

**DIVINING DISPOSITION: THE ROLE OF ELITE BELIEFS AND GENDER
NARRATIVES IN WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE**

Mariel J. Barnes

April 2019

mjb496@cornell.edu

I would like to thank David Bateman, Debak Das, Sabrina Karim, Nazli Konya, Julius Lagodny, Pauliina Patana, Thomas Pepinsky, Kenneth Roberts, Stephen Roblin, Jake Swanson, Jimena Valdez-Tappata, Christina Wolbrecht, the participants of the PBAC colloquium at Cornell University, and the anonymous reviewers for their insightful and valuable comments.

INTRODUCTION

*The pretty dresses of the ladies and their smiling faces lighted up the polling booths most wonderfully, and one envied the returning officer and poll clerks whose duty it was to pass in review such a galaxy of beauty. Truly yesterday was the women's triumph.*¹

In 1893, New Zealand became the first country in the world to grant women the right to vote. And despite some arguments that women were uninterested in politics, female participation in New Zealand was extremely high. In the ten weeks between the passage of women's suffrage and the 1893 election, 109,461 women were enrolled to vote – approximately 80 percent of the female population. 90,290 women voted on election day, which meant female turnout dwarfed that of men – 85 and 70 percent respectively.² Moreover, the strength of this participation was hardly a surprise given that, in 1893 alone, 31,872 New Zealand women had signed petitions in support of suffrage.³ However, with such significant and potentially election-changing mobilization from women, how did self-interested (and exclusively *male*) elites determine that women and their “smiling faces” would enhance, rather than undermine, their political power? How did they make inferences about the political preferences of women?

The key to answering these fundamental questions is information – specifically, what information is important and how it is gathered. Yet, all too often, contemporary work on the origins of women's suffrage glosses over the role of information. Instead, many theories of democratization assume that elites focus on potential voters' economic roles or religious affiliations without testing whether such heuristics actually operated or how they informed elite views. However, one literature that has grappled with the information problem faced by elites is the suffrage literature, which has increasingly focused on the mechanism of social mobilization. Under this framework, mobilization of the disenfranchised generates preference cues about political inclinations as members are recruited, demands are solidified, and inter-organizational alliances are fashioned. Elites then use this new information to determine whether enfranchisement will yield political benefits or not.

However, while the mechanism of social mobilization has been increasingly prominent in the enfranchisement literature, it is questionable as to whether it solves the information problem faced by elites, particularly in instances of very broad, and consequently, very diverse, voter enfranchisement. Moreover, a focus on social mobilization minimizes the important and decisive

¹ “Polling Day in Christchurch,” *The Press*, November 29, 1893, Volume L, Issue 8652.

² “Women, the Vote and the 1893 Election,” New Zealand Parliament, November 28, 2013, <https://www.parliament.nz/en/get-involved/features-pre-2016/document/00NZPHomeNews201311281/women-the-vote-and-the-1893-election>; Ministry for Culture and Heritage, “Women Vote in First General Election,” New Zealand History, September 24, 2018, <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/page/women-vote-first-general-election>.

³ Ministry for Culture and Heritage, “About the Suffrage Petition,” New Zealand History, May 15, 2018, <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/politics/womens-suffrage/about-the-petition>.

role that gendered narratives and information played in elite discussions about women's suffrage. And finally, there is little evidence that elites actually used mobilization to ascertain the political preferences of the disenfranchised when contemplating expansions of voting rights.

To address these shortcomings, I propose an alternative for how elites confront the information problem and make inferences about the true political preferences of the disenfranchised. I term this "disposition". Disposition refers to the intrinsic characteristics of an individual that are believed to shape their behavior and decision-making.⁴ Elites use their beliefs about disposition as a heuristic to determine if expansions of political rights will help to consolidate or undermine their political power.⁵ Consequently, dispositional enfranchisement is the expansion of political rights based upon elites' beliefs, prejudices, and stereotypes about the disenfranchised's disposition.⁶

To illustrate the explanatory power of this signal, I examine the earliest instance of national female suffrage – New Zealand. The selection of New Zealand is deliberate. First, mobilization for women's suffrage in New Zealand was strikingly high – one example of this mobilization are the suffrage petitions mentioned above.⁷ This high mobilization, therefore, makes New Zealand an exceptional case to tease out the role that mobilization played in information gathering. Second, New Zealand is also a model case for several other theories of women's enfranchisement including hypotheses relating to the scarcity of women, diffusion, and programmatic enfranchisement. Finally, the positive outcome for women's suffrage make New Zealand an ideal case for in-depth, historical processing-tracing, which allows for a close examination of the evidence in support of my dispositional argument. To accomplish these goals, I analyze over ninety volumes of New Zealand parliamentary debates, which I supplement with other sources including census data, newspaper articles, obituaries, and biographies. Careful analysis of these documents reveals the central role that gendered narratives about women's dispositions, rather than social mobilization alone, played in the enfranchisement of New Zealand women.

A close focus on the role of elite ideas about women's disposition in early enfranchisement decisions is important for several reasons. First, by examining the historical removal of gender restrictions on voting rights, we gain a more complete understanding of enfranchisement. Indeed, as Teri Caraway and Dawn Teele argue, the exclusion of race and gender leaves us with only a partial and distorted view democratization and enfranchisement, obscuring how political

⁴ A similar definition also borrowing from social psychology is used by Ryan Brutger and Joshua D. Kertzer, "A Dispositional Theory of Reputation Costs," *International Organization* 72, no. 3 (2018): 693–724, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818318000188>. For this paper, it does not matter whether intrinsic characteristics that influence decision-making actually exist, only that elites believe and utilize dispositional schemas in debates surrounding expansions of suffrage.

⁵ Elites are defined as individuals who have direct and/or indirect influence over public policy. Robert D. Putnam, *The Comparative Study of Political Elites* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976).

⁶ For more on gender stereotyping as a heuristic see Sabrina Karim, "Restoring Confidence in Post-Conflict Security Sectors: Survey Evidence from Liberia on Female Ratio Balancing Reforms," *British Journal of Political Science*, June 2017, 1–23, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123417000035>.

⁷ Ministry for Culture and Heritage, "About the Suffrage Petition."

institutions were often used to exclude groups from power.⁸ Second, disposition enhances supply-side theories of enfranchisement by highlighting the importance of information in elite decision-making and examining, in detail, from where elites gather that information and how they attempt to use it to their advantage. Disposition is especially important during initial expansions of franchise to new groups, such as women, where the information problem is particularly acute, and elites are trying to anticipate the potential political consequences of enfranchisement. My theory of disposition may, therefore, generalize to other contexts and help explain instances of enfranchisement where partisan or programmatic information about the disenfranchised was scarce. Finally, the case of New Zealand is important as it was the catalyst for women's enfranchisement across the globe and was used by international suffrage movements as an example to make abstract arguments concrete.

ENFRANCHISEMENT AND THE ROLE OF INFORMATION

Despite information being a core input in models of democratization and enfranchisement, there remains little consensus about how elites gather data and form beliefs about the disenfranchised and their political inclinations.

In some limited circumstances, elites are presented with information about enfranchisement that is explicit and unambiguous. The most obvious example of this type of information is violence and coercion – either at a domestic or international level – which tells elites that a refusal to expand political institutions would be catastrophic.⁹ Alternatively, demographic information has also been used to explain franchise expansions to women, particularly when it indicates that the electoral consequences will be minimal and therefore, unlikely to undermine male electoral

⁸ Teri L. Caraway, "Inclusion and Democratization: Class, Gender, Race, and the Extension of Suffrage," *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 4 (2004): 443–60, <https://doi.org/10.2307/4150170>; Dawn Langan Teele, *The Logic of Women's Enfranchisement: A Comparative Study of the United States, France, and the United Kingdom* (Yale University: ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2015).

⁹ Carles Boix, *Democracy and Redistribution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, "A Theory of Political Transitions," *The American Economic Review* 91, no. 4 (September 1, 2001): 938–63; Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Davide Ticchi and Andrea Vindigni, "On Wars and Political Development. The Role of International Conflicts in the Democratization of the West," Working Paper (Institute of Governmental Studies. UC Berkeley, 2006), <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/56x218x7>; Davide Ticchi and Andrea Vindigni, "War and Endogenous Democracy," SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, May 23, 2008), <http://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=1136202>; Stephan Haggard and Robert R. Kaufman, "Inequality and Regime Change: Democratic Transitions and the Stability of Democratic Rule," *American Political Science Review* 106, no. 03 (August 2012): 495–516, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055412000287>.

strength.¹⁰ However, recent research suggests that it is rare for information about the costs and consequences of enfranchisement to be so explicit.¹¹ Moreover, neither of these forms of information provide elites with any clues about the *political preferences* of the disenfranchised, only the costs of (in)action. Ultimately, information about the disenfranchised's preferences is limited and imprecise, and consequently, elites face a severe information problem when contemplating the expansion of political institutions.

So where do elites get their information? Some approaches to enfranchisement underscore the importance of societal cleavages in elite decision-making. Under this mechanism, elites use a particular cleavage as shorthand for determining the preferences of the masses and the political incentive for enfranchisement. For Ansell and Samuels as well as Llavador and Oxoby, it is an economic cleavage;¹² for Przeworski, it is religion.¹³ However, as McConnaughy argues, it may be difficult to determine the long-term political inclinations of the disenfranchised.¹⁴ First, the disenfranchised may not adhere to typical partisan divisions, which is relevant when cleavages are cross-cutting. Second, cleavages are often dynamic and changeable across time and space,¹⁵ particularly in moments of high political contestation or in situations where cleavages may not “have the weight of history”, such as in settler colonies. Third, even where cleavages *are* static, it is difficult to garner whether the disenfranchised's *policy* preferences may redefine a party's broader agenda or undermine other political priorities. For example, although Llavador and Oxoby's model dictates that conservative agriculturalists may seek to enfranchise poor, agricultural workers – both communities should favor and benefit from restrictive trade policy – this ignores the other potential policy preferences of the peasantry – namely, the eradication of the landed aristocracy.

Thus, instead of relying on cleavages to explain enfranchisement decisions, the literature on women's suffrage and enfranchisement has increasingly incorporated the idea of social mobilization. For example, in her theory of programmatic enfranchisement, McConnaughy

¹⁰ Sebastian Braun and Michael Kvasnicka, “Men, Women, and the Ballot: Gender Imbalances and Suffrage Extensions in the United States,” *Explorations in Economic History* 50, no. 3 (July 1, 2013): 405–26, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eeh.2013.04.001>.

¹¹ Haggard and Kaufman, “Inequality and Regime Change”; David Art, “Talking About a Revolution: Or Why (Most of) the West Did Not Extend the Franchise” (APSA Paper, 2012), <http://as.tufts.edu/politicalscience/sites/all/themes/asbase/assets/documents/art/talkingAboutArevolution.pdf>.

¹² Ben W. Ansell and David J. Samuels, *Inequality and Democratization* (Cambridge University Press, 2014); Humberto Llavador and Robert J. Oxoby, “Partisan Competition, Growth, and the Franchise,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 120, no. 3 (August 1, 2005): 1155–89, <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/120.3.1155>.

¹³ Adam Przeworski, “Conquered or Granted? A History of Suffrage Extensions,” *British Journal of Political Science* 39, no. 2 (April 1, 2009): 291–321.

¹⁴ Corrine M. McConnaughy, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in America: A Reassessment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139005104>.

¹⁵ Elmer Eric Schattschneider, *The Semi-Sovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960).

contends that elites used coalitional linkages to infer information about women and the consequences of their enfranchisement.¹⁶ As women populated interest groups and third parties, male elites assumed that women shared similar political preferences to male coalitional counterparts and this, combined with electoral vulnerability, prompted enfranchisement. Similarly, Teele also contends that widespread mobilization was a necessary condition for the expansion of women's suffrage throughout the western United States. Yet, in contrast to McConnaughy, Teele argues that elites used social mobilization to determine the distinctiveness and potency of the female vote. For elites, the particularity of women's political preferences was especially evident regarding prohibition as well as labor issues.¹⁷ For Teele, the women's movement – its membership and recruitment, its alliances with other organizations, and its demands – was therefore essential for providing clues and information to elites about the “peculiarities” of women's political preferences.¹⁸

However, the mechanism of social mobilization cannot completely encapsulate how elites solve the information problem surrounding enfranchisement decisions. First, although coalitions may reveal political similarities between members, individuals and groups are often incentivized to hide their true or latent political preferences to gain backing or avoid censure. A classic example of this deception or exaggeration can be seen in the representation of the Catholic Association in nineteenth-century Ireland. Although the Catholic Rent allowed the Association to claim there was mass mobilization among the Irish, the vast majority of the Association's support was derived from urbanites and large farmers, who were actually a minority. Therefore, while coalitional linkages may ease the information problem faced by elites, they cannot eliminate it.

Second and more importantly, a focus on social mobilization downplays the important informational role that gendered narratives played in elite decision-making. Indeed, for elites, the distinctive nature of women was informative of political preferences *in and of itself*. Yet, it was *how* elites interpreted this distinctiveness that determined whether they would support or oppose women's suffrage, as was the case in New Zealand.

DISPOSITION AS AN INFORMATIONAL CUE

How, then, do elites use gendered narratives to gather information and distinguish between potential supporters and opponents? I argue that elites use the cue of disposition to determine whether expansions of political rights will yield enduring and favorable results. To recall, disposition refers to the intrinsic and internal characteristics of an individual (or group of

¹⁶ McConnaughy, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in America*.

¹⁷ Dawn Langan Teele, “How the West Was Won: Competition, Mobilization, and Women's Enfranchisement in the United States,” *The Journal of Politics* 80, no. 2 (March 2, 2018): 447, <https://doi.org/10.1086/696621>; Dawn Langan Teele, *Forging the Franchise: The Political Origins of the Women's Vote* (Princeton University Press, 2018), 15–48.

¹⁸ Teele, *The Logic of Women's Enfranchisement*; Teele, “How the West Was Won”; Teele, *Forging the Franchise*.

individuals) that supposedly influence behavior and decision-making. In psychology, ascribing behavior to a person’s innate features is known as dispositional attribution, and contrasts with situational attribution, which argues that behavior is derived from factors external to individuals, such as culture or their environment. For example, assuming an individual’s piousness is responsible for their voting behavior is a form of dispositional attribution.

In this account, if elites believe that potential voters’ dispositions favor their political agenda, elites will support the extension of suffrage. And if elites believe that potential voters have dispositions that will lead them to vote against elite political platforms, franchise extensions will be opposed. The idea that a person’s innate qualities should determine their capacity for political participation was widespread throughout the nineteenth century. In the United States, “the look within” – the emphasis of internal characteristics over external qualifications – dictated both the political inclusion and exclusion of certain societal groups.¹⁹ Dispositional enfranchisement is, therefore, the expansion of political and economic rights based on elites’ beliefs and prejudices about the intrinsic characteristics of the disenfranchised and how these characteristics determine political preferences.

It is also important to differentiate disposition from several existing concepts employed in the literature on franchise expansion. First, disposition is distinct from partisan identification or a policy attitude. While party identification and policy attitudes imply a political position or preference, disposition in and of itself does not – an individual with a pious disposition could either be a progressive or conservative, could either support the temperance movement or not (Table 1).

Table 1: Difference between Party, Policy and Disposition

Party identification	An affiliation with a political party. <i>E.g. She is a Democrat/Republican.</i>
Policy attitude	An attachment to a policy or issue. <i>E.g. She supports temperance.</i>
Disposition	A characteristic about an individual or group of individuals. <i>E.g. She is pious.</i>

Second, disposition is distinct from cleavage structures. For example, in his discussion of women’s suffrage, Przeworski argues that the religious cleavages played an important role in enfranchisement decisions – if a state was predominantly Catholic, elites would assume most potential enfranchisees would have conservative political preferences and enfranchisement would only occur under conservative governments.²⁰ However, arguments about cleavage structures contain within them assumptions – often specific to a time or place – about groups’ political preferences. By contrast, a focus on disposition highlights how elites often disagreed over the nature of a group’s innate qualities and this disagreement translates into different elite beliefs about the disenfranchised’s political behavior. Moreover, even if religion, class or gender are

¹⁹ Jacob Katz Cogan, “The Look within: Property, Capacity, and Suffrage in Nineteenth-Century America Note,” *Yale Law Journal* 107 (1998 1997): 473–98.

²⁰ Przeworski, “Conquered or Granted?,” 316–17.

edifying cleavages in the expansion of political institutions to women,²¹ this paper is interested in the *interpretation* of those cleavages by male elites and how gendered narratives were used to justify support or opposition to women's suffrage.²²

Importantly, *disposition does not rest on any claim of whether dispositions or situations are the "true" determinants of political behavior*. Indeed, it is likely that internal and external factors both matter and are mutually constitutive in political preferences. Rather, all that is critical is that elites *believe* there are dispositions, and actively consider these qualities when contemplating extensions of political franchise.

If my dispositional theory of franchise expansion explains the mechanics of enfranchisement in particular cases, the following should be true. First, both supporters and opponents of enfranchisement, *but especially the former*, should make repeated reference to the intrinsic or innate characteristics of the disenfranchised and then link those characteristics to potential voting behavior, policy positions, or partisan identification. Arguments about extending the franchise should be more common amongst supportive elites, as they must overcome the entrenched status quo and provide justifications for extending the franchise. So long as the information problem is real, these arguments will likely be dispositional. Second, contextual justifications for the extension of suffrage should be limited or non-existent – elites should not reference or invoke arguments about violence or international norms, nor should they remark upon the disenfranchised's alliances and coalitions with other organizations as such references would support the social mobilization hypothesis. Third, elites should be uncertain about the disenfranchised's political preferences and consequently, there should be disagreement among elites about ascribed dispositions. This disagreement should cross political boundaries, and variation in dispositional beliefs, not partisanship nor policy position, should predict elites' positions on suffrage extension.

THE CASE OF NEW ZEALAND

To illustrate my proposed theoretical framework, I focus on the emergence of women's suffrage in New Zealand during the late nineteenth century. The choice of New Zealand is purposeful. First, although New Zealand had an organized suffrage movement, widespread agitation only occurred after 1890 and was mainly limited to arranged meetings, petitioning and letter writing. Indeed, the suffragists were advised against a more militant and raucous strategy for fear of alienating potential political allies and it never represented a genuine threat to the

²¹ Dawn Langan Teele, "Ordinary Democratization The Electoral Strategy That Won British Women the Vote," *Politics & Society* 42, no. 4 (December 1, 2014): 537–61, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329214547343>.

²² These cleavages not only informed elite beliefs, but also suffragist strategies. For instance, French suffragists were incredibly reluctant to expand the suffrage movement beyond urban areas to incorporate rural women as they felt such women would vote as their priests instructed. For more see Teele, *Forging the Franchise*, 133–76.

stability of the government.²³ However, this widespread non-violent mobilization, does make New Zealand an excellent case to explore the interaction between disposition and social mobilization, and how the women's suffrage movement, the temperance movement and the labor movement informed the gendered narratives held by elites.

Second, New Zealand was the first state to grant nationwide universal suffrage to women.²⁴ This means that the case is largely independent from subsequent suffrage events and removes the possibility that New Zealand elites were pressured into granting suffrage by the international community. Indeed, after suffrage, New Zealand became an exporter, rather than an importer, of the norm of female enfranchisement as suffragists and politicians travelled aboard and widely publicized their views and experiences.²⁵ Thus, the international community and diffusion hypotheses forwarded by Haggard and Kaufman, and Ramirez *et al.* do not provide satisfactory explanations for women's suffrage in New Zealand.

Third, as an emerging colonial democracy, New Zealand faced similar challenges to other countries in the West – particularly relating to the scarcity of women. Scarcity was such a problem that the government subsidized passages for women from Britain and advised men that a wife was critical for colonial success.²⁶ The disproportionate sex ratio makes New Zealand a reasonable test for the scarcity of women hypothesis. To investigate this theory, I assembled data on parliamentarians' roll call votes on the *1893 Electoral Bill* where the word “man” was changed to “person” – a vote which would eventually enfranchise women. Votes in favor of female suffrage were coded as one, and votes against suffrage were coded as zero. In addition, I calculated a sex ratio (the number of men per 100 women) for each electoral district based off data from the most recent 1891 census.²⁷ Combining these data, I estimated a simple logit regression model with sex ratio as the sole covariate. The results show that sex ratio had a statistically insignificant effect on the vote for or against suffrage (Table 2).

²³ Teele, *The Logic of Women's Enfranchisement*.

²⁴ Women were also the last group to receive suffrage in New Zealand - Māori men were able to were able to vote for Māori-specific seats as well as European candidates if they met property requirements for individuals. The latter was difficult as Māori property was often owned communally.

²⁵ Raewyn Dalziel, “Presenting the Enfranchisement of New Zealand Women Aboard,” in *Suffrage and Beyond: International Feminist Perspectives*, ed. Caroline Daley and Melanie Nolan (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 42–64.

²⁶ Charlotte MacDonald, “Women and Men - Colonial Beginnings: 1840s–1880s,” Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, 2017, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/women-and-men/page-1>.

²⁷ It is important to note that this data is almost exclusively focused on New Zealand's white, European population as the census had a separate and much less comprehensive section for the Māori population. Further, there were also separate electoral rolls for the Māori and European populations.

Table 2: Support for Suffrage and the Scarcity of Women

	Vote for Suffrage 1893
Sex Ratio 1891	0.010 (0.014)
Constant	-0.479 (1.592)
N	60
Log Likelihood	-37.906
AIC	79.811

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

This calls into question the scarcity of women hypothesis and its ability to explain franchise expansion in New Zealand. These results are also replicated with earlier suffrage votes in 1891 and 1892 (Appendix A).

Finally, since the aim of this paper is to elucidate the process of elite decision-making, the role of disposition and gendered narratives, and the extension of suffrage to women, the selection of a case study with a positive outcome combined with in-depth process-tracing allows for a focus on finding evidence consistent with the proposed cue of disposition. Evidence in support of my theory would include references to the nature or temperament of women (or subsections of the female population) – for example, women being more emotional, less intelligent, shrewder, reserved, or family-oriented.

To identify my disposition signal, I analyzed over ninety volumes of New Zealand parliamentary debates. The records begin in 1867 with the Second Session of the Fourth Parliament and were analyzed up until 1895.²⁸ Commonly referred to as *Hansard*, the records are almost verbatim discussions of parliamentary debates and are widely regarded as accurate records of statements made in parliament.²⁹ Because *Hansard* is verbatim, volumes are often hundreds, if not thousands, of pages long. To find the relevant sections of the debates, I utilized key word searches based on words that were likely to appear during discussions of women’s suffrage. They included the following: woman, women, female, universal, suffrage, franchise and electoral. Each time the searchable text returned a match to one of these words, I read the surrounding text for relevance. Amongst early volumes women are sparsely mentioned. The key word searches also returned debates surrounding expansions of franchise to groups other than women, such as the Māori and miners, as well as other electoral reforms, such as the secret ballot. Thus, in the ninety volumes included in this paper, almost every reference to women or suffrage has been analyzed to evaluate support for the idea of disposition.

One concern is the possibility that members of parliament would self-censor to protect themselves from accusations of bias, prejudice, or bigotry. However, in the late nineteenth century,

²⁸ The records were digitized and searchable by the University of California. Available at <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/010236658>

²⁹ Some redundancies in the debates are eliminated from the records such as the Speaker of the House calling on each member before they are allowed to speak.

there were very few social norms that proscribed racism, sexism, or other prejudice in New Zealand. Indeed, although British colonizers considered the Māori to be “more civilized” than other indigenous groups, it was still acceptable to refer to the Māori as “Natives” or occasionally “savages”. This suggests that politicians did not feel the need to engage in self-censorship and I proceed under the assumption that politicians’ statements in Hansard are relatively accurate reflections of elite beliefs. In other words, I assume that politicians are *not* refraining from voicing their beliefs about women’s dispositions in Parliament for fear of censure.

In addition, I have incorporated a number of other sources including newspaper articles, obituaries, and historical biographies, which have provided useful details about the beliefs, thoughts, and political preferences of deceased New Zealand politicians.

Although I aim to demonstrate that elite support or opposition for New Zealand women’s suffrage was largely determined by beliefs about women’s disposition, I also evaluate potential alternative explanations for the enfranchisement of women and attempt to build on the debate between Teele and McConaughy as to whether women’s suffrage was an instance of strategic or programmatic enfranchisement.³⁰

NEW ZEALAND AND WOMEN’S SUFFRAGE

Like many, I argue that New Zealand politicians were largely motivated by electoral interests and a desire to increase political support. Yet, despite this, male elites were confronted with an information problem about how women would vote. This problem was retrospectively acknowledged by New Zealand’s longest serving Prime Minister, Richard John Seddon: “By granting the franchise to women, Parliament plunged into an abyss of unknown depth”.³¹ To solve this problem, male elites based their support or opposition to female suffrage on their beliefs about women’s dispositions rather than any anticipated partisanship or policy preference. Indeed, even weak partisanship – defined as an identification with a party – could not have been the elite heuristic of choice, because political parties did not exist in New Zealand prior to 1890. Instead, coalitions were formed around loose and malleable affiliations between independent parliamentarians. Male New Zealand politicians relied on the heuristic of disposition to determine whether enfranchising women would be politically beneficial for them or not, and the analytical narrative that follows reveals how this affected parliamentarians’ deliberations and ultimately their votes.

New Zealand was first established as a separate British colony in 1840, before being granted a limited right to self-governance in 1852. Following the Westminster system, a bicameral parliament was created with a House of Representatives with members elected to five-year terms and a Legislative Council where the Governor made lifetime appointments. The first national

³⁰ Teele, “How the West Was Won”; McConaughy, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in America*.

³¹ Seddon quoted in James Drummond, *The Life and Work of Richard John Seddon (Premier of New Zealand, 1893-1906): With a History of the Liberal Party of New Zealand* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 197.

election was held in 1853 and the initial requirements for participation were relatively generous. Voters had to be British males over twenty-one who held freehold property over £50, a leasehold property with a valuation over £10, or a tenement in a rural area with a value of £5 or more.³² Additionally, men could vote in each electorate that they met this requirement. Under these rules, roughly three-quarters of European men were eligible to vote, although the plural voting system ensured the political dominance of the propertied class, and many Māori men were disenfranchised as Māori land was often held communally.

Despite this “generosity”, politics largely remained the domain of the landed wool aristocracy until 1860 when the New Zealand parliament expanded franchise for the first time – to gold miners. Subsequently, expansions took place (Table 3) until there was a patchwork of “fancy franchises” dealing with the enfranchisement of “freeholders, leaseholders, householders, goldminers, lodgers, ratepayers and Māori”.³³ And it was during these debates about broadening the electoral system that the issue of women’s suffrage arose.

Table 3: Key Electoral Events in New Zealand

1840	New Zealand is established as a British colony
1852	The New Zealand Constitution Act grants limited self-governance to the colony
1853	First national election
1860	The Representation Act grants franchise to gold miners in an attempt to prevent another Eureka Stockade
1867	The Maori Representation Act enfranchises Maori men over 21 and creates four Maori specific electoral districts
1870	Verbal voting is replaced by the secret ballot
1875	The Lodgers’ Franchise Act grants voting rights to men (particularly tradesman and clerks) living in temporary, often urban accommodations
1879	The Qualification of Electors Bill establishes universal male suffrage
1889	Plural voting is abolished
1893	The Electoral Act passes both the House of Representatives and the Legislative Council granting universal female suffrage

Initial support for women's suffrage in the early 1870s was, however, minimal. Many parliamentarians were outright opposed to female suffrage, while others refused to be drawn into debate. Even sympathetic politicians only offered lukewarm support.

More substantial debate about women’s suffrage did not occur until 1878. The issue was first raised by Reverend James Wallis, who was one of the few parliamentarians who supported women’s suffrage on general ethical principles. Inspired by John Stuart Mill, Wallis implored parliamentarians to recognize the equality of women and proposed that “the electoral disabilities of women should be entirely removed, and that the same political rights and privileges should be

³² Giselle Byrnes, *The New Oxford History of New Zealand* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 111; Electoral Commission, “The Right to Vote,” Electoral Commission, February 21, 2013, <http://www.elections.org.nz/right-vote>.

³³ Neill Atkinson, “Voting Rights - Male Suffrage,” in *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, 2012, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/voting-rights/page-3>.

granted to women as to men”.³⁴ The motion was ultimately defeated by a substantial margin: 44-8.³⁵ Women’s suffrage was again considered for a second time during debate on the *1878 Electoral Bill* where Attorney-General Robert Stout advocated the inclusion of female voters if they were also landowners or ratepayers.³⁶ Most importantly though, Stout’s support for women’s enfranchisement was underpinned by disposition – he thought that women were more emotional than men and that this would lead them towards in a socially progressive, interventionist political agenda,

I do not expect that at first or the second or perhaps even the third election women will know as much as men about politics, but I believe the effect on women will be this: that they will direct their attention to social questions...I do not deny – I have never denied – that possibly women may be more emotional...I do not think they will be what is termed individualistic, or what is called conservative. The probability is that their emotions will lead them away before they have studied political questions, and perhaps they may ask the State to interfere more than is prudent in social affairs: but that will correct itself.³⁷

For Stout, enfranchising female ratepayers was a preliminary step towards universal suffrage,³⁸ as well as a political compromise designed to unite two distinct factions – moderates, who disliked universal female suffrage, and progressives who demanded the complete political emancipation of women. However, even this limited form of women’s suffrage proved to be contentious to the point that even Stout’s own Premier, George Grey, said “that the Government were not quite in agreement as to the woman suffrage”.³⁹ The Government’s progressive backbenchers feared that enfranchising ratepaying women would reaffirm plural voting and help enhance the conservative position in New Zealand politics as

It would enable wealthy men to give their wives and daughters small blocks of land in order to have their names place on the electoral roll, whereas poor persons could not do so. The result would be to put more power into the hands of the wealthy and landed classes in the colony.⁴⁰

³⁴ New Zealand Parliament, “Parliamentary Debates” 28 (1878): 131–37, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/007119315>.

³⁵ New Zealand Parliament, 289–90.

³⁶ New Zealand Parliament, 158.

³⁷ New Zealand Parliament, “Parliamentary Debates” 80 (1893): 593–94, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/007119315>.

³⁸ Patricia Grimshaw, *Women’s Suffrage in New Zealand* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1972), 16.

³⁹ New Zealand Parliament, “Parliamentary Debates” 33 (1879): 276–77, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/007119315>.

⁴⁰ New Zealand Parliament, 273.

The assumption behind this statement is that women were merely an extension of their husbands and were malleable, simple, or uninterested in politics. Indeed, women were thought to do so dependent that one parliamentarian suggested “they might as well give the vote to dogs and children also”.⁴¹ Therefore, because of this dispositional belief about women’s dependency, the progressive backbench refused to support any measure less than universal female suffrage.

As my theory would predict, the opposition to female ratepaying suffrage went far beyond the government backbench as conservative politicians also opposed the implementation of female ratepaying suffrage as it would enfranchise and empower a disproportionate number of “unsavory” women in the colony,

You are proposing by this Bill to give ratepayers a vote, but you are not giving married women a vote. You are merely giving a vote to spinsters, who have not fulfilled the useful function they were sent here to fulfil. You are proposing to give a vote to spinsters, who are of that class known as “carpet-baggers”, who are here to-day and away to-morrow. The proposal of the honorable member for Auckland City West will give a vote to married women, and that, I contend, will go a long way to neutralize the evil effect, if there be any, of the measure which the Attorney-General proposes. I say it is the married women of the country who are the political educators of the wage-earning class. While the men are outside working in the fields, the women are at home striving to do every day what the Colonial Treasurer tries to do only once a year – namely, to make both ends meet. I think that is one of the most serious steps in political education. Now, these are the women whom the Attorney-General specially wishes to exclude from this liberal franchise.⁴²

From this statement by John Cathcart Wason, it is possible to derive several dispositional beliefs regarding women’s suffrage. First, opposition originated, in part, from the belief that limited female franchise would disproportionately empower “spinsters”, who were often ratepayers due to the lack of a male “guardian”. For conservatives, like Wason, these women had rejected their traditional gender role and therefore, were likely to introduce an “evil” (or progressive) effect upon the electorate. It is also notable that Wason chose not to mention ratepaying widows. This is most likely because their lack of male guardianship was involuntary and thus, widows would be more likely to subscribe to traditional social values. For Wason and other conservatives, the solution to this spinster effect was to enact universal female suffrage, which would enfranchise married women, who were morally superior and economically thrifty– a desirable quality since the Long Depression (1873-96) had severely affected New Zealand. Ironically, it was the desire to prevent a progressive electoral advantage that encouraged some conservatives, such as Wason, to align themselves with political progressives, like Wallis and Stout. They did so because supporting

⁴¹ Grimshaw, *Women’s Suffrage in New Zealand*, 77.

⁴² New Zealand Parliament, “Parliamentary Debates,” 1878, 166.

universal female suffrage, in their opinion, would ensure the incorporation of a “morally sound” and therefore, conservative female electorate.

However, much like the progressive split in parliament, not all conservatives supported universal female franchise. In fact, some did not support any form of female franchise. The most prominent and important example of conservative opposition was the aforementioned Richard Seddon. Although Seddon would later become leader of the progressive Liberal Party, he was not a liberal but a populist whose support emerged from his opposition to New Zealand’s elites and representation of the “working man”.⁴³ Seddon opposed women’s suffrage (and actively colluded to defeat it when he was Premier) largely because he believed women wished to curtail the “basic ingredient of ‘mateship’” – alcohol consumption.⁴⁴ Seddon’s belief was partially based on policy attribution – women “were the greatest sufferers from the evils arising from intemperance”⁴⁵ and as in other societies, there were close connections between the suffrage movement and the temperance movement. However, underpinning this was a belief that women were easily corrupted by power, and foolish and irrational when forced beyond the duties “which properly belong to them”.⁴⁶ Seddon’s hostility and opposition to women’s enfranchisement can be observed as early as 1879 when he advocated that the *Qualification of Electors Bill* be recommitted so as to allow the word “person” to be struck out in favor of the word “man”.⁴⁷ And he repeatedly refused to have “the majority of the members of this House under petticoat government”.⁴⁸ While this form of opposition was relatively minor on Seddon’s part, it clearly demonstrates that no faction in parliament was united behind female franchise and that Seddon’s opposition was particularly deep-seated, which became important as the suffrage movement gained momentum.

Unfortunately, the electoral reforms designed to incorporate women into New Zealand’s political institutions in the late-1870s failed. Parliamentarians who completely opposed female suffrage united across benches with those who opposed even partial enfranchisement. After these defeats, Wallis tried repeatedly to ensure women’s suffrage remained on the legislative agenda and introduced the *Women’s Franchise Bill* in 1880 and 1881. However, neither of these pieces of legislation moved beyond their first readings in the House of Representatives and Wallis was voted out of office in 1881.

⁴³ Parliamentarians considered Seddon to be the “best bulwark against radicalism” and even Sir John Ballance, the founder of the New Zealand Liberal Party, did not regard Seddon as his true successor. W. J. Gardner, “Hall, John,” in *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, 1990, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1h5/hall-john>; David Hamer, “Seddon, Richard,” in *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, 1993, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2s11/seddon-richard-john..>

⁴⁴ Jean Garner, *By His Own Merits: Sir John Hall-Pioneer, Pastoralist and Premier* (Dryden Press, 1995), 259–60.

⁴⁵ New Zealand Parliament, “Parliamentary Debates” 15 (1873): 1450, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/007119315>.

⁴⁶ New Zealand Parliament, “Parliamentary Debates” 54 (1886): 565–66, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/007119315>.

⁴⁷ New Zealand Parliament, “Parliamentary Debates,” 1879, 280–81.

⁴⁸ New Zealand Parliament, “Parliamentary Debates,” 1886, 565.

Then two prominent advocates for women's suffrage emerged almost simultaneously. The first was Julius Vogel. Although he did not wholly subscribe to democratic principles (he opposed the establishment of an independent electoral commission and the abolition of plural voting), Vogel introduced the *Women's Suffrage Bill* in 1887 as Colonial Treasurer. The bill codified female franchise as a universal right regardless of ratepaying status. In moving for a second reading of his bill, Vogel presented a comprehensive case for women's suffrage, which contested the typical beliefs about women's dispositions. Instead of women being weak and frail creatures who would be unaccustomed to the rigors of political participation, Vogel argued that the dispositional qualities of women, such as sympathy, thoughtfulness, and endurance, far exceeded the capacities of men and it was these qualities that made women eminently more qualified to partake in New Zealand's political system.⁴⁹ Moreover, for Vogel, even if women did not possess the qualities necessary for meaningful political participation, the fault lay with men who had withheld political responsibilities from women.⁵⁰ According to Vogel, once women were given political rights, they would learn how to exercise those rights responsibly. Vogel's universal suffrage proposal had considerable support from parliamentarians who relied on dispositional attribution to underpin their political backing. William Francis Buckland, for example, believed that women were not only more intelligent than men but were also more attuned to the deception of politicians, stating,

...the time will come when [women's suffrage] will be passed, and when the women will exercise the vote more intelligently than the men will. They cannot be so easily deceived as men. A candidate can often hoodwink an elector; but he cannot hoodwink the elector's wife. She sees through him, and her strong sense would decide to whom the vote should be given. Why should she not have the vote? In nine cases out of ten the woman has the burden of the whole establishment on her shoulders – at any rate, she looks after the money, and gives her husband good advice. We all know that if we had followed woman's [sic] advice during our lifetime we should have been better off than we are now. Woman is calculating and cautious, and if we had her vote in politics we should have better legislation than we have now.⁵¹

Although Buckland did not explicitly label women's suffrage as either a liberal or conservative measure, the underlying meaning of his statement indicates that he believed female enfranchisement would serve to enhance his preferred conservative platform. Not only did he regard female constituents as cautious, responsible, and shrewd voters, but he was also convinced that their enfranchisement would have enhanced New Zealand's political system.

⁴⁹ New Zealand Parliament, "Parliamentary Debates" 57 (1887): 230–32, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/007119315>.

⁵⁰ New Zealand Parliament, 230–32.

⁵¹ New Zealand Parliament, 235–36.

However, while Buckland was restrained in his instrumental support for Vogel's bill, many New Zealand politicians were more unequivocal about the "natural" dispositions of women and their political futures if women's suffrage was to be introduced. Another conservative, William Downie Stewart Sr., argued that women's suffrage would confer a "great blessing" on New Zealand because while

...in one sense the question of enfranchisement of women may be looked upon as a Liberal measure, we still cannot disguise the fact that women are naturally conservative – their sympathies are all in the conservative direction; and, although you will find a certain percentage, and a growing percentage perhaps, of women who are prepared for reforms in social questions and in other directions, still, speaking generally, women have been recognized as of a conservative tendency: in fact, it has been said, I believe, that the Chinese and women are the two greatest conservative classes in the world.⁵²

Yet, Buckland and Stewart Sr.'s supportive position towards women's suffrage did not extend to all conservatives nor indeed, all liberals. For example, while conservative Richard Monk claimed to support women's franchise, he simultaneously believed that such reforms would remain inoperable and dormant for a considerable amount of time due to the timid nature of women. In Monk's opinion, Vogel's bill would, therefore, have little discernable effect on parliament in the immediate future.⁵³ Meanwhile, Robert Cunningham Bruce argued that instead of imparting conservatism to political life in New Zealand, women's suffrage would repel morally upstanding, modest women from voting, while encouraging unscrupulous and "bad" women to vote for unscrupulous and immoral candidates.⁵⁴ One parliamentarian, James Dupré Lance – a liberal and ally of Vogel, who would eventually try to formally unite Vogelites, liberals and radicals⁵⁵ – went so far as to suggest that a husband might "wring his wife's neck like a chicken's" if his wife voted against his preferred, losing candidate.⁵⁶ It is important to recognize that Lance's "analysis" does not rely on dispositional attribution to oppose women's suffrage. Instead, it is included to demonstrate that opposition, like support, was divided across the government and opposition.

Although Vogel garnered enough support for a second reading of the *1887 Women's Suffrage Bill*, key allies retired early in the evening and the legislation failed to pass Committee.⁵⁷

The second prominent advocate for women's suffrage was former New Zealand Premier, Sir John Hall. Hall was a veteran parliamentarian – he was first elected in 1855 and served in

⁵² New Zealand Parliament, 240.

⁵³ New Zealand Parliament, 241–42.

⁵⁴ New Zealand Parliament, 236.

⁵⁵ W. J. Gardner, "Lance, James Dupré," in *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, 1993, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/211/lance-james-dupre>.

⁵⁶ New Zealand Parliament, "Parliamentary Debates," 1887, 233–35.

⁵⁷ Raewyn Dalziel, *Julius Vogel: Business Politician* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2013).

various roles, including Colonial Secretary and Leader of the Legislative Council, before becoming Premier in 1879. And although he was a staunch conservative, he became the de facto leader of the women's suffrage movement in parliament. Hall had first declared his support for universal female franchise in 1878 when he was a Legislative Councilor, but, until 1890, he did little to advance the cause.⁵⁸ Then on August 5th, 1890, Hall put forth a motion of support for women's suffrage, which passed with twenty-six votes in favor of enfranchisement. This theoretical support, however, did not translate into legislative change as Hall's *Women's Franchise Bill* – introduced fourteen days later – languished after its first reading and his impromptu amendment to the Government's *1890 Electoral Bill*, which declared that “the masculine gender shall include women”, was defeated by seven votes.⁵⁹

However, while Hall's attempts to promote women's suffrage were unsuccessful, he simultaneously provided invaluable strategic advice to the external suffrage campaign. It was Hall who suggested the suffragists refrain from public criticism of the Government to avoid it being construed as a political challenge. It was Hall who advised women to undertake a petitioning campaign to both raise awareness and demonstrate women's desire for the franchise. And it was Hall who arranged the lobbying of sympathetic members of parliament as well as the timing for the presentation of suffragist positions, so they had maximal impact.

Yet, even a stalwart ally like Hall was not immune to perceived political benefits and using disposition as a way to interpret political benefit. Hall was convinced that women valued individual integrity and policy above any form of class consciousness and therefore, would help to enhance the conservative cause,

One good & certain result will be the increase of the influence of the family or the settled population, as against that of the floating & unsettled part of the community; this means conservatism of the best & broadest kind.⁶⁰

Most importantly, Hall was not alone in his political machinations gendered narratives dominated parliamentary discussions about women's suffrage between 1891 and 1893. When the Liberal Ministry⁶¹ under John Ballance first introduced their *Electoral Bill* in 1891, the issue of women's suffrage was absent and overlooked. This is likely because of deep divisions within the Liberal Party over female enfranchisement. Most of the backbenchers of the Ballance Government were “radicals”, who favored sweeping political and economic reforms including universal female suffrage.⁶² While these Liberal backbenchers were partially motivated by altruism and principle,

⁵⁸ Garner, *By His Own Merits*, 241–42, 248.

⁵⁹ Grimshaw, *Women's Suffrage in New Zealand*; New Zealand Parliament, “Parliamentary Debates” 69 (1890): 158–59, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/007119315>.

⁶⁰ Garner, *By His Own Merits*, 261.

⁶¹ The Liberal party had been formed by Ballance in 1891 and was the first political party of New Zealand.

⁶² Grimshaw, *Women's Suffrage in New Zealand*.

these rationales were not enough to garner support for women's suffrage.⁶³ Indeed, the underlying dispositional perspective of the radicals becomes clear when women are being discussed. According to Liberal backbenchers, women were a radical segment of society, who supported widespread redistribution, unionism and social justice broadly defined. A clear example of this belief in "radical women" comes from William Earnshaw who argued,

And the greatest thing the working-men can do is to bring their wives and sisters to fight the battle against organized capital. I have no fear about the female franchise. It will come. We are told by the great champion against this Bill (Mr. Fish) that this is a movement by those who believe in private schools, local option, and all such things. Curiously enough, while I am supporting this Bill I am opposed to all those things; and I ought to shake in my boots, feeling that I represent a constituency strong on local option, strong on the Private Schools Bill, and similar fads, as the honourable gentleman calls them. On that ground I should have no show at all of being returned. But the great question of bread and butter will rise up against all those minor questions, and I have no doubt of the way that women will vote. They will vote as the labour element votes. The great bulk of women are more associated with those who are struggling for existence than with those who have accrued means of existence.⁶⁴

Notably, the dispositional idea of female radicalism was not strictly confined to members of the Liberal government. Indeed, many conservatives shared this belief, but, instead of supporting the suffrage movement, the idea led many conservatives in the Opposition to ardently embrace an anti-suffrage position. For these anti-suffragists, while it was noble and virtuous for women to be interested in issues such as social justice, destitution and humanitarianism, the positions were largely based on emotion rather than logic, sound policy or economic principles. Furthermore, to address these issues, it was believed that women would support dramatic, "communistic" expansions of the state regardless of cost or consequence.⁶⁵ Conservative, anti-suffragists were, therefore opposed to enfranchising women as with their dispositions they would undoubtedly vote for the Liberal Party, which would "double the majority against [the conservatives]" and make the Ballance Government politically unassailable.⁶⁶ The notation that women are an inherently radical force in society was, therefore, widely shared across the New Zealand Parliament and when faced with an information problem, this dispositional heuristic was used to determine whether enfranchisement would result in political advantage or not.

⁶³ Grimshaw, 62–63.

⁶⁴ New Zealand Parliament, "Parliamentary Debates" 73 (1891): 536, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/007119315>.

⁶⁵ Grimshaw, *Women's Suffrage in New Zealand*, 63.

⁶⁶ Grimshaw, 63.

Although their views on women's dispositions varied dramatically, conservative anti-suffragists found unexpected allies in the ministry of the Ballance (soon to be Liberal) Government. The frontbench of the Ballance Government either argued that the disposition and consequently, the political preferences of women were unknown; or that women are naturally inclined to be conservative. Both of these positions enhanced the frontbench's resistance to the suffrage movement. One of the most strident government opponents to women's suffrage was Henry Smith Fish. Fish was widely regarded as a politician with loose allegiances who was involved in political affairs largely for the fame and could easily be swayed with monetary compensation.⁶⁷ His opposition to women's suffrage arose largely because of his belief in that women, because of their dispositions, supported the temperance movement and like Seddon, he considered himself a champion of the working man.⁶⁸ Fish was, therefore, unwilling to risk enfranchising women in case it caused a conservative backlash,

Now with regard to the Liberals of the House. If the votes of women are to strengthen and increase the Liberals, what need is there for them? Is not the House democratic enough? Have not members been returned in a sufficient majority to give us a Liberal House? If that be so, then why should the Liberal side of the House vote for this question, when there is a risk that it will result in a Conservative reaction? I say there is a great risk, and I tell my honourable friends that it will be the death-blow to Liberalism.⁶⁹

Fish was vehemently anti-suffrage because he believed that women had smaller brains and were intellectually inferior to men.⁷⁰ Because of this intellectual disability – core to their disposition – women embodied conservative social values, which would cost the Liberals their parliamentary majority.⁷¹ Fish was hardly alone. For example, Sir George Stoddart Whitmore, a Liberal Legislative Councilor, argued in 1893 that female enfranchisement would be “the rule of the clergy...[as] women [were] more impressionable than men, and they [were] more in the hands of the clergy.”⁷² Even Ballance, who had claimed to support women's suffrage for years, wavered in his

⁶⁷ F. R. J. Sinclair, “Fish, Henry Smith,” in *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, 1993, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2f8/fish-henry-smith>.

⁶⁸ Sinclair.

⁶⁹ New Zealand Parliament, “Parliamentary Debates,” 1891, 511.

⁷⁰ Tom Brooking, *Richard Seddon: King of God's Own* (Penguin UK, 2014).

⁷¹ Fish would eventually break with the Liberal government because he was consistently overlooked for additional parliamentary responsibilities Sinclair, “Fish, Henry Smith.”

⁷² New Zealand Parliament, “Parliamentary Debates” 81 (1893): 142, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/007119315>.

support, believing that “women may be Conservative while ignorant, but Liberal when instructed”⁷³ and thus, a preponderance of power would be given to the Conservatives.⁷⁴

Finally, the suffragists’ cause also received help from some Conservatives, such as Hall. As previously discussed, the widespread belief that women prioritized family and traditional societal values made them an appealing constituency for conservative to incorporate into political institutions. Hall was one of many parliamentarians who thought women’s traditional dispositions made them conservatively inclined and thus, his statements are indicative of the broader pro-suffrage coalition.

Importantly, there is little historical evidence to suggest that elites were primarily motivated to support women’s suffrage by widespread mobilization and the movement’s connections to other social movements, such as the Tailoresses Union. Instead, it is disposition and gendered narratives that are repeatedly emphasized by elites. The best example for the social mobilization hypothesis in the New Zealand case is the coalition between women’s suffrage and the temperance movement. However, even here, it is unclear whether the association with the temperance movement was politically informative. First, temperance in New Zealand was a cross-cutting issue and did not align neatly along partisan lines. Indeed, while temperance campaigners worked towards a common policy objective, supporters could be progressives or conservatives and motivated by differing rationales. It, therefore, would have been difficult for elites to draw conclusions about women’s partisan or policy preferences from their connection with the temperance movement. Second, while some politicians, such as Seddon and Fish, did reference the temperance movement in their opposition to women’s suffrage, many other parliamentarians did not. Even within the New Zealand Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), temperance and Christianity were often relegated to secondary interests behind achieving the franchise, particularly as the campaign for enfranchisement gathered momentum in the late 1880s.⁷⁵

By 1892, female franchise had become an official platform of the New Zealand Liberal Party under Ballance and finally passed through the House of Representatives on August 31, 1892. The conservative Legislative Council also approved it but made a strategic (and likely deliberate) amendment – giving women the postal vote.⁷⁶ This amendment was intolerable to the House of Representatives as the secret ballot was considered sacrosanct and many feared that secrecy would be violated.⁷⁷ This caused the majority of parliamentarians, including pro-suffrage Liberals and radicals like Earnshaw, to vote against female franchise when the bill returned to the House of Representatives.

⁷³ New Zealand Parliament, “Parliamentary Debates” 68 (1890), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/007119315>.

⁷⁴ “Parliamentary Gossip,” *Auckland Star*, August 24, 1891.

⁷⁵ Megan Cook, “Women’s Movement - Women’s Christian Temperance Union,” Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, 2011, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/womens-movement/page-2>.

⁷⁶ New Zealand Parliament, “Parliamentary Debates” 77 (1892): 258–62, 442–48, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/007119315>.

⁷⁷ Grimshaw, *Women’s Suffrage in New Zealand*, 70; New Zealand Parliament, “Parliamentary Debates” 78 (1892): 817, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/007119315>.

Parliamentary supporters of women's suffrage tried again in 1893 with the amended *1893 Electoral Bill*. Although he was an opponent of women's suffrage, Seddon – now the Liberal Party leader – introduced the bill as he had ensured its failure in the Legislative Council by convincing two paired Councilors to change their vote from 'yes' to 'no'. These additional votes guaranteed the bill would fail until Seddon's manipulation was discovered and the Councilors change their position in protest.⁷⁸ Thus, on September 8, 1893, women's suffrage finally passed through parliament by two votes and New Zealand became the first country in the world to grant universal franchise to women.

CONCLUSION

The cue of disposition has played an important yet unacknowledged role in the development of democracy and the enfranchisement of women. In New Zealand, self-interested politicians relied heavily on their beliefs about women and their dispositions to determine whether the enfranchisement of women was likely to be politically beneficial or not. Not only did political elites make repeated claims about the intrinsic qualities of women with limited references to broader concepts of equality, but these beliefs cut across political boundaries, which resulted in dramatic splits within liberal and conservative blocs.

Importantly, this paper makes several contributions to our understandings of gender, women's suffrage, and democratization, more broadly. First, the paper's focus on disposition and gender narratives reveals how elites constructed and perceived gender, particularly during moments of high political contention. Moreover, by emphasizing how beliefs about disposition varied amongst the elite, the paper reinforces the idea that gender norms and behavior are socially constructed.

Second, this paper's focus on disposition reveals the dispositional heuristics that are present in important segments of the literature on enfranchisement. Too often the conventional wisdom holds that women were largely apolitical beings who, upon receiving the vote, would merely "vote like their husbands".⁷⁹ Indeed, Duverger argues that "...while women have, legally, ceased to be minors, they still have the mentality of minors in many fields and, particularly in politics..." – which is a dispositional attribution.⁸⁰ However, as this paper demonstrates, elites in New Zealand certainly did not expect women to vote as instructed by their husbands. Instead, women were viewed as a distinct voting bloc with strong (sometimes quite radical) political

⁷⁸ Grimshaw, *Women's Suffrage in New Zealand*, 92.

⁷⁹ Bernard R. Berelson, Paul F. Lazarsfeld, and William N. McPhee, *Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Campaign* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954); Angus Campbell et al., *The American Voter* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

⁸⁰ Maurice Duverger, "The Political Role of Women" (Paris: UNESCO, 1955), 129.

preferences and inclinations. This paper, therefore, adds to the growing literature that challenges the dispositional idea women were merely a political tool of their husbands.⁸¹

Third, as previously mentioned, New Zealand suffragists and their supporters became prominent norm entrepreneurs on the international stage. The importance of these actors to the international diffusions of women's suffrage highlights the potential for smaller, historical cases to make substantial contributions to the literature of democratization and enfranchisement, which is disproportionately focused on larger and somewhat overdone examples.

This account has emphasized the role of men in the enfranchisement of women, which might be read as implying that women played no role in their own struggle for suffrage. It is indisputable that the women's suffrage movement, especially in New Zealand, played a critical role in encouraging male allies, who advocated for female suffrage, and pressuring male opponents, who did not. Additionally, the suffrage movement was also responsible for contributing to elite interpretations of women's dispositions that existed at the time. Ultimately, however, male elites were responsible for voting to extend political rights to women. Therefore, it is essential to examine exactly how this occurred.

There are two avenues for further research left unexplored by this paper. My theory about disposition implies that extensions of franchise to similar groups in different states should be protracted and difficult affairs. Although elites rely on disposition and gender narratives during initial expansions, which are low information contexts, subsequently elites are able to examine the results of previous enfranchisement. This new information from other countries allows elites to update their expectations of voting behavior based on actual behavior, learning about whether enfranchisement was politically beneficial or not through a process of diffusion. Therefore, after an initial spate of broadening, enfranchisements should gradually slow over time. Second, if women know that elites rely on the heuristic of disposition, it should have been possible for women to manipulate political elites' perceptions either in favor of or against the women's suffrage position. The interaction between women, the women's movement, and the perception of their dispositions, therefore, is fruitful avenue for future research.

⁸¹ For a more extensive discussion of this debate see J. Kevin Corder and Christina Wolbrecht, *Counting Women's Ballots* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 19–22; Other literature that challenges the conventional wisdom of women voting like their husbands includes Sara Alpern and Dale Baum, "Female Ballots: The Impact of the Nineteenth Amendment," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 16, no. 1 (1985): 43–67, <https://doi.org/10.2307/204321>; Kristi Anderson, "Women and the Vote in the 1920s:," *Women & Politics* 14, no. 4 (November 20, 1994): 43–56, https://doi.org/10.1300/J014v14n04_04; Sara E. Brown, "Female Perpetrators of the Rwandan Genocide," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 16, no. 3 (July 3, 2014): 448–69, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2013.788806>.