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A DASH OF SUFFRAGE SPICE: RURAL AND URBAN ETHNICITY
CONSTRUCTION IN THE TRANSNATIONAL WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE
MOVEMENT

by

Anna M. Peterson
Bachelor of Arts, Concordia College, 2004

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

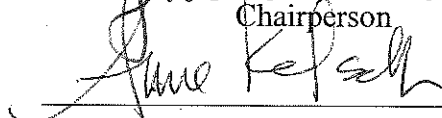
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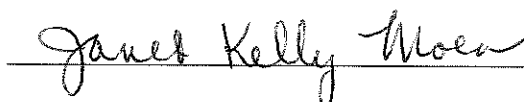
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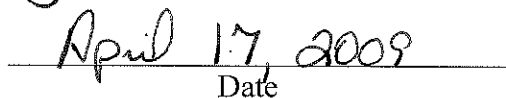
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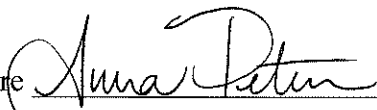
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ABSTRACT

The women's suffrage movement in Europe and the United States led to female enfranchisement in much of the West in the early twentieth century. Suffrage historiography, however, places too much emphasis on a middle-class history of urban white women's struggle to win the vote. This traditional scholarship not only lacks a thorough class-based analysis but also fails to examine ethnicity's role in the American women's suffrage movement as well as larger transnational connections.

Research on the construction of Norwegian ethnicity and its corresponding influence on Norwegian-American support of women's suffrage contributes to filling this historiographical gap. In addition, the influence Norwegian-language literature and Norwegian suffrage successes had on rural and urban Norwegian-American homemaking myths shows how ethnic construction compounded with gender and class to create a progressive political identity. Transatlantic suffrage relationships propagated this identity formation and in part created and reinforced Norwegian ethnicity.

My research investigates the extent to which ethnicity impacted the American women's suffrage movement and also draws attention to the differences between rural and urban Norwegian-American suffragists. The cases of rural Norwegian Americans

living in Minnesota and North Dakota highlight that these men and women participated in progressive ethnic construction and implemented these ideals through their work in a Grand Forks Votes for Women Club. Urban Norwegian-American suffragists involved in the Minneapolis, Minnesota-based Scandinavian Woman's Suffrage Association demonstrate that urban ethnics joined a suffrage club at a greater rate than their rural counterparts and utilized ethnic stereotypes to lobby for women's suffrage on a local and national level. These findings illuminate the similarities and differences between rural, agricultural Norwegian Americans and urban, "citified" Norwegian Americans.

Traditional qualitative sources such as memoirs, newspaper articles, women's magazines and suffrage club records, provide insight into individual and group lives. This study also implements non-traditional qualitative source material such as literature and quantitative analysis to augment the traditional qualitative sources. Combining suffrage club membership records with the United States census data reveals the ethnic make-up, age, family and economic situations of suffrage club members. In urban Minneapolis, Minnesota and rural Grand Forks, North Dakota the creative and combined use of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies illustrates that a transatlantic exchange of progressive ideals contributed to Norwegian American ethnic construction, identity formation and participation in the women's suffrage movement.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Although the United States has long been described as a nation of immigrants, existing histories of American women's suffrage fail to reflect the nation's diverse population. Academics have long ignored ethnicity's role in the passage of the Nineteenth Constitutional Amendment in traditional suffrage histories and the overarching field of gender history. Likewise, immigration historiography has neglected to explore the influence immigration and ethnic construction had on this political movement. As a result of these oversights, the existing history of the American women's suffrage movement needs to be reexamined. Research on ethnic groups and their support or rejection of women's suffrage is a means to discover how a heterogeneous country reacted to Americans' quest for equal rights from 1890 to 1920. This study explores the influence of Norwegian women's suffrage victories and their literary roots on Norwegian-American ethnicity construction and its role in the American women's suffrage movement. The case of Norwegian-American ethnicity also demonstrates that not all suffragists were urban, middle-class Anglo Americans. Instead, Norwegian Americans from a variety of economic and family backgrounds contributed to a far more diverse suffrage movement than the existing historiography assumes. Norwegian Americans in rural Minnesota and North Dakota and urban Minneapolis, Minnesota,

demonstrate not only the role of gender in the women's suffrage movement but also ethnicity and class.

Norwegian-American support of American women's suffrage is a fascinating case of the intersecting role ethnicity and gender play in political movements and the construction of identity. In late-nineteenth-century Norway, a feminist movement emerged that focused on fighting for equal enfranchisement of women. During this same time period a mass of Norwegian emigrants sought a new life in the United States.¹ High concentrations of Norwegian immigrants homesteaded in the Midwestern states of Minnesota and North Dakota.² As Norwegians transitioned into Norwegian Americans, their cultural identity changed.³ Norwegian Americans formed and renegotiated this identity with each passing generation. Each generation identified with Norway in various ways, but central to each generation's identification was the memory and perception of Norway as an idyllic country of progress and liberty. The portrayal of their ethnic background as intertwined with democratic values of equality emphasized their perceived likeness with Americans while maintaining a distinct identity.

Norway's political and social climate from 1890 to 1920 symbolized a country that increasingly promoted universal democratic ideals. The disparity between women's equal voting rights in Norway and the United States justified Norwegian immigrant

¹ In 1910, foreign-born Norwegians were 0.4% of the total United States population. First and second generation Norwegians made up 13.4% of Minnesota's total population and 21% of North Dakota's total population. *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, report prepared by William P. Dillingham and William S. Bennet, December 10, 1910.

² Minnesota, Wisconsin and North Dakota were the three states with the most foreign-born Norwegian residents in 1905. Jon Gjerde and Carlton C. Qualey, *Norwegians in Minnesota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2002), 1.

³ Persons claiming cultural association with Norway either through language or ancestry will be referred to as Norwegian Americans. For a discussion of the transition from old world identity to new world identity see: Jon Gjerde, *The Minds of the West: Ethnocultural Evolution in the Rural Middle West, 1830 – 1917* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

assertions that their ethnic identity was progressive⁴ and democratic.⁵ Through a series of legislative victories from 1907 to 1913, Norwegian women represented some of the most enfranchised women in the world. Norway successfully became the first independent country to implement universal female suffrage in 1913, seven years before Congress ratified the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.⁶

Norwegian authors presented Norwegian Americans with literary examples that confirmed their cultural identification. Famous Norwegian writers such as Camilla Collett, Henrik Ibsen, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson and Jonas Lie became symbols of this progressive Norwegian identity. They formed a group of Norwegian literary figures devoted to the exposure of social inequality as a part of the poetic realist movement.⁷ These authors called for a reexamination of women's roles in society and their legal rights as citizens. Their works, circulated both in Norway and the United States, embodied progressive values and called for social change. Norwegian Americans in the rural and urban Midwest could use this type of Norwegian literature to further construct their ethnic identity as progressive.

The combination of Norwegian women suffrage successes and poetic realistic literary examples led to the construction of a Norwegian-American identity based on the same ideals that supported women's suffrage. My research demonstrates how Norwegian

⁴ I will use the term "progressive" to indicate a personal belief that social reform can be achieved in the future. "Progressive" people regard all people to be equally entitled to the results of social reform. For further discussion of the political and historical use of the term "progressive" see: Jack Weinstein, "On the Meaning of the Term Progressive: A Philosophical Investigation," in *William Mitchell Law Review* 33, no. 1 (Nov 2006): 50.

⁵ I will use the term "democratic" to indicate social and political equity.

⁶ The Russian territory of Finland and British territory of New Zealand had women's suffrage prior to 1913. Women's suffrage dates for individual countries can be found in *The International Encyclopedia of Women's Suffrage* ed. June Hannam, Katherine Holden and Mitzi Auchterlonie (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2000).

⁷ Poetic realism was a literary movement that juxtaposed domestic realities with societal ideals in order to reveal the gap between lived experience and ideals. Per Thomas Andersen, *Norsk Litteraturhistorie* (Oslo: Universitetsforlag, 2001), 205.

Americans living in both rural and urban environments during 1890 to 1920 used ethnic and gendered perceptions of women's suffrage. Literature by Camilla Collett, Henrik Ibsen, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson and Jonas Lie brought ideas from the Norwegian women's suffrage movement to rural and urban Norwegian Americans. Norwegian Americans from across Minnesota and North Dakota showed how rural Norwegian-language literature served as a vehicle for Norwegian American ethnic construction and influenced their limited participation in a rural suffrage organization. Norwegian Americans living in Minneapolis, Minnesota and their ethnic-based involvement in the Scandinavian Woman's Suffrage Club demonstrated how urbanity affected the creation of an all-Scandinavian suffrage club based on utilizing ethnic rhetoric in their lobbying of local and national support of the cause.

Definition of Terms

The terms "rural" and "urban" are ambiguous in nature and warrant further clarification. I will use a cultural definition to accurately compare ethnic identity formation in rural Minnesota and North Dakota to the urban environment of Minneapolis.⁸ Often in American historiography, scholars define "rural" and "urban" in polarized terms. Economic historians refer to rural and urban areas according to the basis of primary economy; often dichotomized as either agricultural or industrial.⁹

Traditionally, historians implement demographic criteria in their description of rural and

⁸ An excellent discussion of the cultural definition of "rural" can be found in: William Kandel and David Louis Brown, *Population Change and Rural Society* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2006), 3.

⁹ Susan Sessions Rugh, *Our Common Country: Family, Farming, Culture, and Community in the Nineteenth Century Midwest* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 80; Jeremy Burchardt, "Agricultural History, Rural History, or Countryside History," in *The Historical Journal* 50, no. 2 (June 2007): 465 - 481.

urban environments. Definitions that rely solely on population density, however, are problematic on many levels. The majority of immigration historians currently characterize “rural” as any settlement unit with a population of less than 2,500 even though the most recent census declares all areas with less than 1,000 people per square mile as rural.¹⁰

On their own, demographic and economic definitions are too narrow. They create a false sense of cohesiveness between a small town of 2,501 and a bustling metropolitan center of 50,000 or even 10 million. I seek to address this problem by implementing a cultural definition that focuses on how an environment can help create a certain mindset. “Rural” will refer to an area with large tracts of undeveloped land, far from urban centers and without a metropolitan core. This area relies on an agricultural economy and traditional forms of community including strong churches, schools and local government which mimic the structure of the family farm. In comparison, “urban” refers to an area with close proximity to a metropolitan core with an economy that depends primarily on manufacturing industries. These revised definitions of “rural” and “urban” enable a better comparison of Norwegian-American ethnic support of women’s suffrage in rural Minnesota and North Dakota and urban Minneapolis because they help to explain the development of ethnic construction in different cultural environments.

¹⁰ This definition first appears in the 1920 United States Census. Odd Lovoll, *Norwegians on the Prairie: Ethnicity and the Development of the Country Town* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2006), 4; Charles W. Eagles, “Congressional Voting in the 1920s: A Test of Urban-Rural Conflict,” in *The Journal of American History* 76, no. 2 (Sep. 1989): 529. For the most recent definition see: “Census 2000 Urban and Rural Classification,” *Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Geography Division*, April 30, 2002, accessed on November 25, 2008: http://www.census.gov/geo/www/ua/ua_2k.html.

Gender, Suffrage, Nationalism and Immigration Historiography

The topic of rural and urban Norwegian-American attitudes towards women's suffrage fits within the greater historical subfield of women's and gender history. Since the beginning of the 1970s women's history has sought to uncover and place the female narrative in the existing historical framework. With the influence of poststructural theorist Michel Foucault, gender theory emerged in the 1980s as an alternative way to study the past. Currently the focus of gender historians is on documenting the effects of gender in traditional paradigms such as the nation state.

In 1980, Michel Foucault and his decisive work, *History of Sexuality*, took post-structuralist theory normally used in literary criticism and applied it to concepts of sexuality. Foucault introduced a discussion of the pivotal role language and the construction of words and categories had on suppressing women throughout history.¹¹ The Foucauldian concept of discourse inspired feminists to employ his method to not only destroy traditionally male-based discussions but also form an empowered female discourse with women at the center. These new waves of feminist thought and research emerged in the late 1980s and 1990s and implemented the term "gender." Third wave theories dealt with gender not only as something female but as relating to the definition of both sexes and their sexuality. Gender theorists claimed that terms such as "men," "women," and "sexuality" were not biological, but were, as Foucault argued, socially constructed.¹² As a result, the study of sex roles and typifications could reveal historical values and help explain the varying origins and degrees of female oppression and male

¹¹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume One*, trans. R. Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1980). Foucault drew on the work of Sigmund Freud, who first used theories of repression in *Selected Papers on Hysteria and Other Psychoneurosis* (New York: Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease Pub. Co, 1909).

¹² Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

dominance throughout history. Gender theorists promoted a discourse that explored the epistemological process of hierarchical construction.

The advent of gender theory changed how feminists wrote history. Gender became a major trend in historical study in the 1980s and continued to have an impact in the 1990s and early 2000s. Feminists in the 1990s focused on expanding post-structuralism's boundaries.¹³ Post-structuralism influenced the study of women through the reevaluation of traditional concepts of race, class and sex. Gender historians saw women in relation to men and included the influence of race, class and even geography on gender constructions. Comparative history gained importance during this period due to third wave feminists' desires to challenge second wave feminist ideals, particularly the Marxist-feminist emphasis on class. Third wave feminism reacted against second wave feminism and its previous inadequacies at discussing women's suffrage as more than just a white, middle class, Western world phenomenon representative of all women's experiences. Third wave feminists in the 1990s sought to get away from portraying women as a universally Western, homogenous group. Gender theorists stressed the importance of cultural relativity while maintaining that women around the world had a common history of oppression.¹⁴

During the 1990s, gender theorists emphasized a three-pronged methodological approach highlighting the roles sex, class, and ethnicity played in constructing gender. This framework used difference as a category of analysis. The scholarship in the 1990s reflected third wave feminism's goal of exploring not just women but gender and

¹³ James A. Winders, *Gender, Theory and the Canon* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

¹⁴ In particular, a lot of work was done revising the origins of feminism and the women's suffrage movement. See *Nation, Empire, Colony: Historicizing Gender and Race*, ed. Ruth Roach Pierson and Nupur Chaudhuri (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998); *Suffrage and Beyond*, ed. Caroline Daley and Melanie Nolan (New York: New York University Press, 1994).

sexuality. It also sought to include subaltern women and non-militant working class women as the subjects of analysis.¹⁵ Gender history written in the 1990s highlighted comparative, global contexts. This influenced the development of a women's suffrage historiography focused on international perspectives.

Suffrage history has had a central place in women's history. Unfortunately, historians have barely penetrated the topic in their plentiful works on the subject. Professionals and lay persons alike have studied women's suffrage since the beginning of formal feminist movements.¹⁶ Their findings, even in recent years, have often focused on individual nationalist movements led by middle-class, bourgeoisie women in Western Europe and North America.¹⁷ In the 1990s researchers sought to pluralize the global history of women's suffrage through work on largely neglected areas of the developing world. Yet their methodology continued to highlight Anglo, middle-class perspectives even within the new comparative, international suffrage history.¹⁸ Historians expanded traditional suffrage historiography by highlighting non-Western suffrage efforts. This new emphasis illuminated alternative geographical areas but abandoned further study of the Western women's suffrage movement and masked its potential complexity.

¹⁵ Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, 24 – 26; *Suffrage and Beyond*, 11.

¹⁶ Alice Blackwell, *Lucy Stone: Pioneer of Women's Rights* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1930); Ray Strachey, *The Cause. A Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain* (London: Virago, 1928); Doris Stevens, *Jailed for Freedom* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1920).

¹⁷ Some examples include: Ellen Carol DuBois, *Harriot Stanton Blatch and the Winning of Woman Suffrage* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997) and *Woman Suffrage and Women's Right* (New York: New York University Press, 1998); Jacqueline Van Voris, *Carrie Chapman Catt: a Public Life* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1987); Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

¹⁸ *The Women's Suffrage Movement, New Feminist Perspectives*, ed. Maroula Joannou and June Purvis (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); *Women's Suffrage in the British Empire: Citizenship, Nation and Race*, ed. Ian Christopher Fletcher, Laura E. Nym Mayhall and Philippa Levine (New York: Routledge, 2000).

This thesis emerges from within this international, comparative suffrage context. The Norwegian women's rights movement and corresponding quest for enfranchisement played a role in the construction of a Norwegian-American ethnic inclination to support American women's suffrage. This bond linked both sides of the Atlantic with similar ideals of democracy and equality. The exploration of this international suffrage alliance uses the three-pronged methodological approach of highlighting the intersecting roles of gender, ethnicity and class. The influence of constructed ethnic identities on the development of attitudes towards American female suffrage is vitally important to a pluralized understanding of Western suffrage movements. The examination of the role ethnicity played in the American women's suffrage movement will augment currently lacking traditional suffrage histories and lead to a greater understanding of the correlation between ethnic discourses and perceptions of gender.

Also important to the development of comparative gender models is the advent of the study of gendered nationalism. In 1991, concepts of nationalism exploded onto the historical scene with the publication of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*.¹⁹ Since its introduction, historians have focused on answering the questions of national belonging, citizenship and nation formation. Scholars have only recently, however, begun to explore the impact gender had on the historical concepts of nationalism. In the last ten years gender historians have concentrated on placing gender within a nationalist context. This research aimed to understand the ways gender affected defense and reproduction, national symbolism, identity and citizenship.²⁰ The interactions between feminist

¹⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991).

²⁰ Ida Blom, "Gender and Nation in International Comparison," in *Gendered Nations* ed. Ida Blom, Karen Hagemann and Catherine Hall (New York: Berg, 2000).

movements and nationalist movements are subsets of gendered nationalism as well.²¹ The recent emphasis historians have placed on gendered nationalism remains tied to the post-structuralist goals of exploring the construction of discourses.

The study of Norwegian-American support of women's suffrage contributes to the current development of a gendered nationalist discourse. In particular, Norwegian-American gendered ethnicity depended on a relationship with an imagined Norwegian community. This nationalist identification influenced not only their national identity but also their attitudes towards citizenship. The construction of Norwegian-American ethnicity depended on Norwegian Americans' gendered identification with ideas of progress and equality. Their identity remained linked to a Norwegian nationalist movement and its manifestation in America. The relationship between old and new world ideals and the role of that relationship in the construction and negotiation of American ethnic identities is visible through the exploration of a diverse American women's suffrage movement.

The history of American immigration fits within the greater field of gendered nationalism. Immigration historians, although interested in the development of an ethnic identity, have left its role in the American women's suffrage movement largely unexamined. Oscar Handlin introduced the concept of immigrants as "the uprooted" in his 1951 seminal work.²² Handlin used the metaphor of an uprooted plant to describe immigrants who tore up their old country roots but had not yet planted new ones in American soil. Handlin's immigrants left their cultural identities behind and moved to a place where their identity could either be reaffirmed or altered. Although this placed

²¹ *Feminist Nationalism* ed. Lois A. West (London: Routledge, 1997).

²² Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1951), 6.

immigrants in a state of transition, their common cultural, racial, linguistic and religious backgrounds bound them together. In the United States, these formed communities of immigrants constituted "ethnic" groups.²³

Norwegians came to the United States and settled primarily within ethnic enclaves in the Midwest. The preeminent Norwegian-American scholar, Odd Lovoll, compared the urban and rural ethnic identities of Norwegian Americans. He found both urban and rural Norwegian Americans sought relationships with others who spoke Norwegian and had similar cultural identities, even choosing to settle with people from not only their homeland but also their own valley.²⁴ Other scholars have affirmed this finding; Norwegian Americans often chose to settle among other Norwegian Americans, and if possible, with those who came from the same region of Norway.²⁵ The result was a cohesive grouping of Norwegian Americans that helped to solidify their ethnic identity. The close proximity to others who spoke Norwegian and practiced Norwegian cultural norms, along with the rejuvenation caused by the influx of new Norwegian immigrants, led Norwegian Americans to maintain ethnic identification with Norway through multiple generations. The ethnic group's interactions with American culture constantly revised its remembrance of what it meant to be Norwegian.

²³ This is the standard definition of ethnicity as referred to throughout this study. William Peterson would also call this definition a "subnation" indicating its similarity to the larger concept of "nation." See "Concepts of Ethnicity" in *Dimensions of Ethnicity* ed. William Petersen, Michael Novak and Philip Gleason (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1982), 3.

²⁴ Odd Lovoll, *A Century of Urban Life: The Norwegians in Chicago Before 1930* (Northfield, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1988), 136 - 138 and *Norwegians on the Prairie*, 6 - 10.

²⁵ Gjerde and Qualey, *Norwegians in Minnesota*; John Randolph Jenswold, "The Hidden Settlement: Norwegian Americans Encounter the City, 1880 - 1930," (Ph.D. diss., University of Connecticut, 1990); Lowell Soike, *Norwegian-Americans and the Politics of Dissent, 1880 - 1924* (Northfield, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1991); Gjerde, *The Minds of the West; They Chose Minnesota: a Survey of the State's Ethnic Groups* ed. June Drenning Homquist (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1981).

Norwegian ethnic identity hinged on the relationship between a Norwegian past and an American present. Contact with the dominant Anglo-American culture along with other ethnic Americans resulted in the renegotiation of Norwegian-American identity. In particular, Norwegian-American perceptions of male and female roles changed due to encounters with outside cultures. Norwegian-American historian DeAne Lagerquist found that, although Norwegian Americans maintained a cohesive identity within their ethnic enclaves, they still encountered alternative ways of dealing with gendered roles in the domestic and farming realms.²⁶ These encounters both challenged and reinforced Norwegian-American ethnicity. The construction of Norwegian-American identity, confronted with alternative gender roles, also depended on its ability to adapt to the ethnic and racial hierarchy prevalent in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century.

In order to deal with the challenges they encountered in the United States, immigrants justified their American existence with examples from their past. These immigrant efforts invariably used filiopietistic elements of calling upon positive aspects of their culture in order to make themselves less foreign. American immigration scholar Orm Øverland argued Norwegian Americans, like all immigrants, reacted to Anglo-American dominance by constructing a “homemaking mythology” which impressed that they were the best Americans.²⁷ Homemaking myths used historical figures such as Christopher Columbus or Leif Erikson to create stories that asserted immigrants’ rightful

²⁶ DeAne L. Lagerquist, *In America the Men Milk the Cows: Factors of Gender, Ethnicity and Religion in the Americanization of Norwegian-American Women* (Brooklyn: Carlson Pub., 1991), 102 – 105.

²⁷ Orm Øverland, “Norwegian Americans are Americans,” in *Immigrant Minds, American Identities, Making the United States Home, 1870 – 1930* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

place in the United States.²⁸ Norwegian-American homemaking myths often took factual elements of Norwegian history and linked them to the founding of American democracy.²⁹ For example, according to Øverland, Norwegian Americans frequently used the Viking conquest and settlement of modern-day England and France to argue it was actually Norwegians who signed the Magna Carta, which was the basis for the Declaration of Independence and subsequent American constitution.³⁰ This linked Norwegians and Norwegian Americans intrinsically to the ideas at the heart of American democracy.

Late-nineteenth-century Norwegian literary movements and women's suffrage victories fueled the Norwegian-American construction of a homemaking mythology based on democratic values. Norwegian-American homemaking arguments justified Norwegian Americans' place in America by using Norway's democratic traditions as illustrations. Norwegian ethnicity became increasingly synonymous with qualities of liberty, progress and equality. These qualities, originally grounded in Viking history, started to take root in contemporary views of Norway, the country immigrants had left behind.³¹ Norwegian literary figures engaged in poetic realism, such as Collett and Ibsen, came to symbolize Norwegian progressive qualities. The Norwegian women's suffrage victories in 1907 and 1913 also provided examples of the Norwegian people's commitment to democracy. These elements of Norwegian culture contributed to

²⁸ Øverland, *Immigrant Minds, American Identities*, 8.

²⁹ See: Odd Lovoll, *The Promise of America: A History of the Norwegian-American People* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

³⁰ Øverland, "Norwegian Americans are Americans," 149.

³¹ Øverland, "Norwegian-Americans are Americans," 149.

Norwegian-American identification with progressive and democratic ideals and influenced their perception of the women's suffrage movement.

At the core of this study is an examination of how Norwegian Americans' need for a homemaking mythology led many of them to identify with progress and equality. This constructed identity played a role in urban and rural attitudes towards women's suffrage. Academics have pointed to Scandinavian Americans, and especially Norwegian Americans, as particularly prone to accept and promote radical and progressive political movements. Jon Wefald captured the essence of scholarship on Norwegian-American political involvement when he referred to Norwegian-American voting patterns as "unrelentingly progressive" and "radical."³² Political scientists found that Norwegian-American men continued their pattern of progressive political attitudes in regards to support of women's suffrage.³³ Many American immigration scholars sought to explain why Norwegian Americans were ethnically inclined to support progressive politics, but have not investigated how this influenced Norwegian-American attitudes towards women's suffrage. Instead, researchers focused on Norwegian-American support of socialist agrarian policies in the rural Midwest and their almost unanimous opposition of American involvement in World War I in their works on the Nonpartisan League of

³²Jon Wefald, *A Voice of Protest: Norwegians in American Politics, 1890 – 1917* (Northfield, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1971).

³³ Political scientists found Scandinavian-American men living in Ohio and Michigan in 1912 – 1918 were a large group of ethnic supporters of woman's suffrage, second only to Anglo Americans. See Eileen L. McDonough and H. Douglas Price, "Woman's Suffrage in the Progressive Era: Patterns of Positions and Support in Referenda Voting, 1910 – 1918," *The American Political Science Review* 79, no. 2 (1985): 424.

North Dakota, third-party systems in Wisconsin and the effects of World War I on ethnicity.³⁴

Norwegian-American immigration scholars have thoroughly explored the dichotomy between agricultural and industrial working Norwegian Americans. While they have also begun to examine gender in relation to Norwegian-American ethnicity, much more work needs to be done on how Norwegian-American ethnicity influenced constructed gender roles and gender and ethnicity's correlating impact on political identification.³⁵ Much of the previous scholarship on Norwegian Americans examines Norwegian-American support of progressive political movements. Some even superficially mention Norwegian-American support of women's suffrage.³⁶ The only substantial research that has been done on the topic of Norwegian-American suffrage participation was 1998 Master's degree work by Anja Bakken at the Norwegian University of Technology and Science.³⁷ Bakken's preliminary work focused on middle-class, urban Norwegian Americans in Brooklyn and Minneapolis. Her study ignored the predominantly agricultural Norwegian-American rural population of the working and lower class. She made use of traditional suffrage methodology that focused on qualitative sources. Her failure to utilize quantitative analysis of the available archival sources

³⁴ Daron William Olson, "Norwegians, socialism and the Nonpartisan League in North Dakota: how red was their protest," (M.A. Thesis: University of North Dakota, 1993); Soike, *Norwegian Americans and the Politics of Dissent*; Jørn Brøndal, *Ethnic Leadership and Midwestern Politics. Scandinavian-Americans and the Progressive Movement in Wisconsin, 1890 – 1914* (Northfield, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 2004); Carl Henry Chrislock, *Ethnicity Challenged: the Upper Midwest Norwegian-American Experience in World War I* (Northfield, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1981).

³⁵ Lagerquist, *In America the Men Milk the Cows*; Lori Ann Lahlum, "'There Are No Trees Here:' Norwegian women encounter the Northern Prairie and Plains," (Ph.D. diss., University of Idaho, 2003).

³⁶ Lagerquist, *In America the Men Milk the Cows*, 27.; Lovoll, *Norwegians on the Prairie*.

³⁷ Anja Bakken, "'Our Country Gives us the Vote—America Refuses it:' Norwegian-American Suffrage Workers in Brooklyn and Minneapolis, 1880 – 1920, and Their Gendered Sense of Ethnicity," (Master's Thesis: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 1998).

limited her findings. The employment of alternative qualitative and quantitative methodologies can illuminate neglected areas of suffrage and immigration history.

Methodology

The use of traditional qualitative sources such as memoirs, newspaper articles, women's magazines and suffrage club records provides insight into individual and group lives. These traditional sources are often problematic in documenting women's lives. Women, especially ethnic Americans at the bottom of the economic and social order, often did not leave evidence behind of their attitudes towards politics. This makes it very difficult to include an analysis of rural women in ethnic-American studies. This thesis implements non-traditional qualitative source material, such as literature, along with quantitative analysis to augment the traditional qualitative materials. A quantitative look at suffrage club membership records combined with the United States census data reveals the ethnic make-up, age, family and economic situations of suffrage club members. In urban Minneapolis and rural Grand Forks, North Dakota, the creative and combined use of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies provides an indication of how the construction of Norwegian-American identity influenced Norwegian-American participation and attitudes towards the American women's suffrage movement.

This thesis begins the difficult work of exploring ethnic attitudes and contributions to dominant political movements. Efforts to reconstruct past mindsets involve piecing together various source materials in an attempt to understand more about the "why" of human behavior. The fact remains clear that in 1920 the United States Congress ratified the Nineteenth Constitutional Amendment. The arduous task of

documenting the intricate details involved in its passage is exponentially more nebulous. My research uncovers preliminary explanations of some of the reasons behind an ethnic group's support of the American women's suffrage movement. I do not presume to speak for all Norwegian Americans nor to indicate the presence of an entire population dedicated to women's rights. My thesis focuses on Norwegian Americans who supported women's suffrage, but this group was not one cohesive entity. Suffrage supporters were rarely in the majority in the world and this included Norway and the United States. The presence of an ethnic group that voted in support of women's suffrage more than any other ethnicity does, however, demonstrate nuance within women's suffrage advocates. My findings further complicate the established picture of the transnational women's suffrage movement, and not only give agency to lost voices, but also discover various causalities behind Norwegian-American involvement in a controversial political debate.

This thesis combines suffrage and immigration historiographies in an effort to contribute to a greater understanding of the overarching field of gender history. I organized my findings geographically, with one chapter devoted to each of the three areas in question: Norway, rural Minnesota and North Dakota, and urban Minneapolis, Minnesota. The beginning chapter on Norway explores the origins of Norwegian-American identity. In this chapter, the influence Norwegian poetic realistic literature and the development of the Norwegian women's suffrage movement correlates to the beginning of Norwegian-American ethnic identity and homemaking arguments. Chapter Three shows how rural Norwegian-American exposure to Norwegian suffrage ideals through *Kvinden og Hjemmet* (*The Woman and the Home*) and Norwegian literature by

Collett, Ibsen, Bjørnson and Lie influenced their attitudes towards women's suffrage. Quantitative analysis of the Grand Forks Votes for Women Club further illustrates rural Norwegian-American involvement in the suffrage movement. Chapter Four examines urban Norwegian-American membership and participation in the Scandinavian Woman's Suffrage Club in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The club's roster reveals the ages, family and economic situations of the Norwegian-American suffragists. Urban Norwegian-American suffragist engagement in Norwegian literary organizations connected them to their old world roots and reinforced their ethnic identity.

The overarching field of gender history encompasses both suffrage and immigration historiographies. The influence the Norwegian women's suffrage movement and its literary roots had on Norwegian-American attitudes towards American women's suffrage enhances previous literature and fills a gap in gender historiography. The topic explores the intricacies of Western women's quest for enfranchisement and also allows for greater understanding of the role mass immigration played in developing American political movements. This thesis speaks to the influence of ethnic identity construction on the women equal rights movement. Research on Norwegian-American ethnicity and its effects on rural and urban attitudes towards women's suffrage enriches the field of gender history and its intersecting work on suffrage and immigration.

CHAPTER 2

NORWEGIAN SYMBOLS OF PROGRESS: POETIC REALISM, WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE VICTORIES AND NORWEGIAN-AMERICAN HOMEMAKING MYTHS

The first step in understanding the basis of the transnational suffrage relationship between Norway and the United States is to examine the evolution of the Norwegian literary and women's rights movements. Through a series of legislative victories in 1901, 1907 and 1913, Norwegian women became some of the most enfranchised women in the world. Norway was the first independent country to enact universal female suffrage in 1913.³⁸ The work of fiction writers and political activists, playing on nationalist rhetoric, enabled the success of the Norwegian women's suffrage movement. During this same time period, Norwegian immigrants flocked to the United States in search of new opportunities. As these immigrants became Norwegian Americans, they constructed an ethnicity that justified their place in America. The literary roots of the Norwegian women's rights movement and subsequent suffrage victories influenced the ethnicity of Norwegian Americans and further reified their identification with notions of progress and equality. Many of the ideas behind the Norwegian women's rights movement came from Norwegian literature. Norwegian authors were able to reach a majority of the population because of Norway's almost universal literate culture.

Norway's close relationship with the Lutheran church led to high rates of literacy early on in its history. In fact, between 1870 and 1890 Norway's population was 98

³⁸ The Russian territory of Finland and the British territory of New Zealand had female suffrage prior to 1913.

percent literate.³⁹ This meant most adults in Norway possessed the capability to read at least rudimentary text written in their native-tongue. All classes of Norwegians, including land-less farmers, had the opportunity to read literature either through direct exposure or newspaper reviews. The majority of Norwegians were probably alerted to ideas about women's rights and equality expressed in this literature. Norwegian church and school literacy campaigns sought to universally disseminate knowledge through printed media sources. This effort contributed to the nearly unlimited access adult women and men had to popular culture expressed in print.⁴⁰

Popular Norwegian authors and their groundbreaking critique of societal inequality came to symbolize Norwegian-Americans' progressive roots. This association would come to have direct implications for the construction of Norwegian-American identity and Norwegian-American attitudes in favor of female suffrage in the United States. The popularity of Norwegian literature and its ties to Norwegian-American identity led to an exchange of ideas between Norway and the United States that would positively affect Norway's international suffrage alliance with the United States in the future.

Poetic Realism as a Foundation for the Norwegian Women's Suffrage Movement

The literary figures who questioned obvious gender inequality in society would inspire the beginnings of the Norwegian women's rights movement in the mid-nineteenth

³⁹ See Kevin O'Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson, "Open Economy Forces and Late 19th Century Swedish Catch-Up: A Quantitative Accounting," *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 43, no. 2 (1995), Table 3.

⁴⁰ Henry Milner, *Social Democracy and Rational Choice: The Scandinavian Experience and Beyond* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 96; David Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England 1750 – 1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 3; Egil Johansson, "Literacy Campaigns in Sweden" in *National Literacy Campaigns: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* eds. Robert F. Arnove and Harvey Graff (New York: Plenum Press, 1987), 65.

century. Literary masterpieces by authors such as Camilla Collett and Henrik Ibsen presented the Norwegian people with radically new concepts of women's roles in society. Norwegian literature written by Collett, Ibsen and other figures such as Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson and Jonas Lie critiqued women's social position. These authors followed a literary genre referred to in Norwegian literary history as *poetisk realisme* (poetic realism). Poetic realism was a literary movement in the 1800s that juxtaposed the lived experiences of domesticity with people's ideals in order to reveal the contradictions between romanticism and reality.⁴¹ This movement was widely popular as all of the "big four" Norwegian literary figures (Ibsen, Bjørnson, Alexander Kielland and Lie) were poetic realists. These authors not only had immediate success but continued to have a lasting significance on Norwegian literature.⁴² Often Collett, Ibsen, Bjørnson and Lie used idealism as a foil to highlight the reality of women's unequal position in Norwegian society. Poetic realist authors introduced early feminist concepts to the Norwegian public and related the progression of women's rights to the construction of Norwegian nationalism.

One of the greatest influences on Norwegian and Norwegian-American perceptions of women's rights was the work of Camilla Collett. Collett came from an important family in Norway's political and educational life. Her family contributed greatly to the creation of a Norwegian nationalist movement during the national romantic period of the early nineteenth-century. In politics, her father and brother, Nicolai and Henrik Wergeland, led Norway's quest for independence from Sweden. Nicolai and Henrik Wergeland also contributed to the development of higher education in Norway

⁴¹ Andersen, *Norsk Litteraturhistorie*, 205.

⁴² Andersen, *Norsk Litteraturhistorie*, 204 – 206; Elisabeth Oxfeldt, *Nordic Orientalism: Paris and the Cosmopolitan Imagination, 1800 – 1900* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2005), 199.

and wrote poetry that romanticized Norway's natural landscape.⁴³ Brought up in a family that prized freedom, education and independence, Camilla (Wergeland) Collett, also penetrated Norwegian consciousness with the publication of *Amtmandens Døtre* (*The District Governor's Daughters*) in 1854.

The District Governor's Daughters was a morality tale that exposed middle-class women's unequal position in marriage and society. Collett, one of the first Norwegian feminists, wrote an indirect critique of women's position in her novel through the use of dialogue and plot development. Camilla Collett forever altered Norwegian literature and feminist thought with her literary themes of women's roles in love, marriage and society. Collett was a maternal feminist who advocated women's rights based on sexual difference. With its roots in the biological, this feminist variant of essentialism focused on women's unique feminine qualities and mores. Collett believed that society oppressed female traits and women needed to be given rights based on their difference from men.⁴⁴ Collett wanted to explore these issues in regards to upper and middle-class Norwegian women and wrote *The District Governor's Daughters* to tell the story of middle-class sisters growing up in Eidsvoll, Norway. Although all of the sisters in the novel experience heartbreak, the youngest sister, Sofie, is the heroine of the story. It is through Sofie's relationship with herself and men that Collett highlighted Norwegian women's inequality.

⁴³ For more on Camilla Collett's life see: Ellisiv Steen, *Den Lange Strid: Camilla Collett og Hennes Senere Forfatterskap* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1954); Torill Steinfeld, *Den Unge Camilla Collett: Et Kvinnehjertes Historie* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1996).

⁴⁴ See Andersen, *Norsk Litteraturhistorie*, 218 – 219 for more information on Collett and the feminist theory of difference.

Camilla Collett explored the societal contradiction that stated women should be of heart and feeling yet at the same time were expected to repress romantic emotions.⁴⁵ In the book, Sofie fell in love with her tutor, Georg Kold, but female romantic love was not encouraged or accepted at this time in middle-class Norwegian society. Instead, parents arranged marriages and the matches most often focused on the man's money or reputation. In *The District Governor's Daughters*, when Sofie's mother confronted Kold with the concept of women's self-denial, Kold replied, "It is suicide! It is to destroy the most wonderful thing a human being possesses."⁴⁶ This reflected Collett's personal belief that arranged marriages stifled women's natural instinct to love and denied their right to make decisions for their own lives.⁴⁷

Collett also discussed Norwegian women's societal roles in regards to education and love throughout the novel. Sofie's family stressed the importance of education. However, because Sofie was a girl, she was not encouraged to learn all subjects. For example, when she asked her brother to borrow a botany book he exclaimed, "You need not exert yourself to learn such things... Women were created only to keep house for the men and... all learned ladies should be put in the insane asylum."⁴⁸ Sofie subsequently started to hide books in a secret outdoor cave. Collett used this interaction to show the contradiction that although upper and middle-class women should know how to read and converse, they were discouraged from reading books not relevant to their future domestic and societal life.

⁴⁵ This is another example of Collett's subscription to "difference" feminism. Camilla Collett, *The District Governor's Daughters*, trans. Kirsten Seaver (Norwich, England: 1992), 29.

⁴⁶ Collett, *The District Governor's Daughters*, 183.

⁴⁷ Sherrill Harbison, review of *The District Governor's Daughters* by Camilla Collett, *Scandinavian Studies* 65.3 (Summer 1993): 447-9.

⁴⁸ Collett, *The District Governor's Daughters*, 109.

In Norwegian society, a woman was not supposed to declare her love for a man before he had first proclaimed his intention to marry her. Collett illuminated the inequality inherent in this norm in *The District Governor's Daughters*. Sofie and Georg maintained a hidden relationship without the knowledge of Sofie's parents. Georg never officially declared his love and Sofie was not allowed to express feelings for a man who had not first proclaimed his interest in her.⁴⁹ This reflected contemporary Norwegian society where a man had supreme power over legitimating a relationship. Sofie and Georg eventually parted ways over a tragic misunderstanding where Sofie overheard Georg denying his love for her to his teacher, Müller. Sofie then married another man, and increasingly lived her life for the happiness of others.⁵⁰

The issues Camilla Collett raised in this book led to an important reaction in Norwegian society. Never before had a Norwegian-language novel negatively explored women's roles in marriage and family decisions.⁵¹ Collett shocked the upper class circles in Christiania (modern-day Oslo) to such a degree that she felt the need to respond to their criticisms in the preface of the 1879 publication of *The District Governor's Daughters*. Collett agreed with her critics that the novel was a negative depiction of women's roles. She defended this portrayal and stated that women's roles could not be discussed in any positive manner. She also pointed out that her treatise on women's position in Norwegian society barely penetrated the depressing reality of their lives.⁵²

Camilla Collett profoundly influenced the Norwegian suffrage movement. In 1885, the leader of the Norwegian Women's Rights Association referred to the legacy of

⁴⁹ Collett, *The District Governor's Daughters*, 178 – 183.

⁵⁰ Collett, *The District Governor's Daughters*, 312.

⁵¹ Andersen, *Norsk Litteraturhistorie*, 205.

⁵² Camilla Collett, *Amtmandens Døtre* (Kristiania:Cammermeyer, 1879), 1.

Camilla Collett when she called Collett her “spiritual mother.”⁵³ Early on, women’s rights advocates deemed Collett’s work as essential to the Norwegian women’s rights movement because of its discussion of the most basic principle of women’s rights; a woman’s right to choose her husband.⁵⁴ The notion of women’s freedom of choice in marriage opened up the debate to women’s rights in other realms. If a woman could choose her husband then should she not also have the right to a choice in regards to education, economy and politics?

Collett’s pivotal work unveiled how a woman’s lack of equality in her own household affected her societal status. Early suffrage activists used this notion in their fight for women’s rights. Historians and political activists alike recognized Camilla Collett’s great influence on the beginning of the suffrage movement in Norway because of her discussion of this foundational freedom of choice. In 1937, Anna Agerholt called *The District Governor’s Daughters*, “the deepest and most important contribution to the women’s rights movement in Norway” in her seminal work on the history of the Norwegian suffrage movement.⁵⁵ Ida Blom echoed this sentiment in her more recent treatment of the Norwegian women’s rights movement.⁵⁶ Many of Norway’s early suffragist leaders, such as Aasta Hansteen and Gina Krog, publicly responded to Collett’s coverage of women’s inequalities and its impact on their passion for women’s rights.⁵⁷ Camilla Collett’s influence on the early Norwegian women’s rights debate also inspired

⁵³ Gina Krog, Speech to the Norwegian Women’s Rights Association, November 27, 1885.

⁵⁴ Lorentz Dietrichson, *Camilla Collett og Hendes Inlæg I Kvindesagen* (Kristiania:Cammermeyers Forlag, 1894).

⁵⁵ Anna Caspari Agerholt, *Den Norske Kvinnebevegelseshistorie* (Oslo: Gyldendal Forlag, 1937), 25.

⁵⁶ Ida Blom, “Modernity and the Norwegian Women’s Movement” in *Women’s Emancipation Movements in the 19th Century* ed. Sylvia Paletscheck and Bianka Pietrow-Ennker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 128.

⁵⁷ *Dagbladet* (Oslo) July 13, 1870.

other Norwegian authors to discuss women's unjust inequality in Norwegian society through literature.

Camilla Collett's writing influenced Henrik Ibsen, the most renowned Norwegian playwright of all time and widely regarded to be the father of modern drama.⁵⁸ Ibsen followed Collett's literary vision and contested women's roles in marriage and family. Henrik Ibsen began his playwright career in 1850, but after Collett's *The District Governor's Daughters* became well known, Ibsen's female characters changed. Ibsen started modeling his heroines after Camilla Collett's life, often using her failures in love as inspiration for his plays.⁵⁹ His plays contained many "New Woman" themes including discussions of sensual women, sexually transmitted diseases and women abandoning their families.⁶⁰ Many of Ibsen's works influenced the global discussion of women's rights, but one in particular profoundly changed the feminist literary canon.

Henrik Ibsen's, *Et Dukkehjem (A Doll's House)*, first appeared on the Norwegian literary scene in 1879. *A Doll's House* confronted Norwegian society with a continuation of Camilla Collett's work on women's roles in marriage. In contrast to Collett's maternal feminism, Ibsen's position as a socialist feminist argued that women had the same basic qualities and capabilities as men and therefore should have the same political rights.⁶¹ In *A Doll's House* he examined women's legal rights, their access to paid work and their development as human beings and not just as wives or mothers. The heroine of the play,

⁵⁸ Andersen, *Norsk Litteraturhistorie*. For a biographical discussion of Henrik Ibsen see: Harold Bloom, *Henrik Ibsen* (Broomall, PA: Chelsea House Publishers, 2000).

⁵⁹ This was especially true of his play, *Lady from the Sea*. See letter from Henrik Ibsen to Camilla Collett, May 1889, in Henrik Ibsen, *Breve fra Henrik Ibsen* (Copenhagen, Gyldendal, 1904).

⁶⁰ The New Woman challenged traditional Victorian ideals of womanhood, ranging from racial hierarchies to sexual habits. Gail Cunningham, *The New Woman and the Victorian Novel* (London: MacMillan Press, 1978), 1.

⁶¹ Andersen, *Norsk Litteraturhistorie*, 219; Gail Finney, "Ibsen and Feminism," in *Cambridge Companion to Ibsen* ed. James Walter McFarlane (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 89.

Nora, was Ibsen's interpretation of a woman oppressed by family roles and Norwegian laws. The play followed Nora's dilemma as a Norwegian housewife and shrewd business woman.

Ibsen explored Norwegian law's unequal treatment of women and men in *A Doll's House*. At this time in Norwegian society women could not legally borrow money without their father or husband's permission. Nora, unbeknownst to her husband, had forged her deceased father's name on a loan note to business man Mr. Krogstad years earlier. Krogstad, now an employee of Nora's husband, Torvald, got fired at the beginning of the play. Krogstad was aware of Nora's illegal forgery and he blackmailed her so that she would convince Torvald to reinstate and promote him at work. If she did not comply, he threatened to reveal her secret. Throughout the play Nora anxiously tried to keep her secret from Torvald, but in the end he learned of her illegal act.

Henrik Ibsen used dialogue to reveal women's subservient position in their household roles as wives and mothers. In what was later regarded as a highly controversial speech, Nora explained to Torvald how their relationship was not a marriage between two equals. She stated, "Our house hasn't been any more than a dollhouse. Here I have been your doll wife just as I was my father's doll child at home."⁶² Later in the conversation Nora rejected all traditional notions of women's duty to their roles as wives and mothers and declared herself to be, "first and foremost a *person*."⁶³ Nora realized that she no longer wanted to be part of a marriage where only her husband's desires mattered. Nora then proceeded to abandon her husband and her children. The sound of a slamming door concluded the play. This shocking conclusion

⁶² Henrik Ibsen, *Et Dukkehjem* (Chicago: Skandinavens Boghandels Forlag, 1890), 143.

⁶³ Ibsen, *Et Dukkehjem*, 146.

caused uproar in European upper-class circles.⁶⁴ The critical and societal outrage focused mainly on the idea of a woman blatantly disregarding her role in the family. Ibsen, forced to respond to these critiques and faced with conservative countries potentially refusing to stage his play, wrote an alternative ending for German audiences. In this ending, Nora, confronted with her children, decided that she could not free herself at the expense of her children and decided to stay with Torvald.⁶⁵

Henrik Ibsen influenced both protagonists and antagonists of the Norwegian suffrage movement with the publication of *A Doll's House*. The details of this play provided both suffragists and their opponents with fodder they could use in the debate on women's suffrage. Anti-suffragists used *A Doll's House* to show how irresponsible women could be. They described Nora's decision to leave her family as one that placed all women in danger. Opponents of women's rights could cite Ibsen's work to illustrate how emancipated women would abandon their husbands and children. With Nora as an example, they argued women who wanted equal rights were ungodly, rejecting the holy institutions of marriage and family.⁶⁶ While anti-suffragists used Ibsen's writings to demonstrate the threat women's rights posed to the family, his work also aided those in favor of women's equality by drawing attention to women's subjection to men in their domestic roles.

Norwegian suffrage leaders reacted to Ibsen's discussion of Nora in an extremely positive way, seizing the opportunity to use Ibsen's work as feminist propaganda.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Egil Tornqvist, *Ibsen: A Doll's House* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 153.

⁶⁵ Ibsen was outraged at having to change the ending to please a more conservative palate. For the alternative ending see: Henrik Ibsen, "A Doll's House," in *The Oxford Ibsen*, trans. James Walter McFarlane, Vol. 4 (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 287 – 288.

⁶⁶ M. J. Færden, "Den Principielle Modsætning i Opfatningen av Kvinders natur og Opgave, some Ligger til Grund for det Moderne Kvindespørgsmål" in *Luthersk Ugeskrift* (1884): 389 – 402.

⁶⁷ Cunningham, *The New Woman*, 46.

However, Ibsen himself did not take credit for his pivotal role in the Norwegian suffrage campaign. He saw his plays as opportunities to examine the complexity and value of all humanity, not just women. Ibsen said in his famous 1898 speech to the Norwegian Women's Rights Association, "I'm not even really sure what women's rights even are."⁶⁸ He was more concerned with how he portrayed humanity as a whole; the role of women just happened to be an obvious contradiction to his perception of a balanced society. This concept was one of the most important aspects of the women's rights movement. Women, as fellow human beings, had innate rights which also gave them societal responsibilities. Ibsen's public discussion of women's rights and duties as both people and thus citizens helped create a new discourse about equal rights for women that benefitted the Norwegian suffrage movement. They felt that his work had finally uttered the words that other Norwegian activists had been too timid to articulate; women were people, nothing more and nothing less. The Norwegian suffragists felt indebted to Ibsen's work as he had illuminated the plight of women as second-class citizens and confronted society with radical opposition to these traditional sub-roles.⁶⁹

The themes in *A Doll's House* had a lasting impact on the Norwegian suffrage movement as well as the global discussion of women's rights.⁷⁰ Ibsen believed Collett had presented ideas about women's rights in her literature that would profoundly impact Norwegian society. He also personally hoped that her literature as well as his own would inspire the creation of political balance between women and men in Norway.⁷¹ The play

⁶⁸ Ibsen to the Norwegian Women's Rights Association in Christiania, May 26 1898, in *Ibsen: Letters and Speeches*, ed. Evert Sprinchorn (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 337.

⁶⁹ Gina Krog, "Det Vidunderlige Sker ikke Saadant til Hverdags," *Aftenbladet* (Oslo) January 12, 1880.

⁷⁰ Ibsen's work had continuing significance in the West as well as the East beyond the late 1800s. See: Toshihiko Sato, "Henrik Ibsen in Japan" (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1966).

⁷¹ Letter from Henrik Ibsen to Camilla Collett, August 1881 in Ibsen, *Breve fra Henrik Ibsen*.

impacted contemporary concepts of women's domestic roles to such an extent that it has been compared to Betty Friedan's *A Feminine Mystique* which also served as a societal awakening to the potentially unfulfilling roles of wives and mothers.⁷² Camilla Collett and Henrik Ibsen represent only a sample of Norwegian literature in the late 1800s that exposed women's subjugation. Many other Norwegian authors critiqued women's societal roles in their literary works. Although these writers did not always agree on method and form, they created a close network of literary figures interested in revealing social ills, including inequality, through published materials. Collett and Ibsen had close contact with some of these other authors, especially the famous Jonas Lie and Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson.

Bjørnson, Lie and Ibsen contributed to the Norwegian women's movement both through the literature they wrote and their direct contact with Norwegian politics. Lie and Bjørnson both wrote about the roles of men and women in their domestic lives in Norway.⁷³ Bjørnson and Lie were also at times radically engaged in Norwegian political life.⁷⁴ They kept in close contact with Henrik Ibsen, who lived in self-exile in Italy, on issues concerning female equality. For example, in 1884, all three men encouraged one another to sign a petition to the *Storting* (Norwegian Parliament) calling for the passage of a Married Woman's Property Bill.⁷⁵ These authors not only wrote about women's rights in their books and plays but also took political action in order to change Norwegian women's position in society.

⁷² Vincent J. Balice, *Ibsen's Feminine Mystique* (New York: Vantage Press, 1975).

⁷³ Some of these authors' most famous works include: Jonas Lie, *Kommandørens Døttre* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1886); *Familien på Gilje: et Interiør fra Førtiaarene* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1883); Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, *En Glad Gut* (Menasha, WI: George Banta Pub., 1915); *Leonarda* (Kristiania: Gyldendal, 1919).

⁷⁴ Bjørnson spent much of the 1870s and 1880s in Germany because the Norwegian government threatened him with treason for his alignment with the radical farmer's movement.

⁷⁵ Letter from Henrik Ibsen to Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, March 28, 1884 in *Breve fra Henrik Ibsen*.

Collett, Ibsen, Lie and Bjørnson capitalized on the rapid changes affecting Norwegian society in the late 1800s. Seeds of modernity had come to Norway from the Continent, and industrialization would play a major role in altering Norway's predominantly agricultural demographic. As Michael Kimmel found in studying masculinity in England and America, crisis situations often led to the alteration of gendered identities.⁷⁶ Ida Blom took this framework and applied it to the process of Norwegian industrialization. She argued that the migration of young men and women to larger population centers along with the growing strength of the *bondebevegelse* (farmer's/worker's movement) created a historical "crisis" that enabled men and women's societal roles to change. While industrialization and modernity helped usher in economic and political independence for Norwegian women, married women's responsibilities as wives and mothers increased with the modern emphasis on child cleanliness and pedagogy.⁷⁷ These political and social transitions created a climate that encouraged debate. Norwegian authors' used this milieu to explore feminist ideas and convey them to portions of Norwegian society. This literary and historical context would ultimately benefit the Norwegian women's suffrage movement.

Victories Across the Sea: The Norwegian Women's Suffrage Movement

One of the first Norwegian women who took literary ideas and implemented them politically was Aasta Hansteen. In 1871 Aasta Hansteen strongly condemned the Lutheran Church and its role in women's subjection. The Church's position in regards to

⁷⁶ Michael Kimmel, "The Contemporary "Crisis" of Masculinity in Historical Perspective," in *The Making of Masculinities: The New Men's History* ed. Harry Brod (London: Allen and Unwin, 1987), 121 – 153.

⁷⁷ Blom, "Modernity and the Norwegian Women's Movement," 126 – 127; Ida Blom, "Changing Gender Identities in an Industrializing Society: the Case of Norway c. 1870 – c. 1914" in *Gender & History* 2, no. 2 (Summer 1990): 131 – 147.

sedlighetdebatten (the morality debate) portrayed women as moral and pure, especially in regards to their sexuality.⁷⁸ Hansteen publicly spoke out about women's rights in regard to this issue and was met with ridicule. By 1880 she became so frustrated with the situation in Norway that she left for the United States in order to observe American suffrage leaders.⁷⁹ For over nine years, she lived in Boston and Chicago. While in the United States she delivered speeches around the Midwest -- including Minneapolis -- to Norwegian-American women, educating them on how the women's rights movement had developed back in Norway.⁸⁰

Hansteen returned to Norway in 1889 with a desire to apply the lessons she had learned in America to further the Norwegian women's rights movement.⁸¹ Her desire to move home indicated that she thought her contribution was of more use in Norway than it was in the United States. Much of this probably had to do with the language barrier she experienced in the United States.⁸² Also, while she was gone, Norwegians became increasingly involved in starting a suffrage movement of their own. Now that Norway had a viable women's rights movement, Hansteen's wish to assist her homeland in achieving suffrage was a factor in her decision to return. When Hansteen moved back to

⁷⁸ Bjørnson was also active in this movement. For a discussion of the Norwegian morality debate see: Kari Melby, "Velferdspolitik" in *Medkjønnspektiv på norsk historie*, ed. Ida Blom and Sølvi Sogner (Oslo: Cappelen, 2006), 293.

⁷⁹ Halvdan Koht, *Life of Henrik Ibsen* (New York: B. Blom, 1971), 311.

⁸⁰ *Minneapolis Budstikken* March 28, 1882.

⁸¹ Janet Garton, *Norwegian Women's Writing, 1850 – 1990* (London: Althone, 1993), 9.

⁸² Hansteen's poor English limited her interactions to those people who spoke Norwegian. For a thorough discussion of Hansteen's life in the United States see: Janet E. Rasmussen, "*The Best Place on Earth for Women:*" *The American Experience of Aasta Hansteen* (Northfield, MN: Norwegian American Historical Association, 1986).

Norway she was greeted with a society that was much more tolerant to women publicly discussing their plight than it had been when she left for America.⁸³

While Hansteen was in the United States, the Norwegian suffrage movement gained momentum. The women's movement in Norway followed the approach of other Western challenges to traditional male political power. Gina Krog and her male colleague, Hagbart Berner, initiated a women's rights debate in the 1880s with the formation of the *Norsk kvinnesagsforening* (Norwegian Women's Rights Association or NWRA). This organization aimed to further women's rights in the realms of marriage, education and work. Noticeably absent was a program directed at securing the vote for women. Berner was more concerned with advocating women's rights based on maternal feminism and represented a faction of Norwegian activists who stressed that women's primary place was in the home.⁸⁴ Berner wanted to advance women's position in all areas that affected their private lives, especially as wives and mothers. Krog, on the other hand, was a liberal feminist who argued that women should be granted the same rights as men because of their equality.⁸⁵ This ideological and strategic split reflected the division between feminist theories which either emphasized women's difference or their equality as discussed earlier in the works of maternal feminist, Camilla Collett and socialist feminist, Henrik Ibsen.

The ideological divergence that separated Krog from Berner ultimately led to the creation of the *Norsk kvinnestemmerettsforening* (Norwegian Women's Suffrage Association) in 1885. The Norwegian Women's Suffrage Association (Norwegian WSA)

⁸³ Garton, *Norwegian Women's Writing, 1850 – 1990*, 9; Rasmussen, "The Best Place on Earth for Women."

⁸⁴ Blom, "Changing Identities in an Industrializing Society," 138.

⁸⁵ Blom, "Modernity and the Norwegian Women's Movement," 130.

would become a much more radical organization than the NWRA under the leadership of Gina Krog. Krog maintained good relations with the NWRA and continued to utilize its acceptance of male members (the Norwegian WSA did not allow men to join) in the fight to secure the vote for women.⁸⁶ The division of the NWRA and the Norwegian WSA was just another example of ideological splits in the global women's rights movements as also evident thirty years later in the United States when the National Woman's Suffrage Association and the National Woman's Party separated for many of the same reasons.

Most of the NWRA and the Norwegian WSA's efforts aimed at using politics to advance women's rights. The NWRA focused on targeting the newly formed Liberal Party for its cause. Berner was careful to maintain the NWRA's position on progressing slowly towards women's economic emancipation, based on women's maternal qualities. He believed that an ameliorated position would best achieve greater female equality as it would not alienate the Liberal Party's platforms and their electoral base. The Norwegian WSA deviated from this position. This organization promoted equality with men based on suffrage and married women's property rights, which it considered essential as long as suffrage was based on property ownership. The Norwegian WSA's position on equality caused them to seek refuge within the more radical Labor Party.⁸⁷

Efforts to unite working class women with middle-class suffragists largely failed. Even though both groups had common goals of working towards economic and political gender equality, leaders of the Norwegian women's rights movements thought including working class, Marxist objectives in their platforms would agitate their male, bourgeoisie

⁸⁶ Blom, "Modernity and the Norwegian Women's Movement," 131.

⁸⁷ Agerholt, *Den Norske Kvinnebevegelseshistorie*, 50 – 80.

political supporters.⁸⁸ The middle-class members of the WSA saw men of their own class as their biggest obstacles in obtaining the vote, not capitalism. This further separated them from Marxist working class movements as the WSA did not intend to systematically overthrow the structures of society.⁸⁹ The WSA wanted to use the existing political structures to implement the vote for women on the same basis as men, which at this time was restricted to property-holding men from the middle and upper classes. This strategy would have excluded working class women from the vote and therefore did not attract many working women supporters. Cooperation between the Norwegian women's suffrage movement and working class women did not come until universal suffrage became a viable political platform at the turn of the twentieth century.⁹⁰

The success of the Norwegian women's suffrage movement and campaign relied on support from liberal upper-middle-class men and women. The thought was that once all men could vote, regardless of economic stance, then the WSA would push for universal female suffrage. In 1896, municipal suffrage was opened to all men, except male servants. This caused a split within the WSA on whether suffrage tactics should be changed to include working class women or whether female suffrage should be achieved slowly, starting first with municipal elections.⁹¹ Anna Rogstad led this new move in the WSA in direct opposition to Gina Krog. Krog, still adamant that immediate equality with male suffrage should apply to female suffrage, broke with the WSA and formed the *Landskvinnestemmerettsforening* (the National Association for Women's Suffrage or NAWS). When universal male suffrage was amended to the constitution in 1898, Krog

⁸⁸ Blom, "Modernity and the Norwegian Women's Movement," 138.

⁸⁹ Blom, "Modernity and the Norwegian Women's Movement," 137 – 138.

⁹⁰ Blom, "Modernity and the Norwegian Women's Movement," 139.

⁹¹ Agerholt, *Den Norske Kvinnebevegelseshistorie*, 85.

argued that the next direction in extending enfranchisement would be females from the Norwegian middle and upper classes.⁹²

The democratic extension of suffrage to all males reflects Norway's position as one of the few places in Europe where nationalism actually benefited enfranchisement efforts.⁹³ Finland and Norway were the Nordic countries that had the strongest nationalist movements in the nineteenth century and significantly, were the only European states where all men and women could vote prior to World War I.⁹⁴ This simple explanation does not fully reveal the complexity of why nationalism led to greater female enfranchisement in Norway but not other European nations such as Germany and France. Ida Blom offered a multifaceted attempt at clarifying the reasons for a mutual nationalist and feminist movement in Norway but not Sweden. She argued that Norway's agrarian past and one-chamber parliamentary system contrasted with Sweden's established governmental hierarchy and aristocracy. This difference allowed for a more liberal definition of Norwegian national citizenship that included women.⁹⁵ Nationalism was, therefore, a political movement in Norway that highlighted the sovereignty of its people which contradicted the exclusion of parliamentary franchise from female citizens. Feminists could use the democratic basis for nationhood in their campaigning for women's rights.

⁹² News of Norwegian males' universal suffrage reached the United States quickly; the *New York Times* included a short entry on the subject on April 22, 1898.; Blom, "Modernity and the Norwegian Women's Movement," 138.

⁹³ Nationalism was often feminism's antithesis in Europe, especially in Germany. See Gisella Kaplan, "Feminism and Nationalism: the European Case," in *Feminist Nationalism*.

⁹⁴ Richard J. Evans, *The Feminists: Women Emancipation Movements in Europe, American and Australasia, 1840 – 1920* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), 81 – 83.

⁹⁵ Ida Blom, "Nationalism and Feminism in Europe" in *The European Way: European Societies During the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* ed. Hartmut Kaelbe (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), 205 – 225.

Norway's struggle to become an independent state after hundreds of years of Danish and Swedish rule led to the romanticizing of its constructed national identity. Norwegians wanted to be seen as progressive people, separate and distinct from their European neighbors.⁹⁶ Women had played a vital role in Norway's self-determined statehood in 1905 and were equated with the "motherland," the "mother tongue" and other nationalistic gendered constructions.⁹⁷ The force of democratic nationalism drew attention to women's contributions while further reifying their maternal qualities and helped pass the 1901 and 1907 women's suffrage bills.

The fight for independence had shown women as politically responsible Norwegian citizens.⁹⁸ This argument, along with suffrage organizations' tireless campaigning of the Norwegian Parliament, led to middle-class women obtaining the right to vote in municipal elections in 1901. Gina Krog's vision of women having the same access to the ballot as men came in 1907 when limited national suffrage was enacted. Norway had won its independence from Sweden two years earlier, and the timing of the bill demonstrates nationalism's role in securing an important women's suffrage victory. Women's suffrage in 1907 also came the year after the Labor Party finally won seats in Parliament. The assistance of this loyal party also helped the passage of the suffrage bill.⁹⁹

In the beginning of the twentieth century women's suffrage had progressed to degrees that people in the previous century had not thought plausible. Norway's fight for

⁹⁶ Marianne Gullestad, "Imagined Kinship: The Role of Descent in the Rearticulation of Norwegian Ethno-nationalism," in *Neo-nationalism in Europe and Beyond: Perspectives from Social Anthropology* ed. Andre Gingrich and Marcus Banks (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 78.

⁹⁷ Blom, "Gender and Nation in International Comparison," 15.

⁹⁸ Karen M. Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700 – 1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 179.

⁹⁹ Blom, "Modernity and the Norwegian Women's Movement," 138 – 140.

independence from Sweden demonstrated women's political capabilities and assisted in this transformation. Even areas in the traditional Lutheran Church of Norway began to support female suffrage.¹⁰⁰ The NAWS' close ties to the newly formed Norwegian Women's Sanitary Association influenced this opinion greatly. The Norwegian Women's Sanitary Association's goal was to educate nurses in preparation for war, lest the political union between Sweden and Norway end in violence. Frederikke Qvam led both organizations and helped focus the Sanitary Association on fighting for women's suffrage as well. These women demonstrated that they were politically apt through their assistance in Norway's fight for sovereignty and helped tie nationalist efforts to feminism.¹⁰¹ The discussion regarding women's rights and equality had changed so much that women's rights activists no longer saw Ibsen's groundbreaking *A Doll's House* as an impossible dream but a real possibility.¹⁰²

Norwegian literature, party support and organizational pressure all contributed to Norway becoming the first independent nation with universal female suffrage in 1913.¹⁰³ Norwegian suffragists achieved universal female suffrage in 1913 along with the right for women to stand for political office. No longer did women's status as property-holders matter in regards to their enfranchisement. This triumph stemmed out of years of debate on whether women should be granted rights due to their special feminine qualities or because of innate human equality. During this time period, Norwegian art, including

¹⁰⁰ See articles in *For Kirke og Kultur*, volumes 14 and 15.

¹⁰¹ Ida Blom, "Nation – Class – Gender: Scandinavia at the Turn of the Century," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 21 (Spring 1996): 1- 16.

¹⁰² Swanhilde Bulan, "A Doll's House Revisited," in *Votes for Women*, February 17, 1911, 8.

¹⁰³ As stated earlier, other places, such as Finland and New Zealand had universal female suffrage prior to 1913. However, their subservience to British and Russian governments limited the political implications of women's suffrage.

paintings and literature, also reflected this ideological dispute.¹⁰⁴ The values of socialist feminism prevailed and in the years between 1907 and 1913, Parliament discussed women's working hours and unmarried women's rights. These steps presented Norwegian suffragists with the opportunity to argue for working women's equality with men and gain working class support. The Labor Party and the Radical Liberals' support of suffrage in Parliament contributed to lower class Norwegian women gaining the right to vote before any other independent European country.¹⁰⁵

Norwegian-American Identity Construction

The success of the Norwegian women's suffrage movement influenced many other women's movements, particularly in the United States. Norwegian women recognized the potential of Norwegian-American contributions to the American suffrage movement and sought ways to encourage Norwegian-American involvement in a transatlantic quest for female enfranchisement. Aasta Hansteen and Gina Krog both traveled to the United States and spoke to crowds of Norwegian Americans along the eastern seaboard and in the heart of the Midwest. They discussed the methods Norwegian women activists had used in Norway and how these campaigns had advanced Norway's political policies. Aasta Hansteen participated in the beginning of the American suffrage movement through her involvement in middle-class suffrage circles. Hansteen also impacted Norwegian-American thoughts on women's rights by encouraging their association with a progressive Norwegian identity.¹⁰⁶ Krog utilized the strengths of the later Norwegian suffrage movement in targeting Norwegian-American suffrage

¹⁰⁴ Agerholt, *Den Norske Kvinnebevegelseshistorie*, 20 – 27.

¹⁰⁵ Blom, "Modernity and the Norwegian Women's Movement," 140.

¹⁰⁶ Rasmussen, "The Best Place on Earth for Women," 245.

involvement. Both of these Norwegian women would remain closely linked to Norwegian-American suffrage participation.

Gina Krog was one of the strongest advocates of an international cooperation between Norwegian suffragists in the old country and their sisters in America. She spoke many times in the United States, especially in urban areas of high Norwegian immigrant concentration such as Brooklyn, Chicago and Minneapolis. It was in these places that she hoped to “not only give them [Norwegian-American women] an account of what we [Norwegian suffragists] are doing over there in their old home, but urge them to exert themselves and assist the women of the states to get similar privileges.”¹⁰⁷ Krog also believed that Norwegian-American women had a unique place in the American women’s suffrage movement. Norwegian Americans had come from a country where women’s fight for equality had succeeded in the implementation of voting rights for women. She assumed that their ethnic background made them predisposed to the support of women’s suffrage. Krog argued Norwegian Americans could utilize their ethnicity in aiding Americans in a suffrage campaign that would affect not only Anglo Americans but ethnic Americans as well.¹⁰⁸

Norwegian Americans and Anglo Americans alike responded to the advances in the Norwegian suffrage movement with a mixture of awe and curiosity. Albert N. Gilbertson of the University of Minnesota wrote a two-page article for the *Minneapolis Journal* exploring the reasons why Norway was a “gynecocracy – a land where woman rules, not merely in the proverbial cradle rocking manner, but politically by a full and

¹⁰⁷ Gina Krog, “Woman’s Rights Abroad,” Newspaper Clipping, 1909, Carl G.O. Hansen Clippings, Envelope 188b, Norwegian American Historical Association.

¹⁰⁸ Janet Rasmussen, “Sisters Across the Sea: Early Norwegian Feminists and their Norwegian Connections,” in *Women Studies International Forum* 5, no. 6 (1982): 647 – 654.

equal suffrage.”¹⁰⁹ In this article Gilbertson pointed to many reasons why Norwegian men trust women with so much political power. He credited Norwegian writers such as Ibsen and Lie with awakening Norwegian society to women’s superiority. He also dedicated some of the article to the curious link between Norwegian women’s societal power and skiing.

Skiing was an area of nineteenth-century Norway that shows the alteration of traditional gender norms.¹¹⁰ Although skiing may not have changed Norwegian women from “sedentary, fireside tabby cats” into women who rejected feminine roles and took “the lead in every educational and social reform,” it did serve as an example of how Norwegian women entered traditional male activities.¹¹¹ Norwegians usually viewed skiing as a masculine sport that increasingly became associated with a Norwegian national identity in the late 1800s.¹¹² Women who learned to ski and actively participate in a male sport showcased their physical capabilities and their role in developing a national identity equal to men.

Gilbertson published his article in an English-language Minneapolis journal. This journal would have been available to the large Norwegian population living in Minneapolis at the time.¹¹³ The article clearly portrayed the Norwegian suffrage movement through rose-colored glasses. He exaggerated women’s political power in

¹⁰⁹ Albert N. Gilbertson, “Norway Only Land in Which Women Actually are in Position to Dictate, by Ballot, to Government,” *The Minneapolis Journal*, June 2, 1912.

¹¹⁰ This phenomena was also present in the Rocky Mountain region of the United States. See: Annie Gilbert Coleman, *Ski Style: Sport and Culture in the Rockies* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2004).

¹¹¹ Gilbertson, “Norway the Only Land.” Gilbertson also references Harvard psychologist Williams James’ lecture on skiing and Norwegian women entitled, “The Gospel of Relaxation.”

¹¹² Blom, “Modernity and the Norwegian Women’s Movement,” 147.

¹¹³ Norwegians made up 19% of Minneapolis’ foreign-born population in 1910. See Anita Olson Gustafson, “Teaching Swedish in the Public Schools: Cultural Persistence in Minneapolis,” in *Swedes in the Twin Cities: Immigrant Life and Minnesota’s Urban Frontier* ed. Philip J. Anderson and Dag Blanck (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2001), 225.

Norway several times throughout the piece, even going so far as to say that Norway was the only place where the “fair sex has supreme power.”¹¹⁴ However, his embellishments served a role in highlighting the suffrage cause. The article, published in an American newspaper, reminded all ethnicities living in the Minneapolis area -- but perhaps most importantly, Norwegian Americans -- that America was behind other countries in the progression of women’s rights. Gilbertson romanticized Norway and women living there, further strengthening Norwegian Americans’ ethnic sense of pride when it came to women’s rights.

Many Norwegian-American women were interested in the advancement of the Norwegian suffrage cause. Connections across the ocean led to ethnic bonds that united the two separate women’s rights movements with one another. In 1925, Frederikke Qvam, leader of the National Woman’s Suffrage Association, headed a project to gather and condense the history of the Norwegian women’s movement from 1814 to 1924 in celebration of the centennial of Norwegian immigration to the United States. The project aimed at outlining the origins and successes of Norwegian women’s fight for equality. It was Qvam’s desire that Norwegian-American women understood the climate they came from and that the cultural bonds uniting Norway and the United States would not break down, even though both countries had achieved preliminary political equality with men.¹¹⁵

The exchange of literature further strengthened the feminist bonds between the countries of Norway and the United States. Norwegian literature contributed to the

¹¹⁴ Gilbertson, “Norway the Only Land.”

¹¹⁵ *Norske Kvinder* ed. Frederikke Mørck (Kristiania: Olaf Brydes Boktrykkeri, 1925).

construction of a Norwegian and Norwegian-American ethnic identity.¹¹⁶ People around the world knew of and read literary works by authors such as Ibsen and formed opinions on the Norwegian people based on his portrayal. Collett, Ibsen and other popular Norwegian authors became symbols of Norway. These authors were foundationally associated with the women's rights movement in Norway. Their critique of women's inferior social positions and their vocal support of female enfranchisement led many Norwegians and Norwegian Americans to identify these writers as examples of Norway's progressive attitudes towards equal rights. Norwegian Americans, removed from their native country, remained nostalgic about their ancestral home. To them, Norway was an idyllic land; one that upheld values of freedom, independence and progress.¹¹⁷ Norwegian authors such as Collett and Ibsen further reinforced these nationalistic cultural associations.

Norwegian-Americans' ethnic identity stemmed from a reciprocal relationship between thoughts of their Norwegian past and their American present and future. One definition of "identity" is a perception of one's self and personal qualities. Identities are not constant but are contingent on shifting contexts, including culture, history and environment.¹¹⁸ American-born children renegotiated their parents' ethnicity and reconciled their own Norwegian ancestry with their American citizenship. Their identification with being Norwegian was manifest in different ways. Many vocally proclaimed themselves to be Norwegian Americans; others did so through their style of

¹¹⁶ Norwegian immigrant women also wrote poetic realistic works in the United States. Most famous is one of Bjørnson's close friends, Drude Krog Janson. She wrote *En Saloonkeepers Datter, A Saloonkeeper's Daughter* in 1892 in the style of her Norwegian contemporaries' poetic realism.

¹¹⁷ This embodied Norwegian-American homemaking myths. See Øverland, "Norwegian-Americans are Americans."

¹¹⁸ Blom, "Changing Gender Identities in an Industrializing Society," 131.

dress and dominant use of the Norwegian language. Some formed cultural groups aimed at maintaining and reproducing “Norwegianness.”¹¹⁹ Immigrants kept contact with their families and cultures back in the old country through writing letters, subscribing to Norwegian language newspapers and magazines and through their local Norwegian-American community.¹²⁰ Ideas of cultural identity, reinforced by other Norwegian Americans living in the vicinity, although altered over time, centered on notions of positive aspects of their ethnicity.¹²¹

At the turn of the twentieth century, when women’s suffrage was at the forefront of American political debates, debates in Norwegian-language printed media increasingly associated Norwegian ethnicity with progressive ideals concerning women.¹²² Norwegian Americans could be proud that when it came to women’s rights, their ancestral land was more advanced than their new, supposedly democratically superior home. Norway was now an independent country, a place of democratic freedoms and a source of cultural identity for Norwegian Americans. Many Norwegian Americans saw the advancements of women’s rights in Norway as another justification for their ethnic pride. These identifications allowed them to perceive themselves as equal to or better than Anglo Americans. Norwegian Americans used their cultural past to establish a homemaking mythology that explained their rightful place in America.¹²³ Norwegian Americans could use Norwegian literature and news of the advances in the women’s suffrage movement as examples of how Norwegians had the same ideals as Americans concerning freedom and

¹¹⁹ Many of these groups, including the Sons of Norway, are still active today in advocating Norwegian-American culture.

¹²⁰ Lovoll, *Norwegians on the Prairie and A Century of Urban Life*.

¹²¹ Øverland, “Norwegian-Americans are Americans,” 149.

¹²² See Chapter 3.

¹²³ These arguments often revolved around discussions of Viking dominance of England and their shared genetic heritage. Øverland, “Norwegian Americans Are Americans,” 148.

equality. In fact, Norwegian Americans often renegotiated their ethnicity based on these grounds to elevate their position in American society.¹²⁴

Norwegian-American ethnic identification evolved with Norwegian women's suffrage advances and the popularity of Norwegian poetic realism. These Norwegian-based ideals led Norwegian Americans to be the largest ethnic supporter of women's suffrage.¹²⁵ Although suffrage supporters were never the majority in any country and women's right to vote remained controversial even after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, Norwegian Americans were a part of the only ethnic group to consistently vote in favor of women's suffrage.¹²⁶ Scholars have often correlated this support with the pro-Prohibition Movement.¹²⁷ The process of ethnicity construction offers another explanation of why Norwegian Americans advocated women's right to vote. Their support helped establish their identity as committed to national values of democracy and equality.

Some Norwegian-American women gave speeches arguing that because of their ethnic background, they had a duty to uphold and fight for the progression of women's rights in the United States. They also pointed to Collett, Ibsen, Bjørnson and Lie as having contributed to their ethnic sense of women's rights. Many Norwegian-American women argued that due to their ancestral heritage, it was inevitable that they would fight

¹²⁴ This was often in response to the racial and ethnic hierarchies prevalent in the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. See Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*; Orm Øverland, "Becoming White in 1881: An Immigrant Acquires an American Identity" in *Journal of American Ethnic History* 23, no. 4 (Summer 2004): 131-141.

¹²⁵ McDonaugh and Price, "Woman's Suffrage in the Progressive Era," 424.

¹²⁶ Norwegian Americans were often lumped under the general category of "Scandinavian." In 1913 and 1914 the percentage of male voters in Michigan and Ohio who voted "yes" for women's suffrage never exceeded 47 percent. See McDonaugh and Price, "Woman's Suffrage in the Progressive Era," 423 - 425.

¹²⁷ Brøndal, *Ethnic Leadership and Midwestern Politics*, 68.

for women's suffrage in the United States.¹²⁸ Norwegian-American women, emboldened and encouraged by the success of the Norwegian women's suffrage movement, eagerly sought an international alliance with Norwegian suffragists.

The books, suffrage propaganda and written materials exchanged between Norway and the United States led Norwegian Americans, more than any other ethnic group, to actively identify themselves as ethnic supporters of women's suffrage. The feminist ideas Norwegian authors explored in their seminal works permeated Norwegian-American existence through international book exchange, book clubs, ethnic women's magazines and American publishing houses.¹²⁹ Collett, Ibsen, Lie and others contributed to exposing Norwegian-American men and women to ideas concerning women's subjugation. Their works reached both urban and rural Norwegian-American women and influenced the way they thought about themselves as both women and ethnic Americans. Many practical materials sent from Norway, such as suffrage speeches and pamphlets, also aided Norwegian Americans in rallying ethnic support of suffrage. The Norwegian suffrage movement sent propaganda materials to Norwegian-Americans interested in women's suffrage. These materials would have a lasting impact on Norwegian-American thoughts on women's suffrage both in rural and urban areas of the United States.

Norwegian literature was one of the strongest bonds that linked both rural and urban Norwegian Americans with the ideas behind the Norwegian women's suffrage movement. The following chapters will explore more deeply how Norwegian-American

¹²⁸ Helen Egilsrud, "Vor Idealer," A.A.G., "Part of Suffrage Speech Given Ten Years Ago at the "Welfare League Club" and "Berømte Norske Kvinder," in *Souvenir Norse-American Woman. 1825-1925. A Symposium of Prose and Poetry, Newspaper Articles and Biographies, contributed by One Hundred Prominent Women*, ed. Mrs. Alma Gutteresen and Mrs. Regina Hilleboe Christensen (St. Paul, MN: Lutheran Free Church, 1926).

¹²⁹ Chapters 3 and 4 will further explore these examples.

suffrage supporters interacted with the transnational women's suffrage movement. The chapters will look at not only Norwegian-Americans' place within the international network of women's activists but also how their ethnicity construction played a role in influencing their attitudes towards and subsequent actions in the American suffrage movement. Together, these chapters examine the common thread of Norwegian suffrage achievements and corresponding Norwegian-American suffrage cooperation.

CHAPTER 3

PRAIRIE SUFFRAGE SUPPORT: RURAL NORWEGIAN-AMERICAN IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

The transatlantic relationship between Norwegians and Norwegian Americans aided in the process of rural ethnicity construction. From 1890 to 1920, rural Norwegian Americans participated in this exchange of ideas through reading Norwegian-language printed materials. An in-depth look at Norwegian-language books and journals shows that Norwegian Americans living outside major metropolitan areas in Minnesota and North Dakota had access to printed literature that correlated their ethnic identity with progressive ideals concerning women's suffrage. These ideas influenced the construction of their ethnic identities and their attitudes towards women's rights. Rural Norwegian Americans not only consumed this ethnic rhetoric but they also participated in the American women's suffrage movement by joining suffrage clubs. A quantitative study of the Votes for Women Club in Grand Forks, North Dakota (GFVWC) demonstrates that some of these women and men actively applied these ideas in their involvement with the GFVWC, but at a lesser rate than their urban counterparts.¹³⁰

The findings in this study uncover the lives of rural women and men and their relationship to the women's suffrage movement. Research on rural Norwegian Americans

¹³⁰ On urban suffrage proponents, see Chapter 4.

and their ethnic support of women's suffrage broadens the narrow field of suffrage history. In previous suffrage historiography scholars have neglected to research not only ethnic participation but also rural attitudes and actions in regards to women's enfranchisement. Suffrage historians' main emphasis has been on documenting the conditions of Anglo-American leaders of the movement, most of whom lived in urban areas.¹³¹ Even Anja Bakken's 1998 study of Norwegian-American suffragists focused on urban women living in Brooklyn and Minneapolis. When clarifying the scope of her study, Bakken broached the subject of rural Norwegian American suffragists but indicated that they probably did not exist due to their busy lives and lack of desire to participate in the women's suffrage movement.¹³² This blatant disregard for rural actors and the value of their attitudes and actions gives a false picture of the American women's suffrage movement as something restricted to burgeoning urban areas.

Norwegian Americans, more than any other immigrant group, came from isolated areas of Norway and maintained an agricultural identity even after emigration.¹³³ The rural nature of Norwegian Americans illustrates how ethnic Americans used their cultural past and American present to create collective political identities. Most Norwegian immigrants settled in the rural Midwest and worked in farming occupations. In 1910, the majority of first-generation Norwegian immigrants lived in the states of Minnesota, Wisconsin and North Dakota.¹³⁴ This type of settlement pattern enabled Norwegian

¹³¹ This was not just a result of second wave feminism as even recent books focus on "great" women. *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman's Suffrage Movement* ed. Marjorie Julian Spruill (Troutdale, OR: New Sage Press, 1995); Barbara Goldsmith, *Other Powers: The Age of Suffrage, Spiritualism, and the Scandalous Victoria Woodhull* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1998); Jean H. Baker, *Sisters: The Lives of America's Suffragists* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005).

¹³² Bakken, "Our Country Gives us the Vote—America Refuses it," 11.

¹³³ Lovoll, *Norwegians on the Prairie*; Gjerde and Qualey, *Norwegians in Minnesota*; *They Chose Minnesota: a Survey of the State's Ethnic Groups*.

¹³⁴ 1910 United States Census, "Color or Race, Nativity and Heritage," 817.

Americans to retain much of their Norwegian culture and heritage.¹³⁵ Religious ideas flourished in Norwegian-American Midwestern communities and a close connection to Norway and Norwegian identities remained. Norwegian Americans living in this environment often formed ethnic identities that were much more homogeneous than those who lived in urban areas and lived among many other ethnic groups.¹³⁶ The rural states of Minnesota and North Dakota are backdrops that highlight the construction of Norwegian-American rural identity, their attitudes towards suffrage and their limited participation in the American suffrage movement.

Norwegian-language Literature in the Rural Midwest

While in the United States, Norwegian Americans combined their personal experiences with societal influences in their process of ethnicity construction. Norwegian-American publications reinforced homemaking myths and mitigated the process of Americanization.¹³⁷ Beginning in the late-nineteenth century, Norwegian immigrants and their offspring published many newspapers, books and magazines in their native tongue.¹³⁸ Norwegian-language media often solidified Norwegian-American ethnic categorization as progressive and in favor of women's suffrage. Poetic realistic books written by popular Norwegian authors such as Henrik Ibsen, Camilla Collett and Jonas Lie along with the Scandinavian women's magazine, *Kvinden og Hjemmet* (*The Woman and the Home*), brought progressive ideas concerning women's rights to rural

¹³⁵ Gjerde, *The Minds of the West*.

¹³⁶ Jenswold, "The Hidden Settlement," vi.

¹³⁷ Øverland, "Norwegian Americans are Americans," 138.

¹³⁸ According to Olaf M. Norlie, during the height of the Norwegian-American press over 500 Norwegian-language newspapers were published in America. See: *Norwegian-American Papers 1847-1946* (Northfield, MN: Mimeopress, 1946), 17.

Norwegian-American doorsteps. These printed media sources along with a book exchange between Norway and the United States kept Norwegian Americans abreast of ideas within Norwegian society and culture.

Many Norwegian Americans remained connected to Norway through literature. Rural women and men living on harsh prairie lands made time to read and felt that Norwegian books, especially the popular poetic realistic ones, were preferable to the books they could get in the United States. Grace (Gro Knudsdatter) Rollag and her family are prime examples of rural Norwegian immigrants who encountered progressive ideals through Norwegian literature. Grace grew up on a small farm in Telemark, Norway with her widowed mother, Kari Nielsdatter, and two siblings. With her husband dead, Kari took over the farm and oversaw a dwindling herd of cattle and sheep while she planted scarcely four combined acres of rye and potatoes.¹³⁹ In 1873, Grace married her neighbor, Ole (Halvorson) Rollag in the local Mæl Church. Due to Grace and Ole's struggling family situations, their honeymoon consisted of emigrating to the United States. Grace was twenty-three years old and Ole, only twenty. They settled in the Minnesota Territory in what is today Rock County. Their settlement experience would prove to be a difficult one.

Grace and Ole Rollag homesteaded on the barren prairie in southwest Minnesota. The Rollags endured mud houses, prairie winds and devastating blizzards in their new homeland but they still found time to read Norwegian literature. Grace and her brother, Austin, both inherited their mother's love of books and Norwegian literature. Just one year after Grace and Ole's arrival, Grace's mother, Kari, and brother, Austin, emigrated to America and joined her in Minnesota. Kari, even as an impoverished peasant, was an

¹³⁹ 1865- Folketelling for 0826 Tinn, accessed on December 14, 2008 at: www.digitalarkivet.no

avid reader and had sold her collection of books in order to finance their journey.¹⁴⁰ The Rollag families had a self-professed passion for reading and while in the United States, Grace and her family maintained a close connection to their Norwegian past through literature.

Contact with popular Norwegian literature provided the Rollags with examples of Norwegian progressive ideals. Even though Grace had a busy life rearing nine children, clearing farmland and building a homestead, she made sure there was always enough time to read. The neighbors never thought of Grace Rollag as an excellent housekeeper. Instead, as she stated in her memoirs, she would much rather read a good Norwegian book than clean house.¹⁴¹ Austin enjoyed Norwegian literature as well. He started a Norwegian book club in an old schoolhouse near his homestead in the Minnesota Territory. The members of the club circulated copies of well-known Norwegian books written by Henrik Ibsen and Camilla Collett.¹⁴² Through the literature they read and discussed, Grace and Austin remained connected to their Norwegian culture.

The Rollags' maintenance of their cultural heritage through direct contact with Norwegian literature demonstrates how ideas behind progressive homemaking myths could spread to rural Minnesota. Kari, who emigrated at the age of fifty-three, believed that she and her children were Norwegians first and Americans second. When English began to replace Norwegian in the local churches, Kari insisted her grandchildren be confirmed again in Norwegian because it was a "holier" language.¹⁴³ Kari's filiopietistic attitudes reflected the conviction that her ancestral home was superior to the United

¹⁴⁰ Austin Rollag Papers, Norwegian-American Historical Association.

¹⁴¹ Grace Rollag Papers, Norwegian-American Historical Association.

¹⁴² Austin Rollag Papers, Norwegian-American Historical Association. Brynhild Rowberg inherited her grandfather, Austin's, book collection and recalled the authors of some of the books.

¹⁴³ Austin Rollag Papers, Norwegian-American Historical Association.

States. Kari and her family also thought of Norway as a country that treated women more equally than the United States.

Kari Bjorndalen was an advocate of women's suffrage. Kari based her support of women's suffrage on the idea that women were men's equals and should be regarded as such when it came to citizenship rights.¹⁴⁴ Grace Rollag also identified Norway as more progressively inclined than her new home in America. She was angry when she encountered wage discrimination upon arrival in the United States. Grace could not understand why employers in the United States, which was supposed to be the land of opportunity, paid women less than men for performing the same farm labor "just because we wore a different kind of pants."¹⁴⁵ This statement reflected the cultural clash Grace experienced when her Norwegian concepts of equality collided with American gender inequalities.

The Rollag families are examples of rural Norwegian Americans whose ethnic identification with progressive values received rejuvenation from Norwegian literature. The Rollags represent a microcosm of the rural Norwegian-American experience. Faced with devastating natural disasters and the overwhelming particulars inherent in breaking untouched land and forging new identities, the Rollag families embodied the circumstances of their fellow Norwegian immigrants. The Rollags were poor farmers who chose to leave their homeland in search of more financially secure lives in the United States. Like the majority of Norwegian Americans, the Rollags emigrated to America as farmers and continued this way of life on the harsh Minnesota prairie.¹⁴⁶ The

¹⁴⁴ Austin Rollag Papers, Norwegian-American Historical Association.

¹⁴⁵ Grace Rollag Papers, Norwegian-American Historical Association.

¹⁴⁶ In 1920, 52 percent of Norwegian born and 65 percent of their descendants lived in rural areas of the United States. See: Gjerde and Qualey, *Norwegians in Minnesota*, 22.

shared experiences of agricultural, Norwegian-American immigrants links the particular account of the Rollags with the greater rural Norwegian-American community.

The commonalities between the Rollag families and their compatriots suggest that their shared immigrant experience, coupled with their exposure to and absorption of a progressive Norwegian identity, influenced their attitudes towards women's suffrage. Other Norwegian immigrant stories demonstrate that the Rollags' experience as rural Norwegian Americans, who participated in an exchange of ideas between Norway and the United States, was not atypical. These Norwegian immigrants left behind less archival evidence but illustrate the Rollags' representativeness.

Gunnar Høst immigrated to the United States in 1883 and lived in both Stephen, Minnesota and Grand Forks, North Dakota. He wrote home often and asked his sister to send him books, especially ones written by Henrik Ibsen.¹⁴⁷ Gro Svendsen, a frontier woman in Iowa, also sent many letters to Norway and requested that her family send her books.¹⁴⁸ Elise Wærenskjold lived on the isolated Texan prairie and asked her family and friends for novels written by recent authors, especially Jonas Lie. Wærenskjold did not care much for Henrik Ibsen, but did ask for a copy of *Et Dukkehjem* (*A Doll's House*) because of its importance to the feminist cause.¹⁴⁹ All of these rural Norwegian Americans wanted access to books from Norway and it seems as though their families back home were the easiest and perhaps, least expensive, way to get these books. Høst, Svendsen and Wærenskjold also all commented in their letters that Norway was a much

¹⁴⁷ Letter from Gunnar Høst to Agnes Hansen, November 13, 1884 in *In Their Own Words. Letters from Norwegian Immigrants*, ed. and trans. Solveig Zempel (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 62 – 63.

¹⁴⁸ Letters from Gro Svendsen in *Frontier Mother: The Letters of Gro Svendsen* ed. and trans. Pauline Farseth and Theodore C. Blegen (Northfield, MN: The Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1950), 28 – 29, 35, 135.

¹⁴⁹ Letter from Elise Wærenskjold to Thomine Dannevig. September 23, 1883 in *The Lady with the Pen*, ed. and trans. C. A. Clausen (Northfield, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1961), 118.

superior country to the United States. Svensen even wrote, "I have praised and defended Norway and things Norwegian so much that I have had heated arguments with some people who believe this land is paradise."¹⁵⁰

Other rural Norwegian Americans were authors themselves who commented on the political situation in the United States. Hans Foss lived in Grand Forks, North Dakota and published *Hvide Slaver: sosial-politisk skildring* (*White Slaves: A Social and Political Commentary*) in 1892. Foss' book, along with letters from other rural Norwegian Americans, illustrates Norwegian immigrants' desire for poetic realistic Norwegian literature. Throughout his book, Foss compared the ideological freedoms in Norway to those in the United States. He continually referred to Norway as the "idealistic" land and suggested that Norwegian Americans who came to the United States should use the opportunity to implement Norwegian ideals in America.¹⁵¹ He also published the book in an effort to establish that Norwegian Americans were the logical people to help liberate Americans because they had come from such a progressive country.¹⁵² These examples, along with the Rollag case, show how progressive ideals reached rural Norwegian Americans and influenced the perception of their ethnicity.

Rural Norwegian Americans also read Norwegian-language newspapers and journals published in the United States. These subscription materials introduced rural Norwegian Americans to an ethnic identity that was collectively progressive and supported women's suffrage. Many of these publications were a joint effort on behalf of

¹⁵⁰ Letter from Gro Svendsen, November 1862 in *Frontier Woman*, 29.

¹⁵¹ Hans Foss, *Hvide Slaver: sosial-politisk skildring* (Grand Forks, ND: Normanden, 1892), 15.

¹⁵² Foss, *Hvide Slaver*, 246.

Norwegian and Danish journalists.¹⁵³ One of these Norwegian-language journals printed in the United States specifically targeted female readers. *Kvinden og Hjemmet* (*The Woman and the Home*) was a woman's journal written with Scandinavian-American women in mind. First published in 1888, *Kvinden og Hjemmet* had the subtitle "Et Maanedskrift for den Skandinaviske Kvinde i Amerika" (A Monthly Magazine for the Scandinavian Woman in America).¹⁵⁴ Norwegian immigrant, Ida Hansen, founded the Scandinavian women's journal after her husband discontinued the publication of his magazine, *Fra Alle Land* (From All Countries), which included her column, "Husmoderen" (The Housewife). Hansen decided that "Scandinavians need(ed) a journal dedicated to women, their interests and daily chores."¹⁵⁵ This vision drove the publication of a Norwegian-language women's magazine.

Kvinden og Hjemmet acted as a conduit that related notions of women's progress to rural Norwegian-American ethnic identification. The journal spread progressive ideas about women's rights and suffrage to rural Scandinavian women through articles on successful Scandinavian suffrage legislation and its inclusion of Norwegian poetic realistic literature. As a result, rural Norwegian-American women living in Minnesota and North Dakota received information from *Kvinden og Hjemmet* which further strengthened their ethnic identification with support of women's suffrage. Ida Hansen started the journal in her home in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Although the journal's headquarters was in Cedar Rapids, most of its readers came from the rural Midwest, with

¹⁵³ This was due to the fact that written Norwegian and Danish were very similar. Swedish, on the other hand, varied greatly from both written Norwegian and Danish. See Marion Tuttle Marolf, "The Danish-Language Press in America," (Ph. D. diss. University of Michigan, 1972), 2.

¹⁵⁴ This subtitle suggests that the editors wrote for a Norwegian, Danish and Swedish audience. From 1893, however, the demand for a Swedish language edition led to the separate publication of *Quinnan och Hemmet*, intended for the Swedish-American population

¹⁵⁵ *Kvinden og Hjemmet*, May 1888: 1.

the states of Minnesota and North Dakota well represented.¹⁵⁶ Circulation peaked at 83,000 in 1907, the same year women in Norway gained limited national suffrage.¹⁵⁷

Starting in 1905, *Kvinden og Hjemmet* included “Vort Bibliotek” (Our Library) and “*Nordisk Folkebibliotek*” (The Nordic Folk Library) as literary supplements to the journal.¹⁵⁸ These additions gave readers the convenience of reading literature in their native tongue and emphasized literary symbols of Norway’s progressiveness. Jonas Lie’s *Et Samliv* (*A Cohabitation*) and *Kommandørens Døtre* (*The Commodore’s Daughters*) were two of the novels included in the “*Nordisk Folkebibliotek*.”¹⁵⁹ Lie’s work focused on illuminating the contradictions of women’s domestic life in Norwegian society. In both *Et Samliv* and *Kommandørens Døtre*, Lie juxtaposed the conventional existence endured by Norwegian women against the pleasant milieu of everyday life. His brand of poetic realism reached *Kvinden og Hjemmet*’s subscribers through monthly installments of the “*Nordisk Folkebibliotek*,” which sometimes devoted more than six months of the supplement to publish the novel in its entirety.¹⁶⁰ *Kvinden og Hjemmet* also included feature articles on Lie’s fellow poetic realists, Henrik Ibsen and Camilla Collett.

Columnists alerted their readers to a Norwegian ethnicity linked with questioning societal norms and supporting women’s rights through their articles on Henrik Ibsen and Camilla Collett. For instance, in 1913 *Kvinden og Hjemmet*’s editors stressed that Scandinavian women were champions of women’s progress and cited Norwegian Camilla

¹⁵⁶ Åse Elin Langeland, “Kvinden og Hjemmet: Sixty Years of Success,” in *Norwegian-American Essays 2004* (Northfield, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Association and Norwegian Emigrant Museum, 2005), 167.

¹⁵⁷ Langeland, “Kvinden og Hjemmet,” 167.

¹⁵⁸ This program started as an effort to send each subscriber a complete book in the mail. However, due to a change in the 1906 postal law, *Kvinden og Hjemmet* decided to publish the literary supplements as a regular part of the journal. See Langeland, “Kvinden og Hjemmet,” 169.

¹⁵⁹ *Kvinden og Hjemmet*, January 1913; *Kvinden og Hjemmet*, May 1913.

¹⁶⁰ *Kvinden og Hjemmet*, May 1913 – November 1913.

Collett, Swedish Fredrika Bremer, Finnish Adelaide Ernroth and Danish Mathilde Fibiger as examples. The editors also credited these authors with giving Scandinavian women their current position as, "independent and enlightened women."¹⁶¹ In 1917, columnist Kristian Østergaard attributed Henrik Ibsen with the same ability to inspire Norwegian and Norwegian Americans alike. Østergaard wrote that Ibsen had showed a whole society how it had betrayed its own ideals, especially in regards to women.¹⁶² These commentaries on Camilla Collett and Henrik Ibsen and the ways in which they influenced societal perceptions of women's roles contributed to the spread of Norwegian American progressive identification.

The articles included in *Kvinden og Hjemmet* differed from most other publications at the time because the editors and the majority of journalists were women. In 1908, the editors pledged to their readers, "about the progress of women we will report truthfully."¹⁶³ This was in response to other women's magazines edited and written by men, such as the much larger *Ladies' Home Journal*, that negatively portrayed the fight for female enfranchisement.¹⁶⁴ As Grover Cleveland stated in the widely-circulated *Ladies Home Journal*, "sensible and responsible women do not want to vote."¹⁶⁵ Although this anti-suffrage rhetoric existed in many national women's publications, rural women's magazines targeted a different audience, one that was used to working along side their husbands on the farm, and who might be more open to women's suffrage. *The Farmer's Wife*, an English-language rural women's publication, often included columns

¹⁶¹ *Kvinden og Hjemmet*, February 1913: 47.

¹⁶² *Kvinden og Hjemmet*, July 1917: 157.

¹⁶³ *Kvinden og Hjemmet*, January 1908: 24.

¹⁶⁴ Lilly Setterdahl, "Adjusting to America," *Palimpsest* 3 (1987): 138.

¹⁶⁵ Quoted in Arthur M. Schlesinger, ed. *The Almanac of American History* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1983), 419.

written by the known Kansas suffragist, Annie L. Diggs.¹⁶⁶ Diggs' argued for women's suffrage on the basis of women's shown equality in the pioneering of Western states and their essential work on farms. These arguments appealed to the rural women reading them. *Kvinden og Hjemmet* focused on a different strategy for gathering rural support of women's suffrage. Its articles argued that rural Scandinavian women, especially of Norwegian descent, had an ethnic predisposition and duty to fight for women's rights.

The preponderance of Norwegian and Norwegian American female editors and journalists influenced the types of articles included in the journal. Ida Hansen and co-editor, Ellen Lindstrøm (1906) were both interested in the women's rights movement. Both editors thought that the journal should help Norwegians make America home. Lindstrøm, in particular, believed immigrants could best achieve assimilation by using their ethnic heritage to contribute to American society. She also linked Norwegian-American support of women's equal rights to their ethnicity. In 1907 Lindstrøm wrote, "We, the adopted Norse children of America, in our enthusiasm for the freedom promised by the Star Spangled Banner, forget that the reason we so easily Americanize and claim our civil rights, is the belief in freedom that we attained in our old country."¹⁶⁷

The editorial support for women's rights led them to include a column entitled "*For og om kvinder*" (For and About Women). This column featured women from around the world that defied traditional roles as housewives and mothers. Pioneers in the fields of medicine, literature and scholastics, these women represented the opportunities available to women. Often these articles pointed to the success of the women's movement

¹⁶⁶ "Annie L. Diggs" Women of the West Museum. Accessed online at: www.astrynationalcenter.org/explore/exhibits/suffrage/anniediggs_full.html; Also see: Janet Galligani Casey, "Farm Women, Letters to the Editor and the Limits of Autobiographical Theory" in *Journal of Modern Literature* 28.1 (2004): 89-106.

¹⁶⁷ *Kvinden og Hjemmet*, September 1907: 304.

in Scandinavia. For example, in 1909 Hansen wrote an article about "Women of the Future." In this article she wrote, "The Nordic countries are, as everyone knows, number one in granting women rights, which much larger countries have not even dreamt of granting."¹⁶⁸ These types of statements served as a source of pride to rural Norwegian American women; their identity as Norwegian Americans linked them to successful women's rights movements and progressive ideals. It also demonstrated that Scandinavian women came from cultures further advanced in supporting women's rights than their new American home. This evidence contributed to a Norwegian-American sense of moral superiority over Anglo Americans and other ethnic Americans. These feelings of supremacy in regards to female equality gained even more credence in *Kvinden og Hjemmet's* coverage of the international campaign for women's suffrage.

The articles in *Kvinden og Hjemmet* demonstrated how women in Scandinavia and of Scandinavian descent could learn from the Norwegian women's suffrage movement's achievements and "give them courage to continue to work to further the cause."¹⁶⁹ The columnists celebrated the successes of the Norwegian suffrage movement and invited their readers to not only take pride in them but also follow their old country's example. From the beginning, the journal had space dedicated to the women's suffrage cause. In 1894, just five years after the publication of its first issue, editor Ida Hansen devoted several pages to free advertising for women's organizations. Hansen also introduced a column called "*Om stemmerett for kvinder*" (About Women's Right to Vote) where she invited readers to formulate a discussion based on suffrage.¹⁷⁰ *Kvinden og Hjemmet* included stories about the women's suffrage movement in Europe and in the

¹⁶⁸ *Kvinden og Hjemmet*, August 1909.

¹⁶⁹ *Kvinden og Hjemmet*, January 1908: 11.

¹⁷⁰ *Kvinden og Hjemmet*, January 1894.

Western United States.¹⁷¹ These articles often juxtaposed the average American woman's ability to participate in the United States' government with her Scandinavian counterparts.

Columnists also encouraged their readers to reconsider the state of women's rights in America. Elna, a regular contributor to the journal, asked subscribers to take off the veil of sentimentality surrounding the debate about women's rights and examine the real issues of equal citizenship: the right to vote and serve on a jury. She concluded that it was Norwegian women's ability to candidly address their situation that led them to victory and assured her readers that, "it wouldn't hurt to think about it."¹⁷² These articles made *Kvinden og Hjemmet* one of the few ethnic women's journals that spread ethnically progressive ideas about women's rights and suffrage. Rural Norwegian-American women read this women's journal and gained knowledge that reaffirmed their identification with progressive ideals. They not only received materials that linked their ethnicity with progressive values and support of women's suffrage, but they also participated in organized suffrage clubs on the prairie.

Rural Suffrage Organizations

Suffrage clubs sprung up throughout Minnesota and North Dakota during the beginning of the twentieth century, and many of their members were Norwegian Americans. Rural Norwegian Americans had read about how women in Norway had advanced in the women's rights movement, gotten jobs as professionals and even won the right to cast ballots. The literary supplements in *Kvinden og Hjemmet* and book

¹⁷¹ Langeland, "Kvinden og Hjemmet," 174.

¹⁷² *Kvinden og Hjemmet*, February 1908: 64.

exchanges with neighbors and clubs brought the ideas of Henrik Ibsen, Jonas Lie and Camilla Collett into rural Norwegian-American lives on the Midwestern prairie.

Norwegian authors entered American homes and became symbolic of a culture that questioned societal inequalities and empowered women. These ideas spread throughout the Midwest and led many Norwegian Americans to identify themselves as progressive and in favor of female equality.

Scholars have portrayed traditional American suffragists as Anglo-American women without children and of the middle to upper-class.¹⁷³ Most of these works are biographical and focus on the leaders of the national suffrage movement. They neglect to tell the story of the thousands of women involved in the fight for the vote across the country, in rural towns as well as large urban cities. Norwegian-American members of the Grand Forks Votes for Women Club (GFVWC) depict a different type of American suffragist. Quantitative analysis of the GFVWC membership records illuminates a portion of rural women's lives and their involvement in the American women's suffrage movement. These rural, first- and second- generation Norwegian immigrants came from financial and household situations very different from the stereotypical Anglo-American, urban suffragist so often referred to in suffrage scholarship.¹⁷⁴ The majority of these traditional suffrage histories do not include sections on rural women, unless they focus on

¹⁷³ Some recent examples include: Ann Basum, *With Courage and Cloth: Winning the Fight for a Woman's Right to Vote* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2002); Kathi Kern, *Mrs. Stanton's Bible* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Joelle Million, *Woman's Voice, Woman's Place: Lucy Stone and the Birth of the Woman's Rights Movement* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003).

¹⁷⁴ Some recent examples include: Brenda Stalcup *Women's Suffrage* (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 2000); *Votes for Women* ed. Jean H. Baker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); *U.S. Women in Struggle* ed. Claire Goldberg Moses and Heidi Hartmann (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995).

the Western states, and even Western suffrage historians have often ignored the role of ethnicity in rural suffrage clubs.¹⁷⁵

One of the reasons women's historians have neglected this area of research is the lack of sources available. Regrettably, the GFVWC records did not contain information regarding the activities members organized and participated in. This limits the information available about the functioning of the club and its role within Grand Forks and the surrounding rural area. The GFVWC did, however, leave behind a membership list from 1910 that contains information about members' ethnicity, ages, financial and household situations.¹⁷⁶

The typified progressive identity of rural Norwegian Americans influenced their support of the women's suffrage movement. Some rural Norwegian Americans not only thought of themselves as progressive and in favor of women's enfranchisement but also actively participated in rural suffrage clubs. Grand Forks, North Dakota, was home to one of these organizations. In 1910, Grand Forks was a town with just over 12,400 residents.¹⁷⁷ Grand Forks' location between the bustling towns of Winnipeg, Manitoba, and Fargo, North Dakota, made it an ideal place for the operation of both the Great Northern and the Northern Pacific Railroads. The size of Grand Forks in 1910 misleadingly suggests that it was an "urban" area. Its population, although according to the United States census large enough to warrant an "urban" city, does not sufficiently describe the cultural environment of Grand Forks. North Dakota in general was an

¹⁷⁵ Carolyn Stefanco, "Networking on the Frontier: the Colorado Women's Suffrage Movement," in *The Women's West* ed. Susan H. Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press).

¹⁷⁶ Cross-referencing these names with the 1910 manuscript census reveals information about the ethnic make-up, age, household and financial situations of the GFVWC's members. See Appendix A for a discussion of methodology.

¹⁷⁷ 1910 United States Census.

agricultural state. In fact, 67 percent of its workers engaged in agriculture, forestry or animal husbandry in 1910.¹⁷⁸ Grand Forks was a town on the North Dakota prairie that was more than 75 miles away from any settlement that rivaled its population size. Between 80 and 90 percent of land in Grand Forks County was under agricultural production and between 90 and 100 percent of the land in surrounding counties was used for farming.¹⁷⁹ Grand Forks' main economy was based primarily on agriculture and the majority of its citizens were engaged in related occupations.¹⁸⁰ A more accurate description of Grand Forks, therefore, is as a "rural" town that was capable of producing an isolated, agriculturally-based mindset.

Within this rural context, Grand Forks maintained a special position in the Red River Valley as a hub for business and organizational activities. Farmers residing within the surrounding 75 mile radius came to Grand Forks and sold their goods as well as visited professionals, such as lawyers and doctors. This central gathering place also housed a women's suffrage club that attracted Americans and ethnic Americans that resided on both sides of the city limits. The membership records of the GFVWC contain information pertaining to which people, living in a rural area, participated in the women's suffrage movement.

The GFVWC is just one example of a Midwestern rural suffrage organization. Unfortunately, it is one of few clubs that has a surviving historical record of its members. The lack of comparative data available makes conclusions about the representativeness of GFVWC's members preliminary. The size of its membership is not significant enough to

¹⁷⁸ 1910 United States Census, "Population," 125.

¹⁷⁹ 1910 United States Census, "Agriculture," 288.

¹⁸⁰ Jane Ahlin, "North Dakota" in *The American Midwest* ed. Richard Sisson, Christian Zacher, and Andrew Cayton (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 1126

render definitive quantitative findings, but the club does provide an indication of what types of women and men joined rural suffrage groups.

The ethnic make-up of the club is an example of Norwegian-American participation in a rural suffrage organization. The GFVWC was a rural suffrage club that had both Anglo-American and ethnic-American members. Due to the nature of the club and its location, nearly three-quarters of its membership were Anglo Americans.¹⁸¹ The remaining membership belonged to several ethnic groups. Norwegian Americans were the largest ethnic group in Grand Forks in 1910.¹⁸² Norwegian Americans, as the largest ethnic group in Grand Forks, also represented the greatest percentage of first-generation immigrants involved in the GFVWC compared to the other ethnic groups. These rural Norwegian Americans joined the local women's suffrage club in Grand Forks at a greater rate than most other ethnic groups. The fact that Norwegian Americans had the largest percentage of first-generation immigrants in the club also indicates that even though these people would have been new to the United States and the area, their active support of women's suffrage was stronger than any other ethnic group. In total, first- and second-generation Norwegian American immigrants represented 8 percent of the club's 1910 membership roster.¹⁸³

The ethnic composition of the GFVWC suggests that although Anglo Americans were indeed members of the club, ethnic Americans such as Norwegian Americans and Irish Americans, in particular, felt compelled to join the women's suffrage organization. Irish Americans were a significant presence in the GFVWC. Irish Americans, often cited

¹⁸¹ Anglo Americans include 3rd generation Americans, 1st and 2nd generation English and 1st and 2nd generation Canadian English.

¹⁸² Foreign-born Norwegians and second-generation Norwegian Americans made up 18 percent of Grand Fork's total population in 1910. See United States Census, "Population," 358.

¹⁸³ See Table 1 for the ethnic breakdown of the GFVWC.

as being anti-suffragists, surprisingly made up the largest percentage of second-generation ethnic American members with just over 9 percent.¹⁸⁴ The large number of Irish-American members in the GFVWC warrants further study as its presence introduces nuance to the traditional perception of Irish Americans and their opposition to women's suffrage. Their ethnic membership in the club did not mean that all of Grand Forks ethnic groups were involved in supporting women's suffrage. German Americans were the second largest ethnic group in Grand Forks in 1910.¹⁸⁵ They were not however the second largest percentage of GFVWC members. In fact, less than 3 percent of the GFVWC members were German Americans. The other dominant ethnic groups in Grand Forks were the Swedes and (German) Russians.¹⁸⁶ Despite their significant numbers in town, few people of Swedish or (German) Russian descent participated in the GFVWC. A smattering of other ethnicities including Swedish, Danish, Scottish, French and (German) Russian Americans were members, but no other ethnicity exceeded more than 2 percent of total club membership.

Scholars generally consider women under the age of fifty, or within their childbearing years, to be relatively young participators in organizational activities.¹⁸⁷

Younger women with children to raise often do not have the same opportunities to be

¹⁸⁴ Political Scientists found Irish, Italian and German Americans in the Midwest to be opposed to women's suffrage. McDonough and Price, "Woman's Suffrage in the Progressive Era," 424.

¹⁸⁵ First- and second- generation German Americans made up 5 percent of Grand Forks' population. See 1910 United States Census, "Population," 358.

¹⁸⁶ The census did not separate from Russians and Germans from Russia. German Russians were much more likely to be living in Grand Forks at this time than ethnic Russians. 1910 United States Census, "Population," 358.

¹⁸⁷ Gunilla Bjerén and Inga Elgqvist-Saltzman, *Gender and Education in Life Perspective: Lessons from Scandinavia* (Aldershot, England: 1994); Joan Borysenko, *A Woman's Book of Life: The Biology, Psychology, and Spirituality of the Feminine Life Cycle* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1996); Elizabeth A. Carter and Monica McGoldrick, *The Expanded Family Life Cycle: Individual, Family and Social Perspectives* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2005); Steven D. McLaughlin, *The Changing Lives of American Women* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); David R. Unruh and Gail Susan Livings, *Personal History Through the Life Course* (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1989).

active outside of the home as women without children at home. The negative societal view associated with politically active mothers was one of the reasons mothers tended to be uninvolved outside the home. Historians, political scientists and sociologists alike have found that women with children do not participate in political organizations at the same rate as women who either do not have children or have grown children.¹⁸⁸ Rural women, in particular, not only had responsibilities within the house and to their children but also had duties on the farm. The combination of these obligations with societal pressure led many women with children to engage in political activities at a lesser rate than childless women or women with grown children.¹⁸⁹ The number of minor children female members of the GFVWC had living at home in 1910 is therefore an indication of the extent to which motherhood affected their ability to join a suffrage organization.

Rural Norwegian-American suffragists defied this traditional view of inactive young mothers. Most of the GFVWC's Norwegian-American members were young women with children at home. When Congress passed the Nineteenth Constitutional Amendment in 1920, the majority of the GFVWC's Norwegian-American members would still have been under the age of fifty. According to the 1910 United States Census, only 13.5 percent of North Dakota's "urban" (exceeding 2,500 inhabitants) population was over the age of thirty-nine.¹⁹⁰ The average GFVWC member was older than the average North Dakota "urbanite," however, in regards to women's life cycles, the GFVWC maintained a relatively youthful membership. The average age of a GFVWC member was thirty-seven years old.¹⁹¹ Of this group, Norwegian Americans made up

¹⁸⁸ See footnote 187 in Chapter 3.

¹⁸⁹ Carter and McGoldrick, *The Expanded Family Life Cycle*.

¹⁹⁰ 1910 United States Census, "North Dakota," 344.

¹⁹¹ See Table 2 for the age breakdown of the GFVWC.

some of the younger members of the club. Sixty-six percent of Norwegian Americans were below the age of forty, while only 55 percent of Anglo Americans and half of the Irish Americans were below the age of forty.

Norwegian-American members of the GFVWC more than any other ethnic group involved in the club not only were within childbearing age but they also had minor children living at home in 1910. This indicates that while other American members tended to follow traditional life cycles, the Norwegian-American members of the suffrage club joined a suffrage club regardless of the number of children they had living at home. Three-quarters of Norwegian-American members had at least one child at home. This was contrary to the other members of the club. Less than half of the GFVWC's members had children under the age of eighteen living at home in 1910.¹⁹² 56 percent of the Anglo American members were either childless or had grown children. Even 36 percent of the Irish Americans, the largest ethnic American contingent, had no children living at home in 1910.

This suggests that although women's life cycles are often seen as obstacles to political participation, there were a number of women in Grand Forks, North Dakota whose lives contradict this generality. The rural environment may be a reason that young women joined a suffrage organization as social engagement helped counteract isolation. It also could have been an opportunity to strengthen rural networks. The GFVWC also shows that many women, including Anglo Americans, joined the women's suffrage movement in spite of the number of children they had living at home even though the majority of their ethnic group did not. In fact, four Anglo-American members had five or

¹⁹² See Table 3 for the number of children under the age of eighteen in 1910 living with GFVWC members.

more children under the age of eighteen living at home in 1910.¹⁹³ Norwegian-American women in particular, overcame the difficulties inherent in balancing their home life with public life in order to become members of a suffrage club. Their membership in the GFVWC solidifies the role ethnicity played in the women's suffrage movement. These rural, Norwegian-American women suggest that their convictions and support of women's suffrage led them to overcome the practical barriers to participation in the suffrage movement, as well as cultural expectations that they would focus on domestic duties.

The GFVWC's member occupations indicate that rural suffragists came from the middle-class.¹⁹⁴ This is particularly true for the Irish- and Anglo-American members. Most of the GFVWC's Irish- and Anglo-American members either had professional or governmental "white-collar" jobs.¹⁹⁵ Nearly one-half of the Irish-American members and 68 percent of Anglo-American members were engaged in professional occupations. This suggests that although Irish Americans living in Grand Forks strayed from their stereotypical ethnic opposition to women's suffrage, they did so in part because of their class association. They therefore were not representative of the majority of Irish Americans who tended to be industrial workers.¹⁹⁶ These findings suggest that rural suffragists were of the upper class, but the presence of other ethnic groups in the GFVWC lessened the overall percentage of the members who received their income from

¹⁹³ See Table 3.

¹⁹⁴ If an occupation was not listed for female members, their husbands' occupations served as an indication of their families' financial situation.

¹⁹⁵ See Table 4 for the correlation between ethnicity and occupational backgrounds.

¹⁹⁶ Even by 1910 the majority of Irish Americans worked in industry and transportation. Joseph Lee and Marion R. Casey, *Making the Irish American: History and Heritage of the Irish in the United States* (New York: NYU Press, 2006), 360.

professional occupations.¹⁹⁷ Of these members, only 5 percent of them were Norwegian Americans. Other occupations represent a different side of the American suffrage movement.

The membership of the GFVWC highlights the fact that American suffragists were not all wives or daughters of white-collar workers such as doctors, lawyers and teachers. They were also farmers, grain sellers and dairy men. Attesting to the rural nature of the GFVWC, 12.5 percent of total club members were farmers, making farming the third largest employer of GFVWC members. In particular, most Norwegian-American members' husbands engaged in agricultural occupations, which remained consistent with the majority of rural Norwegian Americans as a whole.¹⁹⁸ None of the Norwegian-American members had live-in servants, which suggests that these women were responsible for maintaining their own households and farms. Norwegian men and their gendered sense of identity affected the extent to which their wives engaged in Grand Forks' suffrage activities. Husbands' support of their wives participation in the club went further than neutrality; these men had to release their wives from parenting and farming responsibilities so that they had time to go into Grand Forks and maintain suffrage club memberships.

The remainder of suffrage club members gained income from traditional female occupations. In contrast to many scholars' findings on suffrage workers, most of the GFVWC's members were not single, working women.¹⁹⁹ Unmarried working women did not join the GFVWC at a greater rate than married women who had children. Only 11

¹⁹⁷ There were thirteen occupational categories: professional, government employee, merchant, skilled worker, artisan, laborer, salesman, farmer, female occupation, own income, none, other and widow. See Appendix A for a discussion of methodology.

¹⁹⁸ See Table 4.

¹⁹⁹ See Table 5 for the breakdown of the correlations between sex, occupation and ethnicity.

percent of its female members worked within traditional female occupations such as stenographers, teachers and domestic servants. This finding further demonstrates that not all women who participated in the American suffrage movement were able to do so because they did not have families. Ethnic backgrounds did not influence the rate of single working women becoming members of the GFVWC. Among Anglo-American and ethnic-American members only around 8 percent of them worked in female occupations.

Active support of the women's suffrage movement came predominantly from rural women. Female members of the club whose husbands were farmers joined the club separately from their husbands, emphasizing that rural ethnic women were independent proponents of women's suffrage. In fact, 39 percent of the males accounted for in the 1910 census were professionals and only 4 percent were farmers. These results suggest that male farmers were too busy to engage in public support of suffrage, but not opposed enough to restrict their wives' involvement. It also shows that the rural men who supported women's suffrage were mainly professionals.²⁰⁰ Of the twenty-six male members of the GFVWC, 65 percent were Anglo Americans and 17 percent were Irish. Norwegian-American women participated in the GFVWC at a much greater rate than Norwegian-American men did. There was only one Norwegian American man who was a member of the GFVWC. This man was a first-generation Norwegian immigrant who came to Grand Forks to be a doctor. The backgrounds of the GFVWC's male members indicate that rural women suffragists came from different financial and ethnic backgrounds than rural men.

Analyzing the membership records of the GFVWC indicates that rural Norwegian Americans, especially women, overcame the obstacles of farm labor, house work and

²⁰⁰ See Table 5 for the correlations between sex, occupations and ethnicity.

raising children and joined a women's suffrage club. The members of the GFVWC show that rural Norwegian Americans not only thought of themselves as progressive, but some actively participated in the women's suffrage movement. Rural Norwegian Americans maintained a connection to Norwegian culture through reading Norwegian-language materials. Immigrants requested their families back home to send them Norwegian books written by poetic realists. They also wrote their own social commentaries, formed book clubs and subscribed to a Norwegian-language woman's magazine. These printed materials spread ethnic rhetoric that justified their existence in the United States and provided them with evidence of a progressive culture. These examples show how a rural environment affected ethnicity construction and women's suffrage participation.

CHAPTER 4

URBAN SCANDINAVIAN-AMERICAN IDENTITY: THE SCANDINAVIAN WOMAN'S SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION'S RALLYING CRY

Urban Norwegian Americans left behind more evidence of their organizational activities than did rural Norwegian Americans. Norwegian Americans involved in one of the largest ethnic suffrage organizations in the United States, the Scandinavian Woman's Suffrage Association (SWSA), demonstrate how urban ethnic Americans challenge traditional notions of American suffragists. This suffrage club illustrates the identity of Scandinavian-American women who participated in the club and how their ethnicity contributed to the struggle for women's equal political rights. The case of the SWSA also reveals that urban suffragists were not only middle-class Anglo Americans as previous scholarship suggests.²⁰¹ Instead, examining the membership of the SWSA in comparison with the GFVWC contributes to a greater understanding of how environment, ethnicity and gender influenced the American women's suffrage movement. A discussion of the reasons behind the SWSA's formation, its goals and activities, along with a quantitative look at its members highlights intersections among gender, ethnicity and class in the rural and urban suffrage movement. Then, examining the connections between Norwegian Americans involved in the SWSA and Norwegian-American literary societies will further illustrate the importance of the international exchange of ideas occurring at the time.

²⁰¹ Some examples include: Joyce Cowley, *Pioneers of Women's Liberation* (New York: Merit Publishers, 1969); Roger Fulford, *Votes for Women. The Story of a Struggle* (London: Faber & Faber Ltd., 1957); *Women's Suffrage in the British Empire: Citizenship, Nation and Race*.

The SWSA serves as an appropriate gauge of Norwegian-American urban ethnicity in the women's suffrage movement because of its membership diversity and local and national activities. Of course, not all Norwegian Americans interested in suffrage were members of the SWSA. Many Norwegian Americans joined other suffrage groups, took individual action, or did not participate publicly in the women's suffrage movement. However, the SWSA represents a useful case study of how urban ethnic Americans of different ages, family situations and backgrounds participated in the women's suffrage movement. Although many rural Norwegian Americans also supported suffrage, they did not participate in the suffrage movement at the same rate as urban Norwegian Americans. Unlike rural areas, where strong community institutions such as the church wielded significant power, urbanity exposed Norwegian-Americans to a variety of social and cultural institutions that influenced their organizational participation.²⁰²

The surviving archival evidence of the organizational and membership records of the SWSA contain a wealth of sources that enable a more thorough discussion of the SWSA's activities than the GFVWC. The SWSA is a unique case where enough ethnic support of women's suffrage allowed for the formation of an all-Scandinavian organization. The metropolitan area of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, had a large Scandinavian population that was close to centers of government. This environment enabled a greater percentage of Norwegian Americans in the city to join a suffrage club than rural Norwegian Americans. The make-up of the SWSA varied from the interethnic GFVWC in important ways. Urban Norwegian-American suffragists were older, had fewer underage children living at home and had a higher percentage of male members

²⁰² Jenswold, "The Hidden Settlement," vi.

than the Grand Forks suffrage club. Members of the SWSA did not continue an agricultural lifestyle like the majority of Norwegian immigrants. Instead, most Norwegian Americans in the SWSA had either artisan or laborer occupations. The SWSA's location led to the formation of a complex network of Scandinavian Americans interested in suffrage that impacted both the local and national suffrage campaigns. Focusing on the SWSA illustrates that Norwegian Americans were not only interested in women's suffrage but that they also took part in the American suffrage campaign through a politically active suffrage organization.

Although Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota had many suffrage clubs in the early twentieth century, such as the Minnesota Woman's Suffrage Association (MWSA) and the Political Equality Club (PEC), the SWSA stood out as the only ethnic women's suffrage club in the city.²⁰³ The President of the PEC, Dr. Ethel Hurd, formed the SWSA in 1907 and was credited as being the SWSA's organizer and "midwife."²⁰⁴ The SWSA remained in existence until the Nineteenth Amendment to the federal Constitution was passed and woman's suffrage was enacted in 1920. At that point, it followed the lead of the other Minneapolis suffrage clubs and disbanded after thanking its Norwegian-American state and national level congressional supporters for their efforts in securing the passage of the amendment.²⁰⁵ The SWSA maintained close ethnic ties to the suffrage cause from its formation to its disbandment.

One of the reasons for the SWSA's formation was directly linked to members' ethnic heritage. The members of the SWSA saw themselves as having particular prestige

²⁰³ Ethel Hurd, *Woman Suffrage in Minnesota* (Minneapolis: Inland Press, 1916).

²⁰⁴ Hurd, *Woman Suffrage in Minnesota*, 12; Barbara Stuhler, *Gentle Warriors. Clara Ueland and the Minnesota Struggle for Woman Suffrage* (St Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1995), 81.

²⁰⁵ Nanny Mattson Jaeger Papers, Box 3, Minnesota Historical Society.

among other non-ethnic woman's suffrage clubs due to the early suffrage victories in Norway, Denmark and Sweden.²⁰⁶ Women's suffrage activists in Norway had a major success in 1907 when tax-paying women obtained full suffrage. In fact, all of the Scandinavian countries at the time, not just Norway, had progressed further on the women's suffrage front than the United States.²⁰⁷ Ethel Hurd may have seen examples of Scandinavian suffrage successes as an opportunity to gain more supporters in the Minneapolis area.

While immigrants from Scandinavia generally associated their personal identities within a nation-state context, they often used "Scandinavian" as an umbrella ethnicity in urban social and political organizations.²⁰⁸ In Norway, nationalists asserted Norway's independence from other Scandinavian countries, especially Sweden, in the early twentieth century. In the United States, however, Scandinavian immigrants found it useful to band together, especially in regards to politics. Norwegian and Swedish Americans put their old country rivalries aside, but rarely out of mind, in an effort to assert greater political power. This was especially true in urban areas where Scandinavian Americans were generally an ethnic minority. Forming a suffrage club composed of Scandinavian members rather than separate Norwegian, Danish and Swedish organizations had distinct political advantages in a metropolitan area like Minneapolis. Eliciting members for a Scandinavian organization allowed for larger numbers of potential members than a purely national-based organization composed of only Norwegians, Danes or Swedes. When combined, Scandinavians made up the largest

²⁰⁶ Speech by Nanny Mattson Jaeger, Undated, Box 3, Minnesota Historical Society.

²⁰⁷ P. Orman Ray, "Woman Suffrage in Foreign Countries" *The American Political Science Review* 12, no. 3: 469.

²⁰⁸ Lovoll, *A Century of Urban Life*, 53; Jenswold, "The Hidden Settlement."

immigrant group in Minnesota, surpassing German immigrants by hundreds of thousands of people.²⁰⁹ Thus, a united Scandinavian club made it possible to exert greater influence over the Scandinavian foreign-born population living in Minnesota. Outside the Scandinavian milieu, it was quite natural to associate Norwegians, Swedes and Danes as one ethnic group. Similar languages, customs and histories led many Anglo Americans to interchangeably refer to the various Scandinavian ethnicities.²¹⁰ The formation of a consolidated Scandinavian suffrage association took advantage of this misconception to create what would seem to the Anglos as a stronger, more cohesive lobbying machine.

In urban areas, the tendency for ethnic groups to remain secluded within their national communities was less prevalent than in rural regions of the United States. The lack of space inherent in an urban setting made it more difficult to maintain ethnic distance. The larger number of ethnic groups represented in a city also led to higher instances of multicultural interaction. Norwegians, Danes and Swedes found more in common with one another when met with alternative Eastern and Western European cultures present in a city. The urban environment encouraged a greater inter-Scandinavian network than would have been possible in the rural Midwest.²¹¹

The formation of united Scandinavian-American political organizations in urban areas differed from their rural counterparts. Scandinavian immigrant groups settling in the rural United States were renowned for retreating into enclaves along not only national lines but also according to their local *bygd* or town affiliation.²¹² There was also at times considerable tension between the Norwegians and the Swedes in America due to, among

²⁰⁹ *They Chose Minnesota: a Survey of the State's Ethnic Groups*, 2.

²¹⁰ Jenswold, "The Hidden Settlement," 97.

²¹¹ Jenswold, "The Hidden Settlement," 67.

²¹² For an excellent discussion of this see: Gjerde, *The Minds of the West*.

other things, the political union that was starting to unravel in the old countries. The fight for women's suffrage was further advanced in both Norway and Denmark, whereas the suffrage battle had stalled in Sweden by the start of World War I.²¹³ This could have influenced the attitudes of three separate ethnic groups lumped under one suffrage umbrella, but even with their ethnic differences, urban Scandinavian Americans largely found that unity strengthened their political power.

The SWSA would come to have both local and national importance in rallying Scandinavian-American suffrage support. The notoriety of the SWSA's effectiveness at targeting ethnic Americans to support woman's suffrage spread to other areas of the United States. In time, both surrounding state suffrage societies and national suffrage organizations would communicate interest in the SWSA's methods. The SWSA's success as an ethnic woman's suffrage organization thus influenced local, state and national suffrage campaigns.

Local, State and National Lobbying Efforts

The SWSA's main purpose was to use its ethnic make-up to further the American women's suffrage movement. According to 1915 organization leader, Nanny Mattson Jaeger, the SWSA injected "a little suffrage spice in to the melting pot."²¹⁴ The club worked to reach men and women who might not have identified with the predominant English suffrage mediums, but who might respond well to information given in their native Scandinavian tongue. The SWSA had the unique advantage of utilizing non-English international alliances as well. In particular, their work helped to solidify

²¹³ Ray, "Woman Suffrage in Foreign Countries," 473.

²¹⁴ Report to Minnesota Women's Suffrage Convention 1915, Nanny Mattson Jaeger Papers, Box 2, Minnesota Historical Society.

relations between already successful women's suffrage movements in Scandinavia with the ongoing struggle for the vote in the United States.²¹⁵ Another vital function of the SWSA was its lobbying of Scandinavian-American legislators for support of suffrage bills and amendments.²¹⁶

In its efforts, the SWSA targeted Norwegian-American members of the Minnesota and national Congresses. Among recipients of these letters were Minnesota Congressmen Ole Sageng and N. S. Hegnes and United States Senator Knute Nelson. The SWSA lobbied these legislators for support of women's suffrage based on their ethnic backgrounds. The club made sure to mention the Scandinavian suffrage legislation victories. For example, in 1915 Jaeger informed Hegnes that:

Our Scandinavian Woman Suffrage Association is particularly anxious that no legislator of Scandinavian birth or blood be found less fair-minded toward his sister in this our adopted country than is his brother in the old country.²¹⁷

The SWSA also acted as a liaison between Norwegian-American organizations interested in suffrage and Norwegian-American legislators. For example, the SWSA was an intermediary between the Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod and the United States Congress. There is not much scholarship on the role of Norwegian-American Lutheran churches in the women's suffrage movement. Preliminary scholarship on the topic only briefly mentions that pastors were often publicly indifferent to suffrage unless

²¹⁵ Speech by Nanny Mattson Jaeger, Undated, Nanny Mattson Jaeger Papers, Box 3, Minnesota Historical Society.

²¹⁶ Report to Minnesota Women's Suffrage Convention 1915, Nanny Mattson Jaeger Papers, Box 2, Minnesota Historical Society.

²¹⁷ Letter to N.S. Hegnes from Nanny M Jaeger, Dated February 2, 1915, Nanny Mattson Jaeger Papers, Box 2, Minnesota Historical Society.

the movement was directly tied to Prohibition.²¹⁸ More work needs to be done on the Norwegian Lutheran churches' views on women's suffrage and how they shaped congregational attitudes. For the purposes of this example, however, the attitudes of the Norwegian-American Lutheran churches are not an issue, but the pastors in the Augustana Synod speak to the SWSA's role as a trusted women's suffrage contact that had lobbying pull. Attesting to this was a letter Nanny Mattson Jaeger received from the Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod in 1918.

In this 1918 letter to Jaeger, Norwegian-American Lutheran pastors contested the perceived stereotype that Lutheran pastors opposed women's suffrage. Sixteen pastors from the Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod wanted to right this image and signed a petition calling for the immediate implementation of the Federal Suffrage Amendment on the grounds of female equality. This petition and letter was then sent to Nanny Mattson Jaeger at the SWSA. The pastors asked her to forward it to, among others, United States Senator Knute Nelson.²¹⁹ This letter not only indicates that some of the more liberal Lutheran synods supported suffrage but also demonstrates another function of the SWSA. The Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod perceived the SWSA as having more leverage with the United States senators than the synod alone would have had. The synod also aligned itself ethnically with the SWSA and wanted to use this ethnic affiliation to further strengthen the suffrage cause.

The SWSA was a politically and culturally active organization in the Minneapolis/St. Paul community. The club participated in suffrage activities, raised

²¹⁸ Part of this had to do with women's political roles in the church. Often Lutheran pastors supported women's suffrage with the Prohibition movement in mind. See Lagerquist, *In America the Men Milk the Cows*; Soike, *Norwegian-Americans and the Politics of Dissent*.

²¹⁹ Letter to Nanny Jaeger from G. K. Stark, Dated May 23, 1918, Nanny Mattson Jaeger Papers, Box 2, Minnesota Historical Society.

money for the MWSA and organized Scandinavian-American cultural events in the area. In each of these areas the SWSA demonstrated a keen interest in furthering American suffrage goals while maintaining a distinctly ethnic flair. Suffrage meetings in Minneapolis/St. Paul normally took place within the individual clubs. The PEC, MWSA and the SWSA each held club meetings on a regular basis. The SWSA usually held a meeting every month at one of the member's homes, but sometimes the meetings were more informal and convened at irregular intervals.²²⁰ A representative from the SWSA, most often the president, was present at the PEC meetings that assembled twice monthly. The SWSA representative reported any news from their club, but also fulfilled an ethnic role in the PEC's meetings. Members from the SWSA spoke on a number of subjects pertaining to their ethnicity. Among other things, these topics included women's suffrage in Norway and the state of women's position there.²²¹ The PEC also requested translations from the SWSA of speeches given by the noted Norwegian suffragist, Gina Krog.²²²

The SWSA joined forces with the other Minneapolis/St. Paul suffrage clubs when it came to important suffrage events. One of these events was the suffrage parade held on the national Suffrage Red Letter Day, Saturday, May 2, 1914. Ethel Hurd of the PEC organized the parade. The 4th section of the parade was an area dedicated to the Scandinavian contingent. The SWSA considered the responsibility of representing a Scandinavian group of suffragists to be an opportunity to show their unique ethnic

²²⁰ Report to Minnesota Suffrage Convention, Nanny Mattson Jaeger Papers, Box 2, Minnesota Historical Society.

²²¹ Political Equality Club Minutes, March 7, 1910, Political Equality Club File, Box 1, Minnesota Historical Society.

²²² Political Equality Club Minutes, November 16, 1914, Political Equality Club File, Box 1, Minnesota Historical Society.

support of women's suffrage. Former Norwegian-American President Jenova Martin gave then-President Nanny Mattson Jaeger advice on where more Norwegian-American women might be found to join in the parade.²²³ Nanny Mattson Jaeger also wrote a letter to the members of the SWSA encouraging them to take part and march.²²⁴

The Scandinavian section of the parade led by a Swedish American was a festive addition to the suffrage procession. In a photograph taken of the Scandinavian section, Norwegian, Swedish and Danish flags can be seen waving as women dressed in *bunader* (traditional costumes) march holding English-language signs demanding the vote.²²⁵ These women demonstrated clear identification with Scandinavian identity while alerting the onlookers to their support of an American suffrage cause.

The SWSA also had in its possession a suffrage banner boasting of the triumph of Norwegian suffragists. The words, "Women Vote in Norway" were imprinted on the white silk banner in large black letters.²²⁶ The banner was made to be pinned to the front of a woman's *bunad* and more than likely was used in this parade. The suffrage banner was also used in the Norwegian-American celebration on May 17, 1914 of the centennial of the Norwegian constitution being signed.²²⁷ The use of this suffrage banner illustrates several suffragist strategies. A demonstration of ethnic pride was inherent in Norwegian-American women wearing a banner boasting of Norway's suffrage achievement. This banner also served as suffrage rhetoric shaming Americans into realizing that they were behind other countries in the progression of women's rights. While it carried different

²²³ Letter from Jenova Martin, Dated April 13, Nanny Mattson Jaeger Papers, Box 2, Minnesota Historical Society.

²²⁴ Carrie Fosseen Microfilm, Minnesota Historical Society.

²²⁵ Item J7.11/r6, Minnesota Historical Society

²²⁶ Item number 7522.2.1, Minnesota Historical Society.

²²⁷ Lovoll, *Norwegians on the Prairie*, 186.

messages for Norwegian Americans than it did for Anglos, the suffrage banner clearly highlighted links between the suffragist's battle in the United States and their triumphant suffragist sisters in the old country.

The SWSA also arranged cultural events in the metropolitan area. The SWSA used these opportunities to not only showcase some Scandinavian culture but also to draw a crowd that would be ethnically inclined to support their cause. One of the largest was an evening of dramatic and musical entertainment held on February 28, 1917. This arrangement reflected the heritage of the majority of SWSA's members: Swedish and Norwegian. Two musical dramas were presented that night, one a well-known Swedish play and the other, a rendition of Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*. Many of Minneapolis/St. Paul's Norwegian and Swedish Americans attended this event at Central High School in Minneapolis.²²⁸

The SWSA served a non-ethnic function in the context of the state suffrage organizations. The other Minneapolis suffrage clubs often praised the SWSA for its ability to raise money as an auxiliary organization to the MWSA.²²⁹ The SWSA was specifically responsible for raising money for the construction of a suffragist building on the Minnesota State Fairgrounds. The building was called the Woman's Citizen Building, a name which reflected its use by all of Minneapolis' suffrage clubs, and stood on the fairgrounds as a gathering place for suffragists. The building was also an information hub, educating the public on why women should vote.²³⁰ Even though most of their fundraising money probably came from ethnic supporters, the SWSA did not limit the use

²²⁸ Nanny Mattson Jaeger Papers, Box 2, Minnesota Historical Society.

²²⁹ Hurd, *Woman Suffrage in Minnesota*; Letters from the MWSA to SWSA, Nanny Mattson Jaeger Papers, Boxes 1 and 2, Minnesota Historical Society.

²³⁰ Nanny Mattson Jaeger Papers, Boxes 1 and 2, Minnesota Historical Society.

of the Woman's Citizen Building to Scandinavian-American suffragists. Instead, in the spirit of suffrage cooperation, all of the area's women's suffrage clubs used the building.

The SWSA's involvement in suffrage club meetings, city-wide suffrage events and Scandinavian cultural events reveals how the members used their unique ethnic affiliation to gain support for women's suffrage. Their ethnicity did not, however, play an overt role in every suffrage activity in which they engaged. The SWSA probably targeted Scandinavian Americans in their efforts to raise money for the Woman's Citizen Building. Yet, when the fundraising was completed, the SWSA turned the money over to the MWSA so that the building would be open to all of the suffrage clubs in the metropolitan area. This shows that the club had roles within the state suffrage organization that both took advantage of their ethnic membership and also allowed them to conduct activities that had no direct link to ethnicity.

Other state-level suffrage organizations that had substantial Scandinavian-born populations and the national campaign used the SWSA's competence to rally ethnic support of suffrage. The SWSA's members saw themselves as possessing knowledge that could increase the chances of women getting the right to vote through the involvement of Scandinavian immigrants. Its ethnic foundation gave the SWSA the ability to extend its lobbying reach outside the urban Minneapolis/St. Paul area and the state of Minnesota. Scandinavian Americans across the United States could benefit from the SWSA's campaign message.

The SWSA offered its expertise to nearby state suffrage organizations. Minnesota's neighbor, North Dakota, was a logical choice because Scandinavian

Americans made up nearly a quarter of its population in 1910.²³¹ Nanny Mattson Jaeger sent suffrage articles written in an unidentified Scandinavian language to the North Dakota Votes for Women League (NDVWL) located in North Dakota's largest city, Fargo. She gave them advice on how to gather Scandinavian-American voters as well. Jaeger wanted to ensure that the NDVWL targeted Scandinavian Americans in its state to support suffrage. The league kept in contact with the SWSA concerning the use of ethnicity in the suffrage campaign. Elizabeth O'Neil was the North Dakota league's campaign manager. O'Neil wrote to Nanny Mattson Jaeger in 1914 about continuing inter-state suffrage cooperation. O'Neil promised to publish the articles received from Jaeger in Fargo's Scandinavian newspaper, presumably the Norwegian-language *Fram*. She also indicated that the NDVWL was interested in gaining more Scandinavian-American suffrage supporters.²³² This letter suggests that the SWSA's desire to cooperate with out-of-state suffrage organizations contributed to broadening traditional suffragist strategies. The NDVWL, whether previously aware of Scandinavian-Americans' suffrage potential, now had every reason to cooperate with the SWSA and utilize its state's ethnic constituents in the campaign for women's suffrage.

In the national campaign the SWSA supported and aligned itself with the radical suffrage organization, the National Woman's Party (NWP). The rift between the NWP and the more traditional, middle-class National American Woman Suffrage Association compelled many suffrage clubs to support the national campaign based on their

²³¹ Norwegian Americans made up 18 percent of the 23 percent of Scandinavian-Americans in North Dakota in 1910. See Playford Thorson, "Scandinavians," in *Plains Folk. North Dakota's Ethnic History*, ed. William C. Sherman and Playford Thorson (Fargo, ND: North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, 1988), 186.

²³² Letter from North Dakota Votes for Women League to Nanny Jaeger, Dated October 19, 1914, Nanny Mattson Jaeger Papers, Box 1, Minnesota Historical Society.

identification with either militant or conventional suffrage methodology. A photograph of a Minnesota suffrage delegation holding the SWSA's banner in front of NWP's Congressional Union headquarters showcases the SWSA's decision to align itself with the NWP.²³³ The SWSA also chose to maintain a close relationship with the NWP in other ways, including financial support and advice on recruiting Scandinavian Americans.²³⁴

The SWSA was uniquely qualified as an ethnic rallying force for women's suffrage in the national campaign. Alice Paul, chairwoman of the NWP, saw the SWSA as a way to stir suffrage support in Scandinavian Americans across the United States. The SWSA, although located in Minnesota, could contact Scandinavian-American enclaves throughout the country. If the NWP became aware of Scandinavian-American communities open to information about suffrage, they contacted the SWSA. For example, the NWP wrote the SWSA about some Scandinavian Americans living in Delaware. The NWP then asked the SWSA to use their ethnic identity to encourage these women to support the suffrage cause.²³⁵ The NWP must have preferred the SWSA's reputation as an effective ethnic suffrage organization over the closer Norwegian-American suffrage organization located in Brooklyn, New York.²³⁶

Ethnicity played a role in more than just the Minnesota suffrage campaign. Local suffrage clubs as well as national clubs recognized the SWSA's ability to increase

²³³ Photograph of "Minnesota Day on the Picket Line," 1917, National Woman's Party Records, Group I, Container I:160, Folder: Pickets, 1917, The Library of Congress Repository, Accessed online at: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mnwp.160025>

²³⁴ Letter from National Woman's Party to Nanny Mattson Jaeger, Dated May 4, 1920, Nanny Mattson Jaeger Papers, Box 1, Minnesota Historical Society.

²³⁵ Letter from National Woman's Party to Nanny Jaeger, Dated May 4, 1920, Nanny Mattson Jaeger Papers, Box 1, Minnesota Historical Society.

²³⁶ For more information on the Brooklyn suffrage club see: Bakken, "Our Country Gives us the Vote—America Refuses it."

suffrage supporters through ethnicity. The SWSA was aware of its unique position within the suffrage movement and offered help to out-of-state organizations. At the same time, the NWP reinforced this idea by enlisting the SWSA to target Scandinavian Americans across the United States. State suffrage organizations, such as the NDVWL, utilized some of the SWSA's techniques in targeting its state's Scandinavian population. These examples show that the SWSA's unique position as an ethnic organization not only enabled them to further Minnesota's suffrage goals but also assisted in gaining supporters for other states and the national campaign. This also demonstrates the applicability of ethnicity in the woman's suffrage movement to situations and locations much different than Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Recruitment of Scandinavian-American Suffrage Support

The members and officers of the SWSA influenced the ethnic strategies it employed. Under its first president, Norwegian-born immigrant, Jenova Martin (1907 – 1913), the SWSA reflected Martin's close ties to the Norwegian-American community.²³⁷ Martin's successor, Nanny Mattson Jaeger was a Swedish American married to a Norwegian-American newspaper publisher.²³⁸ Although the reason for Jenova Martin's retirement is unknown, her surrendering of the position led to a definite shift in the attitude and membership of the club.

²³⁷ Hurd, *Woman Suffrage in Minnesota*, 12.

²³⁸ Although not uncommon for Scandinavians to intermarry, the majority of the SWSA's members married men from the same ethnic background. Nanny Mattson Jaeger Papers, Box 4, Minnesota Historical Society and the United States census 1910.

Jaeger was an ardent believer in the assimilation of immigrants into the larger American culture.²³⁹ Yet she still used the appeal of ethnic identity to encourage women of Scandinavian descent to join a suffrage club. The juxtaposition of these ideas seemingly places them at odds with one another. Jaeger married the two dissimilar ideas of the reinforced ethnicity of the SWSA and the process of assimilation through women's suffrage. To Jaeger, ethnicity was a suffragist strategy that could be used to develop the most important part of citizenry: enfranchisement. The process of being enfranchised would allow for assimilation into American society. Thus, women's suffrage was inevitably linked to the process of Americanization and ethnicity was a means to achieve suffrage.²⁴⁰

Suffragists and anti-suffragists alike debated the ethnic specificity of suffrage sensibilities. The debates dealt with the seemingly unique inclination of different ethnicities to either support or oppose woman's suffrage. Much like the dominant suffrage historiography, it was thought in many social circles in the early twentieth century that Anglo Americans were the predominant supporters of suffrage. Irish and German Americans were stereotyped as being ethnically opposed to women's suffrage, but as the membership records of the GFVWC indicate, not all of these ethnic Americans conformed to this image. Suffragists often strategically employed rhetoric concerning the foolishness of ethnic Americans opposed to the cause. Julia B. Nelson, an Anglo-American married to a Norwegian-American, wrote a suffrage poem for the SWSA utilizing this particular style of strategy to display how ridiculous German Americans

²³⁹ Several letters of correspondence between Jaeger and the American Assimilation League asserts Jaeger's belief in assimilation. See the Nanny Mattson Jaeger Papers at the Minnesota Historical Society, Boxes 1 – 3.

²⁴⁰ Speech by Nanny Mattson Jaeger, Undated, Nanny Mattson Jaeger Papers, Box 3, Minnesota Historical Society.

seemed in their antagonism towards equality for women. The poem referred to a farmer, Hans Dunderkompf (Hans Stupidhead) and his contradictory view of women's rights. Dunderkompf believed that women definitely had the right to equality when it came to sharing farm work but did not understand why this right should apply to voting. In fact, Dunderkompf was appalled at the idea of his wife becoming a "man" and the responsibilities that came along with that.²⁴¹ This is just one example of how Anglo and ethnic suffrage rhetoric made use of ethnic stereotypes.

According to political scientists, McDonough and Price, Scandinavian Americans supported woman's suffrage more than any other ethnic group in the Midwest.²⁴² However, when Nanny Mattson Jaeger reported to the Minnesota Women's Suffrage Convention in 1915 she referenced Scandinavian Americans who were not in favor of women's suffrage. Jaeger indicated that Scandinavian Americans who had left their native lands before suffrage movements had taken hold and who had lost contact with the old countries needed as much convincing of why women should be enfranchised as non-Scandinavians.²⁴³ This statement contradicts the very essence of the formation of the SWSA, but provides evidence of a Scandinavian-American presence openly opposed to suffrage which may have included members of the conservative Lutheran church. The existence of a women's suffrage club held together by Scandinavian ethnic identity challenges Jaeger's report to the MWSA and indicates a strong core of Scandinavian American supporters of women's suffrage. Jaeger's acknowledgement of a population of

²⁴¹ Julia B. Nelson, "Hans Dunderkompf's Views on Equality," 1882, Nanny Mattson Jaeger Papers, Box 3, Minnesota Historical Society.

²⁴² McDonough and Price found in their 1985 study that Scandinavian-American men living in Ohio and Michigan in 1912 – 1918 were a large group of ethnic supporters of woman's suffrage, second only to Anglo Americans. Note that the study was only on those who voted "yes." These supporters never made up more than 47 percent of the voters. See "Woman's Suffrage in the Progressive Era," 424.

²⁴³ Speech by Nanny Mattson Jaeger, Undated, Nanny Mattson Jaeger Papers, Box 3, Minnesota Historical Society.

Scandinavian Americans who did not ethnically support female suffrage is understandable in light of the audience she addressed. She spoke to the top suffrage organization in Minnesota and needed to explain why the SWSA was important: to convince Scandinavian Americans in the state to voice their support of suffrage and to further construct an ethnic identity that believed in female political equality. If Jaeger had indicated that Scandinavian Americans favored woman's suffrage without any encouragement, she would have been undermining the very existence of an organization aimed at targeting these Americans.

This brings up an interesting point. Jaeger could have argued for the validity of the SWSA on the opposite premise. The genius of the SWSA depended on its ability to recruit Scandinavian-American members and persuade them to ethnically support women's suffrage. Proof in point, no major ethnic suffrage clubs in Minneapolis aimed at securing the Irish- or German-American vote. This was perhaps due to the notorious difficulty of swaying already opposed minds. A group of people whose identity formation was tied to progressive ideals, as the Scandinavian Americans were, would be much easier to recruit. The SWSA was, in part, an efficient organization because it targeted and recruited people already inclined to support suffrage. This was the strategy the SWSA effectively used in lobbying legislatures and local Scandinavian Americans for support.

The SWSA used Jaeger's reverse psychology in its membership drive. The SWSA's membership enrollment forms during Jaeger's presidency reflect the attitude that Scandinavian Americans had been blamed by an unknown accuser, most likely the Anglo Americans, for having an ethnic predisposition to oppose suffrage.

Above the line on the form where the new member was to sign his or her name stood,

Scandinavian women are quite often accused of being indifferent as to their responsibility in securing the ballot. Perhaps this is true and it is up to us to find out if this is a fact. However, if you are ever so interested, it will not be very effective unless you give your name for moral support.²⁴⁴

This statement not only specifically rallied Scandinavian women, but also shamed them into showing their formal support of suffrage. If they wanted to dispel the notion that Scandinavian Americans typically did not support suffrage then they would have to officially join the fight for the vote. As many Scandinavian Americans had their ethnicity construction tied up in the ideas behind suffrage support, it is not surprising that many of them signed their names in an effort to dispel this supposed accusation.

The SWSA maintained an ethnic identity in furthering the woman's suffrage movement even though an ethnic backlash in the 1910s challenged their very premise for existence. Although Scandinavian Americans may have been ethnically inclined to support suffrage, not all of them wanted to be identified as ethnic Americans. In a letter written to Jaeger in 1914, former president Jenova Martin voiced her frustration with the number of Scandinavian-American women who were involved in other suffrage associations. Martin indicated that this was because Norwegian, Swedish and Danish-Americans avoided ethnic identification.²⁴⁵ This was most likely due to one of two things. The rivalry that existed between the Scandinavian groups may have led some Norwegian, Danish and Swedish Americans to disassociate from a unified ethnic identity. The more probable reason as to why Scandinavian Americans did not

²⁴⁴ Nanny Mattson Jaeger Papers, Box 4, Minnesota Historical Society.

²⁴⁵ Letter from Jenova Martin, Dated April 13, Nanny Mattson Jaeger Papers, Box 2, Minnesota Historical Society.

want to be seen as ethnic Americans in 1914, though, was the onset of World War I.²⁴⁶ The reluctance of ethnic Americans to claim any cultural background other than American was especially prevalent during this time period. The violent backlash against immigrants after 1914 caused many ethnic Americans to renounce their heritages, hurriedly lose their tell-tale old world accents, and adopt the dominant Anglo cultural attitudes in fear of being singled out as anti-American. Although this syndrome was particularly acute in the German-American community, its effects were far reaching in other ethnic communities as well.²⁴⁷

Scandinavian identity's pervasiveness in the SWSA was not swayed even by the threat of ostracism from the dominant culture. The tendency to avoid ethnic identification during World War I also led the SWSA to contemplate a name change in April of 1918. At the regular meeting of the SWSA a motion was brought forward to change the name of the club from the Scandinavian Woman Suffrage Association to the Woman Citizen Association. Arguments ensued about whether or not the club's ethnic identification was detrimental to the cause and a motion to defer the decision to the May meeting was accepted. Jaeger wrote a letter to the SWSA's members in May 1918 about this matter and stated that although the war may have added burdens to their cause, they needed to focus on suffrage.²⁴⁸ That the name did not change after the May 1918 meeting indicates that the motion to alter the SWSA's name to a more Americanized version did not pass. Scandinavian Americans were disassociating themselves from their ethnicity in other

²⁴⁶ Chrislock, *Ethnicity Challenged*.

²⁴⁷ Chrislock, *Ethnicity Challenged*.

²⁴⁸ Letter from Nanny M Jaeger to club members, Dated May 9, 1918, Nanny Mattson Jaeger Papers, Box 2, Minnesota Historical Society.

ways such as through the adaptation of the English language in churches and schools, but the SWSA's ethnic value in the women's suffrage movement outweighed its costs.

Members of the SWSA

Norwegian-American members of the SWSA challenge traditional depictions of urban American suffragists. Fortunately, the SWSA left membership cards that contribute to a deeper understanding of the club's composition.²⁴⁹ These records reveal that ethnic men and women from various economic and household situations signed their names attesting to their support of women's right to vote. In contrast to the Grand Forks Votes for Women Club (GFVWC), which was mostly an Anglo-American club with several other ethnicities represented, membership of the SWSA was exclusive to women who were either born or had family ties to the Scandinavian countries.²⁵⁰ Members from outside Scandinavia, although perhaps encouraged to join other Minnesota suffrage associations, would be declined membership in SWSA.²⁵¹ A number of these Scandinavian-American women were wives of prominent Scandinavian-American men in the Minneapolis/St. Paul community. The club also included women from working class backgrounds and single working women as well. A paradigm of ethnic activities allowed the middle-class to maintain group prominence and included the working class in bourgeoisie activities.²⁵² This helped maintain ethnic solidarity. Men, although not the

²⁴⁹ All percentages are based on the 1910 United States Census. See Appendix A for a discussion of methodology.

²⁵⁰ Report from Nanny Mattson Jaeger to the Suffrage Convention 1915, Nanny Mattson Jaeger Papers, Box 3, Minnesota Historical Society.

²⁵¹ The SWSA did have five members that were second or third generation immigrants from the countries of Bohemia, Germany and Ireland. However, these members were married to prominent Scandinavian-American men which may have excused their non-Scandinavian heritage.

²⁵² Lovoll, *Century of Urban Life*, 176.

main targets of the SWSA's recruitment efforts, were allowed to join and a few of the women's husbands and children were listed as members of the SWSA.²⁵³

The SWSA was a fairly young Swedish-American and Norwegian-American organization. Due to the SWSA's commitment to maintaining an ethnic identity first- and second-generation Norwegian-American immigrants represented 38 percent of the total membership cards while in the GFVWC only 8 percent of its members were first- and second-generation Norwegian-Americans.²⁵⁴ Jaeger's Swedish-American heritage and her prominent role as president help explain why first- and second-generation Swedes represented 49 percent of the SWSA's members. Only two of the names on the membership cards belonged to Danish Americans, representing only 1 percent of the total membership.²⁵⁵

Previous suffrage historians followed the dominant life-cycle trend and portrayed suffragists as middle-class women without children.²⁵⁶ This is disturbingly similar to anti-suffrage rhetoric from the 1910s. Ethel Hurd of the PEC responded to this in 1915 after the Minnesota Anti-Suffrage Association alleged that suffragists were not mothers, instead they were "idle, brainless society women." Hurd argued that suffragists were not elite, society women by quantifying how many of the Minneapolis suffrage club members worked and kept house. She pointed to the SWSA as an example of a club

²⁵³ For example, the Soderberg family and the Sundean family both had daughters in 1910 under the age of ten listed as members of the club.

²⁵⁴ See Table 6 for the ethnic breakdown of the SWSA.

²⁵⁵ These percentages are in conjunction with the ethnic make-up of Minneapolis as a whole. 1st and 2nd generation Swedish-Americans made up over 30% of the foreign-born in Minneapolis, Norwegian-Americans 19% and Danish-Americans only 2.4%. See Gustafson, "Teaching Swedish in the Public Schools," 225.

²⁵⁶ See DuBois, *Harriot Stanton Blatch and the Winning of Woman Suffrage* and *Woman Suffrage and Women's Rights*; Van Voris, *Carrie Chapman Catt*; Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*.

“almost entirely composed of practical housekeepers and mothers.”²⁵⁷ The quantitative evidence supports Hurd’s claim that the SWSA had many members that were mothers and housekeepers.

Younger Scandinavian-American women, often faced with household responsibilities radically different from older women, felt compelled by the cause to such an extent that they became members of the SWSA despite their personal obstacles. When the women’s suffrage movement culminated in 1920, the majority of both the SWSA and the GFVWC’s members would still have been under the age of fifty. The ethnic membership of the SWSA caused it to be one of the younger women’s suffrage organizations in Minneapolis.²⁵⁸ Norwegian and Swedish Americans below the age of fifty dominated the membership of the SWSA even though they made up a smaller percentage of the population than their older counterparts.²⁵⁹ The average age of a member of the SWSA was thirty-one years old and the majority of the members fell between the ages of thirty and thirty-nine in 1910.²⁶⁰ The Norwegian Americans followed the age trend of the other members for the most part. However, the age group with the most Norwegian Americans represented was the forty to forty-nine year-old bracket, making them slightly older than the Swedish-American members. SWSA members were on average ten years older than the majority of the Norwegian Americans involved in the GFVWC.

²⁵⁷ Letter from the Political Equality Club to Ole Sageng, Dated February 22, 1915, Ole Sageng Papers, Box 2, Minnesota Historical Society.

²⁵⁸ Stuhler, *Gentle Warriors*, 81.

²⁵⁹ First generation Swedish and Norwegian immigrants between the ages of 18 – 50 were only 14% of Minnesota’s population. First generation Swedish and Norwegian immigrants over the age of 50 were 29% of Minnesota’s population. Data extracted from 1910 census using IPUMS.

²⁶⁰ See Table 7 for the age breakdown of the SWSA.

In general, urban women had different family and household responsibilities than rural women who lived on farms. In addition to this, the Norwegian-American members of the GFVWC were younger than Norwegian-American members of the SWSA, which influenced the number of underage children they had living at home. Fewer than half of the SWSA's members had children under the age of eighteen living at home in 1910 in contrast to more than three-quarters of GFVWC's Norwegian-American members.²⁶¹ This highlights the situations of the rural Norwegian-American women who joined the GFVWC despite their domestic situations. In comparison, Norwegian Americans in the SWSA were the largest group of members that did not have any minor children in 1910. In fact, 67 percent of Norwegian-American members did not have underage children living at home, and only 10 percent of them had more than two children living at home in 1910.²⁶² These findings support women's life cycle scholarship, but not all women conformed to this pattern.

While urban Norwegian Americans may have participated in a suffrage organization at a greater rate than rural Norwegian Americans, they did so with fewer family responsibilities. Perhaps this was because rural Norwegian-American women had the opportunity to engage in equal working relationships with their husbands on the farm, while urban Norwegian-American women had nuclear families headed by a male breadwinner. The nature of farm life may have led rural Norwegian-American women to break with the generalities often referred to in life cycle scholarship more frequently than urban Norwegian-American women. It is important to note, however, that over a third of

²⁶¹ See Table 9 for the number of members living with children under the age of eighteen in 1910.

²⁶² The lack of date on the membership cards makes it difficult to know exactly how many SWSA women had minor children when they joined. Some of the children may have reached the age of majority in-between 1910 and the date their mothers joined the SWSA.

Norwegian Americans involved in the SWSA had minor children living at home in 1910. Of the Norwegian-American women with children at home, the majority of them only had one child, but one Norwegian-American member had five minor children.²⁶³ As stated earlier, the GFVWC's Norwegian-American members represented the largest group who had children living at home in 1910. The census did not list any domestic servants for these households, leaving the responsibility of child-rearing to the women themselves as well as taking care of farm and household responsibilities.²⁶⁴ These women may have had support systems available to them that other women did not, or perhaps their passion for the cause led them to find ways to participate in the suffrage club despite the obstacles. This raises many questions regarding whether or not Scandinavian-American mothers were unique in their political memberships. Further quantitative research needs to be conducted on Anglo-Americans suffragists to determine the degree of the SWSA and GFVWC's uniqueness. These Scandinavian-American women offer proof that not all women allowed their domestic situations to dictate their political actions.

Scandinavian-American interest in suffrage in Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota did not always stem from an upper middle-class vantage point. This research confirms Hurd's 1915 argument that Minneapolis suffragists were not just society women. In fact, just as many of SWSA's members received their income from laborer occupations as professional occupations.²⁶⁵ The result clearly demonstrates that not all American suffragists came from the traditional middle class. The SWSA consciously made it easier

²⁶³ 36 percent of Norwegian-American women with children at home only had one child.

²⁶⁴ 1910 United States Census.

²⁶⁵ There were twelve occupational categories: professional, government employee, merchant, skilled worker, artisan, laborer, salesman, farmer, female occupation, own income, none and other. See Appendix A for a discussion of methodology.

for poorer households to join by eliminating dues, and their membership lists reflect their desire to encourage women from poorer economic situations. This may help to explain why the largest number of SWSA's members came from skilled worker households. They represented 14 percent of club members. However, a considerably lower number of Norwegian Americans fell into the skilled worker category compared to Swedish Americans.²⁶⁶ Norwegian Americans involved in the SWSA came from families with mostly artisan and salesman occupations. The artisan category consisted of jobs such as carpenters and cabinet makers. Nearly one-quarter of the Norwegian-Americans were married to either artisans or salesmen. The professional job category included professionals such as lawyers, doctors and even Minnesota's Governor, Adolph O. Eberhart. Only a little over 10 percent of the club's Swedish- and Norwegian-American members came from families that fell into the professional occupation category. This finding challenges traditional suffrage historiography's basis in the middle and upper classes and offers a new way to view the American woman's suffrage movement.

The SWSA shows how urbanity affected the occupational backgrounds of its members. The GFVWC's Norwegian-American members came from mostly agricultural backgrounds. None of the SWSA's Norwegian-American members were farmers and only 2.5 percent of the rest of its members had farming occupations in 1910. This sheds more light on how urban and rural locations altered the circumstances of the Norwegian-American members involved in the American women's suffrage movement. There were important differences between the Norwegian Americans involved in a city club and those involved in a rural suffrage organization, and their household occupations reflect this difference.

²⁶⁶ See Table 10 for the correlation between ethnicity and occupational backgrounds.

Most of the SWSA and GFVWC's female members were not single, working women.²⁶⁷ The members who worked were mainly single women who had recently immigrated. Only 12 percent of the SWSA's members and 11 percent of the GFVWC's members were women working in traditional female occupations. This further challenges the notion that suffragists engaged in the battle for the vote because they did not have children. Single, working women did not flock to join the SWSA in greater numbers than did married women who had children. Differences in Scandinavian ethnic background did not determine whether or not single working women joined the SWSA. First- and second-generation Norwegian Americans and Swedish Americans made up an equal number of single, working women in the SWSA. Yet a generational difference was evident in single, working SWSA members; a much larger percentage of first-generation Norwegian immigrants were single and working than first-generation Swedes and second-generation Norwegian Americans.

Scandinavian-American men were also interested in women obtaining equal enfranchisement. The urban location affected the rate that Norwegian-American men participated in a suffrage club. Norwegian-American men joined the SWSA at a much greater rate than their rural counterparts. Only one rural Norwegian-American man was a part of the GFVWC. There were twelve men listed as members of the SWSA. This indicates that urban Scandinavian-American men either had more time to participate in organizational activities than their rural counterparts or the ethnic premise of the club encouraged more men to join on the basis of ethnicity, not just gender. Of SWSA's twelve male members, only three had wives listed as members in the club. Scandinavian-American men, especially Swedish Americans, were involved in the SWSA not because

²⁶⁷ See Table 11 for the breakdown of the correlations between female, occupation and ethnicity.

of their wives' affiliation with it, but because of their own attitudes towards woman's suffrage. The ethnic composition of these men was predominantly Swedish American, however, 22 percent of the men were second-generation Norwegian-American men.²⁶⁸

The male members of the SWSA did not come from much different financial backgrounds than their female counterparts.²⁶⁹ In fact, 28.5 percent of the males accounted for in the 1910 census were skilled workers and only 18 percent were professionals. An equal number of Swedish and Norwegian Americans made up the skilled worker males, while the professionals all had Swedish backgrounds. These numbers show that the male members of the SWSA further demonstrate that suffrage supporters did not only come from middle or upper middle-class backgrounds.

There is considerably more information about Norwegian-American SWSA women from the middle or upper classes because of their higher visibility.²⁷⁰ Unfortunately, Norwegian-American women from artisan, laborer and sales backgrounds involved in the SWSA do not have a historical voice beyond the quantitative data. The women that did come from middle or upper middle-class standings were involved in ethnic organizations besides the SWSA. The number of Norwegian-American members involved both in the SWSA and other ethnic organizations is significant. It was typical of urban Norwegian Americans to form organizations based on their ethnicity to promote

²⁶⁸ See Table 8 for the male/female distribution of ethnicity.

²⁶⁹ See Table 12 for the correlations between males, occupations and ethnicity.

²⁷⁰ Unfortunately, little can be said about the leadership of the SWSA. Nanny Mattson Jaeger is the only leader that is listed in the 1910 or 1920 census. Jaeger was a second-generation Swedish American married to a first-generation Norwegian-American newspaper publisher. She was 50 years old in 1910 and had a teenage daughter living at home. The Jaeger household did not have a domestic servant. Previous SWSA President, Jenova Martin, was a first-generation Norwegian American. Little is known about her family and economic situations, but it has been theorized that her husband came from the working class. For an unsubstantiated discussion of her economic situation see: Bakken, "Our Country Gives us the Vote—America Refuses it." The vice-president, secretary, and treasurer of the SWSA could not be found in the 1910 or 1920 census or Minnesota death records.

and maintain Norwegian values.²⁷¹ These organizational women represented the backbone of the upper-middle-class Norwegian-American community in Minneapolis/St. Paul. They formed networks of active association women who had ties outside of the framework of the SWSA.

Urban Organizational Women

An examination of the literary clubs that Norwegian-American SWSA women were involved in provides insight into the types of ideas that were being discussed within this network of women and exposes the connection between urban Norwegian Americans and Norwegian-language literature. The Lyngblomsten Literary Society along with the Progressive Literary Club further serve as cases that illustrate the intellectual ideas circulated in the upper Norwegian-American classes in Minneapolis and St. Paul. Some of the most well-known Norwegian-American members of the SWSA were involved in literary organizations. Many of these members were locally published poets or authors and this correlated with their interest in literary clubs and also their relative fame.

One of the earliest Norwegian-American literary societies, the Lyngblomsten Society, engaged in activities that challenged the traditional role of women's organizations. The club was formed in 1902 as a means to discuss Norwegian literature and culture, but quickly evolved into a women's aid organization. Just one year after its creation, the Lyngblomsten Society switched from its literary focus to building a home for the aged Norwegian-American population.²⁷² The Lyngblomsten Society's membership grew to several hundred members over the course of a few years due to the

²⁷¹ Jenswold, "The Hidden Settlement," 99; Lovoll, *A Century of Urban Life*, 68.

²⁷² Carl G. O. Hansen, *My Minneapolis* (Minneapolis, MN: Standard Press, 1956), 258.

popularity of the project. This woman's organization did atypical woman's aid work because of their involvement in what were traditionally thought of as male activities. The members not only raised money for the old-age home but also met with contractors, architects and land-owners to get the nursing home built in 1912.²⁷³ This work stretched the boundaries of typical ladies aid organizations that restricted their activities to fundraising. Instead, the Lyngblomsten Society started as an organization dedicated to Norwegian literature and ended up challenging societal norms regarding the scope of women's aid work.

Laura Bratager is an example of an inter-organizational Norwegian American. She was active in the SWSA and the Lyngblomsten Society. Bratager was born in Norway and came to the United States in the 1880s. A noted poet, she was married to a decorator and had two young children at home in the nineteen-teens. Yet Bratager still managed to remain active in the Norwegian-American community.²⁷⁴ Bratager was a leading force in the Lyngblomsten Society and also wrote Norwegian suffragist propaganda for the SWSA to use.²⁷⁵ In her poem entitled *Hvorfor Maa Kvinden faa Stemmeret?* (Why Must Women Get the Right to Vote?) Bratager cited many maternal feminist reasons for why women should be able to vote.²⁷⁶ Among other things, women's concern for the weak in society and their quest for peace, not war, are heavily referred to in this poem.²⁷⁷

²⁷³ Hansen, *My Minneapolis*, 258.

²⁷⁴ Nanny Mattson Jaeger Papers, Box 1, Minnesota Historical Society.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ For a further discussion of maternal feminism see Ann Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood in Western Europe 1890–1970* (New York: Palgrave & Macmillan, 2005).

²⁷⁷ Undated poem signed by Laura Bratager, Nanny Mattson Jaeger Papers, Box 1, Minnesota Historical Society.

The Lyngblomsten Society represented a club that used gender and ethnicity to further its goals. It started as a literary society interested in discussing Norwegian culture. It then transformed into an aid society determined at constructing a home for elderly Norwegian Americans. Although the society's mission changed throughout its existence, the foundation stayed the same. Norwegian-American women interested in discussing ideas and then taking action remained the majority of the society's members. The Lyngblomsten Society was a precursor to another Norwegian-American club aimed at intersecting ethnicity and gender in Minneapolis, the Progressive Literary Club.

The Progressive Literary Club was officially formed in 1921, just after the nineteenth amendment to the United States' constitution was signed. The literary club was in existence prior to 1921, but was much more loosely organized. The Progressive Literary Club met monthly and used literature as a means of preserving Norwegian culture and language. The club maintained a membership of seventy-five members until its end in 1991.²⁷⁸ The Progressive Literary Club discussed ideas of women's equality and maintained gendered ties to Norway throughout its existence.

The Progressive Literary Club was connected to the women's suffrage movement through its members. Famous Norwegian women, including Norway's first female factory inspector, came to the United States to take part in the International Woman's Council held in Washington, D.C. The Progressive Literary Club hosted these women at the Curtis Hotel on June 5, 1925.²⁷⁹ During this meeting, the noted Norwegian-American Republican spokeswoman, Carrie Fosseen, gave a speech entitled, "The Working Out of Suffrage." Fosseen stated that Norwegian women brought a sense of appreciation for the

²⁷⁸ The Progressive Literary Club Records, Norwegian-American Historical Association.

²⁷⁹ Hansen, *My Minneapolis*, 324.

ballot and political freedom with them to the United States. She argued that this, in part, enabled Norwegian-American women to actively use their new-found right to vote.²⁸⁰

Carrie Fosseen's speech links the Progressive Literary Club with the fight for women's enfranchisement. The fact that the club chose Fosseen to speak on the subject of suffrage women shows a correlation between the club's ideals and the women's rights movement. It also demonstrates an international relationship between feminists in Norway and the United States facilitated by a literary club.

The common memberships of the SWSA and the Progressive Literary club further strengthened the tie between suffrage and Norwegian-American women's literary clubs. Even the SWSA's former president, Jenova Martin, was a member of the Progressive Literary Club. Martin's notoriety in Minneapolis as a well-known Norwegian-American poet made her an attractive member of the club.²⁸¹ She joined the organizer of the Progressive Literary Club, Helen Egilsrud, in promoting the cultural ideals of Norwegian Americans through literature and the SWSA. Egilsrud, another Norwegian-American author, did not immigrate to Minneapolis until the start of World War I. However, in the short period between the beginning and end of World War I, she organized both the Twin City Musical and Dramatic Club and the Progressive Literary Club.²⁸² She also remained active in the SWSA during this time period.

Egilsrud wrote an article entitled "Our Ideals" for the centennial of Norwegian-American women's immigration to America in 1925. In this article she attributed the success of women's suffrage movement to "racial ideals" Norwegians brought to

²⁸⁰ Carrie Fosseen, "The Working Out of Suffrage," given June 5, 1925 at the meeting of the Progressive Literary Club, Carrie Fosseen Papers, Microfilm Roll 1, Minnesota Historical Society.

²⁸¹ Hansen, *My Minneapolis*, 240.

²⁸² Hansen, *My Minneapolis*, 239 – 40; The Progressive Literary Club Records, Norwegian-American Historical Association.

America. She surmised that it was Norwegian Americans' "duty to support and fight" for these ideals of "freedom, honesty and the spirit of progressiveness" in their new adopted country.²⁸³ Egilsrud characterized Norwegian-American ethnicity as inherently progressive. This rhetoric contributed to feelings of ethnic pride through the explanation of why American women won the vote.

Norwegian-American women, at least of the middle-classes, maintained and forged networks combining their interests in ethnicity and women's rights. The overlapping members of the SWSA and Norwegian-American literary societies, such as Lyngblomsten and the Progressive Literary Club, show a connection between suffrage and Norwegian literature. Some of the most prominent Norwegian-American women in the SWSA also belonged to literary clubs. These clubs enabled Norwegian Americans interested in women's rights to share their interests and ideas in an environment that embraced their ethnicity and their gender. The literary societies also demonstrate a clear transatlantic link of an idea exchange between the old world and the new.

The Norwegian Americans in the SWSA show how ethnic predispositions to support woman's suffrage could be utilized in an urban setting. The metropolitan area of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota had larger ethnic networks to support a Scandinavian-based suffrage club that rural areas did not have. Also, Minneapolis' unique position as a Scandinavian-American center in the United States allowed the SWSA to work from an ethnically supported headquarters. The SWSA's location and ethnicity enabled them to take advantage of international suffrage connections, lobby Norwegian-American legislators and utilize successful Scandinavian suffrage achievements in their efforts to gain supporters.

²⁸³ Egilsrud, "Vor Idealer," 132 - 135.

The case of the SWSA also demonstrates that a multitude of people were involved in the fight for women's rights. Men, women and children cut across ethnic lines to form a coalition of Scandinavian Americans interested in suffrage. These people show that not all women's suffrage activists came from middle- or upper-middle-class, Anglo-Saxon backgrounds. The Swedish and Norwegian-American members of the SWSA represented diverse age groups, family situations and financial backgrounds. The Scandinavian-American women involved in the SWSA closely identified themselves as ethnic-Americans in support of suffrage. The SWSA serves as an example of a suffrage club that flourished because of its unique ability to use these particular cases of ethnic support in the woman's suffrage movement.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This thesis contributes to the fields of European and American suffrage, immigration and gender history. Norwegian ethnic construction fed off the transnational exchange of ideas between Europe and the United States. The women's suffrage movement gained ground during the same time period that mass immigration to the United States occurred. Taking an active role in their new American home, European immigrants incorporated political movements into their own efforts at becoming ethnic Americans. My findings explore the dichotomy between urban and rural America and not only emphasize the presence of ethnic participation in the women's suffrage movement but also demonstrate the role of environment on ethnicity construction and political behavior. The implementation of non-traditional qualitative sources such as literature and quantitative analysis of Grand Forks and Minneapolis suffrage club records document a different side of the American women's suffrage movement than previously studied. This thesis showcases how creative use of archival materials can lead to greater knowledge about the types of men and women involved in politics and contribute to a more complex understanding of an existent historiographic discourse.

The examination of rural and urban Norwegian Americans reveals many levels of diversity within the American women's suffrage movement. This study includes important categories of analysis such as ethnicity, geography, culture and class that reveal the complexity of the movement. It also emphasizes the role of ordinary citizens in the

women's suffrage movement instead of focusing only on national women's suffrage leaders. When the United States Congress ratified the Nineteenth Amendment on August 18, 1920, generations of American women and men celebrated the culmination of the women's suffrage movement. Carrie Chapman Catt, Lucy Stone and Harriot Stanton Blatch were certainly among the celebrants. Although their leadership in the national women's suffrage campaign was paramount, this thesis demonstrates that these Anglo-American women do not sufficiently represent all American suffragists. Norwegian women had won the right to vote nearly seven years earlier and many Norwegians living in the United States wanted -- and actively sought -- the same rights in their new homeland as their sisters back in the old country.

One of the most important vehicles for the ideas behind Norwegian-American progressive identity formation was the printed media. Ethnic rhetoric concerning Norwegian-American suffrage support spread throughout rural and urban Minnesota and North Dakota via Norwegian-language literature. Norwegian Americans adopted parts of this collective rhetoric and used these homemaking myths for different purposes. Some internalized these ideas and came to see themselves as inherent proponents of equal citizenship rights for women while others sparingly employed this identity when dealing with the world around them. The basis for this identity stemmed from political and social movements back in Norway.

Norway's literary and social advancements during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries served as documented examples of Norway's progressiveness. The combination of Norwegian women's suffrage victories and literature written by Camilla Collett, Henrik Ibsen, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson and Jonas Lie led to an exchange of ideas

between Norway and the United States that aided in Norwegian-American ethnic construction. Norwegian authors and women suffragists became symbols of a cultural commitment to women's rights. This became the basis for a Norwegian-American political identity that supported women's enfranchisement. In particular, Norwegian-language literature imparted knowledge about feminism, progress and equality to both urban and rural Norwegian Americans. Norwegian books written by Collett, Ibsen, Bjørnson and Lie included social and poetic realistic treatises on men and women's social positions and transmitted these ideas to their readers. *Kvinden og Hjemmet* brought these books to Norwegian-American subscribers through the publication of literary supplements and correlated the authors' critiques of women's social situations to the practical victories of the Norwegian suffrage movement. These printed materials founded on Norwegian examples of progressive values contributed to the construction of a Norwegian-American ethnicity that advocated women's suffrage.

A politicized Norwegian ethnicity pervaded Norwegian-American communities, but its application differed in urban and rural locations. Clearly, families like the Rollags, who lived on the isolated Minnesota prairie in the 1870s, remained connected to ideas concerning ethnic support of women's suffrage through Norwegian-language literature. The case of the Rollags suggest that Norwegian Americans living in very remote areas associated their ethnicity with progressive ideals concerning women, but perhaps did not have access to the institutional infrastructure necessary for an organized women's suffrage club.²⁸⁴ Some of differences between urban and rural membership rates may

²⁸⁴ The nearest town to the Rollag farms was Luverne, Minnesota, with a population of 1486 in 1890. The population of Luverne increased to 2,540 by 1910 and later hosted one of Minnesota's women's suffrage organizational branches. Their membership records, unfortunately, have not been archived. See Hurd,

have to do with Minneapolis' location as a regional hub closely linked to national movements while rural areas remained largely isolated from centers of government. Rural suffrage clubs not only had fewer people to recruit as potential members but also had the added difficulty of assuring their members that their voices would count on the national stage. These differences affected the rate at which Anglo and ethnic Americans joined the Grand Forks Votes for Women Club.

Norwegian Americans' rural settlement patterns led them to form an ethnic identity based on external and internal influences. Rural life largely isolated Norwegian Americans from opportunities to engage in the women's suffrage movement or to record their activity for historical study, but the ethnic literature they read and innovative analysis of the archival evidence available presents enables new scholarship on rural suffragists. Rural Norwegian American readership of Norwegian-language printed materials laid a foundation for their participation in a women's suffrage organization. The Grand Forks, North Dakota, suffrage club provides some documentation of rural Norwegian-American involvement in an organized branch of the national suffrage movement. The Norwegian-American members of the GFVWC highlight the diversity of American suffragists through the examination of a rural-based suffrage organization. As the largest first-generation ethnic group represented in the Grand Forks suffrage club, these Norwegian Americans illustrate that perceptions of a shared progressive identity encouraged their participation in an organized club. Their engagement in predominantly agricultural occupations also demonstrates that rural Norwegian-American suffragists did not come from traditional middle or upper-class backgrounds. The full significance of

Woman Suffrage in Minnesota (Minneapolis: Inland Press, 1916) for a list of the Minnesota state-level suffrage organizations.

these findings become apparent when juxtaposed with the case of urban Norwegian Americans.

The Norwegian-American members of the Minneapolis, Minnesota-based Scandinavian Woman's Suffrage Association (SWSA) served as the urban component of this study. These suffragists used the perceived Norwegian-American progressive identity prevalent during the turn of the twentieth century as rhetoric in their appeals to new Scandinavian-American recruits and Norwegian-American United States Congressmen. The SWSA shows how an ethnic suffrage organization implemented its ethnic rhetoric as a tool to gain support for the cause. The make-up of the SWSA's membership also demonstrates that Norwegian Americans involved in the club differed from their rural counterparts.

Urban Norwegian-American members of the SWSA had fewer family responsibilities than rural Norwegian American members of the GFVWC. This may have been due to the fact that in general, North Dakota's "urban" population was much younger than Minnesota's "urban" population.²⁸⁵ In turn, Norwegian Americans living in Grand Forks followed this trend and were younger than urban Norwegian Americans in Minneapolis. The demands of farm life encouraged younger men and women to take on the burdens of creating farmland on the prairie and their efforts often required men especially to limit their social activities in lieu of taking care of the farm. These postulations give some explanation for why rural Norwegian-American suffragists were mainly young women with children at home.

²⁸⁵ 1910 United State Census, "North Dakota Population," 344; 1910 United States Census, "Minnesota Population," 992.

The location of the SWSA led to a different type of Norwegian-American suffragist. The nature of metropolitan cities contributed to urbanites having a different lifestyle than those living in rural areas and this affected the characteristics of the average Norwegian-American suffragist in Minneapolis. Urban Norwegian-American suffragists were older, had fewer underage children living at home and included more male membership than the GFVWC. The membership of the SWSA strengthens the argument that the majority of Norwegian-American women's suffrage supporters did not come from the traditional middle or upper classes regardless of their urban or rural location. For obvious reasons, urban suffragists were not farmers like rural Norwegian-American club members. Most urban Norwegian Americans did, however, have either artisan or laborer occupations. This demonstrates that both rural and urban Norwegian Americans represented a different type of American suffragist than their Anglo-American sisters.

The findings of this thesis contribute to a greater understanding of the complexity of the American women's suffrage movement. It was Norwegian Americans' collective desire to illustrate their commitment to democracy and equality that influenced their attitudes towards women's suffrage. Norwegian-American men and women from both urban and rural environments participated in the American political quest for female suffrage. Their ethnic identity encouraged this involvement and at times made it their "duty."²⁸⁶ News of Norwegian suffrage successes quickly transformed into new homemaking myths, justifying Norwegians' claim to an American existence.

Norwegian Americans implemented perceived gender roles in their construction of homemaking myths and ethnic identities. Men played a part in forming attitudes

²⁸⁶ Egilsrud, "Vor Idealer," 132 – 135.

towards female enfranchisement and often participated on both sides of the debate. Norwegian men and their gendered sense of identity affected the extent to which they and their wives engaged in suffrage activities. This is particularly true in the case of the rural Norwegian-American female members of the GFVWC. Most of these women had underage children at home and a farm to help run. Their husbands' support of their participation in the club went further than neutrality; these men had to release their wives from parenting and farming responsibilities so that they had time to go into Grand Forks and maintain suffrage club memberships. These examples highlight the complexity of ethnic gender roles and their influence on the larger suffrage movement.

The actions of Norwegian-American suffragists attest to an ethnic desire to support progressive movements. The reasons behind this ethnic predilection for progressive ideals concerning democracy and equality are certainly multifaceted and thus inherently difficult to ascertain. Perhaps Norway's historical climate as an isolated agricultural country that emphasized women's necessary role within farming, fishing and lumbering communities increased the value and independence of Norwegian women. This research raises important questions about how men's and women's gendered roles played out in the Norwegian nationalist movement during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and how these constructions influenced the women's rights movement in Norway and the United States.

This thesis highlights regional variation in Norwegian-American ethnic support of women's suffrage. However, more research on the role of Norwegian-American ethnicity in the women's suffrage movement needs to be conducted. The exploration of additional rural suffrage club records along with a comparison of Minnesota and North Dakota state

voting records on the issue of female suffrage will shed light on the uniqueness of this thesis' findings. Also, more primary document research into traditional archival materials such as diaries and letters can contribute to a greater understanding of how Norwegian-Americans, especially those living in rural areas, internalized the printed media they read and whether or not these materials influenced their support or opposition for women's suffrage. Comparing the immigration histories of known anti-suffrage groups such as Irish and Italian Americans and Norwegian-American suffragists will contribute to understanding how ethnicity, gender and political behavior co-existed. Further examination of this topic will continue to inspire new questions about how the construction of a transatlantic identity in favor of women's suffrage affected the lives of Norwegian and Norwegian-American men and women and the political environments they variegated.

APPENDICES

Appendix A Methodology

A quantitative look at suffrage club membership records based on the United States census shows which women participated in suffrage clubs in urban Minneapolis, Minnesota and rural Grand Forks, North Dakota. Quantitative analysis also demonstrates the ethnic make-up, age, family and economic situations of suffrage club members.

Grand Forks Votes for Women Club

I cross-referenced the Grand Forks Votes for Women Club (GFVWC) membership list from 1910 with the 1910 United States Federal Manuscript Census in an effort to reveal the composition of the GFVWC's members. The quantitative data made available from this qualitative source permitted me to examine the backgrounds of rural American suffrage supporters. The names found in the 1910 census illuminated additional data not included on the forms. I accessed the census online at www.ancestrylibrary.com. I then compiled the data and used SPSS to process the information. The results show the GFVWC's ethnic composition, gender and age of members, household composition and economic status.

The ten year gap in census compilation creates limitations for the data. The membership roster allow for a deeper understanding of the GFVWC's membership, but the information gained needs to be viewed within the source's limitations. Not all of the names on the membership cards could be found in either the 1910 or 1920 census. Of the 213 names on the membership list, I could not locate 70 of the names in either census.

Also, determining whether or not a member had minor children living at home in 1910 did not mean that this was still the case in 1920 when suffrage was won. Although

there are limitations to this quantitative source, the information gained from the SWSA's membership cards is invaluable.

The use of the manuscript census also allowed me to investigate a member's economic status. Traditional three-tiered class structure or dichotomous white-collar versus blue-collar categorization often neglect to show the intricacies of class composition. While it can be useful in drawing clear distinctions between social groups, it is not the most nuanced approach to studying economic status. The federal census categorizes the population's occupations too broadly with only eight divisions. These groupings included lumping agriculture, forestry and animal husbandry together as well as placing all service occupations under the heading "Public Service." The census does not distinguish between high-level skilled positions and low-level workers within these broader categorizations. Therefore, for the scope of this study I categorized members' occupations in order to reveal the member's economic status. The occupation listed for themselves or their husbands in the census enabled me to place them within a categorical economic structure. Due to the rural nature of the GFVWC, I based the occupational categories on the dominant jobs listed on the census. As my purpose was to reveal the most accurate depiction of a member's social status, I divided the occupations into thirteen categories: Professional (lawyer, doctor, engineer, dentist, professor, magazine publisher, pharmacist, chiropractor, governor), Government Employee (clerk, teacher, streetcar operator), Merchant (owner of own store, grocer), Skilled Worker (foreman, machinist, contractor, electrician, plumber, tailor), Artisan (carpenter, cabinet maker, decorator), Laborer (laundry driver, painter, blacksmith, laborer, factory worker, bricklayer), Salesman (salesman, real estate agent), Farmer, Female Occupations

(dressmaker, stenographer, millinery, domestic servant), Own Income, None, Other (student, newspaper collector) and Widow.

Scandinavian Woman's Suffrage Association

One hundred seventy-eight membership cards found in Nanny Mattson Jaeger's papers at the Minnesota Historical Society allowed me to analyze the SWSA. Although the cards are undated, Jaeger's ownership of the cards indicates they stem from her presidency (1913 – 1920). The quantitative data made available from this qualitative source permitted me to examine the backgrounds of Scandinavian-American suffrage supporters. I cross-referenced and analyzed the data in the same manner as the GFVWC. The results from the quantitative data analysis show the SWSA's ethnic composition, gender and age of members, household composition and economic status. I used similar occupational categories to analyze the SWSA's members' economic backgrounds. There were only twelve occupational categories as no widows were listed for the SWSA: Professional (lawyer, doctor, engineer, dentist, professor, magazine publisher, pharmacist, chiropractor, governor), Government Employee (clerk, teacher, streetcar), Merchant (owner of own store, grocer), Skilled Worker (foreman, machinist, contractor, electrician, plumber, tailor), Artisan (carpenter, cabinet maker, decorator), Laborer (laundry driver, painter, blacksmith, laborer, factory worker, bricklayer), Salesman (salesman, real estate agent), Farmer, Female Occupations (dressmaker, stenographer, millinery, domestic servant), Own Income, None, and Other (student, cook, barber, bartender, courier, credit man, newspaper collector, clergyman).

The results from this data analysis allowed me to determine what type of rural and urban actors participated in the women's suffrage movement. The lack of source material available for ethnic suffragists required me to make use of the only qualitative source available: the GFVWC and SWSA membership lists from 1910 and 1913. My use of quantitative analysis allowed me to gain as much information as possible from this limited source.

Appendix B
Tables

Table 1. Grand Forks Votes for Women Club Ethnic Make-up.

		Frequency	Valid Percent	
Ethnicity	1st gen Norwegian	4	2.8	
	2nd gen Norwegian	8	5.6	
	2nd gen Swede	2	1.4	
	1st gen Dane	1	0.7	
	3rd gen American	62	43.4	
	1st gen Canada English	26	18.2	
	2nd gen Canada English	8	5.6	
	1st gen Canada French	1	0.7	
	2nd gen Canada French	1	0.7	
	1st gen English	3	2.1	
	2nd gen English	5	3.5	
	1st gen Irish	1	0.7	
	2nd gen Irish	13	9.1	
	2nd gen Scotland	2	1.4	
	1st gen Russian	1	0.7	
	2nd gen French	1	0.7	
	1st gen German	1	0.7	
	2nd gen German	3	2.1	
		Total	143	100
	Missing	System*	70	
Total		213		

*Note that the Missing Category denotes members that could not be found in either the 1910 or 1920 census.

Table 2. Grand Forks Votes for Women Club Member Ages.

		Age in 1910								Total
		0-9	10 - 19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	
Ethnicity	1st gen Norwegian	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	4
	2nd gen Norwegian	0	1	1	4	1	1	0	0	8
	2nd gen Swede	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
	1st gen Dane	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	3rd gen American	0	6	15	12	17	10	1	0	61
	1st gen Canada English	0	1	3	11	7	3	0	1	26
	2nd gen Canada English	1	1	1	1	3	1	0	0	8
	1st gen Canada French	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	2nd gen Canada French	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	1st gen English	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	3
	2nd gen English	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	0	5
	1st gen Irish	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	2nd gen Irish	0	0	2	5	2	3	1	0	13
	2nd gen Scotland	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
	1st gen Russian	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	2nd gen French	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	1st gen German	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	2nd gen German	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
	Total	1	9	28	44	35	21	3	1	142

Table 3. Grand Forks Votes for Women Club Members and the Number of Minor Children Living at Home in 1910.

		Children at Home in 1910						Total
		0	1	2	3	4	5+	
Ethnicity	1 st gen Norwegian	0	3	1	0	0	0	4
	2nd gen Norwegian	3	1	1	3	0	0	8
	2nd gen Swede	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
	1 st gen Dane	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	3 rd gen American	39	4	9	6	2	2	62
	1st gen Canada English	10	2	3	7	2	2	26
	2nd gen Canada English	5	3	0	0	0	0	8
	1st gen Canada French	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	2nd gen Canada French	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	1 st gen English	1	0	1	0	1	0	3
	2nd gen English	3	1	1	0	0	0	5
	1 st gen Irish	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	2nd gen Irish	5	1	2	2	1	2	13
	2nd gen Scotland	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
	1 st gen Russian	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	2nd gen French	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	1 st gen German	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	2nd gen German	2	0	0	1	0	0	3
	Total	76	16	20	19	6	6	143

Table 4. Grand Forks Votes for Women Club Ethnicity and Occupation.

	Pro.	Gov. Employee	Merchant	Skilled Worker	Artisan	Laborer	Salesman	Farmer	Female Occupation	Own Income	None	Other	Widow	Total
1st gen Norw.	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	4
2nd gen Norw.	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	2	8
2nd gen Swede	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
1st gen Dane	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
3rd gen USA	17	11	4	4	1	0	4	4	7	0	4	3	2	62
1st gen Can. Eng.	4	3	5	0	0	2	1	5	2	0	3	1	0	26
2nd gen Can. Eng.	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	0	8
1st gen Can. Fr.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
2nd gen Can. Fr.	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
1st gen English	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
2nd gen English	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	5
1st gen Irish	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
2nd gen Irish	6	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	13
2nd gen Scotland	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
1st gen Russian	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
2nd gen French	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
1st gen German	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
2nd gen German	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
Total	36	23	12	6	2	3	7	18	16	1	9	4	5	143

Table 5. Grand Forks Votes for Women Club Sex, Ethnicity and Occupation.

Sex	Occupation													
	Professional	Government Employee	Merchant	Skilled Worker	Artisan	Laborer	Salesman	Farmer	Female Occupation	Own Income	None	Other	Widow	Total
F	Ethnicity													
	1st gen Norwegian	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	3
	2nd gen Norwegian	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	2	8
	2nd gen Swede	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
	3rd gen American	13	10	4	4	1	0	3	3	7	0	4	2	53
	1st gen Canada English	4	2	1	0	0	2	0	5	2	0	3	1	20
	2nd gen Canada English	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	6
	1st gen Canada French	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	2nd gen Canada French	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	1st gen English	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
	2nd gen English	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	4
	2nd gen Irish	3	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	10
	2 nd gen Scotland	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	1st gen Russian	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	2 nd gen French	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	1st gen German	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	2 nd gen German	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3
Total	27	20	7	5	2	3	5	17	16	1	8	3	119	
M	Ethnicity													
	1st gen Norwegian	1	0	0	0			0	0			0	0	1
	1st gen Dane	1	0	0	0			0	0			0	0	1
	3 rd gen American	4	1	0	0			1	1			0	1	8
	1st gen Canada English	0	1	4	0			1	0			0	0	6
	2 nd gen Canada English	0	0	0	1			0	0			1	0	2
	2 nd gen English	0	0	1	0			0	0			0	0	1
	1st gen Irish	0	1	0	0			0	0			0	0	1
	2 nd gen Irish	3	0	0	0			0	0			0	0	3
Total	9	3	5	1			2	1			1	1	23	

Table 6. Scandinavian Woman's Suffrage Association Ethnic Make-up.

Ethnicity		Frequency
Valid	1st Gen Swedish	39
	1st Gen Norwegian	27
	1st Gen Danish	2
	1st Gen Finnish	1
	3rd Gen +	8
	2nd Gen Swede	23
	2nd Gen Norwegian	21
	2nd Gen Other	3
	2nd Gen DaneSwede	1
	2nd Gen NorwegianSwede	1
	Total	126
	Missing	52
Total		178

Table 7. Scandinavian Woman's Suffrage Association Member Ages.

		Age 1910						Total
		0-9	10 - 19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+	
Ethnicity	1st Gen Swedish	1	3	5	14	9	6	38
	1st Gen Norwegian	0	2	4	5	9	5	25
	1st Gen Danish	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
	1st Gen Finnish	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	3rd Gen +	0	4	1	2	0	0	7
	2nd Gen Swede	2	9	8	3	1	0	23
	2nd Gen Norwegian	0	8	5	4	2	2	21
	2nd Gen Other	0	1	1	1	0	0	3
	2nd Gen DaneSwede	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	2nd Gen NorwegianSwede	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Total	3	27	25	32	21	14	122

Table 8. Scandinavian Woman's Suffrage Association Ethnicity and Sex.

		Sex		
		Female	Male	Total
Ethnicity	1 st Gen Swedish	37	2	39
	1 st Gen Norwegian	27	0	27
	1 st Gen Danish	2	0	2
	1 st Gen Finnish	1	0	1
	3 rd Gen +	6	2	8
	2 nd Gen Swede	20	3	23
	2 nd Gen Norwegian	19	2	21
	2 nd Gen Other	3	0	3
	2 nd Gen DaneSwede	1	0	1
	2 nd Gen NorwegianSwede	1	0	1
	Total	117	9	126

Table 9. Scandinavian Woman's Suffrage Association Members and the Number of Minor Children Living at Home in 1910.

		ChildU18						Total
		0	1	2	3	4	5+	
Ethnicity	1 st Gen Swedish	14	8	9	5	1	0	37
	1st Gen Norwegian	14	4	3	1	2	1	25
	1 st Gen Danish	1	0	0	0	0	1	2
	1 st Gen Finnish	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
	3 rd Gen +	3	3	0	1	0	0	7
	2 nd Gen Swede	15	6	1	0	0	1	23
	2 nd Gen Norwegian	17	0	3	1	0	0	21
	2 nd Gen Other	1	1	0	0	0	1	3
	2 nd Gen DaneSwede	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	2 nd Gen NorwegianSwede	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Total	67	22	16	8	3	5	121

Table 10. Scandinavian Woman's Suffrage Association Ethnicity and Occupation.

		1st Gen Swedish	1st Gen Norwegian	1 st Gen Danish	1st Gen Finnish	3 rd Gen +	2nd Gen Swede	2nd Gen Norwegian	2nd Gen Other	2 nd Gen DaneSwede	2nd Gen NorwegianSwede	Total
Occupation	Professional	2	2	0	0	2	4	3	1	0	0	14
	Government Employee	4	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	8
	Merchant	5	3	1	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	13
	Skilled Worker	7	3	0	0	2	2	1	0	1	1	17
	Artisan	2	4	0	0	0	2	2	1	0	0	11
	Laborer	7	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	12
	Salesman	1	3	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	8
	Farmer	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
	Female Occupation	1	5	0	0	1	5	1	0	0	0	13
	Own Income	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	None	1	3	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	7
	Other	5	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	9
	Total	35	25	2	1	6	22	20	3	1	1	116

Table 11. Scandinavian Woman's Suffrage Association Female Members, Occupation and Ethnicity.

Sex	Ethnicity												Total
	1st Gen Swedish	1st Gen Norwegian	1st Gen Danish	1 st Gen Finnish	3rd Gen +	2nd Gen Swede	2nd Gen Norwegian	2nd Gen Other	2nd Gen DaneSwede	2nd Gen NorwegianSwede			
Female	2	2	0	0	2	3	3	1	0	0	0	13	
Occupation													
Professional	2	2	0	0	2	3	3	1	0	0	0	13	
Government													
Employee	3	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	7	
Merchant	5	3	1	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	13	
Skilled													
Worker	7	3	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	15	
Artisan	2	4	0	0	0	2	2	1	0	0	0	11	
Laborer	7	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	12	
Salesman	1	3	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	7	
Farmer	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	
Female													
Occupation	1	5	0	0	1	5	1	0	0	0	0	13	
Own Income	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	
None	1	3	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	7	
Other	4	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	7	
Total	33	25	2	1	5	20	18	3	1	1	1	109	

Table 12. Scandinavian Woman's Suffrage Association Male Members, Occupation and Ethnicity.

Sex	Ethnicity											Total	
	1st Gen Swedish	1st Gen Norwegian	1st Gen Danish	1st Gen Finnish	3rd Gen +	2nd Gen Swede	2nd Gen Norwegian	2nd Gen Other	2nd Gen DaneSwede	2nd Gen NorwegianSwede			
Male	Occupation	Professional	0				0	1	0				1
		Government Employee	1				0	0	0				1
		Skilled Worker	0				1	1	0				2
		Salesman	0				0	0	1				1
		Other	1				0	0	1				2
		Total	2				1	2	2				7

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