opinions About Iraq,” *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 58, no. 2 (2014), 215 – 233.

⁶⁴ Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, “The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media,” *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1972), 176 – 187.

a very modern theory in comparison to the history of the women's suffrage movement and the business models of nineteenth and early twentieth-century newspapers. This does not mean that it is not historically applicable, but rather that it is used much like hindsight to recognize and highlight certain aspects of the subjects discussed.

The theory itself has three basic levels: 1) the first level (basic agenda-setting) occurs when there is some sort of “impact of the media agenda on the public agenda regarding the salience of issues, political figures and other objects of attention,” 2) the second level (attribute agenda-setting) can be identified by the “impact of the media agenda on the public agenda regarding the salience of the attributes of these objects,” and 3) the third level (network agenda-setting) is characterized by the “impact of the networked media agenda of objects or attributes on the networked public agenda of object or attribute salience.”⁶⁵ For the purposes of this thesis, assertions concerning the applicability of agenda-setting theory will be based on possibility rather than tested results. It is important to recognize the potential for audience influence contained within the articles presented in this paper. Agenda-setting theory provides a means to acknowledge this potential and account for the impact it may have had.

Together, gatekeeping and agenda-setting provide a unique lens through which to view the coverage of the women's suffrage movement in the South. While both theories were codified years after the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, their impact and relevance are still significant, even when applied in hindsight. Using these theories in tandem offers a new way to look at old issues and subjects, making them more modern and more digestible.

⁶⁵ Maxwell McCombs, Donald Shaw, and David Weaver, “New Directions in Agenda-Setting Theory and Research,” *Mass Communication and Society* 17 (2014), 781 – 802.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

The materials for this study were gathered using a variety of online newspaper archives. The primary archives include the Library of Congress and NewspaperArchives.net. These databases provided highly relevant articles, due in large part to precise search engines that enable the researcher to designate geographical location, year(s), and type of publication. The ability to enter important words into the search bar was also extremely helpful. The majority of keyword searches included variations of “women’s suffrage” such as “woman voting,” “female suffrage,” and, simply, “suffrage.”

These search terms yielded a large number of results. The archives used generally presented results by newspaper page (as opposed to by edition or by article) and offered many results at once. Approximately seventy separate newspapers were viewed and evaluated for relevancy through these searches. Of those seventy, roughly fifty contained articles that were applicable to this thesis. The articles themselves were all chosen based on three main criteria: the article was printed in a southern newspaper, the date of publication was between 1820 and 1925, and the article explicitly addressed the Women’s Suffrage Movement.

A large number of articles fit these criteria, though a fair number had to be eliminated due to poor image quality, which made the text either unreadable or fragmented, or inapplicable

references to “women,” “suffrage,” or any variations that did not actually have anything to do with women’s suffrage (for example, “women’s” could have been found in an ad on the page and “suffrage” in an article unrelated to first wave feminism). This determination of relevancy shortened the number of initially chosen articles from nearly one hundred to the seventy-five used in this thesis. The chosen articles were then divided into five categories: Anti-Suffrage, Informational, Pro-Suffrage, Humor, and Post-Amendment.

Dividing the articles into these five categories allows for a fuller examination of the ways in which southern newspapers presented the Women’s Suffrage Movement. This method also provides a more cohesive and effective manner through which to present the information gathered. The information provided in “Anti-Suffrage” shows the variety of reasons printed in southern papers that outlined why many opposed the Movement, as well as how these articles were trying to persuade the reader to the same views. The same can be said for what is featured in “Pro-Suffrage,” as these articles promoted the Movement and attempted to sway others to support it. However, “Informational” contains articles far more neutral, where the general intent was simply to inform with little to no discernable bias. “Humor” highlights the gradations within the other three categories, showing how race, gender, and humor played into southern news coverage of the Women’s Suffrage Movement. Lastly, “Post-Amendment” establishes a link between the pre-suffrage South and the post-suffrage South, following the gradual state ratifications that followed the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment. Each article included in this paper fits into at least one of the main categories, and may also be counted into the fringe category.

These five categories were determined through a number of themes that presented themselves in the articles read. Each article’s representation of the women’s suffrage movement

was recorded using a variety of language. For example, one article that was eventually sorted into the Anti-Suffrage category was described with words such as “negative” and “against suffrage.” Another article, which would later be considered Informational, was associated with the words “neutral” and “factual.” Yet another article, which fell under the Pro-Suffrage category, was described as “biased” and “positive.” Articles placed under Humor were described as “silly” and “ironic.” However, the articles placed under Post-Amendment were sorted there purely because of when they were written, after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment.

The most important factor in the reading, sorting, and subsequent use of these articles was evaluating the overall salience of each piece. The initial stipulations concerning the time, place, and inclusion of the suffrage movement in the articles established a base level of importance that was gradually built upon. The same factors that led to the sorting of articles into the five categories helped to highlight their individual and collective impact.

CHAPTER 5

PATTERNS OF REPRESENTATION

After studying the selected articles, certain patterns of representation became apparent. These patterns are not solely characterized by particular shared or common words or phrases, though those do play a role. Rather, it was the perceived intent and overall message that determined any categorization. This is not tone or framing, per se; it is a combination of factors that, when applied together, produce a particular meaning.

The three main categories recognized through this study are “Anti-Suffrage,” “Informational,” and “Pro-Suffrage.” There are also two fringe categories, “Humor,” which encompasses nuances of absurdity and wit, which are integral parts of many of these articles, and “Post-Amendment,” for articles that were published following the federal ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. These five categories offer a framework through which to examine representations of this first wave of feminism in southern newspapers.

It is important to note that the American press has never claimed to be completely unbiased. The Colonial and Revolutionary Press established the American standard for reporting, which directly involved choosing a side, generally in terms of politics, and sticking to it.⁶⁶ This partisan philosophy was present during the Women’s Suffrage Movement and has persisted into

⁶⁶ Wm. David Sloan and Carol Sure Humphrey, “The Revolutionary Press, 1765-1783,” in *The Media in America: A History*, 9th ed. (Northport, AL: Vision Press, 2014), 51 – 68.

the twenty-first century. The label of Democrat and Republican seemed to matter less as bipartisan support grew in the face of coming female suffrage. But the years leading up to the nineteenth amendment were quite telling of what was and was not considered popular support for the Women's Suffrage Movement.

Additionally, it is relevant to note that southern women were a large portion of newspaper consumers. The *Birmingham Iron Age* (Alabama) featured a short notice penned by an editor in 1874 that established just how readily women in the South invested in their news:

An experienced editor pays a high and deserved compliment to the fair patrons of the press. 'Women,' he says, 'are the best subscribers in the world to newspapers, magazines, etc. We have been editor for forty years, and never lost a dollar by female subscribers. They seem to make it a point of conscientious duty to pay the preacher and the printer – two classes of the community that suffer more by bad pay and no pay at all than all the rest put together.'⁶⁷

This glowing recommendation, likely written by a man, to the moral and financial goodness of southern women would not have been written without cause. Whether it was an attempt to attract more female subscribers or truly a heartfelt homage to the newspaper-reading women of the South, this editor's note was highly complimentary.

While southern women were such ardent news consumers, their contributions to southern journalism during this time were minimal by attribution. The lack of bylines declaring the authors of articles could have easily hidden the identities of female writers, but the general makeup of reporters during this time was overwhelmingly male. However, there were exceptions to this rule, such as Ida B. Wells-Barnett, who is still well known for her work as a journalist and early civil-rights activist.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ "An Experienced Editor," *Birmingham Iron Age*, September 28, 1874.

⁶⁸ "Ida B. Wells-Barnett," Ida B. Wells-Barnett Museum: Cultural Center of African American History, accessed May 2017, <http://idabwellsmuseum.org/ida-b-wells-barnett/>

Anti-Suffrage Newspaper Coverage

The opposition to the Women's Suffrage Movement, while not particularly organized as a social movement, was heavily represented in southern newspapers. Much of this disagreement with the Movement can be attributed to established gender roles, which were so important during this time. Southern newspaper articles from the first wave of feminism employed particular language and messaging in an attempt to simultaneously inform and persuade readers to view certain events and movements a particular way. The following articles included in this category attempted to encourage their consumers to view women's suffrage negatively.

One of the most common assertions of the anti-suffrage press was that the majority of American women simply did not want to vote. An article headlined, "Roosevelt, Abbot and Other Wise Ones, Say She Does Not Wish to Vote" in the *Ocala Evening Star* (Florida) quoted then-president Theodore Roosevelt: " 'Personally I believe in woman's suffrage,' says Mr. Roosevelt at the outset of the letter, which is dated Nov. 10, 1908, "but I am not an enthusiastic advocate of it because I do not regard it as a very important matter... I do not think that giving the women suffrage will produce any marked improvement in the condition of women. "' President Roosevelt went on to say that he thought "when women as a whole take any special interest in the matter they will have the suffrage if they desire it. But at present I think most of them are lukewarm."⁶⁹ These sentiments played into the common trope found in many anti-suffrage articles of this time that insisted women simply did not care to vote, though this ignored the many female suffrage organizations that had been petitioning for suffrage for years. Similar sentiments were found in the *Pascagoula Democrat-Star* (Mississippi) in September 1890, as the

⁶⁹ "Woman and the Suffrage," *Ocala Evening Star*, December 14, 1908.

editor believed that “the masses of our women do not want to muck with the herd on election day.”⁷⁰

This perceived lack of “ballot box ambition” does not necessarily indicate that most – if not all – southern women truly did not want the right to vote in some capacity.⁷¹ If anything, it shows that the majority of men either believed their mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters truly did not want to vote, or they did not want women to be able to vote regardless of familial connection. The role of women in journalism during this time was minimal, especially in the South; for this reason, it is important to remember that the vast majority of those writing articles about women at this time were not women.

Some articles were openly disparaging about females as a whole, calling their mental faculties into question. An 1882 article from the *Birmingham Iron Age* (Alabama) stated, “The women of the United States, as a sex, do not seek suffrage, and many of those who advocate it most strenuously could not tell what to do with a ballot box.”⁷² The *Staunton Spectator* (Virginia) paraphrased an 1868 article from another newspaper that considered “hope for humanity” as a burden on women’s shoulders:

The Richmond *Whig* says that it is not on account of the suffrage, or from any apprehensions that woman would make it worse, that we object to female suffrage. But it is on woman’s account – for our own sake; for the sake of humanity – that we would save her from this fatal contamination. While she is pure, we have a rallying point. When she becomes debauched by politics, the last altar is profaned; our last resource is exhausted; the last hope of humanity is extinct.⁷³

⁷⁰ “Franchise Committee,” *Pascagoula Democrat-Star*, September 5, 1890. The preceding sentence to the quote above was, “We are glad to be able to say so now” in response to the reporting of the vote tally; southern newspapers like this one did not attempt to hide their beliefs concerning women’s suffrage because of the social position of women at the time.

⁷¹ “Female Suffrage in the Senate,” *The Daily Clarion*, December 22, 1866.

⁷² “The Woman Question,” *Birmingham Iron Age*, June 15, 1882. It was not uncommon to see comments like this that declared outright that women were not capable of thinking politically, viewing the subject as too multifaceted and complex for a woman’s mind to fully grasp. While science and time have disproven this misconception, one should keep in mind that belief in eugenics also dominated the time period; white male supremacy was built upon incorrect assumptions and alternative facts that simply had no basis in reality.

⁷³ “Female Suffrage,” *Staunton Spectator*, December 10, 1868.

This delineation of women as solely “pure” beings to whom the world can credit life and humanity seems nice at the surface, but shows a much darker side with the usage of phrases like “debauched by politics” and “the last altar is profaned.” Dehumanization can be a highly effective tool, though it often alienates the group being cast down; in this case and time, however, the effects would have been less severe than if experienced currently considering the modern level of media proliferation that is so common.

There were many aspersions cast on suffragettes themselves, most of which called their femininity into question. Perhaps the most explicit example of this was printed in the *Austin Weekly Statesman* (Texas) in October 1895. The entire article came from an issue of *The American Naturalist* where author James Weir Jr. declared that suffragettes were all degenerates:

I think that I am perfectly safe in asserting that every woman who has been at all prominent in advancing the cause of equal rights in its entirety had either given evidences of masculo-femininity (viraginity) or has shown, conclusively, that she was the victim of psycho-sexual abberancy. Moreover, the histories of every viragint of any note in the history of the world show that they were either physically or psychically degenerate, or both. Jeanne d’Arc was the victim of hystero-epilepsy, while Catherine the Great was a dipso-maniac and a creature of unbounded and inordinate sensuality.⁷⁴

Weir’s assertions, while not necessarily uncommon considering the time and corresponding scientific understanding, are a relatively accurate example of the reaction of many – if not most – men to the Women’s Suffrage Movement.

There were also reports that indicated a more violent side to the Women’s Suffrage Movement. “Militant action” was a fear that some groups, such as the one led by renowned

⁷⁴ “They are Degenerates,” *The Austin Weekly Statesman*, October 3, 1895. Weir also lamented the (possible) effects of female suffrage: “The baneful effects resulting from female suffrage will not be seen tomorrow, or next week, or week after next, or next month, or next year, or a hundred years hence, perhaps. It is not a question of our day and generation. It is a matter involving posterity. The simple right to vote carries with it no immediate danger, the danger comes afterward; probably many years after the establishment of female suffrage, when woman, owing to her increased degeneration, gives free rein to her atavistic tendencies and hurries ever backward toward the savage state of her barbarian ancestors.”

suffragist Alice Paul, played upon to further their cause. The *Lexington Progress* (Tennessee) in 1918 declared that these “militant amazons ought to be included in the military draft regardless of age.”⁷⁵ This direct disregard for the social order that dictated the stereotypical mental and physical superiority of men over women shows just how disgusted the writer of this particular article was by the suffragettes.

Opposition to the Women’s Suffrage Movement did not just come from men. Some southern women openly opposed the Movement and lent their voices to newspapers to express their views. Gail McMilton, a woman from Louisiana, wrote one 1871 article, “Fact and Conjecture: By a Woman,” for the *Semi-Weekly Louisianian* (New Orleans, Louisiana) which eloquently accepted the political status quo, stating, “It does not imply inferiority to fail where he has not succeeded. It simply indicates that at present she is not politically his superior.”⁷⁶ These were the views shared by the majority of southern women who bought into societal notions concerning appropriate female behavior, particularly during the antebellum era and immediately post-Civil War. The notion of suffrage in 1879 was labeled a “New England idea, which finds no judgment in Southern minds,” furthering the North-South divide and encouraging readers to disregard “Yankee” ideology.⁷⁷ While much of this defensive attitude can certainly be attributed to continued post-Civil War attitudes, there is something to be said for the cultural disparities of

⁷⁵ “Women Threaten Militant Tactics,” *The Lexington Progress*, January 11, 1918. The article explained: “The Women’s party, a ‘win or bust’ female suffrage organization, some members of which made themselves nuisances at Washington and were finally lodged behind bars, threaten to resume militant tactics if the Federal constitution suffrage amendment resolution is not passed.”

⁷⁶ Gail McMilton, “Fact and Conjecture: By a Woman,” *Semi-Weekly Louisianian*, May 21, 1871. McMilton was also critical of the widespread assertions that women at the ballot box would fix the world’s evils, writing, “It dismisses again to the domain of abstract reasoning that idea that government and society are to be uplifted by the direction of professional participation of women in politics, and leaves it with presumptive evidence against it.”

⁷⁷ “Female Suffrage,” *The Opelousas Courier*, June 21, 1879. This article personalized the message more for their readers, adding that these ideals were not popular “particularly with the modest, retiring, and gentle characteristics of Louisiana daughters.” The three listed feminine virtues are another example of the expectations explained so effectively in Jabour’s work, *Scarlet’s Sisters: Young Women in the Old South*.

the two areas. City versus country, industry versus farming, and victor versus loser were characterizations that persisted into the twentieth century.

Some southern newspapers preyed upon fears of male displacement as a means to further anti-suffrage rhetoric. In an 1867 report of the progress of the Women's Suffrage Movement in England, the *Alexandria Gazette* (Virginia) printed, "And as women in England are in a clear majority, there may come a time when a female sovereign may have a female parliament, and the male sex, as a governing power, be dispensed with."⁷⁸ This fear, though not realistic, persisted up until the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment and into the stage of ratification as states, particularly the southern ones, debated whether or not to adopt.

A lengthy 1913 piece in the *El Paso Herald* (Texas) provided an example of what a society governed by women could mean for men. The article carried an unusually long title "Where the Women Rule the Men: How Female Suffrage Works Out Among the Tuaregs, Where Men Go Veiled, Everything Belongs to the Wife, a Husband Can't Stay Out at Night, and Every Man Has to Do Just as Some Woman Tells Him." The piece was intended less as an informational story on a foreign people, but rather as a cautionary tale of how women's suffrage led to male suffering:

Woman suffrage is only just beginning to make real headway in enlightened America. In darkest Africa, however, it is an old story. Down in Ghat, on the border of the Sahara and not very far from Tripoli, there is a large tribe of natives, known as the Tuaregs, who for centuries have spelled woman with a big W and man with the smallest kind of an m... The women show their proud faces to all the world, but the man goes about veiled... It is the men who do the cooking and mind the children, while the women adorn themselves in their characteristic raiment... The men are fortunate if they can obtain a loin-cloth and a veil... The chief of the Tuaregs is a woman. She is

⁷⁸ "Female Suffrage in England," *Alexandria Gazette*, December 30, 1867. Another weak spot in the ideology of white male supremacy is how precarious those that believed in it viewed their position in the social order. Though they were placed at the top of the food chain, a type of paranoia associated with their social placement seemed to manifest itself.

selected by the women, the men having nothing to say about it at all. The women make the laws and naturally enough they don't exactly favor the men.⁷⁹

This role reversal, which clearly would have been frightening and highly unfavorable to male readers, attempted to paint the American Women's Suffrage Movement as the first step to the United States turning into their version of the Tuareg society. However, the assertions concerning the sociopolitical matriarchy of the Tuaregs in this article were over exaggerated. The amenukal, "a chief who is not subservient to any other chief," was always male, as were the main chiefs of the various tribal groups or confederations.⁸⁰ In the South, where patriarchal control was so ingrained into the culture that any possibility of a matriarchal world was both blasphemous and ridiculous, this kind of scare-tactic could have been very effective.

The status of women in states where suffrage was already universal, or at least partial, was often touted as ill omens for the places that were considering suffrage in some capacity. The *Carolina Watchman* (Salisbury, North Carolina), for example, printed an article in 1890 with such a tone: "Woman's suffrage, as tried in 'Cold Kansas,' seems to be only woman's humiliation... God preserve our fair land from the woman in politics."⁸¹ While the article offered no actual examples that would indicate women's suffrage in Kansas had adversely affected

⁷⁹ "Where the Women Rule the Men: How Female Suffrage Works Out Among the Tuaregs, Where Men Go Veiled, Everything Belongs to the Wife, a Husband Can't Stay Out at Night, and Every Man Has to Do Just as Some Woman Tells Him," *The El Paso Herald*, March 20, 1913.

⁸⁰ Andrew Alesbury, "A Society in Motion: The Tuareg from the Pre-Colonial Era to Today," *Nomadic Peoples* 12, no. 1 (2013): 106 – 125. The only arguments made the by article that hold some clout in fact pertain to marriage, the distribution of inheritance, and treatment of subservient males. Women were allowed to own their own animals and slaves, but were not permitted to marry below their social class. Inheritances were divided by personal property ("anything that was earned through one's own economic efforts") and illegitimate property ("things extorted from others, such as vassals' tributes, raided loot etc."), and were often gifted to the male children of the sisters and wives of Tuareg men. It seems that the article was mostly informed by the ways in which the male slaves of female Tuaregs were treated. Any person enslaved during tribal war would be considered a slave, meaning that fellow Tuaregs (male and female) were often enslaved by their brethren.

⁸¹ "Cold Kansas," *The Carolina Watchman*, April 10, 1890. Another article placed below "Cold Kansas" attacked another state's stance on women's suffrage: "The Wyoming 'constitution' is said to be a 'daisy.' This is because it contains a 'woman suffrage' clause. Women and daisies are very companionable, but when added politics, there is a conglomeration of sweetness, blossoms, and bitterness, that will not only make ones hair stand on end, but is likely to have the same removed with the aid of a barber."

female voters in any way, the statement is enough to show how easily women's suffrage was dismissed as an evil for those who would benefit from it.

Another evil, in the minds of many southerners, pertained to changing roles and lives of African Americans. One of the main arguments against women's suffrage was race. Despite the fact that the Nineteenth Amendment did not mean suffrage would be feasible for any non-white women, the overall public opinion was summed up well by the *East Mississippi Times* (Starkville, Mississippi) in 1914: "The Southern man don't want to see his mother, wife, daughter or sister crowding up the polls and being passed around by insolent negro women, for if white women vote so will negro women."⁸² Racism in the South continuously restricted the rights of African-Americans both socially and politically during this time, as it had previously and would for years to come. However, the narrative changes somewhat as black women, not men, became the subject of direct and open hostility concerning the possibility of women's suffrage.

One newspaper that consistently printed disdainful articles about the Women's Suffrage Movement was the *Pascagoula Democrat-Star*. Pascagoula, Mississippi, was a relatively well-known vacation destination for affluent southerners during the summertime. The area had a number of democratic papers, which merged around 1878 to form the *Democrat-Star*. Though the paper ceased printing in 1920, the same year that the nineteenth amendment was passed, the years before were quite lucrative for the weekly paper. Edited by staunch Confederate Capt.

⁸² "Opposed to Female Suffrage," *East Mississippi Times*, January 16, 1914. The end of this article continued to demean the notion that white and black women would be voting together: "Female suffrage may do for Utah or Idaho, where only white people vote, but it won't do for Mississippi or any state of the South, and the present Legislature has the opportunity to administer to female suffrage the blow it deserves and should receive."

Pizarro Kemp Mayers, the *Democrat-Star* was heavily used to “criticize non-Democrat Party views.”⁸³

The vehemence with which many southern newspapers decried women’s suffrage did not change the fact that these media institutions were giving the Movement publicity. This is gatekeeping in action. No matter how biased, misleading, or blatantly false the anti-suffrage press articles were, these institutions were still providing their readers with general information and visibility.

Informational Articles

During these years, some late nineteenth and early twentieth century newspapers were capable of reporting facts without obvious bias or any discernable attempted to persuade readers one way or another. Much like modern media and the early American press, most newspapers generally fell in place along the political spectrum. The Women’s Suffrage Movement, as a highly divisive and extremely political movement, provided an opportunity for newspaper editors to choose their stance and hold their ground. While this certainly happened, there was a surprising amount of neutrality and tact with which many papers reported and handled the Movement throughout its duration.

Some articles seemed to be solely fact-fixated, as little to no conjecture was discernable. For example, Alabama’s *Weekly Iron Age* featured an 1884 article that stated, “The following is the platform adopted by the American political alliance, which has nominated Capt. W.T. Ellsworth of Pennsylvania and Charles H. Watterman of New York for president and vice president of the United States.” A full list of the organization’s stances followed, with one small

⁸³ "The Pascagoula Democrat-Star," *Chronicling America*, accessed February 2017, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87065532/>.

line that pertained to the Women's Suffrage Movement: "...the rights of suffrage to American born females the same as to males..."⁸⁴ This completely neutral listing of provided political points enabled the *Weekly Iron Age* to report the facts while avoiding controversy or pushback; while readers could shake their heads at the American Political Alliance's platform, they could not blame the paper itself for any ill feelings.

In this same vein, the *Fayetteville Daily Democrat* (Arkansas) in 1921 printed a proposed equality amendment word for word to introduce its story:

'No political, civil or legal disabilities or inequalities on account of sex or on account of marriage, unless applying equally to both sexes, shall exist in the United States or any territory subject to the jurisdiction thereof.' This may be the twentieth amendment to the Constitution of the United States. It is offered by the National Women's Party as a necessary supplement to the nineteenth amendment, which gave women equal rights.⁸⁵

This completely factual, unbiased recollection of a proposed federal amendment is another example of the importance of the press as a gatekeeping entity. If newspapers did not provide the actual text of legislation (proposed or passed), the masses would be much less likely to know the exact verbiage of the laws that directly impacted them. Keeping readers informed of these life-changing bills and proposals ensured that the public knew what was going on and, sometimes more importantly in the mind of the editor, kept them buying and subscribing to the newspaper.

⁸⁴ "A New Platform," *Weekly Iron Age*, September 25, 1884. Other principles declared by the American Political Alliance included: "...opposition to importation and attempted colonization of foreigners and paupers from foreign countries, and absolute suppression of Chinese emigration opportunity to vote direct for president and vice-president of the United States; native born citizens, white and colored, to rule and make the laws of this country; no appropriations of public funds for sectarian purposes; the rights of all American citizens as provided by the constitution to be maintained and protected; a free ballot and a fair count." Though many of these principles would not become law for many years, this article shows how varied and progressive some aspects of the United States were in the 1880s.

⁸⁵ "Full Women's Rights," *Fayetteville Daily Democrat*, October 6, 1921. The same article, in a slightly less neutral way, went on to say, "It seems to follow naturally enough. Along with the franchise surely should go full citizenship rights for women, whether married or single, and yet the nineteenth amendment alone does not go far enough to insure those rights. This amendment, or one of the same purport, is pretty sure to be adopted soon or later, and from present indications it will not be long."

Even the simplest articles, such as one from 1885 in the *Carolina Watchman* (Salisbury, North Carolina), could pack a punch with simple truths: “Woman Suffrage has been once more voted down by the Massachusetts legislature. It has been repeatedly voted down heretofore in Mass.”⁸⁶ A similar article, originally printed in a New York paper and reprinted by a Virginian paper in 1867, said, “Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton leave here for Kansas, where they will advocate female suffrage until the election.”⁸⁷ These are not particularly groundbreaking works of literary achievement, but they served their purpose by taking up the least amount of space and informing the audience as quickly – and painlessly – as possible.

Whether or not the southern press was reporting on a suffrage victory or setback, many individual papers were capable of maintaining a relatively unbiased voice in their writings. One article, printed in Tennessee’s *News Scimitar* (Memphis), discussed the passage of the suffrage bill by the senate:

Suffrage leaders characterize the bill as a sort of ‘sop to Cerebus,’ or a sheet anchor through to windward, enabling the women of Mississippi to vote, with their sisters in other states should suffrage become universal within the current year. It is only by constitutional amendment, however, that women can be required to pay poll tax as a qualification for suffrage, and the Glass amendment having this end in view is to be voted upon at the November election, together with an amendment submitting the whole question of female suffrage to the male voters for ratification or rejection.⁸⁸

Again, the focus of the article is on the facts and processes that the average reader needed to know. The writer of this particular article again avoided bias or controversy by simply outlining the necessary legislative steps needed to pass the discussed bill. Regardless of whether or not the reader was pro-suffrage or anti-suffrage in their personal beliefs, this article provided them with pertinent information.

⁸⁶ “Woman Suffrage,” *The Carolina Watchman*, May 14, 1885.

⁸⁷ “Female Suffrage Canvassers,” *The Daily Dispatch*, August 30, 1867.

⁸⁸ “Senate Passes Suffrage Bill,” *The News Scimitar*, March 23, 1920.

Negative news for the Suffrage Movement did not always mean negative coverage in southern newspapers. A 1910 article from Georgia reported the defeat of an early women's suffrage bill with a simple statement of, "Seattle voted six to one for women's suffrage, but the country voted against it."⁸⁹ While this particular event and article would have been the perfect opportunity for an anti-suffrage statement or sharp barb, the author either resisted or the editor overruled it. However, lack of obvious bias did not mean lack of sympathetic language. The following 1911 article from Arkansas's *Journal-Advance* (Gentry) used certain language that both described the events reported and sympathized for the suffragettes, while maintaining neutrality:

The Great resolution for equal suffrage was debated an entire afternoon, and a motion by Hurst to table was lost by a vote of 40 to 47. The principal addresses were delivered by Representatives Grant, Ragon and Baker, and against it by Clarke of Lonoke, Hurst, Brown, and Hardage. Mr. Hurst insisted that it had been introduced in a spirit of fun, while Mr. Hardage killed it effectively when he asserted that a dangerous 'joker' lurked in its innocent phrases, which would disfranchise the men if it were adopted, and turn the government over wholly to the women. On the final roll-call to indefinitely postpone the resolution received only the unlucky thirteen votes.⁹⁰

Though there is a bit of humor and the mention of male disenfranchisement, the article uses the word "unlucky" to describe the thirteen votes received in support for women's suffrage. This is not a drastically supportive use of the word, but provides the necessary balance with the rest of the article to keep it informative and as neutral as possible.

A similar article from 1882 in the *Birmingham Iron Age* (Alabama) reported on a suffrage organization all the way across North America in Oregon:

⁸⁹ "Woman Suffrage is Defeated in Washington," *Atlanta Georgian and News*, November 9, 1910. The short article began with, "The Republicans have elected three Republican congressmen and the women's suffrage amendment was voted down, according to the returns which came in today from rural districts in the state."

⁹⁰ "Woman Suffrage Defeated," *Journal-Advance*, April 21, 1911. The resolution for women's suffrage was not the only proposed reform defeated that week, as another proposal was also thrown out: "...the Toler resolution providing four year terms for executive and eight year terms for judicial officers, with no second terms, and for the recall on the petition of 51 percent of the qualified electors of officials who are proven recalcitrant or corrupt." Both resolutions were declared "Socialistic and a species of demagoguery."

The Portland (Oregon) *New Northwest*, a female suffrage organ, speaks hopefully of the new Oregon Legislature, saying opponents of woman's suffrage who have been elected are few in number, and it seems impossible that enough objectors will be found among the uncommitted candidates to prevent the endorsement of the pending amendment. Women have cause for fears as to the action that will be taken next fall.⁹¹

While the article does mention women's "cause for fear" concerning the possible political outcomes stemming from the new members of the state legislature, the statement itself is speaking only of the fears of those in favor of suffrage, not the paper itself. This distinction is important, as the intent remains informative as opposed to persuasive.

Intent could be difficult to discern in certain articles, like one from 1879 in the *Lake Charles Echo* (Calcasieu, Louisiana) that described municipal elections in Boston where women were permitted to vote for school commissioners. It read: "They were courteously treated, and their presence at the polls secured the most quiet and orderly election held in Boston for half a century."⁹² Some could say that the inclusion of "most quiet and orderly election" could have been conjecture or outright propaganda, but the function of the article maintains a neutral stance despite it. Additionally, the last sentence of the very short article was, "Our new constitution provides for female suffrage in matters relating to public education." This directly informs female readers that reside in Louisiana that they, like their sisters in Boston, could exercise their right to vote in regard to education elections.

A South Carolina paper, *The Union Times* (South Carolina), was one of the more neutral southern newspapers, as it did not openly or continually declare a partisan stance. Established in 1851, the paper was "devoted to agriculture, horticulture, domestic economy, polite literature, politics, and the current news of the day."⁹³ The paper continued its factual assessment of news,

⁹¹ "The Portland New Northwest," *Birmingham Iron Age*, July 6, 1882.

⁹² "Female Suffrage," *The Lake Charles Echo*, December 13, 1879.

⁹³ "The Union Times," *Chronicling America*, accessed February 2017, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn93067853/>.

even under the editorship of the fiery Rev. Lewis Malone Rice, and continues as a Union County's oldest continually functioning business as *The Union Daily Times*.

The need of southern newspapers to resist overly biased language during the time of the Women's Suffrage Movement was no necessarily pressing; outright declarations of anti-suffrage sentiment would not have been shocking or remotely surprising to readers. However, by maintaining neutrality in the reporting of the Women's Suffrage Movement, editors were able to provide their readers with pure information. Again, here can be found the importance of gatekeeping; presenting information without obvious bias or attempt to persuade allows readers to consume the information and draw more immediate conclusions themselves.

Pro-Suffrage Papers

The majority of pro-suffrage newspaper articles seem to have been written and published nearer to the time of the actual passing, and ultimate ratification, of the Nineteenth Amendment. The pro-Suffrage press did not seem to truly exist until about a decade into the twentieth century, though supportive articles concerning women's suffrage and the Movement itself were present decades earlier. Pro-Suffrage writings in the South prior to these years were few and far between. However, the looming passage of the nineteenth amendment and growing support for granting women the right to vote seemed to spur the southern press into action.

Some newspapers, such as the *Pensacola Journal* in Florida, dedicated an entire section to the Women's Suffrage Movement. The paper was founded in March 1897 as a weekly, though it merged with competitor *Pensacola Evening News* and became the *Pensacola News Journal* in 1985. The population of the city of Pensacola grew to 23,000 between the years of 1890 and

1910. The *Pensacola Journal* “covered the cycles of boom and bust that characterized the city in the years that followed.”⁹⁴

The editor of the section, Celia Myrover Robinson, was also the chairman of the Pensacola Equal Suffrage League’s press committee, which took out ad space in the section to include a short form those interested could fill out send in to the organization.⁹⁵ This paper seemed to be one of the more outspoken proponents for women’s suffrage and the Movement that drove it. The paper addressed perceptions about the Suffrage Movement, such as what it could or could not accomplish:

Gov. Nat E. Harris, of Georgia, thinks that woman suffrage in Georgia will do away with lynching. He says the protective feelings that comes from woman’s helplessness drives men to fury when a woman is the victim of a crime. He feels woman suffrage will do much toward putting men and women on a more equal basis, and without lessening the respect and admiration men have for women, will make them less emotional over women’s injustices. If Georgia would pass a law to protect its children from labor exploiters and raise the age of consent, which is now ten years, Southern women might have more faith in Georgia’s sincerity.⁹⁶

While there was no outright dismissal of the claims concerning women voters ending lynching, the paper was still critical of the governor’s words. Much like the *Pensacola Journal*, other southern papers became more openly pro-suffrage as time passed and the nineteenth amendment became a real possibility.

The same paper featured an article written by the principal of the local high school in which he and the district superintendent, both men, announced their support for female suffrage:

If woman has the ability to teach; then she certainly has the capacity to vote. If it is right to tax a woman’s property, it is wrong to deny her a voice as to how the revenue derived

⁹⁴ "The Pensacola Journal," *Chronicling America*, accessed February 2017, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87062268/>.

⁹⁵ “Equal Suffrage,” *The Pensacola Journal*, July 14, 1914. The business-card sized advertisement read: “If you believe in Equal Suffrage sign this slip and sent it to C.M. Robinson, chairman press committee, Pensacola Equal Suffrage League, care The Journal.” It then asked for a name and address, then provided the opportunity to join the sponsoring organization with, “I believe in the right of suffrage for women and wish to become a member of Pensacola Equal Suffrage Association.”

⁹⁶ “Woman Suffrage to Do Away with Lynching,” *The Pensacola Journal*, September 19, 1915.

thereby shall be spent. If woman is fitted to train the mind of future statesmen, then it is unreasonable to say that she is incapacitated to legislate in his behalf too.⁹⁷

First and foremost, the open support of two highly influential local men certainly would not hinder the Suffrage Movement in Pensacola. Additionally, by featuring this statement in the section devoted to women's suffrage and the Movement as a whole, the female editor ensured the statement received the full amount of attention possible.

The women's section of the *Pensacola Journal* did not shy away from calling out those the editor believed had wronged the Suffrage Movement. A piece from July 1914 addressed Mr. W. N. Sheats, an attendant at the National Education Convention representing the state of Florida, after he proclaimed, "As a representative of the South I cannot but present the protest of two-thirds of the southern women against women's suffrage."⁹⁸ The editor of the section published in response:

The Florida women among other southern women, would like to know by what authority Mr. Sheats presented his message to this great body of educators; not by authority of the women educators of the South, the only southern women whose sentiments he could possibly have voiced with any degree of propriety, even if rested with authority – this is safe to say... By this ill-advised protest, made without authority from the women of Florida, Prof. Sheats has done more for the cause of equal suffrage in this state than he could ever have one against it, and for this kind offices he should receive a rising vote.⁹⁹

Holding Sheats accountable for his words successfully could have acted as a means to introduce a chilling effect on male readers who might have thought twice before speaking out publically against the Women's Suffrage Movement.

Some of the articles of this time were borderline cautionary to those who were not falling in line behind women's suffrage. Alabama's *Cullman Times* (Cullman) in 1919 printed, "The Legislators of this State will not persistently fail to recognize the wisdom of President Wilson,

⁹⁷ "Superintendent Edwards and Prof. Lane Endorse Suffrage," *The Pensacola Journal*, September 7, 1914.

⁹⁸ "Mr. Sheats Misrepresents the Women of the South," *The Pensacola Journal*, July 14, 1914.

⁹⁹ "Mr. Sheats Misrepresents the Women of the South," *The Pensacola Journal*, July 14, 1914.

who strongly urges the ratification of the Federal Amendment, knowing the disastrous effect, their failure to ratify, would have upon the Democratic Party.”¹⁰⁰ This could be taken as a pseudo-threat, though not one of bodily harm; rather, it seems to be an indication to the legislators who knowingly hurt the Democratic Party that their constituents would not hesitate to vote them out for their wrongdoings.

Assertions concerning the achievements of equal suffrage states and countries were utilized to promote the Suffrage Movement. Papers – in both the North and the South – printed headlines and stories that proclaimed suffrage countries, such as New Zealand, had the lowest infant mortality rates.¹⁰¹ The state of Kansas, which was one of the few suffrage states of the time, had a decline in infant mortality following suffrage legislation; the *Pensacola Journal* reported in 1915, “This is how a suffrage state protects its babies.”¹⁰² This evidence that women in politics did actual good for themselves and their communities could have been a selling point for other women and even men.

Some newspapers cited basic American values, which were often considered under attack by women stepping outside of the sphere of the home, as reasons why women should be able to vote. Lucile Salley, in a 1917 letter to the *Aiken Journal and Review* (South Carolina), insisted that “All who accept the doctrine of the Declaration of Independence must believe in the right of

¹⁰⁰ “Woman’s Suffrage Grows in Favor – Other Southern States Ratify Amendment,” *Cullman Times Democrat*, August 7, 1919. The article also listed the states that had already ratified the nineteenth amendment: “Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, New York, Texas, Iowa, Kansas, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Missouri, Arkansas and Montana and Nebraska. Making a total of 14; among these will be noted two Southern States.”

¹⁰¹ “Why American Women Want the Ballot,” *Gastonia Daily Gazette*, August 4, 1920. This article provided statistics to back up claims linking women’s suffrage to lower infant mortality rates: “Over 300,000 babies die every year in the United States before they are one year old. The National Conservation Commission estimates that an individual is worth \$2,900 to a society. At this rate the 300,000 babies represent a yearly loss of \$870,000,000 to the United States. Five countries have a lower infant death rate than the United States... The women in all five countries leading the list now have full or municipal suffrage.”

¹⁰² “Kansas Cuts the Baby Death Rate,” *The Pensacola Journal*, September 26, 1915. The article reads in full: “When the Public Health Nursing Association was organized in Topeka, Kansas, in 1913 the infant mortality was 12 per cent. The prenatal instruction given by nurses from the Public Health Nursing Association to mothers cut down the percentage of deaths at birth and the mortality of infants under one year of age in 1914 and up to August 1st, 1915, it had fallen off 25 per cent.”

woman to vote.”¹⁰³ Using a sacred American document such as the Declaration of Independence to promote women’s suffrage was not only brave of Salley, but also called attention to what could have been seen as the versatility of the document; applying these same principles to women that had been mainly applied to men in the past would have effectively shocked other readers, but would have made them think on her point.

Christianity was also brought into play in pro-Suffrage papers. In a, 1893 letter to the editor printed in the Detroit Free Press, and subsequently reprinted in Georgia’s *Sunny South* newspaper (Atlanta), Lotta Miller insisted that women “will not make politicians, but honest, Christian voters, and as such will not be amiss, even in this Christian country.”¹⁰⁴ This would have strongly appealed to the many southern Christians who were grappling with the religious implications of female suffrage. Framing women voters in this way – as a means to promote and ensure the continuation of Christian values in politics – encouraged a more southern-friendly view of the Women’s Suffrage Movement. Even with religion removed from the argument, female moral superiority was often assumed: “When any important question comes up, [women] are reliably certain to be at the polls and vote, and can be more safely depended on to correct a political wrong than male voters.”¹⁰⁵ Regardless of whether or not this statement was truly realistic, the overall belief that women were the pillars of morality was a sentiment shared by many southerners on either side of the suffrage debate.

¹⁰³ Lucile Salley, “Strong Argument for Woman Suffrage,” *Aiken Journal and Review*, February 7, 1917. Salley provided a short history of the Suffrage Movement in her letter, detailing the order in which some states had already approved women’s suffrage. She was firm in the positives of equal suffrage: “Statistics show that suffrage states are far ahead of other states, educationally and in every other way. Every equal suffrage state has a good law against white slave traffic, average age of consent being 18 years, while in others it is 13. Only suffrage states have an eight-hour working law. Every suffrage state has a complete compulsory education law, the ten states highest in education being equal suffrage states, while the most illiterate are those in which the men alone vote. South Carolina is one of these.”

¹⁰⁴ Lotta Miller, “Woman Suffrage,” *The Sunny South*, November 8, 1893.

¹⁰⁵ “Three Out of Nine Members,” *The New Orleans Daily Democrat*, February 7, 1879.

The words of politicians and judges were often printed in southern newspapers as a means of either promoting the Suffrage Movement or defaming it. In 1911, Justice David Brewer of the United States Supreme Court wrote a piece in support of women's suffrage that ran under the headline, "Summing up the Case for Woman Suffrage." In it, the associate justice said:

Female suffrage will come. Woman's broader education, her increasing familiarity with public affairs will lead to it. And why not? The chief reply is the home. God forbid that it should be jeopardized. But female suffrage will not debase the home; it will introduce an uplifting power into our political life.¹⁰⁶

Justice Brewer's words signaled the support of a powerful, influential man. There was much importance placed upon the words of "great" men in this time. For example, he wrote that the Women's Suffrage Movement in England seemed to be legitimized by some because "at the head of the advocates of female suffrage towers that intellectual giant, John Stuart Mill, beyond all doubt the greatest of modern thinkers."¹⁰⁷ The influential man was perhaps the most important accessory to the eventual ratification of the nineteenth amendment. Mill, who was considered one of England's leading philosophers, authored a book titled *The Subjection of Women*, which became a standard text of the Women's Suffrage Movement in England.¹⁰⁸

The Women's Suffrage Movement was fraught with white supremacy in both the North and the South. Race was used by the pro-Suffrage southern press to legitimize the idea of

¹⁰⁶ "Summing up the Case for Woman Suffrage," *Journal-Advance*, May 19, 1911. Brewer also alluded to biblical teaching, stating, "Our first parents, guilty of a mutual sin, were driven out of Eden, that garden which gave men all thing to live with and nothing to live for. Hand in hand they went out of Eden; hand in hand they must enter the new Paradise grander and nobler than the first Eden; because wrought out of the thorn-growing earth by their united labors."

¹⁰⁷ "Female Suffrage," *The Keowee Courier*, April 13, 1867. This article began: "Certain startling questions have recently sprung into life, and are performing a grand march around the world. Prominent among them, is 'female suffrage,' and nothing is more certain than that women will be permitted to vote in less than ten years. In this country it will come sooner, but in England the picket line of great thinkers are already agitating the question, and there the female will vote before long." It also proclaimed that "nothing is more certain than that women will be permitted to vote in less than ten years." While this did not prove to be true – the nineteenth amendment would not pass for another 53 years – the sentiment is surprising.

¹⁰⁸ John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (London: Longmans, 1869). The book examined the history of gender relations and went on to assert that the reform spearheaded by female voters would be highly favorable for all of England.

women's suffrage: "Of all the arguments against Woman Suffrage wholly without foundation, is the alleged menace of the negro vote. There is no change whatever in the Federal law, pertaining to the franchise except to strike out sex discrimination." The 1919 article provides the two sections of the nineteenth amendment to back up the assertion that it has nothing to do with race: "Section 1. The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of Sex. Section 2. The Congress shall have power, by appropriate legislation, to enforce the provisions of said act." It then told readers that the only mention of race in the discussion at all was based in the fifteenth amendment: "Section 1. The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States, or by any state on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude. Section 2: The Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation." The article explained how, despite the fifteenth amendment, the state of Alabama (among others) had regulated "colored suffrage" with no pushback from Congress; therefore, the nineteenth amendment would have no impact on the "race question" whatsoever.¹⁰⁹ The need for this statement to be made in the South is indicative of the extreme racial divide of the reconstruction era, as well as the widespread beliefs of racial dominance.

Many pro-suffrage articles viewed equal suffrage as an eventuality, not a possibility. Statements such as, "female suffrage is right – female suffrage is coming – and when they acquire the right to vote, the women will vote right" were not uncommon.¹¹⁰ This realistic outlook did not stop after the creation of the nineteenth amendment. The future of women's rights was a subject some southern newspapers also tackled. The *Fayetteville Daily Democrat* (Arkansas) in 1921 asserted that, "Along with the franchise surely should go full citizenship right

¹⁰⁹ "Race Question," *Cullman Times Democrat*, August 7, 1919.

¹¹⁰ "Female Suffrage," *The Abbeville Press and Banner*, December 21, 1892.

for women, whether married or single, and yet the nineteenth amendment alone does not go far enough to insure those rights.”¹¹¹ This incredibly progressive sentence was written ahead of its time. An acknowledgement of the Nineteenth Amendment’s limitations surely would have shocked southern readers.

The southern pro-Suffrage press, while not particularly large in number or influence, provided readers with a more progressive message that was lacking in most papers in the South during this time. These newspapers, such as the *Pensacola Journal*, acted as gatekeepers not just of information, but of opinion. Without the printing of material that characterized women’s suffrage as a positive movement, some southerners would not have been exposed to controversial opinions that confronted the patriarchal norms that were a part of their everyday life.

Humor in the Papers

Journalists have often used nuance and comedy as a way to expand upon certain ideas, to entertain, or add interest to an article. Southern newspapers that reported on the Women’s Suffrage Movement used humor repeatedly for those purposes, though the wit was not one-sided. Both anti-suffrage and pro-suffrage papers in the South used humor to their benefit. While the overall effectiveness of articles that employed these devices is certainly debatable, the presence of attempted jesting is not.

An 1899 short piece in Arkansas’s *Journal-Advance* (Gentry) told the story of a young woman and her monetary investment in the Suffrage Movement:

¹¹¹ “Full Women’s Rights,” *Fayetteville Daily Democrat*, October 6, 1921.

Queer Use of a Wedding Gift – On the ground that she needed no outward symbol of love a Philadelphia young woman declined to receive an engagement ring from her fiancé, but was [unintelligible] to accept the \$100 which he intended to lay out on the token. They had been married six months before he knew what she had done with the money, and then he was chagrined to find that she had purchased a life membership in the Women’s Suffrage society.¹¹²

The humor in this tale is directly tied to membership in the suffrage group, or associates the Women’s Suffrage Movement with a humorous piece on marriage that called into question the wife’s motives that could have made men thankful that their wives did not do as the woman in the story.

Another short article, also from the *Journal-Advance* a year later, poked fun at a local politician who stated that he “commended electioneering with men and women,” only to be rebuked by another man who “informed him that this (Ark.) was not a female suffrage state.”¹¹³ While the tale may seem rather straightforward in this retelling, the humor is found in the act of an everyman informing a politician which constituents really mattered at the time. The politician’s position and the need for the reminder make this piece particularly witty.

Some pieces were written by women who were not at all impressed with stereotypes and misconceptions that labeled them the “weaker sex.” Dorothy Dix wrote in the *Pensacola Journal* in 1915: “A woman can walk a sick baby for two days and nights at a stretch, whereas an hour’s hand-to-hand combat with a teething infant leaves a man a physical wreck. Yet there are people who doubt that the members of the feminine sex have enough stamina to cast a ballot.”¹¹⁴ Dix, which was the pen name of writer Elizabeth Meriwether Gilmer, was a well-known advice

¹¹² “Queer Use of a Wedding Gift,” *Journal-Advance*, June 30, 1899.

¹¹³ “Milt Corlew,” *Journal-Advance*, March 16, 1900. The article reads in full: “Milt Corlew a candidate for circuit clerk, lit down on us Saturday when we were least expecting him and he commended electioneering with men and women, and our friend on the corner informed him that this (Ark.) was not a female suffrage state.”

¹¹⁴ “The Weaker Sex,” *The Pensacola Journal*, September 26, 1915.

columnist who wrote primarily for the New Orleans *Daily Picayune*.¹¹⁵ Dix's outright confrontation of patriarchal gender roles shows briefly what was expected of mothers, and what was not expected of fathers. To apply these roles to the argument against suffrage is, thanks to Dix, quite laughable.

The *Bryan Daily Eagle and Pilot* (Texas) in 1916 associated women's suffrage with insects in a humorous effort: "The female mosquito (*stegomia fasciata*) alone communicates yellow fever and malaria. The reason is that many centuries ago they won out in their fight for female suffrage."¹¹⁶ The comparison of a suffragette to a blood-sucking, illness-spreading mosquito could have been highly divisive and offensive to some who supported equal suffrage. However, those who were not in favor of women's suffrage would have found the comparison both amusing and accurate.

The *Pensacola Journal* (Florida) joked in 1915 that, "'A man who suggested repealing woman suffrage in New Zealand would be considered a fit subject for an insane asylum,' said S.M. Fisher, the Minister of Marines and Customs of New Zealand, during a recent speech in Philadelphia."¹¹⁷ While this article was not necessarily intended to be a funny piece, the Minister from New Zealand's quote was too humorous for the paper to not print. Like the previous article, this one could be controversial. Pro-suffragists would have laughed and agreed while anti-suffragists would have surely taken offense.

The *Carolina Watchman* (Salisbury, North Carolina) in 1887 featured a rather funny piece about a member of the Dakota state legislature, Wilbur Steele, who was just about to vote

¹¹⁵ "Acquisitions" *The Historic New Orleans Collection Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (2013): 17 – 18. Dix was originally from Tennessee and was married to the mentally unstable George Gilmer. While recovering from a mental breakdown on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, Dix met and befriended the owner of the *Daily Picayune*, Eliza Nicholson. She first started writing her column in 1895 and it was later syndicated in 1917. She also wrote as a crime reporter for the *New York Journal* starting in 1901. Her advice columns was one of the most popular newspaper columns of the 1930s and 1940s.

¹¹⁶ "The female mosquito," *Bryan Daily Eagle and Pilot*, September 30, 1916.

¹¹⁷ "Considered Fit Subject for Insane Asylum," *The Pensacola Journal*, September 26, 1915.

‘nay’ on a women’s suffrage bill when “a well-dressed lady was seen to bend over the gallery rail. In a loud voice she exclaimed: ‘W-i-l-b-u-r!’ He glanced upward. It was enough. He turned and said: ‘Mr. Speaker, I vote aye.’ The lady was Steele’s wife.”¹¹⁸ This version of the old trope of men bowing to the wishes of their wives would have struck the funny bone of nearly every reader.

Even the legendary Mark Twain could not resist adding his own brand of humor to the ranks of pieces concerning the Women’s Suffrage Movement, writing in 1868:

There is one insuperable obstacle in the way of female suffrage, Jennie. I approach the subject with fear and trembling; but it must out. A woman would never vote, because she would have to tell her age at the polls. And even if she did dare to vote once or twice when she was just of age, you know what dire results would flow from ‘putting this and that together’ in after times. For instance, in an unguarded moment, Miss A. says she voted for Mr. Smith. Her auditor, who knows that it is seven years since Smith ran for anything, easily cyphers out that she is at least seven years over age, instead of the young pullet she has been making herself out to be. No, Jennie, this new fashion of registering the name, age, residence and occupation of every voter, is a fatal bar to female suffrage.¹¹⁹

Again, the play on a universal joke, this time concerning the hesitation of women to reveal their age, falls in with female suffrage. It is the absurdity of the argument that makes it all the more humorous, though there had to have been the odd reader to take it to heart, as so often satire in any form is taken too literally.

Humor was also used as a means to discuss women’s suffrage while simultaneously disparaging black women. A rather lengthy 1899 piece from the *Yorkville Enquirer* (South Carolina) described a, likely false, application to teach at a “colored school” in a small town in

¹¹⁸ “Wilbur Voted Aye,” *The Carolina Watchman*, June 2, 1887. Prior to the exchange quoted above, the article read: “Everybody in Dakota knows Wilbur F. Steele. He was a member of the Legislature from Steele county. There is an incident in Steele’s legislative career that goes very far to show his characteristic regard for his wife. He has one fault, however. He takes no stock in woman suffrage – except when he is obliged to. On the occasion in question the Woman Suffrage bill was before the House. Major Pickley was championing the cause of the fair sex in eloquent words when a call was made for a vote, and the Clerk proceeded to call the roll. When Steele’s name was reached he rose with the dignity of a Demosthenes and commenced: ‘Mr. Speaker, I am sorry that I cannot support this bill, but-’...”

¹¹⁹ “Mark Twain on Female Suffrage,” *The Daily Phoenix*, August 25, 1868.

Florida where a black woman replied with a number of ignorant responses when asked her opinion on female suffrage. The article read in full:

In a country town in Florida recently there was an examination for applicants for second grade teachers' certificates in a colored school. One of the questions asked for a brief expression of the applicants opinion of 'female suffrage.' A young colored woman filed her blank with an essay on 'Female Suffrage'. It beings, 'In regard to female suffrage there are thousands of women who suffer early and also daily, and I am compelled to say that the greater part of their sufferage is brought on by themselves.' The writer then specifies the various cuases of female 'suffrage.' Women eat too rapidly, have their meals too irregularly, expose themselves too much, do not have proper exercise or clothing. 'Any one of these will bring about female sufferage.' She also think they would be stronger if they regarded the laws of health. 'Their treatment to the physical body only goes to show to them that they are doing too much if they would only hear.' And finally, 'Another great cause of female sufferage is trying to keep up with every new style or fashion that comes about, whether it agrees with our health or not, and what is, indeed, a poor way to take care of the health.'¹²⁰

This example of a black woman mistaking "sufferage" and embodying stereotypical negative characteristics is just another instance of the role of racism in both the Suffrage Movement and the southern press.

A Virginian newspaper, the *Times Dispatch*, was a highly circulated paper based out of Richmond that became one of the most recognized papers in the South. The political stance of the paper was continuously in flux, as it was edited by a Confederate Civil War veteran, Joseph Bryan, who briefly advocated for limited suffrage for African Americans, until public opinion on black rights shifted the paper's views.¹²¹ The *Times Dispatch* did not shy away from controversial satire, as was shown in March 1907 when it published a lengthy piece that chronicled a group of poorly educated, heavily accented men discussing the Women's Suffrage Movement. The piece ends with a pseudo-endorsement of the Movement as one man says:

¹²⁰ "Female 'Suffrage'," *The Yorkville Enquirer*, November 25, 1899.

¹²¹ "The Times Dispatch," *Chronicling America*, accessed February 2017, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85038615/>.

It wudden't do anny gr-reat harm if a man cudden't be illicted to office onless he kept his hair combed, an' blacked his boots an' shaved his chin wanst a month. Annyhow...I care not who casts th' votes iv me country so long as we can hold th' offices. An' there's on'y wan way to keep the women out iv office, an' that's to give thim a vote.¹²²

The characterization of the men involved, in addition to the over-done accents, uses stereotypical characters to drive home a not-so-common idea.

Using humor as a device to discuss the Women's Suffrage Movement had the potential to not only draw attention to the Movement, but could also impact the way in which it was viewed. Pro-suffrage and anti-suffrage humor, while mildly divisive, did not carry the same amount of rancor or outright degradation that articles without humor in these camps often did. Regardless of agreement with either side, humor enabled readers to have a laugh while also placing the Suffrage Movement at the center of discussion.

Post-Amendment

The passage of the Nineteenth Amendment was the culmination of more than seventy years of work towards women's suffrage. The amendment itself was passed through Congress on June 4, 1919 and was subsequently ratified on August 18, 1920.¹²³ The amendment read: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by

¹²² "On Woman Suffrage," *Times Dispatch*, March 10, 1907. This piece was full of highly stylized conversation that included a cartoon of a group of British suffragettes attempting to intimidate a police officer. The caricature provided each woman with features that could have belonged to an elderly man, and proportioned them to be the same size and stature of the police officer. One of the conversing men says, "If ye'er suffrage club was composed iv a hundhed thousand sturdy ladies ar-rmed with rollin' pins, brooms, mops, potato mashers, stove lifters, an' th' other weepins that nature has provided th' seet with to defind thimsilves again tyranny in th' home, it wudden't be long before Bill O'Brien wud be sindin' ye a box iv chocolate cream i'r ye'er vote."

¹²³ "19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: Women's Right to Vote," National Archives, accessed March 2017, <https://www.archives.gov/historical-docs/19th-amendment>. Most of the earliest supporters of equal suffrage did not live to see the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, such as Susan B. Anthony (d. 1906), Elizabeth Cady Stanton (d. 1902), and Lucretia Mott (d. 1880).

appropriate legislation.”¹²⁴ The articles published in southern newspapers after the congressional passage and ratification of the amendment ran along a spectrum of anti-suffrage, informational, and pro-suffrage that, regardless of viewpoint, provided readers with the news of the amendment and its implications.

In the wake of the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, the consistently anti-suffrage *El Paso Herald* (Texas) ran stories that proclaimed in their headline “Is Against Women Active In Politics.” The paper cited a variety of individuals who had particular views on the amendment, with most (if not all) determining that it was “dangerous to the common good.” One mechanical engineer, John Vandemoer, was quoted days before its passage as saying, “A man can take off his hat in a second, but it takes a woman sometimes a half hour to do this, and she might miss or pass her floor.”¹²⁵ While Vandemoer may have been correct in the assertion that it took many women a while to remove their hats – seeing as these more antiquated forms of headwear would have been quite elaborate and pinned on – the belief that the status of the covering of one’s head would impact their ability to partake in politics seems to be an example of how unhappy many southerners were when women were given the right to vote.

Another Texas paper, the *Snyder Signal*, offered a last-minute plea against women’s suffrage 6 months before the vote with an article that quoted former California suffrage leader Annie Beck expressing her disappointment in the outcomes of equal suffrage in her state. She wrote:

¹²⁴ “United States of America 1789 (rev. 1992),” *Constitute Project*, accessed March 2017. https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/United_States_of_America_1992.

¹²⁵ “Is Against Women Active In Politics,” *El Paso Herald*, August 7, 1920.

I was one of the prominent workers who helped to bring suffrage to California and I regret it. A year in politics has taught me that women are intolerant, radical, revolutionary and more corrupt in politics than men, also all this so-called reform leads to the Socialist co-operative commonwealth. Since suffrage there has been an alarming increase in immorality, divorces and murder in California. Women suffrage has made cowards and puppets of men. It has coarsened and cheapened women. Were the men to vote on woman suffrage in California today it would not carry. Suffragettes asked suffrage that they might put only good men in office; now they clamor for a fifty-fifty show for all offices. I shall do penance forever for the part I played in bringing suffrage in California. Please urge your colleagues not to do what will bring regret and disaster, but to stand for that 90 percent of women who do not want suffrage but are glad to trust all politics and governmental affairs to their beloved husbands, fathers, sons and brother. To the South, women suffrage would bring more than calamity.¹²⁶

The characterization of political women almost seems to mirror the portrayals of accused witches in the past, as they are linked with immorality and depravity. While Beck's plea for the South to resist ratification would ultimately be in vain, the sentiment would have surely resounded with the many southern men who were hoping that the amendment would fail in ratification.

Louisiana's *Star-Progress* (Opelousas) published a similar article as former governor R.G. Pleasant lamented the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment as a failing on the South's part. One of Pleasant's main foci was the role of race in the ratification of the amendment, as he stated:

A negro candidate for governor of Arkansas has attracted thousands of negro, and some white voters to his standard. Many negroes ran for local offices in southeast Arkansas and in other states, and a negro was elected to legislature of Missouri...Before the Louisiana, Tennessee, Maryland and other southern legislatures it was asserted vigorously and continuously by local and imported advocates that the success of the suffrage amendment meant the success of the democratic party, and that southern shotguns would keep the negroes from voting. It did neither.¹²⁷

It should come as no surprise that the culturally ingrained racism of the South was used to further degrade the rights that came with the amendment. Pleasant's use of the word "shotguns,"

¹²⁶ "Reaction Sets Up," *The Snyder Signal*, July 16, 1920.

¹²⁷ "Former Governor Shows How South Fell Into Trap," *The Star-Progress*, November 17, 1920.

however, is most disturbing –this southern brand of racism held a particularly violent streak that surely stemmed from the innate institutionalized violence of the slave system of the not-very-distant past. The *Dallas Express* (Texas) echoed these racist sentiments, printing that “the Negro woman is causing some embarrassment, but it is thought a grandmother’s clause will meet this phase of the difficulties.”¹²⁸ Non-white persons, particularly women, were very easily written off at this time.

The majority of southern newspapers that printed articles concerning the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment focused on a more informational approach that educated readers on the latest developments of the continuous state ratifications of the amendment. Whether it was a short article mentioning an upcoming vote, or a front-page piece that proclaimed the delay of a state vote that could lead to ratification, southern newspapers placed a definite emphasis on reporting the facts of the ongoing situation while maintaining a lack of obvious or outright bias.¹²⁹ While it could be argued that the selection of particular article to print could be a showing of some sort of bias, the majority of informational articles about the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment provided basic but highly newsworthy information to readers.

The *Era-Leader* (Franklinton) out of Louisiana, for example, recognized the importance of informing new female voters of what they should expect with the passage of the amendment:

Mr. Ches Mizell, clerk of the couth, announces that he will open the books for the registration of the women of Washington Parish on September 15, the day following the Democratic Primary Election. All white women 21 years of age and over, will be permitted to register and can vote in the November election without the payment of a poll tax. Prompt attention must be given this matter as the books will be open only a few days over two weeks, closing October 2nd, 30 days prior to the general election.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ “Would Have Women Of Georgia Given Ballot,” *The Dallas Express*, July 23, 1921.

¹²⁹ “Suffrage Vote Not Possible,” *The Pensacola Journal*, March 13, 1920.

¹³⁰ “Women Voters To Register In Rush,” *The Era-Leader*, September 2, 1920.

This announcement, regardless of opinion, would have been considered highly relevant and important to print in the paper. Comparable articles kept readers abreast of the news concerning the ratification efforts in states such as Tennessee, where certain lawmakers attempted to stall the process and stop the “suffrage amendment” in its tracks.¹³¹ Similarly, Tennessee’s *Camden Chronicle* published a short piece, “Of Vital Importance To Women,” which informed readers of the basics of the amendment and its ratification process:

The Federal Suffrage Amendment is of vital importance to every woman voter in the United States. True, women have full suffrage in fifteen states and are entitled to vote for the next President in fifteen other states, but it is only by final ratification of the Federal Suffrage Amendment that any woman is national protected in her voting rights. Let a New York woman cross the North river into Jersey and she loses her full suffrage rights. Let a Tennessee woman move to Alabama and she loses her Presidential and municipal suffrage rights... After [President] Wilson’s advocacy of woman suffrage, ten woman suffrage states that had formerly been Republicans went Democratic.¹³²

This article, while a bit reductionist, illustrated the importance of the amendment. The need for a countrywide law, not simply one that differed state by state, was great for American women who wished to vote.

Some southern papers used their articles to explain to readers how the ratification process worked. A two-column piece in Texas’s *Amarillo Daily News* reported:

¹³¹ “State May Safely Ratify Suffrage,” *Concordia Sentinel*, July 3, 1920.

¹³² “Of Vital Importance To Women,” *The Camden Chronicle*, August 13, 1920.

Action of the Rhode Island and Kentucky legislature today in ratifying the federal woman suffrage amendment brings the number of states which have accepted it to twenty four. Ratification by 12 more states is necessary before the amendment becomes effective and officers of the national American woman's suffrage association today declared they would conduct an active campaign to obtain the necessary ratifications before the presidential primaries in April. Women of twenty one states, including Rhode Island, will enjoy presidential suffrage this year regardless of whether the amendment becomes effective before the presidential primary, according to suffrage association officials. States which have ratified the amendment and in which presidential women suffrage this year is contingent upon the amendment becoming effective include Arkansas and Texas. The suffrage of women in Arkansas and Texas is limited to state primaries."¹³³

Again, the need for information seemed to outweigh any possible urge to insert opinion or conjecture. This trend of reporting straight facts seemed to permeate the majority of reporting concerning the Nineteenth Amendment as many anti-suffrage papers, such as the *El Paso Herald*, ran large front page stories that followed the gradual ratification movement of the amendment with no malice.¹³⁴

Much like the continued anti-suffrage sentiments found in some southern newspapers, more pro-suffrage leaning articles were not uncommon during the ratification process of the Nineteenth Amendment. For example, a Louisiana newspaper, the *St. Mary Banner* (Franklin), published a long article that highlighted "some notable features of the long fight for equal suffrage" and "some names made immortal by the contest." The piece went on to list the important dates that led to the initial congressional passage of the amendment, then profiled some of the more notable women of the Movement such as Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady

¹³³ "Suffrage Amendment Lacks Ratification By 12 More States To Be Effective," *Amarillo Daily News*, January 7, 1920. The article also included: "Special legislative sessions to take action on the amendment already have been called for the next few weeks by Oregon and Idaho. Arizona, Nevada, Oklahoma, Washington and Wyoming, whose legislatures do not meet this year, also are expected to call special sessions to take action on the amendment. Other states in which the amendment probably will be taken up in regular sessions this year are Louisiana, Mississippi, Virginia, Georgia, South Carolina and New Jersey."

¹³⁴ "Tennessee's Ratification Of Suffrage Would Be Legal, is Federal Department Ruling," *The El Paso Herald*, June 24, 1920.

Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and Alice Paul.¹³⁵ The pro-suffrage newspaper, the *Pensacola Journal* (Florida), published a similar article in August 1920. It read in part:

Full suffrage is enjoyed today by the women of 21 foreign countries, including the new states of Czecho-Slovakia and Poland and the ancient nations of England, Germany and the Scandinavian countries. Now that the women of the United States have won the right equally with the men to take their part in the government of the republic, the effect of the women's vote on the political life of the country remains for time to show.¹³⁶

This paragraph, in particular, encompasses the large-scale inclusion of women's suffrage world wide while adding a hopeful note that equal suffrage in the United States would be, in time, a notable accomplishment and addition to the country.

Tennessee's *Sequachee Valley News* took a different approach by providing a list of "friends and supporters" of the Women's Suffrage Movement, describing them as a "legion" that included "practically every influential organization, state and national." The list was divided into seven categories: business organizations, industrial organizations, professional organizations, religious organizations, fraternal and benevolent groups, agricultural organizations, and women's organizations. Providing such a list, which included more than thirty separate groups, enables readers to make a connection between the organizations many would have been familiar with and the Movement and subsequent legislation they promoted.¹³⁷ Studying the portrayals of the Women's Suffrage Movement in southern newspapers does not end with the initial passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. The long process of individual state ratifications, and the many legislative roadblocks along the way, must be addressed, as they are vital to understanding the full story of the first wave of feminism.

¹³⁵ " 'Votes For Women in 1920' Wins," *The St. Marry Banner*, August 28, 1920.

¹³⁶ "Continued from page 1," *The Pensacola Journal*, August 19, 1920.

¹³⁷ "Advertised By Its Great Allies," *Sequachee Valley News*, August 5, 1920.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The South is a region of the United States with a rich background and distinct regional culture that makes it stand out when social movements occur in the area. Southern newspapers portrayed the Suffrage Movement of first wave feminism with a certain amount of distaste and disagreement. The influence of traditional principles, specifically patriarchal and Christian ones, and a history of racial discrimination and hatred made the South somewhat inhospitable to this first wave of feminism, as well as the ideas of equality that stemmed from it.

Writers and historians have often downplayed the complicity of southern women in the subjugation of slaves as a natural aspect of their own suppression by southern men. While there is no denying that women in this time and place did not have the same social, political, and economic rights as their male counterparts, it would be historically false to label them all as kindly, graceful, and subservient. Southern women were just as complicit in their own subservience as they were in the enslavement of millions.

The American South is a case study in how extreme cultural norms and beliefs manifest themselves through time in certain areas. The indisputable impact of patriarchal control in southern society helped to create an environment that was hostile to groups and ideologies that challenged the deeply established status quo. The Women's Suffrage Movement did just that, defying regional norms and empowering women to fight for their right to vote.

The southern press seemed to evolve at a similar rate to the Women's Suffrage Movement as the first wave of feminism progressed from the nineteenth into the twentieth century. What started out as an extremely unfavorable view of equal suffrage in most, if not all, southern papers progressed into a general acceptance of the nineteenth amendment as 1920 drew closer. The added complication of race in relation to women's suffrage in the South likely slowed the Movement's overall progress.

One limitation of the paper is the number of southern newspapers that are unrepresented. Future research could incorporate more papers and examine differences within the articles.. However, this work does provide a strong starting point from which to move forward. Additionally, the regional focus of this paper on the South allows for a more narrow, culturally salient research process that could be both replicated and expanded in future research. It would be interesting to examine the personal letters and diaries of southern women in conjunction with newspaper coverage, as well as how southern newspapers reported on (or ignored) the Seneca Falls Convention that jump started the Movement.

Gatekeeping, as a theory, has maintained its relevance into the current century, and will surely continue to do so for many years to come. Using this theory to evaluate historical documents, such as southern newspapers, can provide a new way of looking at old information. At its core, the theory provides a basic application that pertains to every newspaper and article highlighted in this paper: printing an article – any article or piece in any capacity – is a gatekeeping decision. The southern gatekeepers that decided anti-suffrage, informational, pro-suffrage, humorous, or amendment passage articles should be featured in their papers for their readers to consume put this theory to good use.

Similarly, agenda-setting theory allows for the acknowledgement of the power of southern newspapers during this time. The modern media organizations that have ingrained themselves so completely in society were preceded by these smaller, but no less important, newspapers that informed southern readers of what the editors, most of whom were male, thought was important. Through the publication of article with particular slants – such and anti or pro-suffrage – editors also impacted the ways in which readers thought about the issues they were made to believe were important.

The importance of this paper can be found in the overall lack of progressive female-centric southern history in mainstream academic discourse on journalism. The inextricable ties between the women of the South and the newspapers they read should not be ignored, but rather examined in detail to help promote understanding of southern women of the not so distant past. Studying the ways in which southern newspapers presented the Women’s Suffrage Movement is only one small part of this overarching goal.

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