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Men Are from the Gilded Age, Women Are from the Progressive Era

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This is an expanded version of the presidential address I gave to the Society for Historians of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era (SHGAPE) at their meeting in 2000. In Part I, I use the catchphrase “Men are from the Gilded Age, Women are from the Progressive Era” as a way of making a critique of Progressive-era historiography from the perspective of women’s history. In Part II, I suggest four specific ways in which Progressive-era historians might respond to that critique.

I

In 1984, when Allen Davis published a new edition of his 1967 landmark study of the social settlement movement, he wrote in his preface, “Nothing has changed the writing of history more in the last decade and a half than the emergence of women’s history.”¹ Over fifteen years have passed since then, and yet even with the explosion of scholarly work in women’s history from the mid-eighties onward, Progressive-era historians have not changed their treatment of women as much as they might have.

In this essay I make a few observations about this issue. I begin with a confession. When I attended the first organizational meeting of SHGAPE, I did not join the Society. The room was filled with men who, it seemed to me at the time, were interested primarily in studying Gilded Age presidencies. My interests and theirs did not coincide. A few years later, Kathryn Kish Sklar called to say she had become a SHGAPE officer and to ask if I would participate in a SHGAPE panel she was putting together for the next meeting of the Organization of American Historians. Not only did I take part on that panel, but shortly afterward I was asked to serve as a SHGAPE officer myself. Later, in

¹ Allen F. Davis, *Spearheads for Reform: The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement, 1890-1914* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1984), xxiii.

trying to explain why I had originally spurned an organization in which I was now an officer, I found myself saying, "Well, you know, men are from the Gilded Age and women are from the Progressive Era, and there were too many men in that room!"²

This is the origin of the title of this essay. After coming up with the phrase, I realized that it was apt not only to my first experience with SHGAPE but also to my first encounters with the field of Progressive-era history. I came to this field in the mid-1970s, when, after an early career in French history, I began the research for a biography of Belle Moskowitz. Moskowitz was New York Governor Alfred E. Smith's political strategist in the 1920s and also my paternal grandmother. Since Moskowitz had identified herself as a Progressive, I began exploring Progressive-era historiography in order to place her into a wider context. Imagine my surprise when I found that general treatments of the progressive movement were unrecognizable from the perspective of Moskowitz's career.

Moskowitz was an educated middle-class Jewish woman born in 1877 in Harlem, New York, to a family of shopkeepers. From adulthood to marriage she worked in a social settlement. After marrying she became a volunteer social reformer, most notably through membership in the Council of Jewish Women and the Society for Ethical Culture. Her earliest campaign, and one that made her known throughout New York City, involved the licensing and regulating of dance halls. She became involved in Republican party insurgency in the early 1910s and in the Progressive party at local and state levels during its 1912 campaign. After a brief career as a garment industry peacemaker and industrial consultant, she joined a group of anti-Tammany Democrats who wanted to see Al Smith become governor. Moskowitz's partnership with Smith lasted until her untimely death in 1933, but despite her loyalty to him and to the Democratic party, to the end of her life she thought of herself as a "Progressive."

How could I locate her and her circles in general works on progressivism? As far as I could tell, she did not display status anxiety.

²This catchphrase is, of course, borrowed from the pop "gender-difference" language of John Gray. His *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus: A Practical Guide for Improving Communication and Getting What You Want in Your Relationships* (New York, 1992), sets up a binary relationship between male and female behaviors and expectations in the hope of improving communication between the sexes. The best part of the book is the title. The rest is a catalogue of differences based so heavily on stereotypes that they border on caricature.

Nor was she a businessman looking for order. Although the Social Gospel movement had influenced her, that context did not seem appropriate either. I found a few sources on Ethical Culture and immigrant Jewish community movements, and of course I derived much from Allen Davis's work. But what about all the women's voluntary associations she had been involved in? In the 1970s I could find almost nothing on them. No one had written about dance hall reform. Paul Boyer's 1978 study of urban moral reform briefly mentioned Newton Baker's efforts to create "wholesome" dance hall environments in Cleveland, Ohio, but Boyer said nothing of the woman-led reform movement that had given Baker this idea.³ In the end, I came to understand the themes and issues in dance hall reform by connecting it to recreation, parks, and playground movements and to concerns about prostitution and other forms of commercialized urban "vice."

Progressive-era party politics were even harder to get a handle on from the perspective of women. Since women did not vote in this period, political historians considered them irrelevant and wrote nothing about them.⁴ The best I could find were occasional references to woman suffrage and to progressives' interest in the woman's vote. J. Stanley Lemons's book on the "woman citizen" of the 1920s was not set in the Progressive Era *per se* but I found it enormously helpful.⁵ An unpublished dissertation, which said almost nothing about women, was my chief source on industrial peacemaking in the garment industry.⁶

³Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920* (Cambridge, MA, 1978), 220. Boyer's role as assistant editor of the biographical encyclopedia *Notable American Women, 1607-1950: A Biographical Dictionary* (Cambridge, MA, 1971) might have led one to assume that he would feature women in his book, but he focused almost exclusively on men (Josephine Shaw Lowell and Jane Addams were exceptions). He rarely names women in moral-reform movements, instead referring to them only as "friendly visitors" or as "the wives" of clerics and merchants. When he describes William Stead's *If Christ Came to Chicago* (Chicago, 1894) he jokes about Stead's vision of Mrs. Potter Palmer becoming the city's mayor (184-87) but neither identifies Palmer (a prominent Chicago clubwoman in charge of the woman's building at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition) nor explains why Stead could have had this vision. Of the book's reviewers, only Bertram Wyatt-Brown criticized him for his lack of focus on women. See *Reviews in American History* 7 (December 1979): 528.

⁴I remember feeling excited when I found Richard L. McCormick's *From Realignment to Reform: Political Change in New York State, 1893-1910* (Ithaca, 1981), only to discover that he never mentioned any women, nor the idea of women as a political force, in his book.

⁵J. Stanley Lemons, *The Woman Citizen: Social Feminism in the 1920s* (Urbana, 1973).

⁶Hyman Berman, "Era of the Protocol: A Chapter in the History of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, 1910-1916" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1956).

Everything else I had to figure out on my own from the primary sources I found in widely scattered public and private collections.

Works on the Al Smith period proved relatively unhelpful. Except for a brief revival of progressive themes under the leadership of “Fighting Bob” La Follette in the mid-1920s, the movement was supposed to be “dead” during the Harding-Coolidge years. Lemons’s book had established just how alive it was among women, but most sources on Smith’s career, except for a then-unpublished dissertation by Paula Eldot, were heavily male-oriented and Tammany-focused. These sources acknowledged that Moskowitz had played a vital role in Smith’s “kitchen cabinet” but no scholar had found out anything precise about what she had done. The only research that helped me get started was that of journalist-historian Robert Caro, who had written on Robert Moses, one of Smith’s closest associates. Caro developed quite a fascination for Moskowitz but beyond ascertaining her impact on Moses’s career never went any further.⁷

By the early 1980s, some women were making cameo appearances in the general literature. Daniel Rodgers’s penetrating essay, “In Search of Progressivism,”⁸ which came out in 1982, mentioned women – their clubs, quest for the vote, other “women’s concerns,” and of course Jane Addams. But women and women’s “concerns” were not central to his argument. Rodgers gave the idea of progressivism new life by clarifying some of its elements of cohesion but gender held no place in that analysis.

⁷Paula Eldot, *Governor Alfred E. Smith: The Politician As Reformer* (New York, 1983); Robert Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York, 1974). I have written about these early research experiences in “Critical Journey: From Belle Moskowitz to Women’s History,” in *The Challenge of Feminist Biography: Writing the Lives of Modern American Women*, eds., Sara Alpern, Joyce Antler, Elisabeth Israels Perry, and Ingrid Scobie (Urbana, 1992): 79-96.

⁸Daniel Rodgers, “In Search of Progressivism,” *Reviews in American History* 10 (December 1982): 113-32. Referring to the idea of progressivism as shuffling “through the 1970s as a corpse that would not lie down” (113), Rodgers assesses the decade’s various attempts to make progressive-era studies more coherent. He shows first that the “bifurcation” – the setting up of dualities of progressives (social reformers vs. structural reformers, western Bryanites vs. eastern Rooseveltians, new-stock vs. old-stock, etc.) – failed to bring much clarity. He looks then at the historical context of progressivism’s emergence – the decline of political parties, the rise of extra-party interest groups, and the increasing importance of issue-focused politics. Unwilling to give up on the idea of a shared ground for progressives, Rodgers identifies three: antimonopolism, a belief in (or longing for) social cohesion, and a quest for social efficiency.

Furthermore, most of the women appearing in the general works of the 1980s were only the most prominent: Jane Addams, Lillian Wald, and Florence Kelley, most notably, and occasionally Frances Willard. But more problematic was that the historians who wrote about them compartmentalized them into a “social work” or “social justice” wing of Progressivism.⁹ Other historians began to paint a broader picture of women progressives but they too used compartmentalizing terms. Prompted by Paula Baker’s important article from 1984, “The Domestication of Politics,” they began referring to women’s activism as “municipal housekeeping” or “domestic reform.”¹⁰ These terms reflected the ways in which some middle-class Progressive-era women, fearing criticism for “interfering” in public affairs, described their own activities. But were they appropriate descriptors for all of them?

Whether identifying Progressive-era women activists as part of a “social work wing” or as “municipal housekeepers,” neither treatment did justice to their commitment to broad-ranging change. Historians writing about men who pursue quality of life or welfare issues do not

⁹Robert Crunden’s *Ministers of Reform: The Progressives’ Achievement in American Civilization, 1889-1920* (New York, 1982) creates a collective portrait of 100 progressives, of whom a dozen are women, but he gives close attention only to Jane Addams. David R. Colburn and George E. Pozzetta, eds., *Reform and Reformers in the Progressive Era* (Westport, CT, 1983), refers only to Addams (in Blaine Brownell’s introductory historiographical essay, 12) and to Frances Perkins, Belle Israels, Pauline Goldmark, Josephine Goldmark, and Florence Kelley only once each and in the context of the investigation after the Triangle Factory fire (in Colburn’s essay, 30). Arthur S. Link and Richard L. McCormick, *Progressivism* (Arlington Heights, IL, 1983), an historiographical survey, refers more generously to women but primarily as “social progressives” concerned with issues important to the “women’s sphere” (74).

¹⁰Paula Baker, “The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920,” *American Historical Review* 89 (June 1984): 620-47. The image of women as municipal housekeepers has had considerable staying power. See, for example, James J. Connolly, *The Triumph of Ethnic Progressivism: Urban Political Culture in Boston, 1900-1925* (Cambridge, MA, 1998). Connolly says that women activists, “capitalizing on the traditional separate-spheres ideology...sought to increase their political power by extending their responsibilities as wives and mothers into public life” (10). “Their efforts [to be “municipal housekeepers”] helped push new ideas onto the political agenda while giving women the opportunity to assume broader public roles. They began speaking and acting on behalf of their communities on issues considered to be within the purview of women, further expanding the possible variations on the Progressive formula in the process.” Later, however, he describes Boston women trying to penetrate the world of male politics in ways inconsistent with the housekeeping paradigm. Appearing briefly are Julia Duff, a Catholic leader who ran for an at-large seat on the Boston City Council as a trustbuster, and the League of Catholic Women, launched in 1910 to coordinate the work of Catholic women’s clubs (72-73). Connolly never follows up on their stories.

call them “housekeepers.” In the 1880s, for example, the Knights of Labor used the power of the state to improve the quality of life in local communities. They campaigned for better transit, garbage pick-up, street lights, poor relief, and education. Not once does one of their historians, Leon Fink, call them “municipal housekeepers.”¹¹

Belle Moskowitz and women political activists like her would have rejected the housekeeper analogy. Although Moskowitz occasionally appealed to a language of “motherhood,” calling for a “motherhood of the commonwealth” to protect the unprotected, “municipal housekeeping” was not what she had in mind. She saw her work as an expression of a larger plan for restructuring society. These plans evolved as she matured. In her earliest days as a reformer, social and moral reforms were at the top of her agenda; later, as she connected with wider social and political circles, she supported civil service and electoral reform, industrial and labor reform, public control of utilities, protective labor legislation, and government reorganization. Until she linked herself with Smith, she openly fought the Tammany machine; later, she steered as clear of it as she could. Since she had never hunted buffalo nor traveled much beyond New York State, perhaps she was not as concerned about western conservation as were some male progressives, but she certainly was keen on preserving the nation’s natural resources for the benefit of all citizens. All of these issues comprised a totality of changes that were, in her eyes, “progressive.”

In the past decade, Progressive-era historiography has become much more responsive to women’s history than it was during the 1980s. The 1990s saw a veritable boom in historical scholarship on Progressive-era women.¹² Historians of progressivism who do not work

¹¹See Leon Fink, *Workingmen’s Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Politics* (Urbana, 1983), 32.

¹²Ruth Bordin’s *Woman and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873-1900* (Philadelphia) had originally come out in 1981 but was reissued in 1990. Nancy Cott’s *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven) came out in 1987 and helped clarify the relationship of women’s voluntary groups to political parties in the 1920s; but it focused so heavily on the national rather than local picture that it overstated the limits of women’s political choices after suffrage. Especially helpful were Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, eds., *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* (New York, 1993); Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939* (New York, 1990); Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935* (New York, 1991); Anne Firor Scott, *Natural Allies: Women’s Associations in American History* (Urbana, 1991); Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, MA, 1992); and Kathryn

in women's history are now reading this work (or at least some of it). Some of these "non-women's historians" (for lack of a better term) are also using gender as an analytical category.¹³ Nevertheless, a gap remains between how historians of women and "non-women's historians" continue to present the era to the public. To my mind, the catchphrase of this essay's title still has relevance.

Today's historical literature on the Progressive Era is referring to women with greater frequency. John D. Buenker and Edward R. Kantowicz's 1988 *Historical Dictionary of the Progressive Era* may serve as a starting reference point. The index refers to only 92 women, or less than 10 percent of the whole.¹⁴ There are eighteen references to Jane Addams, twelve to Florence Kelley, seven to both Julia Lathrop and Lillian Wald, six to Carrie Chapman Catt and Alice Paul, four to Margaret Sanger, and three to Frances Perkins. In contrast, one non-presidential figure, Louis Brandeis, is mentioned on twenty-five of the dictionary's pages.

Matters improved in the early 1990s. The number of references to women in surveys of the era increased over the decade. Approximately 20 percent of John Cooper's *Pivotal Decades* contains references to women. Around half the pages of William Link's *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism*, a more specialized study, refer to women. The 1992 edition of John W. Chambers's *The Tyranny of Change* refers to women on over two-thirds of its pages. Over 75 percent of Steven Diner's 1998 *A Very Different Age* contains references

Kish Sklar, *Florence Kelley and the Nation's Work: The Rise of Women's Political Culture* (New Haven, 1995). Studies of local women's politics that came out in the 1990s include many on southern women: Marsha Wedell, *Elite Women and the Reform Impulse in Memphis, 1875-1915* (Knoxville, TN, 1991); Sandra Schackel, *Social Housekeepers: Women Shaping Public Policy in New Mexico, 1920-1940* (Albuquerque, NM, 1992); Pamela Tyler, *Silk Stockings & Ballot Boxes: Women & Politics in New Orleans, 1920-1963* (Athens, GA, 1996); Elizabeth Hayes Turner, *Women, Culture, and Community: Religion and Reform in Galveston, 1880-1920* (New York, 1997); Anastatia Sims, *The Power of Femininity in the New South: Women's Organizations and Politics in North Carolina, 1880-1930* (Columbia, SC, 1997); Elizabeth York Enstam, *Women and the Creation of Urban Life: Dallas, Texas, 1843-1920* (College Station, TX, 1998); and Judith N. McArthur, *Creating the New Woman: The Rise of Southern Women's Progressive Culture in Texas, 1893-1918* (Urbana, 1998).

¹³A good example is Philip J. Ethington, "Recasting Urban Political History: Gender, the Public, the Household, and Political Participation in Boston and San Francisco During the Progressive Era," *Social Science History* 16 (Summer 1992): 301-33.

¹⁴John D. Buenker and Edward R. Kantowicz, *Historical Dictionary of the Progressive Era, 1890-1920* (Westport, CT, 1988).

to both ordinary and extraordinary women and to topics concerning women. Daniel Rodgers's *Atlantic Crossings*, also published in 1998, cuts a wide swath across the period. Slightly under half of its pages refer to women, many of them new to Progressive-era historiography.¹⁵

While I applaud the rising number of references to women, I still find aspects of the ways in which these historians treat women inadequate. In both blatant and subtle ways, they do not convey the centrality of women's experiences, ideas, and activities to progressivism. Cooper's *Pivotal Decades*, for example, promised to highlight changes in gender relations while showing how women sought new opportunities in politics, the workplace, the local community, and in the arts and culture. Cooper notes that some middle-class women with advanced educations fought for the vote and for public and private issues (for example, birth control). He sees other middle-class women as breaking into new fields of employment while poorer women took jobs in mills and factories (hardly a new phenomenon, of course). He also mentions that women were prominent in the prohibition movement.

In the end, however, his survey provides but a limited picture of women's full range of activities in the era. He refers often to women who are motion picture stars, modern dancers, and cultural icons such as the "Gibson Girls." But when discussing the women's movement, he mentions only suffrage as a feminist issue and in the process misnames the major suffrage association.¹⁶ Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, who by 1900 are so advanced in age that a younger generation is in the process of replacing them, receive one mention apiece, as does Harriot Stanton Blatch. But Carrie Chapman Catt, Alice Paul, Anna Howard Shaw, and Ida B. Wells are ignored. Jeannette Rankin's election to Congress and her vote against war are mentioned but not contextualized. Florence Kelley gets two mentions, once as a social worker (although she was a lawyer and industrial reformer) and then as a progressive who (along with Jane Addams) reached out to the labor

¹⁵John Cooper, *Pivotal Decades: The United States 1900-1920* (New York, 1990); William Link, *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill, 1992); John Whiteclay Chambers, II, *The Tyranny of Change: America in the Progressive Era, 1890-1920* (New York, 1992); Steven J. Diner, *A Very Different Age: Americans of the Progressive Era* (New York, 1998); Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA, 1998).

¹⁶He calls it the NWSA (National Woman Suffrage Association) instead of NAWSA (National American Woman Suffrage Association): 63, 125.

movement for more support for suffrage. Neither the suffrage movement's complexities nor its greater meanings (for women as well as for society at large) receive any analysis. The National Consumers' League is never mentioned, nor are Frances Perkins, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, or the National Association of Colored Women. Emma Goldman appears but without any information about her career or beliefs. Jane Addams is one of Cooper's "great leaders" (xvi), but while he refers to her six times he does not explore the setting for her work. Women's labor legislation and the antiprostitution movement are totally absent from his coverage.

Link's book on southern progressivism integrates women well into his narrative. He features woman suffrage as a major issue among progressive reformers and treats the concerns of women suffragists as a major feature of southern progressivism. My only complaint is that he gives more prominence to male than female reformers. Why? Is it because the leadership *was* more male, as well as more prominent? He does not say. Chambers's survey of the era also does a fine job of integrating women, but it does not explicitly make women central to the progressives' interventionist agenda. Chambers presents social welfare and the suffrage and feminist movements as if they were of primary interest only to women and not as central to the struggle for progressive change. He sees voluntaristic and cooperative "women's" groups (his examples are the settlements and the Consumers' Society, both of which were mixed-gender institutions) as models of progressivism (151-52), but does not treat them as pivotal progressive institutions. When he mentions groups that combined voluntarism with training for citizenship he points to the Boy Scouts but not the Girl Scouts. My critique is more about nuances of emphasis and expression than about omissions, but taken together they all add up to the marginalization of women.

From the point of view of women's history, Diner's book, the most recent of the surveys, presents me with the fewest problems. An attempt to integrate social and political history, his book attributes to middle-class women "a substantial role in creating [the] new political discourse" of progressivism (201-02). Diner's periodization is closer to the one that I would adopt. The biggest drawback of the book is its weak treatment of moral reform. Antiprostitution, an important part of Progressive-era moral reform, is totally absent.

Likewise, Rodgers's *Atlantic Crossings*, a critique of Progressive-era historiography's emphasis on American exceptionalism,

also omits all mention of Progressive-era moral reform. Rodgers roots progressivism in European traditions and precedents. Perhaps he omitted moral reform because it would have hurt his thesis. American prostitution reformers rejected European models which they felt were inappropriate for American conditions. A number of European communities, for example, had experimented with “reglementation” or “containment” (segregated districts with periodic, mandatory health inspections). American antiprostitutionists believed that the American civil-rights tradition would make the United States inhospitable to such an idea.

Rodgers’s discussion of women’s participation in progressivism is sensitive to gendered constraints and flows smoothly throughout his analysis. But he interprets women’s social activism in the Progressive Era solely as an expression of “social maternalism” (his one index reference in the category “Women” reads: “See Social maternalism”). Some women activists certainly were maternalists in the sense that they envisioned a state built around the needs of mothers and tended to see women workers as mothers or as potential mothers. But other ideologies, including feminism, socialism, and a desire for “social justice” for all workers regardless of sex, also motivated women activists. Rodgers’s book says nothing about feminism as an intellectual current within progressivism. Nor does it touch on the woman suffrage campaigns or women’s political ambitions in the era. By essentializing all women social activists as maternalists, Rodgers confines them within an explanatory paradigm that is just too narrow.

In sum, the ways in which these fine historians position women within progressivism is still somehow off the mark. Despite the huge production of scholarship in women’s history in recent years, the larger vision of Progressive-era history has not changed as much as it needs to.¹⁷

¹⁷Lewis Gould’s 80-page essay on Progressive-era history appeared after I delivered this address. Its presentation of women supports my argument that the field needs to do more with women’s history. *America in the Progressive Era, 1890-1914* (Harlow, UK, 2001) introduces women early in the narrative, referring to “men and women” who opened settlement houses and to Hull House as the “most famous.” After observing that “the role of women” was a “significant element in the gathering momentum for reform,” Gould cites their club work, roles as “municipal housekeepers,” and advocacy of environmentalism and the creation of juvenile courts (11). The woman suffrage movement appears as “part of the progressive agenda” and receives a brief paragraph here, whereas the quest of blacks for civil rights is described as a “striking example of...reform” and receives five paragraphs (13-14). Gould brings women back

II

To change that vision, I have four specific suggestions to make. First, historians need to include not just the story of the woman suffrage movement but a discussion of its meaning and consequences. Second, they need to rethink a neglected aspect of progressivism that featured women activists as prominent participants, and that is “moral” reform. Third, historians need to broaden the meaning of the term “politics” so as to incorporate the entire spectrum of women’s activism as part and parcel of the political story of progressivism. Fourth, they need to adopt a more capacious and flexible periodization for the progressive movement.

First, the woman suffrage movement and how historians can approach it in a more meaningful way: happily, historians of progressivism now at least include the suffrage movement as part of the Progressive-era story. They discuss the early victories in the West and the militancy of its last few years. They emphasize the disappointments of woman suffrage, including the divisions in the movement, the failures of substantial numbers of women to vote, and the fact that most women seemed to vote just like men. What is missing? Historians could talk more about what those events meant, first of all, to the many different kinds of women who were involved in them, and then to American political life in general.

For most women progressives, suffrage was not just “one” issue but the key issue. They had received extraordinary educations in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. Because of that training, by the turn of the twentieth century they saw themselves as the conscientious caretakers of the nation’s well-being. To them, the vote was an antidote to their feelings of powerlessness.¹⁸ Without it, they believed that

into the narrative with only two more paragraphs on the suffrage movement (59, 70), and while he mentions Jane Addams, Ellen Gates Starr, Alice Paul, Lucy Burns, Carrie Chapman Catt, Ida Tarbell, and Frances Willard, he says little about any of them.

¹⁸Skocpol’s *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers* emphasizes the importance of American women’s educations to their civic and political activism at the turn of the twentieth century (52) and argues for the centrality of women’s policies to the Progressive Era (354). I agree on both points, but take issue with other aspects of her book. Her insistence on a distinction between paternalist and maternalist legislation is problematic, and her idea that the maternalist kind (laws designed to protect mothers or potential mothers) arose from disillusionment with the corrupt patronage system of (paternalist) Civil War pensions is conjectural. Alice Kessler-Harris,

legislators and other public officials would continue to dismiss them as dilettantes and nags meddling in affairs beyond their proper sphere.

But public affairs were these women's sphere. Listen to how a woman in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1897 expressed it. Kate Kirkman, chair of the Woman's Department of the Tennessee Centennial Exposition, defined "woman's work" as "Whatever may be necessary to preserve the sanctity of the home and ensure the freedom of the State." The women she led thought this formulation important enough to have it engraved on a bronze plaque set into a stone obelisk erected on the place where the Woman's Building of the Exposition had stood. It stands there still, telling me that even the relatively traditional and conservative upper-class women of this southern town thought of their actions as having a significance far beyond that of "municipal housekeeping."¹⁹ In their view, women – at least the women of their social class and race – had entered the vanguard of social change. Men had always been at the center of action – with their political parties, clubs, and voluntary associations. But now women were launching an attack from the margins, confronting contemporary social issues, investigating those issues with the tools of social science, publicizing their findings, and then prodding officials to take action.

Historians of women can multiply this example by the dozens. Hear Mrs. G. H. Robertson of the National Congress of Mothers tell her colleagues in 1911, "We are stateswomen. Any woman interested in social problems and anxious to unravel them, any woman who feels that around her there are conditions that she wishes to improve is a stateswoman."²⁰ It is in such expressions that historians can find the

Journal of American History 80 (December 1993): 1035-37, notes that much of the "maternalist" legislation that women's organizations advocated (and to some extent achieved, if only temporarily) resulted in "paternalist" consequences for women, that is, restrictions that only entrenched their socio-economic subordination. Other critics point to Skocpol's limited view of women's politics in this period and the ways in which her polity-centered approach to history ignores ethnicity, race, and generational differences, not to mention the socio-economic or cultural antecedents of policy that she rejects as explanations of historical change. See, for example, Anne Firor Scott in *Contemporary Sociology* 22 (November 1993): 777-79; Frances Fox Piven in *American Political Science Review* 87 (September 1993): 790-91; Paula Baker in *American Historical Review* 98 (April 1993): 458-60; and Virginia Sapiro in *Political Science Quarterly* 108 (Winter 1993-94): 738-39.

¹⁹Inscription on the monument to the Woman's Building of the Tennessee Centennial Exposition held in Nashville, Tenn., 1897. The obelisk still stands in Nashville's Centennial Park.

²⁰Quoted in Skocpol, 357.

meaning of the vote to women social activists. Turning to government to assist them in finding solutions for current social and economic problems, they believed – naively, of course, but nonetheless sincerely – that without the vote they could continue to have “influence,” but with it they could convince politicians to take them seriously.

What did the vote mean to women progressives? Power! Never mind that some of them, fearing to appear “unsexed,” denied that this was what they wanted. Of course they denied it. Enduring social traditions warned them that social activism would make them unfit for marriage and childbearing. And never mind that the vote failed to win them the power they dreamed of! Power is still what they wanted, the power to do what they felt was “right” within their vision of a “good” society. And this is the way historians need to present the woman suffrage cause, not as something that happened just because a few dedicated women worked for it but as a movement of enormous consequence to all women, whether they worked for it or not.

Woman suffrage had its disappointments. These must be covered, too, as they comprise some of the most fascinating parts of the story. During the movement itself, white suffragists rejected the involvement of African-American suffragists and used racist and nativist slurs to further the cause of an “educated” white woman’s vote. At the movement’s climax, political suffragists did not support the militants when they were arrested and force-fed in jail. Once the vote was won, average women had little inclination to use it, no surprise after generations of disfranchisement. Moreover, women won the vote at a time when general interest in voting had declined to one of its lowest points. After suffrage, “difference” feminists and “egalitarian” feminists, “maternalists” and campaigners for social justice, split over the Equal Rights Amendment. Moreover, contrary to some predictions, no clear “woman’s voting bloc” emerged. Finally, men resisted the attempts of women to enter their political spaces, keeping them off of juries and out of policy-making party positions, and rarely supporting their efforts to win office.

But these disappointments do not obscure the fact, as political scientist Kristi Andersen asserts, that after suffrage politics in the United States was never the same: “it is wrong to assume,” she writes, “that congressmen simply returned to voting as if women were not a part of

the electorate.”²¹ Andersen argues further that historians have little basis on which to claim a negligible effect for woman suffrage. Only Illinois, between 1913 and 1920, collected data on how women voted. Andersen finds, and other research confirms, that local conditions determined wide variations in the ways women voted, and that despite their keen differences women often worked together effectively to achieve the goals that they did agree on.²² Instead of focusing on the women who did *not* vote, historians must look more closely at those who did, and at what they voted for and against.

In short, the meaning of the vote to women – to African-American women, working-class women, women in different regions, even to nativist women and the women who opposed votes for women – must be explained if women are to take an important place in Progressive-era historiography. Woman suffrage is one of the most dramatic and significant changes that women accomplished in the first two decades of the twentieth century. It should constitute, in all of its complexities and controversies, a more central part of our national political story.

My second suggestion is that historians rethink the attention they pay to moral reform movements. The Progressive Era was a great producer of such movements. As Paul Boyer claimed, many progressive social reforms were really moral reforms in disguise. Progressives had an “infinite capacity for moral indignation,” he wrote. “For Progressives of all stripes...questions of social injustice, corporate wrongdoing, governmental corruption, and personal morality were inextricably linked. Almost every Progressive cause had its moral dimension; almost every condition Progressives set out to change was

²¹Kristi Andersen, *After Suffrage: Women in Partisan and Electoral Politics Before the New Deal* (Chicago, 1996), 156.

²²Andersen, *After Suffrage*, ch. 3; Elisabeth Israels Perry, “Defying the Party Whip: Mary Garrett Hay and the Republican Party, 1917-1920,” in *We Have Come to Stay: American Women and Political Parties, 1880-1960*, eds., Melanie Gustafson, Kristie Miller, and Elisabeth Israels Perry (Albuquerque, NM, 1999): 97-107. Recent work on women’s quest for jury service includes Linda Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (New York, 1998), esp. ch. 4, “Gwendolyn Hoyt and Jury Service in the Twentieth Century”; and Elisabeth Israels Perry, “Culture, Strategy, and Politics in the New York Campaign for Women’s Jury Service, 1917-1975,” *New York History* 82 (Winter 2001): 53-78.

seen as contributing to a debilitating social environment that made it easier for people to go wrong and harder for them to go right.”²³

Progressives agitated for moral reforms that ranged from temperance, antiprostitution, dance hall regulation, and motion picture censorship to the control of prize-fighting and the outlawing of cigarette smoking. Some of these campaigns were highly popular, especially among women, but with the exception of temperance, most treatments of the Progressive Era fail even to mention them.²⁴ Why? Probably because modern historians know that social mores changed so rapidly in this period that many moral-reform causes became quickly outdated and were soon dropped. Why waste words on failures, especially when some of those failed movements seem somewhat ridiculous to modern eyes?²⁵

I argue that we have to accept moral-reform movements, as silly or as misguided as we might think they are now, as a central aspect of progressivism. Although often interpreted as efforts to control the immigrant working classes, Progressive-era moral reforms had other motivations. They expressed the desire of many progressives to conserve human resources, a major theme of Progressive-era reform in general.²⁶ Temperance, for example, grew out of a decades-long effort to protect families from alcoholic abuse. Antiprostitution, which began as an effort to “rescue” young women and enforce a single standard of sexual morality for men and women, revived when a panic over the

²³Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order*, 196.

²⁴Once again, William Link’s *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism*, which connects moral reform to southern evangelicalism, is an exception.

²⁵The eugenics movement, which began during the Progressive Era and persisted until the 1930s and in some cases beyond, is hard to categorize as either a moral or social reform, as it had dimensions of both. The discussion thread on H-SHGAPE, March 16, 2000, on how to teach about this movement stresses the importance of distinguishing among its many different manifestations and of trying to understand the movement outside the context of the Nazis’ distortion of it. See also, Molly Ladd-Taylor, “Saving Babies and Sterilizing Mothers: Eugenics and Welfare Politics in the Interwar United States,” *Social Politics* 4 (Spring 1997): 136-53, and Eileen McDonagh, “The ‘Welfare Rights State’ and the ‘Civil Rights State’: Policy Paradox and State Building in the Progressive Era,” *Studies in American Political Development* 7 (1993): 242-43.

²⁶The idea of conserving human resources found expression not just in moral reform but also in educational reform. See Joel H. Spring, *The American School 1642-1985: Varieties of Historical Interpretation of the Foundations and Development of American Education* (New York, 1986), 209, on reports of the Commission on National Aid to Vocational Education, which resulted in the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act in 1917 and the major funding of vocational education in this country.

spread of venereal disease and a sexual traffic in women swept American cities. Dance hall reform, motion picture censorship, and similar moral reforms expressed a nostalgic desire to restore the social chaperonage presumed to have existed in small, rural communities. During the Progressive Era, such reforms stirred up more heated controversy than many electoral reforms. Nonetheless, I would wager that, with the exception perhaps of temperance, readers of most general treatments of progressivism will find more discussion of the Australian ballot, recall, referendum, and the initiative than of any of the era's controversial moral reforms.

The problem with moral reforms is that in order to "protect" some members of society moral reformers also had to "control" them. Since the very people these reformers wanted to control often resisted being controlled, Progressive-era moral reforms rarely had the results their advocates sought. But they led to much legislation, at all levels, and certainly had a distinctive and long-lasting impact on urban environments. We are the heirs of these movements, from the more reasonable to the most fanatical. Historians need to pay more attention to them, making careful distinctions among their various manifestations and trying to understand them from within their own contexts instead of through hindsight. They would then draw a more comprehensive and accurate portrait of the Progressive Era.

What did "politics" mean to women in the Progressive Era? This is the third area where a broader perspective would improve the integration of women into general histories of progressivism. Historians of women have long argued that a more capacious definition of the term "politics" would permit us to include women's activism as a central part of the story. When Progressive-era women used the term "politics" they usually meant the same thing that Progressive-era men meant, that is, electoral and party politics. And generally the women assumed that this kind of politics was male turf, a place where the spoils system and cut-throat competition for office ruled. Women, generally excluded from this politics, developed a different kind of political culture built around agitation for nonpartisan causes. They hoped thereby to "purify" politics and make it a less competitive and more cooperative venture.²⁷

²⁷ Andersen, *After Suffrage*, makes this point (163), citing Robyn Muncy, Susan Ware, and Anne Firor Scott. Again, one might analogize to the Knights of Labor. According to Leon Fink, the Knights were consciously apolitical. They hoped to rescue society from parties and supported a merit over a spoils system. "The only way the Knights could cleanse the political

I would argue that Progressive-era women's agitation for reforms was "politics," whether they called it that or not. When women agitated for better neighborhood sanitation, factory inspections, labor laws, or pure food and drugs, they came right up against town councils, mayors, state legislatures, federal agencies, and Congress. To get changes accomplished, they had to get ordinances and laws passed, budgets drawn, appropriations made, experts and officials hired, and enforcement officers trained and supervised. If legislators and executive officers did not make the required changes occur, then they had to be removed and replaced. All of that activity is "politics."

As Linda Gordon once pointed out, today we draw a distinction between politics and social reform. Many Progressive-era women eventually discovered that, for them, such a distinction was artificial. When settlement worker Lillian Wald reflected on her career, she said: "When I went to New York, and was stirred to participate in community work...I believed that politics concerned itself with matters outside [women's] realm and experience. It was an awakening to me to realize that when I was working in the interests of those babies...I was really in politics."²⁸ Or, as an official of the New York City League of Women Voters said in 1922, "it did not seem...possible to separate welfare from political action, as all political action should be looking toward public welfare."²⁹ If historians would think of the kind of politics that women engaged in as "politics," they would go a long way toward incorporating women more fully into the story of progressivism, if not changing the very definition of progressivism itself.³⁰

process," Fink writes, "was to remain outside it, acting from political strength rooted in a moral order of their own making." *Workingmen's Democracy*, 32. Middle-class women who organized for political and social change held similar beliefs.

²⁸Linda Gordon, "Black and White Visions of Welfare: Women's Welfare Activism, 1890-1945," *Journal of American History* 78 (September 1991): 572; Andersen, 166, who cites Doris Daniels, "Building a Winning Coalition: The Suffrage Fight in New York State," *New York History* 60 (1979): 67-68.

²⁹Board of Directors Meeting, New York City League of Women Voters, LWV-NYC Papers, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Columbia University Library, Box 12, folder October 3, 1921 to September 19, 1922.

³⁰Focusing on race as well as gender, Glenda Gilmore makes this point specifically about the progressive movement in *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill, 1996). She argues that her reconstruction of the political activism of African American women in North Carolina enriches "traditional political history" and helps us reclaim "progressivism," a "confused and obfuscating" term (150).

There is another side to this topic, however. Not all Progressive-era women were completely nonpartisan. Convinced that women would achieve political power only if they played the game of politics just as men did, they made commitments to parties long before their presence was officially welcomed. Even though some of these women still employed a “domestic reform” rhetoric, when given opportunities to wield power in competitive politics they did not shrink from the chance. Historians studying such women will find some dramatic stories to tell. As Kristie Miller, Melanie Gustafson, and I tried to convey in our recent anthology on women and political parties before 1960, a significant part of the political story of the Progressive Era and beyond is how women balanced their tradition of nonpartisan activism with their desire to become involved in political parties.³¹ Moreover, in telling that story historians may make new discoveries about the history of American political parties in general.³² In short, discussions of the impact of women on both the parties and on the women themselves can serve only to enrich the story of Progressive-era politics.

Central to Progressive-era politics, then, is not just “women’s political issues” but how women balanced their traditional political cultures with more modern political strategies. Many women – Belle Moskowitz, Mary Garrett Hay, Anna Wilmarth Ickes, Ruth Hanna McCormick, Fannie Barrier Williams, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, to name a few – entered the male world of politics while still rooted in their female political cultures. These cultures both buttressed and handicapped their relations with party men. As Glenna Matthews says, some women found themselves dancing a “gender minuet” to avoid the many minefields that lay in wait in the world of male-dominated politics.³³

³¹Gustafson, Miller, and Perry, eds., *We Have Come to Stay*.

³²For a sociologist’s perspective on the relationship between turn-of-the-twentieth-century women’s groups and political parties, see Elisabeth S. Clemens, “Organizational Repertoires and Institutional Change: Women’s Groups and the Transformation of American Politics, 1890-1920,” *American Journal of Sociology* 98 (January 1993): 755-98.

³³Glenna Matthews, “‘There Is No Sex in Citizenship’: The Career of Congresswoman Florence Prag Kahn,” in *We Have Come to Stay*, Gustafson, Miller, and Perry, 136. For more examples of how women’s political culture operated within party politics (how women did political business, sought support from the role models of other female achievers, and enlisted support from other women’s associations, etc.), see also Maureen Flanagan, “Anna Wilmarth Ickes: A Staunch Woman Republican,” 141-50, and Elisabeth Israels Perry, “Defying the Party Whip: Mary Garrett Hay and the Republican Party, 1917-1920,” 97-107, in *We Have Come to Stay*. Kristie Miller’s biography, *Ruth Hanna McCormick: A Life in Politics, 1880-1944* (Albuquerque, NM, 1992), is also instructive on this point.

Without conveying this part of our political story, we are not fully describing the political arena of the Progressive era.

Periodization is a fourth way in which historians can better incorporate women's history. "When *was* the Progressive-era, exactly?" my students ask. Roughly during the first two decades of the twentieth century, I tell them. Never a precise business, periodization generally reflects the interpretative views of the historian setting its boundaries. Some historians still use 1900 as a starting date, although more recently 1890 has become popular. Some historians end the era as early as the mid-term elections of 1914 or soon after World War I. From the perspective of women progressives, however, these boundaries need to be much more fluid.

The earlier chronological boundary of progressivism is the easiest to adjust. The women who founded social settlements in the 1880s, along with the temperance and suffrage campaigners, comprise a group of American citizens active in conceptualizing progressive reform long before the presumed dawn of progressivism. True, they did not usually occupy positions of public authority. Nor were they holding major academic chairs in universities. But they were speaking and writing and acting on some of the major issues of the Progressive Era long before most politicians acknowledged their importance, and they laid the foundations of progressivism by building public opinion in favor of change.

Looked at from the perspective of women, the later chronological boundary of the Progressive Era is in more urgent need of adjustment. Although Arthur Link's 1959 essay "What Happened to the Progressive Movement in the 1920s?" suggests that the movement was far from "dead" in the 1920s, it acknowledges that the movement had lost its political and intellectual leadership. He asked younger scholars to look at local and state instances to discover more precisely how progressivism survived the postwar reaction, and some scholars have begun to do this.³⁴

³⁴Arthur Link, "What Happened to the Progressive Movement in the 1920s?" *American Historical Review* 64 (July 1959): 833-51. In listing the progressive forces that survived and which, in fact, wielded some power, he includes farmers, organized labor, large Democratic organizations in the cities, a "remnant" of social workers and radicals, and those favoring public electric power and regional developments; he does not mention women. Melvin Urofsky's work on state courts represents the kind of research Link was asking for. See his "State Courts and Protective Legislation during the Progressive Era: A Reevaluation," *Journal*

Women's historians have also been doing this kind of work, but their conclusions have not yet affected Progressive-era periodization. Organized women continued to pursue Progressive-era agendas during the conservative 1920s and beyond. The Women's Joint Congressional Committee, a coalition of women's organizations that formed after the passage of woman suffrage, proposed, lobbied for, and won the enactment of 436 bills at local and state levels.³⁵ Women (and men) continued to pursue baby-saving, child health, and public health measures first outlined during the 1910s, and saw these reforms as the continuation of Progressive-era efforts. The Sheppard-Towner Act of 1921 and the Cable Act of 1922 were only two federal measures out of many legislative acts that were of interest to women after World War I.

Further, despite claims by some historians of women that after suffrage civic-minded women abandoned the single-sex, nonpartisan voluntary associations that had been their prime means for achieving legislative change, pre-suffrage female reform networks endured after suffrage.³⁶ The networks changed form, reorganizing as city clubs and groups set up by women in the professions. Such groups provided essential support to women struggling to function in a world still hostile to the female exercise of power. They made possible women's service on juries, one cause (along with some others) that former suffragists united on no matter how they felt about the Equal Rights Amendment. And they fostered the political and professional careers that a small

of *American History* 72 (June 1985): 63-91, which shows that state courts remained generally favorable toward protective legislation throughout the 1920s.

³⁵Andersen, 154-55, citing Sophonisba Breckinridge's accounting. Andersen asserts that "women extended the life of Progressivism" (153). Works that focus on local women's politics after suffrage include Carole Nichols, *Votes and More for Women: Suffrage and After in Connecticut* (New York, 1983); Felice D. Gordon, *After Winning: The Legacy of the New Jersey Suffragists, 1920-1947* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1986); Elisabeth Israels Perry, *Belle Moskowitz: Feminine Politics and the Exercise of Power in the Age of Alfred E. Smith* (New York, 1987; 2nd ed., Boston, 2000); and the local studies cited in n. 12, above. See also Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890-1935* (Cambridge, MA, 1994), ch. 4, which spells out the links between women progressives and New Deal welfare provisions.

³⁶Estelle Freedman's article "Separatism as Strategy: Female Institution-Building and American Feminism, 1870-1930," *Feminist Studies* 5 (Fall 1979): 512-29, is still cited, even though the author revised her views. See her "Separatism Revisited: Women's Institutions, Social Reform, and the Career of Miriam Van Waters," in *U.S. History as Women's History: New Feminist Essays*, eds., Linda K. Kerber, Alice Kessler-Harris, and Kathryn Kish Sklar (Chapel Hill, 1995): 170-88.

number of exceptional women were able to carve out for themselves in the postsuffrage era.

Insights derived from women's history after 1920, especially at local levels, thus qualify the idea of the 1920s as a blanket reaction against progressivism. A reaction certainly occurred, but many women activists never gave up. The gains they made consolidated the coalition of women who, during the New Deal, used Eleanor Roosevelt's access to the president to continue the work.³⁷ The paths they carved out in state (and some federal) legislation during the 1920s facilitated key New Deal achievements, such as the Social Security and Wagner Acts. Frances Perkins and Grace Abbott, both of whom were steeped in the tradition of progressive social reform, spearheaded labor and welfare bills.³⁸

When was the Progressive Era finally "over" for women? One could say it ended with the Great Depression, when the deepening economic crisis demanded government action far beyond what progressives had envisioned. The depression marks the twilight of two moral-reform movements in which women had been heavily involved, temperance and antiprostitution. Or one could say with Robyn Muncy that a women's Progressive Era ended with the passage of the 1935 Social Security Act, a moment that marked both the triumph and "end" of a "female dominion" in American reform.³⁹

Although it's a stretch, the Cold War is another possible date. This is when some of the great institutions of progressivism, all spearheaded or heavily staffed by women, closed up shop. One marker date could be 1946, when as Kriste Lindenmeyer tells us the U.S. Children's Bureau, the first federal agency to be founded as a result of settlement workers' agitation and thus a true Progressive-era "product," was absorbed into the Federal Security Agency and then in 1953 buried in Health, Education, and Welfare. Or when in the early 1950s these

³⁷See Susan Ware, *Beyond Suffrage: Women in the New Deal* (Cambridge, MA, 1981) and Blanche Wiesen Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt*, vol. II, *The Defining Years, 1933-1938* (New York, 1999). For other examples of the specific work of progressive women in the 1920s, see *Gender, Class, Race, and Reform in the Progressive Era*, eds., Noralee Frankel and Nancy Schrom Dye (Lexington, KY, 1991), esp. Barbara Sicherman, "Working It Out: Gender, Profession, and Reform in the Career of Alice Hamilton," 127-47, and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, "African-American Women's Networks in the Anti-Lynching Crusade," 148-61.

³⁸Part 3 of Skocpol's *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers* provides a useful summary of women's work for social provision throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

³⁹Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion*, 154.

other institutions closed their doors or were forced to shift direction: the Women's Trade Union League, *Survey Magazine*, and the National Consumers' League.⁴⁰ These institutions had managed to survive through Coolidge and Hoover, the Depression, and World War II. By the 1950s their founders were too old to carry on or had died, postwar consumerism was turning women's interests more toward material than social agendas, and the Cold War was making Americans even more wary of proactive government than they had been before.

A whole new periodization for U.S. history, in fact, could be devised which focuses on the period from the 1870s to 1950 as a period of "progressive reform" – launched at the end of the Civil War by the second industrial revolution and ended by the Cold War. And perhaps in coming decades, historians will come to see the period in this extended way. Whether this happens or not, one thing is clear to me: taking women's efforts at reform seriously requires widening the chronological boundaries of the Progressive Era.

In the early 1980s, the Organization of American Historians hosted a conference on integrating the new field of women's history into the undergraduate survey course. In a provocative contribution to the discussion, David Katzman warned that full integration would never take place unless we discarded our old methods of periodization. Debates over this idea are still going on. According to a recent posting on the Internet discussion list H-WOMEN, participants on a panel at a recent OAH meeting claimed that integration required giving up the old "state-building" story.⁴¹ I believe one can keep that story intact and still integrate women. To do so requires recognizing that the absence of

⁴⁰See Kriste Lindenmeyer, "*A Right to Childhood*": *The U.S. Children's Bureau and Child Welfare, 1912-46* (Urbana, 1997). The Women's Trade Union League was founded in 1903 to help organize women workers into unions. *Survey Magazine* was the mouthpiece of early twentieth-century social workers and supported progressive reform in general. The National Consumers' League, founded in 1899, was the spearhead for minimum wage and many other labor reforms. In the 1950s, it could survive only by changing its source of funding from a broad membership base to grants from organized labor and foundations. By the early 1960s, the organization's focus had shifted more toward consumer than worker protection. See Landon R. Y. Storrs, *Civilizing Capitalism: The National Consumers' League, Women's Activism, and Labor Standards in the New Deal Era* (Chapel Hill, 2000), 249, 257.

⁴¹The "OAH Conference on Integration of Women into the Basic Surveys" took place at Indiana University in Bloomington, March 26-30, 1980. Gerda Lerner gave the plenary address. The conference resulted in guides made available to teachers of the U.S. and Western Civilization surveys that showed precisely how integration could be accomplished. The H-WOMEN posting that referred to the discussion at a recent OAH appeared on April 30, 1999.

visible women on the front lines of state-building does not mean that they were absent from the process.

There are other ways in which women's history remains marginalized in Progressive-era historiography. The history of environmentalism usually focuses on large federal issues, such as forest conservation, the establishment of national parks, and southwestern irrigation projects. But women led the nineteenth-century recreation movements that fed into the playground and park construction movements and women began local agitation for pure water, sewage control, and smoke abatement.⁴² Women's intellectual preoccupations get short shrift. Daniel Rodgers says that the central protagonists of this period were "rarely intellectuals, but they cared passionately about issues and ideas."⁴³ Likewise, not all women progressives were intellectuals, but they certainly fit Rodgers's characterization. Yet few general books on this era treat feminism, an issue about which many women cared passionately, as a major intellectual issue of the times. Gail Bederman's fascinating contentions about the centrality of gender to the ideas about civilization as expressed in the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 have not yet found their way into general treatments of that event.⁴⁴ And only recently has a scholar explored the relationship between women's advocacy work and the passage of the great pure food, drink, and drug legislation of the Progressive Era.⁴⁵

⁴²See Elaine Koerner, "Silent Partners," *The Environmental Forum* 14 (March/April 1997): 18-23, which chronicles the study, research, and agitation by women's clubs across the country for pure water and sewage control. She writes, "...typical accounts of the origins of the U.S. environmental movement begin with the conservation movement. Early environmental history has become synonymous with early conservation history" (22). See also R. Dale Grinder, "The Battle for Clean Air: The Smoke Problem in Post-Civil War America," in *Pollution and Reform in American Cities, 1870-1930*, ed., Martin Melosi (Austin, TX, 1980): 83-103, which emphasizes the elite clubwomen who did groundbreaking work on smoke issues in the nation's major cities between the 1880s and World War I. Also relevant are Maureen Flanagan, "The City Profitable, the City Livable: Environmental Policy, Gender, and Power in Chicago in the 1910s," *Journal of Urban History* (January 1996): 163-90, and Angela Gugliotta, "Class, Gender, and Coal Smoke: Gender Ideology and Environmental Injustice in Pittsburgh, 1868-1914," *Environmental History* 5 (April 2000): 165-93.

⁴³Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, 5.

⁴⁴Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago, 1995), 33-34. With the exception of Rebecca Edwards's page on the 1896 election, I have seen no women listed as political leaders in the period on the H-SHGAPE website.

⁴⁵See Lorine Swainston Goodwin, *The Pure Food, Drink, and Drug Crusaders, 1879-1914* (Jefferson, NC, 1999).

I could cite many other examples. My chief point is this: during the Progressive Era, women often functioned in the same sphere as men. Nancy Dye expressed it well when she wrote in 1991, “the relationship between the home and community” is “central to progressivism.”⁴⁶ Glenda Gilmore argued in 1996 that people live their lives more often together than in separate spheres. If historians are to re-vision the past, she said, they need to “test new ideas about the junctures of public and private space in political culture.”⁴⁷

Men and women still did things separately, of course, but they often thought and talked about issues and took action together. We need to think about women as being “in the picture,” as a natural and continuous part of the whole, even if we do not see them or think that they are there. Even if what Progressive-era women did, thought about, and hoped to accomplish did not always meet their own expectations, in this period of history the balance of power between the sexes was forever changed. This in itself is one of the most important stories to tell in the history of the Progressive Era. Women “are” from the Progressive Era. The profession needs to acknowledge this fact and give it the attention it deserves.

⁴⁶Frankel and Dye, *Gender, Class, Race, and Reform*, 4.

⁴⁷Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, xvi. See also, 120, where she argues: “The varieties of black response [to disfranchisement] underscore the ways in which limiting analysis to the electoral sphere impoverishes political history and creates a false dichotomy between the public and private spheres.” Philip Ethington has also contributed to new ways of envisioning the private-public junction by using household surveys to measure shifts in political attitudes. See, for example, “Recasting Urban Political History.”