

Research Statement

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I am an applied microeconomist specializing in labor economics and political economy, which I study using historical data and natural experiments. I am interested in how labor force participation (LFP) relates to civic engagement, political participation, and the political legitimacy of certain interest groups. To study these themes, I focus on women's LFP and political movements in United States history spanning the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A common theme across my research portfolio is the assembly and use of novel data sources to identify formal and informal channels of economic, political, and social capital accumulation. I discuss each of these data contributions in turn below.

My job market paper, "The Political Economy of Women's Suffrage and World War I," considers how women's contribution to the American wartime economy influenced political support for the Nineteenth Amendment. Wartime mobilization drew thousands of women into traditionally male-dominated industries, altering society's view on the suitability of women in the workplace and public sphere. To study the effect of this shift on support for women's enfranchisement, I exploit the timing of two votes on a woman's suffrage amendment in the House of Representatives. I harmonize congressional district maps between the 63rd Congress, which failed to pass a women's suffrage amendment in 1915, and the 66th Congress, which successfully passed the Nineteenth Amendment in 1919. In a difference-in-differences framework, I show that war-driven increases in women's LFP causally increased political support for women's suffrage.

I also introduce a second identification strategy to address measurement-related identification concerns. Generous funding from the Economic History Association (EHA)'s Cambridge University Press Dissertation Fellowship supported the digitization of The New Position of Women in American Industry Report, a data source reporting growth in the size of the female labor force in war-related industries from 1917 to 1918, illuminating women's participation in war-time labor markets for the first time. I apply these industry-level data to a shift-share instrumental variables framework. An investigation of mechanisms suggests that politicians' voting behavior responded to a change in social norms and attitudes among the electorate; county-level referendum data imply that enfranchised men became more supportive of women's suffrage as a function of the shift in women's LFP. Altogether, my findings suggest that LFP and civic engagement are complements, and that market labor may offer means to widened political rights.

In addition to limited voting rights, women were also restricted from owning property, independently entering contracts, and other essential legal functions for much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Women formed clubs and special interest groups to gain access to these privileges, which were accessible to organizations but inaccessible to them as individuals (Boylan, 2002). Joint work with Assistant Professor Andreas Ferrara (University of Pittsburgh) studies women's grassroots organizing in the wake of the U.S. Civil War. With support from the EHA's Exploratory Travel and Data Grant, I digitized

and compiled the names of over 6,000 members of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), the largest woman’s organization in the world during this period. We show that wives and daughters of disabled veterans entered the workforce at elevated rates, and that counties with higher disability rates were more likely to form chapters of the WCTU. These findings are consistent with the history literature, which suggests disabled veterans relied on alcohol to dull their physical and emotional pain, and that rising rates of alcoholism and domestic violence in the late nineteenth century drove women’s political mobilization for temperance (Bordin, 1981; Carroll, 2016). We also show that WCTU activism resulted in policy change in the form of county-level prohibition laws, state-level suffrage extensions, and laws granting women ownership of their wages. Our findings frame increased political mobilization, formal political rights, and LFP for women as consequences of cultural shocks induced by the Civil War.

Work in progress with Associate Professor Greg Niemesh (Miami University) further investigates the impact of parental death and disability on women. Specifically, we consider the effect of losing a father in the Civil War on daughters’ labor and marriage market outcomes. Previous work shows that orphaned sons experienced lower incomes and occupational downgrading following their father’s death (Dupraz and Ferrara, 2023; Goldstein, 2021). However, difficulty linking women after marriage has precluded previous researchers from measuring the impact of parental death on *daughters*. We resolve this issue by linking Union Army military records and 85,000 marriage certificates to the U.S. Census, enabling us to identify daughters of Civil War veterans after marriage. Given women’s restricted ability to navigate economic and legal spheres independently, without a father or husband, the effect of parental death on children’s economic position is likely very different for daughters relative to sons. The Civil War provides a unique opportunity to understand the causal effect of parental death on women’s economic behavior.

Finally, future work with fellow graduate student Paige Montrose will continue to explore the tradeoff between *formal* legal rights and *informal* political participation. A massive effort digitizing directories for the General Federation of Women’s Clubs is currently underway. These data measure the formation of over 3,000 special interest groups from 1893-1925. Leveraging state-level variation in the timing and intensity suffrage extensions and laws granting women ownership of their property and wages, we will explore how the size and proliferation of women’s clubs changed as a function of women’s formal legal privileges. We will use variation in club focus, such as public health- or school-related issues, to study the effectiveness of these groups at influencing policy before and after enfranchisement.

1 Bibliography

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