



## Journal of International Women's Studies

---

Volume 20  
Issue 8 *Issue #2 (of 2) Women's Movements  
and the Shape of Feminist Theory and Praxis in  
Latin America*

Article 7

---

October 2019

### Reflections on a Transnational Project: Suffrage in the Americas

Patricia Harms

Stephanie Mitchell

Follow this and additional works at: <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws>

 Part of the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Harms, Patricia and Mitchell, Stephanie (2019). Reflections on a Transnational Project: Suffrage in the Americas. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 20(8), 110-120.  
Available at: <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol20/iss8/7>

This item is available as part of Virtual Commons, the open-access institutional repository of Bridgewater State University, Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

## Reflections on a Transnational Project: Suffrage in the Americas

By Patricia Harms<sup>1</sup> and Stephanie Mitchell<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

Suffrage is the most significant political development within modern Liberal states. Despite this fact, it is curious as to why suffrage movements have so little history. This article focuses on the creation of an edited volume that seeks to address the women's suffrage story across the Americas. While the intellectual process of the project is discussed in some detail, this article is predominantly a reflection on the process of developing a collaborative project and the challenges inherent to a transnational approach. This project reveals both the significance of suffrage and simultaneously the fractured landscape within individual countries, suffrage movements and the body politics as countless individuals and groups were excluded from the concept of 'citizenship.' It has become clear at this juncture that although significant gaps within women's history across the hemisphere remain, attempting to compile a hemispheric story such as this one would have been unthinkable even a few decades ago and this type of project could also have not happened much earlier in the historiography.

*Keywords:* suffrage, feminism, transnational, Americas

### Introduction

A series of centennials to mark women's suffrage and the move towards universal suffrage have just begun to be marked across the Americas. Canada was the first country to federally enfranchise certain groups of women in 1918 while the United States was a close second in 1920. It seems an obvious point, yet one worth remembering, that the mobilization for universal suffrage represents the most important advance for women as well as many disenfranchised groups of men. Despite its significance for the development of democratic practices, the stories of suffrage movements, those who fought for suffrage, and those who were marginalized from citizenship or the practice of it for reasons of class and ethnic identity have been largely absent from academic scholarship and public awareness. While movements and revolutions for independence have been integrated into our general educational and social consciousness, the same cannot be said about

---

<sup>1</sup> Patricia Harms is an associate professor of history at Brandon University in Manitoba, Canada, and has also served as chair of the Gender and Women's Studies program. She is a scholar of Latin America with a research focus on Guatemala, women and gender analysis. Her upcoming monograph on Guatemalan women in the capital city focuses on the rise of feminist movements within a revolutionary context. She is also involved with the Hispanic Association of Manitoba, an organization designed to facilitate the transition of Spanish speaking immigrants in southwest Manitoba.

<sup>2</sup> Stephanie Mitchell is professor of history at Carthage College in Kenosha, Wisconsin where she teaches courses on Latin American history. She has also served as chair of the Women's and Gender Studies Program. She is a social historian of Latin America with a research focus on twentieth century Mexico. She is also involved with several organizations, including *Voces de la Frontera*, WISDOM, and AMMPARO to advocate for and support Latin American immigrants in her community.

the historical processes surrounding suffrage movements. Therefore, we embarked upon a project to try to answer the question, “how did women get the vote?” across the Americas in order to reconstruct this hemispheric event. Hoping to create an edited volume *Suffrage in the Americas* that integrated this particular element of the feminist story, we have gathered together a group of scholars and feminists with expertise in their respective regions of the hemisphere. To accomplish this goal we believed that in-person conversations among the contributors were critical and so we spent five years applying for research and workshop grants. Our efforts culminated in a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute in 2018. We are now in the final stages of gathering and editing contributing chapters and our theoretical approach and understanding of suffrage processes continue to be transformed.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Puzzle of Suffrage**

The Women’s Suffrage in the Americas project started through an accidental meeting at the Rocky Mountain Council on Latin American Studies’ annual conference in 2005. As historians of Mexico and Guatemala respectively, we (Stephanie and Patricia) were part of a panel on the role of women and gender within revolutionary movements. This same group subsequently met at several more conferences where the question of suffrage as an integral part of both the Guatemalan and Mexican revolutionary struggles emerged. Our research into these two countries led to broader questions concerning how precisely women throughout the Americas gained the vote. From the earliest stages of this project, several realities became evident which affirmed that a transnational study of suffrage was imminently necessary. First, we discovered that broadly speaking, the historiography on national suffrage movements remains very limited. Following an exhaustive historiographic search, it became clear that a comparative analysis of the struggle for suffrage did not exist, highlighting the absence of historical and transnational knowledge. While suffrage movements in the United States had received considerable attention, national movements throughout the rest of the hemisphere remained largely understudied, making any comparison studies impossible. The national stories in Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Cuba and Costa Rica have received more attention but exist predominantly as isolated studies. Within the existing literature, there also seemed to be wide agreement that the expansion of suffrage in one country had an impact on neighbouring countries in a particular region of the Americas, but there was nothing that tied the disparate national histories together. There was no volume that focused on women’s movements the way that the suffragists did, as an interconnected whole. Recognizing that no living historian has enough knowledge inside their head to write such a volume alone, we realized that we needed to put together a team of scholars with enough regional expertise to be able to answer the central question how did women get the vote?” accurately and comprehensively.<sup>4</sup>

The existing comparative studies on suffrage movements reveal the historic intellectual links between particular regions. Studies on transnational feminism in the Americas, the lifeblood of suffrage movements, follow two primary trajectories: along a Trans-Atlantic, “east-west” axis and along a Pan-American “north-south” axis. For example, the most common comparisons exist primarily between movements in the United States and European regions, specifically Great Britain. (Dubois, 1994; Rupp, 1997) Works that focused on the north-south axis have emphasized

---

<sup>3</sup> See the complete list of contributors at the end of this essay. One of the contributors to this volume, Veronica Strong-Boag, has developed a website for suffrage. [www.womenssuffrage.org](http://www.womenssuffrage.org).

<sup>4</sup> There are several sources that focus on the global suffrage movement including Hannam, Aucheterlonie, and Holder (2000); Rupp and Taylor (1999); and Adams (2016).

the influence of the United States suffragists on transnational women's movements in Latin America.<sup>5</sup> *Feminism for the Americas*, Katherine Marino's new study on the influence of six individual feminist and suffrage leaders exemplifies these critical connections and offers a significant revision to existing scholarship, demonstrating how Latin American women played a pivotal role within the development of hemispheric ideas regarding democracy, broader notions of citizenship and women's rights as human rights. (Marino, 2019) Ironically, despite its geographic proximity, Canada's suffrage movement has not been analyzed alongside of or in relationship with the United States and has never been included within limited hemispheric studies. In the absence of other narratives that challenged this unidirectional suffrage and transnational feminist historiography, this perception has flourished.

During our assessment of the suffrage literature, it became clear that what we did know about suffrage movements suggested that a complex array of factors had contributed to each movement. A dizzying number of specific factors appeared to contribute to the successful and often limited enfranchisement of women, although there were definitely patterns from a hemispheric perspective. In an attempt to make some sense of it all, Stephanie Mitchell created a series of political models in which to contextualize the movements from a hemispheric perspective (this will be discussed further in the article). Third, within all the available work, it became clear that the role of individual actors had been pivotal to both national and transnational suffrage movements.

Given the significance of universal suffrage as a democratic milestone, we were curious as to why suffrage movements have so little history. As it turns out, this paucity of history can be understood at least in part, by the development of women's histories themselves. The historiographies of women throughout the Americas have developed unevenly, emerging alongside of the rise of social history. Studies on women in the United States and Canada emerged as a field during the 1960s and 1970s paralleling the rise of feminist movements and social activism.<sup>6</sup> The earliest pioneers in the field of Latin American women's history also began writing during the 1960s and 1970s, but largely in isolation and it was not until the late 1980s that the field began to flourish. This initial surge in women's history and the subsequent creation of women's studies programs led to groundbreaking structural and institutional gender analysis, creating profound and new conversations regarding the role of class and ethnicity. The significant turning point in this scholarly shift can be seen in Joan Wallach Scott's *Gender and the Politics of History* in 1988. Period, regional and thematic histories all began to incorporate gender as an analytical lens, and women were no longer routinely ignored as historical actors. While the field of women's and gender history has certainly experienced a boom, in many ways women's suffrage became the ironic victim of the successes those advances represent. The story of how women achieved the suffrage across the Americas is one of them. As gender histories moved out from the margins, fewer scholars focused on women's history and many elements of these histories remain untold. Indeed, women's suffrage went out of fashion again almost as soon as it reemerged in the 1990s. As Ellen Carol Dubois noted in 1994, "even with the revival of modern feminism and women's history, woman suffrage movements have been a curiously understudied phenomenon." (Dubois, 1994, p. 252) Despite some initial scholarship on the subject of suffrage and the optimistic

---

<sup>5</sup> See Amidon (2007); Lavin (1998); Miller (1986); Paxton, Hughes, and Green (2006); Threlkeld (2014); Marino (2014a, 2014b).

<sup>6</sup> The first Women and Gender Studies Program was established in 1969 at San Diego State University while Cornell University offered the first accredited courses. These developments occurred due to the efforts of individual scholars and feminist activists.

assertion by Caroline Daley and Melanie Nolan that “a new wave of suffrage historians are writing exciting new suffrage histories,” we discovered that their prediction failed to materialize. (Daley and Nolan, 1994, p. 7)

The virtual absence of the suffrage story from contemporary scholarship throughout the hemisphere led us to question its very historical significance and the meaning of citizenship itself. Initial feminist and suffrage movements had been “born wrapped in one great hope: that it would be good for all womankind, and able to embrace all women, to dispel all national, racial and cultural barriers.” (Lavrin, 1998) This early euphoria identified by Asunción Lavrin lay at the heart of suffrage movements as suffragists (and their allies) sought to integrate themselves into the body politic. However, what quickly became evident is that not everyone shared this universal vision, including many of the suffragists themselves. In the aftermath of limited enfranchisement that marked the first suffrage victories, the early suffragists who were predominantly middle and upper class, white and relatively privileged essentially reconstituted existing ethnic and class hierarchies. As a result, the question of who within any given society fit the parameters for political citizenship began to define the suffrage movements and their resisters. Consequently, this project has raised some fundamental questions regarding the definitions of woman, citizenship and the meaning of suffrage itself. Simply put, did the vote matter? Did it expand notions of citizenship alter societal gender norms? Even within regions that have been well studied there has been little analysis on how and if women used their newly found right to vote. We do not know the meaning that women attributed to citizenship and how politicians engaged with this newly enfranchised set of voters. The impact on those who were not enfranchised during the initial legal reforms also remains unknown. Were the socio-political landscapes within individual regions altered by their absence, and how could scholars measure that? We realized that we had more questions than answers, creating any number of intriguing hypotheses about the role and meaning of suffrage.

### **Making Sense of It All**

The challenge at the core of this project has been to present a cohesive story in the midst of the variations present within all the regions of the Americas. In other words, how do we “make sense of it all?” Our goal has been to evaluate characteristics that different national histories might have in common and classify them accordingly, rather than using geography or chronology as an organizing principle. In an attempt to make sense of the enormity of these historical questions, Stephanie Mitchell focused on the political contexts within which various suffrage movements emerged. Subsequently, she identified five general models including the Federalist, the Delayed Liberal, the Conservative Strategic Advantage, the Populist, and the Revolutionary.

The Federalist Model applies to the countries of Costa Rica, the United States, and Canada. In this model, suffragists worked successfully to mobilize political support for their agenda at the local and regional levels, making women's suffrage a reality in many states or provinces before moving to the federal level, where national leaders became convinced of the granting women the vote.

The Delayed Liberal Model and the Conservative Strategic Advantage Model are two sides of the same coin. Both involve a constant we have observed across the entire region, namely women's presumed natural conservatism. This assumption, which was broadly shared by women and men throughout Latin America, as well as French-speaking Canada and much of Catholic Europe, posited that women were, by nature, more inclined to religiosity than men. In political contexts in which Liberals had adopted anticlerical stances, the specter of enfranchised women

represented a potential political threat. Liberal leaders typically feared that women would be likely to vote as their priests directed them. Liberals, therefore, often supported women's suffrage ideologically, but opposed it strategically.

Conservatives, on the other hand, perceived a potential benefit from women's enfranchisement, although they typically opposed altering women's roles in society. Thus, in the Conservative Strategic Advantage Model, conservatives, who may have been responsible for persecuting progressive feminists, took advantage of a presumed political advantage by enfranchising women. Both Peru and Ecuador belong in this category although El Salvador seems to fit as well. In the Delayed Liberal Model, Liberal governments supported women's suffrage in principle, but then blocked or delayed extending the suffrage out of fear that enfranchising women might give conservatives a strategic advantage. Mexico, Chile and Ecuador fit this political profile and we believe many others share aspects of this same phenomenon to greater or lesser degrees.

The fourth model is provisionally labeled the Populist Model. As anyone familiar with twentieth century history will attest, however, the word "populism" has taken on so many diverse meanings as to make its usage of negligible utility. For the purpose of this study, Colombia, Argentina and Brazil fall under this model. Our contributors from Argentina and Brazil had particular concerns about reifying errors in the general historiography of the southern cone that overstate similarities between Perón and Vargas. Nailing down a definition of populism that worked for both countries took a great deal of time and effort. Argentine historian Adriana Valobra suggested that residents in both countries (as well as many others) perceived a general failure of Liberalism to address the most fundamental needs of the nation, opening the way for alternative routes to power. The 'populists' who took advantage of these new routes to power were neither liberal nor conservative in the traditional sense. They were often progressive on some issues and traditionalist on others. They shared a propensity for authoritarian tactics. In these cases, because the newer leaders were not hindered by the same historic association with anti-clericalism that posed such a threat to their Liberal peers, they were free to look at women voters as possible sources of electoral support. While they may not have fully trusted women to vote in their favor, as Brazilian leader Getulio Vargas seemed not to have, they nevertheless saw enough benefit in associating themselves with having been responsible for granting women's suffrage to extend the vote to at least some of the female population. This tendency likely has to do with another universal constant we have identified; women's suffrage seems everywhere to have been associated with internationalism, modernity, and progress. The perceived benefit of this association seems to have been enough in some cases to warrant extending the suffrage, albeit with restrictions even if the leader saw some electoral risk in doing so.

The last model involves countries where, as in Guatemala or Cuba a revolutionary movement against either an outright colonial power or foreign-backed dictatorship brought suffrage to the table through the active participation of women in an anti-imperialist, revolutionary struggle. In the case of Puerto Rico, we encounter a similar scenario with the reverse outcome; suffrage came through the manipulation of pro-U.S. suffragists working together with U.S. suffragists in the halls of the U.S. Congress. In this case, the Puerto Rican assembly chose to extend a restricted version of the suffrage to maintain its semblance of autonomy when faced with the alternative of a US-imposed extension of full universal suffrage.

This theoretical framework was presented at the Rocky Mountain Council of Latin American Studies in 2013. Pioneers of Latin American women's and gender histories, Asunción Lavrin and Donna Guy attended this panel and helped our project take a definite turn for the better. Both Lavrin and Guy have contributed to the foundation of Latin American women's histories

during their careers, and few people understand the historiography and historical trends better than they do. They confirmed the general lack of knowledge regarding suffrage movements in Latin America validating the need for a project like ours. Donna Guy also shifted the direction of the project significantly when she pointed out that while we know little about suffrage movements, we know even less about how or even if women used the vote once they had it. Both Lavrin and Guy subsequently agreed to support our efforts guiding the research, suggesting collaborators from across the hemisphere, reading drafts and perhaps most vitally encouraging us as we encountered the project's many obstacles. In short, they have become the "*madrinas*" (godmothers) of the project. They ultimately played pivotal roles in the NEH Summer Institute, giving key note addresses at the beginning and end of the Institute and sharing their expansive knowledge that can only be gained from a lifetime of work in the field. Their presence affirmed the vital importance of cross-generational collaborations, passing on the hard-won knowledge and insights that is only available after decades of study.

### **Moving the Project Forward**

We realized that this would not be a traditional edited volume and the need for everyone to meet together to discuss their particular regions seemed both critical and impossible. The first strategy was to find funds to bring everyone together and we started in Canada. There is one single funding agency for academics which supports all varieties of "knowledge mobilization" and research known as the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). We applied for a workshop grant to bring all participants together as well as disseminate the presentations across the Americas. The proposal was over fifty pages in length and required evidence of in-kind and other sources of funding. The evaluation response four months later was generally positive, but the specific critiques of the project revealed several key limitations regarding the current state of transnational women's history. Although we had gathered regional experts, including the leading Canadian women's and gender historian (Strong-Boag), and two of the pioneers of Latin American women's history (Lavrin and Guy), the conclusion reached by the SSHRC evaluators was that the participants did not possess the necessary qualifications to contribute chapters. This response, at least to us, appeared to indicate the lack of transnational awareness among scholars about each other's work, and perhaps in this case especially about Latin America. Rather than discourage us, these comments reinforced our conviction regarding the need for more cross-border and cross-disciplinary conversations, affirming the transnational direction of our project.

Two frustrating grant cycles passed without ever being able to find sufficient funding. Our *madrinas* counseled perseverance, however, so we decided to pursue funding in the United States instead of Canada. We also realized that if we waited for funding to begin writing, we might never produce a volume. Forced to work within the existing, untested categories, we asked our collaborators to begin drafting their chapters on their respective national histories. We set up opportunities for smaller groups to meet at various existing conferences: in Canada, in Colombia, and in the United States. We also held Skype conversations among writers within a given category. With each meeting, our understanding of the dynamics of women's suffrage history lurched forward. Taking advantage of the comments from the first cycle reviewers for a National Endowment of the Humanities grant and refining the proposal itself for the next NEH grant cycle, we finally were successful with our proposal to hold an NEH Summer Institute, at Carthage College, in Kenosha, Wisconsin, during the summer of 2018. As a result of our repeated frustrated

attempts to gain funding, nearly half of the chapters were written without the benefit of the in-person gathering that we had hoped would precede the activity.

We selected thirty out of nearly 100 applicants to attend the NEH Summer Institute, all of whom brought distinct expertise on some aspect of women's history in some region of the Americas. Our scholars spent two weeks within the confines of a small liberal arts campus on the shores of Lake Michigan. As was hoped, the Institute produced an extraordinary series of conversations, some of which were programmed in advance, but many of which occurred serendipitously, the result of so much time spent living and working closely together. At the same time, however, two other goals were advanced: promoting the teaching of suffrage history and pushing us towards new questions we had not yet had the wisdom to ask.

In order to develop material that might be available to a broader audience, we also have created a digital source. The digital humanities project is one of the newer elements of the broader NEH project; it allows us to identify some of the basic questions and answers that have yet to be addressed. This idea came about when we realized how many smaller, component questions about women's suffrage have yet to be answered in addition to our overreaching one. Take, for example, the seemingly straightforward question of *when* women in the Americas obtained the suffrage. The question, like so many others relating to our topic, is much more complicated than it seems. For example, many countries extended the vote to some women before others. A traditional timeline will not tell you which women were enfranchised, and which were excluded. Were some women excluded because of their ethnicity, race, class, education or access to property? Were those women who did receive the franchise able to participate in all elections, or only those at the municipal level? Were some women eligible for election before they could be electors? Surely, a chart that accurately tells us when women gained the suffrage would have to answer all of these questions, but none such graphic exists. Similarly, we have nothing that correlates the various movements for women's suffrage with the dates of suffrage extensions—in other words, no way of determining how effective suffrage movements were in any given national context in determining suffrage outcomes. To help us answer these questions, we enlisted the help of a graphic designer who accompanied the NEH summer institute. José Montoto collected some initial data from the various experts present during the Institute in order to construct visualization tools, which we will subsequently make available to the public on our website, [suffrage.carthage.edu](http://suffrage.carthage.edu). As we receive final chapter submissions, the data from these national studies will also be included to create a more comprehensive picture. The tools and materials we are creating will be available for teachers at all levels of our education system who have an interest in telling the story of suffrage. The fundamental intersectionality of race/ethnicity, gender, and class within these stories will also help students, piece together the diffracted elements of our identity politics; it may help them to better place themselves in relation to our hemisphere's interconnected past. Both the digital humanities project and the multiple projects on the creation of classroom materials will promote the teaching of suffrage history. In short, the limited answers and the many more questions we will be able to identify with the completion of the edited volume will create a geo-political suffrage map for scholars to follow.

The NEH Summer Institute offered us a prolonged and intensive opportunity to interrogate these proposed models with both the country specialists as well as the institute participants. The NEH grant provided for a larger gathering of scholars than we originally intended who were able to participate and assist in our efforts to define the suffrage extensions within the hemisphere. As the week progressed, several realities became clear. The existing models based on the political systems with which they were required to engage in order to be successful were not sufficient to



explain the complexity of the success and limited enfranchisement of the suffrage movements. Quite simply, we also needed to focus on the suffragists themselves and the nature of their intellectual development. Following the feedback of participants and fellow contributors, it also became clear that a variety of other factors were critical to the final nature of suffrage in each region beyond that of each political context and must be integrated into a theoretical approach.

### **Constants and Variables**

Based on the insights of all those involved in the Summer Institute, at this juncture we have identified several other factors that appear to be pivotal within suffrage movements in addition to the political system in which they were born. First, the nature of transnational connections played a key role in the nature of any movement. For example, Guatemalans were not allowed to travel outside of the country in the decade prior to their suffrage campaign and so in this particular case the theoretical development and questions related to the nature of citizenship and suffrage remained highly localized, the movement limited to a cadre of middle-class literary figures and educators. For countries such as Brazil, Cuba, Mexico and Argentina, transnational connections and relationships between suffrage and feminist leaders were vital to the trajectory of their respective suffrage movements. Early suffragists in the U.S., Canada and Brazil frequently held notions of their own presumed superiority however, believing that the majority of Latin American women were not prepared for suffrage. Consequently, transnational relationships were frequently conflictual, and these intellectual tensions contributed to each region's theoretical development regarding fundamental questions of citizenship, class, ethnicity and full enfranchisement of all people. Aside from Marino's wonderful contribution to transnational feminist relationships, scholarship has framed the rise of these feminist networks and the intellectual drivers of them in a north to south axis. Our project wants to complicate these presumptions that marginalize Latin American feminists and explore the complex and thought-provoking associations that existed.

Closely related to the role of transnationalism is the factor of individual leaders who were critical to the rise and sustenance of suffrage movements. Each country had key activists and often larger-than-life characters who both led their national movements and communicated with their transnational peers and allies. The intellectual activists such as U.S. activists Susan B Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Doris Stevens (just to name a few), Chile's Bertha Lutz in Brazil, Nelli McClung in Canada, or Gloria Menéndez Mina in Guatemala all played disproportionate roles in the outcome of their respective movements. Each of these individuals had access to education and were part of the dominant culture within their countries, speaking the national language. Many of these figures in Latin America were part of the journalistic and literary communities and had developed national reputations before their participation in suffrage movements.

The ethnic identity of suffragist leaders within their respective nations is also an essential element of suffrage stories across the hemisphere. Existing national studies have all begun to critique the identities of early suffragists, adding insightful new analysis around the role of racism and classism within these movements. Early suffragists' perceptions on the question of power sharing appears to have become an even more critical factor when ethnic groups outside of state power were proportionally larger. For the majority of the hemisphere, ethnic identity has proven to be malleable and highly dependent upon specific colonial experiences with the Spanish, Portuguese, or British. Nikki Strong-Boag's assessment of the Canadian context is applicable in every country. "Feminism never provided a unifying standard for the suffragists or their

successors. Identities associated with class, race, and religion regularly generated distinctive agendas. The middle-class European settler women who dominated the suffrage campaigns did not readily share power with Indigenous, Asian, African, or working-class Canadians.” (Strong-Boag, 2018, p. 3) The preliminary assessments of national suffrage stories all point to the need for further research that focuses on regional elements of the story within each nation-state and where suffrage mobilization was taking place and among which groups of people. We believe that this is the next stage of research which can be taken up by scholars across the hemisphere, enriching, enlarging and clarifying this pivotal step in democratic evolutions.

Within the complex trajectory of suffrage, we have identified five constants which interact with the variables just mentioned. First, a shared historical trajectory as all American suffrage movements trace their origins to nineteenth century elite women’s organizations, usually dedicated to causes relating to social welfare. Second, a shared cultural context by the early twentieth century where the normative masculine quality of citizenship had been successfully brought into question throughout the Americas within a cultural context where women increasingly occupied roles that had heretofore been reserved for men. Third, the rise of transnational associations in which American suffrage movements universally associated feminism with modernity, transnationalism, social welfare, and usually with peace. Fourth, all regions shared a presumption of feminine conservatism. There was wide agreement among political actors of all ideological persuasions that women were more likely to be conservative, more religious, and more vulnerable to clerical influence than men. Fifth and finally, multiple feminisms existed which were not necessarily ideologically consistent and were frequently at odds with one another including compensatory, Catholic, maternalist, rights-based, and Socialist variants.

One of the explicit initial reasons for attempting to organize the hemispheric suffrage movements into models was to avoid a simple chronological approach. However, while there are a myriad of reasons why certain movements were successful earlier than others, it does appear that in fact there is something to be learned about the chronology of the suffrage movements. Therefore, within our discussions, the relationships between countries, their proximity to one another and most especially their influence on each other does contribute to the success or failure of suffrage. The question of chronology also reveals the global processes which influenced suffrage and general questions such as whether suffrage was achieved in the pre- or post-World War II era.

### **Closing Observations**

As it turns out, creating a transnational history of the suffrage movements across the Americas reflects the struggle of suffrage movements themselves. This project exemplifies, and in many ways, replicates the early networks created by the suffrage movements. Scholars in Latin America face greater challenges in accessing archival materials due to a lack of funding than do those of us in Canada and the United States. Perhaps even more critically is the lack of secondary sources in which to contextualize their research. Many Latin American scholars work independently and often even those who work within institutions cannot afford to buy databases with articles and references. Financial resources for travel and research are unequally available to those who are involved in this project, mimicking early transnational privileges and challenges. Despite this inequality, our task much like that undertaken by suffragists a century before us was impossible without the intellectual and psychological support of international peers, mentors, and a lineage of ideas. The first suffrage movements relied on a network of intellectual and moral support in their struggle for the vote and specific individuals were critical to their success. A

century later, the hemispheric story of suffrage we are attempting to reconstruct, while dependent upon generations of scholars, attempts to disrupt the hierarchies prominent within the initial campaigns for suffrage. With the depth of contemporary social analysis available and a conscious inclusion of scholars from across the Americas, it is our hope that this project will forge international scholarly relationships of a more inclusive nature. Although significant gaps within women's history across the hemisphere remain, attempting to compile a hemispheric story such as this one would have been unthinkable even a few decades ago and this type of project could also have not happened much earlier in the historiography.

Finally, all of the analysis over the past several years has revealed the significance of suffrage for the political welfare of women across the Americas. It has simultaneously revealed the fractured landscape within individual countries, suffrage movements, and the body politic as countless individuals and groups were excluded from the concept of "citizenship." A re-examination of the struggle for and against political citizenship is timely and frankly long overdue. It is our hope that this edited volume will map out new questions and new research directions.

**Women's Suffrage Project Participants:**

Organizers/Editors: Patricia, Stephanie Mitchell

Madrinas: Donna Guy, Asunción Lavrin

Regional and thematic specialists: Roisida Aguilar, Perú; Guiomar Dueñas, Colombia; Victoria González Rivera, Nicaragua; Patricia Harms, Guatemala; Susan Goodier, the United States; Stephanie Mitchell, México; Claudia Montero, Chile; Teresa Novaes, Brazil; Erin O'Connor, Ecuador; Margaret Power, Puerto Rico; Eugenia Rodríguez, Costa Rica; Veronica Strong-Boag, Canada; Adriana Valobra, Argentina.

## Bibliography of Cited Sources

- Adams, J. (2016) *Women and the Vote: a World History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Amidon, K.S. (2007) "Carrie Chapman Catt and the Evolutionary Politics of Sex and Race, 1885-1940," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 68, No. 2 (Apr).
- Daley, C. and M. Nolan, eds. (1994) *Suffrage & Beyond: International Feminist Perspectives*. New York: New York University Press.
- Dubois, E.C. (1994). "Woman Suffrage Around the world: Three Phases of Suffragist Internationalism," in *Suffrage and Beyond: International Feminist Perspectives*, eds. Caroline Daley and Melanie Nolan. New York: New York University Press.
- Hannam, J., M. Aucheterlonie, and K. Holden. (2000). *International Encyclopedia of Women's Suffrage*. Santa Barbara, Calif: ABC-CLIO.
- Lavrin, A. (1998) "International Feminisms: Latin American Alternatives," *Gender and History*, 10:3.
- Marino, K.M. (2014a) "Marta Vergara, Popular-Front Pan-American Feminism and the Transnational Struggle for Working Women's Rights in the 1930s". *Gender & History*. 26, no. 3: 642-660.
- Marino, K.M. (2014b) "Transnational Pan-American Feminism: The Friendship of Bertha Lutz and Mary Wilhelmine Williams, 1926-1944". *Journal of Women's History*. 26. No. 2: 63-87.
- Marino, K.M. (2019) *Feminism for the Americas: The Making of an International Human Rights Movement*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Miller, F. (1986) "The International Relations of Women of the Americas, 1890-1928," *The Americas*, 43:2 (Oct).
- Paxton, P., M. M. Hughes, J. L. Green. (2006) "The International Women's Movement and Women's Political representation, 1893-2003," *American Sociological Review*, 71:6 (Dec): 898.
- Rupp, L.J. (1997) *Worlds of Women: The making of an International Women's Movement*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Rupp, L.J. and V. Taylor. (1999) "Forging Feminist Identity in an International Movement: A Collective identity Approach to Twentieth-Century Feminism," *Signs* Vol. 24, No. 2.
- Scott, Joan Wallach. (1988) *Gender and the Politics of History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Strong-Boag, V (unpublished). "Fractured Landscapes: Women and the Long Struggle for Suffrage and Political Equality in Canada," *Suffrage in the Americas*.
- Threlkeld, M. (2014) *Pan American Women: U.S. Internationalists and Revolutionary Mexico*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.