Are women people?
No, my son, criminals, lunatics and women are not people
Alice Duer Miller, *A Book of Rhymes for Suffrage Times*[1]

Outcasts from the Vote: Woman Suffrage and Mental Disability

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In 1893, Kansas suffragist Henrietta Briggs-Wall commissioned a painting for the World's Fair in Chicago entitled "American Woman and Her Peers."[2] A contemporary newspaper article described it as such: "In the center of the frame is the portrait of an intelligent-looking middle-aged American lady, whose mouth and chin are indicative of great firmness of purpose."[3] The image depicted prominent suffragist Frances Willard. Surrounding her was an array of men, including an Indian, a convict, "a hopeless idiot with a low, retreating brow and exposing his fang-like teeth in an imbecile grin," and "a raving maniac…peering out from the picture with staring orbs and tousled hair."[4]

Briggs-Wall observed the next year: "it strikes the women every time. They do not realize that we are classed with idiots, criminals, and the insane as they do when they see that picture. Shocking? Well, it takes a shock to arouse some people to a sense of injustice and degradation."[5] She hoped that "American Woman and Her Peers" would perform the same function for woman suffrage that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* did for

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[1] Alice Duer Miller, *Are Women People? A Book of Rhymes for Suffrage Times* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1915), 1.
[2] "American Woman and Her Peers," Kansas Historical Society http://www.kshs.org/kansapedia/cool-things-american-woman-and-her-political-peers-painting/10294 (last visited July 26, 2016).
[3] "For Pure Politics: Women Demand the Right to Vote," *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 2, 1894, p. 8.
[4] Ibid.
[5] "American Woman and Her Peers."

slavery — spur a political movement based on moral outrage.[6] While the painting did not trigger a war, it catalyzed a strong emotional reaction among those who saw it.

The focus of this indignation was directed at the juxtaposition of images. That a dignified, intelligent white woman was disenfranchised along with disreputable and mentally incompetent men was intended to create outrage among the audience. The painting quickly became a symbol of the political struggle that white women faced at the end of the 19th century. The audience of thousands who viewed the painting at the

[6] Ibid.

1894 World's Fair was augmented by the numerous reproductions and displays that followed in its wake. So, too, have historians of the suffrage movement noted it as an example of the intense penetration of the suffrage movement into the political and cultural consciousness of the time.[7] Less remarked upon by professors, though, are the images themselves. While some scholars have discussed the figure of the Indian and the linkage between suffrage and race, a curious silence surrounds the figures of the lunatic and the idiot. Why would Briggs-Wall believe that these images of mental incapacity were relevant to woman suffrage? Why would she devote fully half the male images to highlighting this dynamic? What lessons were audience members supposed to learn from the appearance of these images?

"American Woman and Her Peers" was far from an aberration in its preoccupation with mental incapacity and woman suffrage. Drawing upon a diverse array of sources, from visual media to legislative documents, I excavate a deep involvement with mental disability by suffrage activists for the white woman suffrage movement in the long 19th century United States. This connection begins with the white suffrage movement at Seneca Falls, travels throughout the nineteenth century into the

[7] Examples include Waldo Martin, *The Mind of Frederick Douglass* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Marsha Wedell, *Elite Women and the Reform Impulse in Memphis, 1875-1915* (University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 24; Gail H. Landsman, "The "Other" as Political Symbol: Images of Indians in the Woman Suffrage Movement," *Ethnohistory* 39 (1992): 271-72; Alice Sheppard, *Cartooning for Suffrage* (University of New Mexico, 1994), 30; Rebecca Mead, *How the Vote Was Won: Woman Suffrage in the Western United States, 1868-1914* (New York, NYU Press, 2006), 77; David Johnson, *John Ringo: King of the Cowboys : His Life and Times from the Hoo Doo War to Tombstone* (Univ. Of North Texas Press, 2008); Ann Short Chirhart & Betty Wood, *Georgia Women: Their Lives and Times* (University of Georgia Press, 2009); Shanna Stevenson, *Women's Votes, Women's Voices: The Campaign for Equal Rights in Washington* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 2009), 57-58; Faye Dudden, *Fighting Chance: The Struggle over Woman Suffrage and Black Suffrage in Reconstruction America* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2011), 43; Corinne T. Field, *The Struggle for Equal Adulthood: Gender, Race, Age, and the Fight for Equal Citizenship in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

early twentieth century, and stretches across the United States. Elite white woman suffrage activists employed a variety of tactics that utilized tropes about lunatics and idiots in a campaign to shore up their own potential enfranchisability. This strategy had two main consequences. First, the use of mental status, tangled up with ideas about respectability, acted to stigmatize men who were also potentially enfranchisable -- African Americans, Indians, and white ethnic and Asian-American immigrants. White woman suffrage activists utilized not only race, but also mental disability, to demonstrate their mental superiority to racial others. Second, their tactics played an active part in creating and reifying the regime of compulsory able-mindedness for voting that disenfranchised lunatics and idiots. Women were also ensnared in this regime, but they were able to leverage their way out of it while lunatics and idiots remained disenfranchised at the beginning of the twentieth century and beyond.

Compulsory Able-Mindedness

White woman suffrage activists tightly linked together the requirement of compulsory able-mindedness with a politics of respectability that served as a prerequisite for full political citizenship.[8] Mental disability was not a benign category of belonging; instead, it was tied to political corruption, social degradation, aesthetic

[8] The classic formulation of the "politics of respectability" comes from Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, who described the performance of moral purity and behavior by African Americans as a part of racial uplift. Here, I use the term to discuss the mental "entry fee" required for political citizenship that is also described in racial, moral and behavioral terms. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 187. *See also* Paisley Harris, "Gatekeeping and Remaking: The Politics of Respectability in African American Women's History and Black Feminism," *Journal of Women's History* 15:1 (2003): 212-220.

unpleasantness, and immorality. White women chiseled themselves out of the category of mental disability by highlighting their own respectability and mental status and juxtaposing it with grotesque caricatures of male idiocy, insanity, and ignorance.

What do I mean by "compulsory able-mindedness"? The idea riffs off of the work of Robert McRuer and Adrienne Rich. Rich's essay, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," denaturalizes the political and cultural hegemony of heterosexuality, highlights the erasure of lesbian activity and identity, and challenges the subordination of lesbianism.[9] McRuer's piece, "Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence," adds physical disability to the mix and illustrates how people have been required to possess both a heterosexual and able-bodied identity in order to receive cultural and political approval.[10] Both accounts emphasize erasure, subordination, and naturalization of taken-for-granted concepts. Here, I use compulsory able-mindedness to discuss the threshold requirement of able-mindedness in order to achieve full political and cultural citizenship. As both a legal mandate and cultural expectation, compulsory able-mindedness naturalized the subordination of people with perceived mental inferiority and erased their status as members of the political community.

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[9] Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Signs* 5 no. 4 (1980): 631-660.

[10] Robert McRuer has written about compulsory able-bodiedness as a concept, but he depicts this idea as asymptotic and always aspirational. Instead, I use compulsory able-mindedness as the threshold requirement of mental status in order to become a full political citizen. Lunatics and idiots, as well as others such as women and African Americans, did not pass muster. Robert McRuer, "Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence," in Lennard J. Davis, ed., *The Disability Studies Reader*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2006), 88-99.

Over the course of the antebellum period, historians emphasize, voting became an important component of citizenship, American identity, and respectability.[11] In the succinct words of Mark Kruman, "[m]en acted politically by voting."[12] Jean Baker affirms: "[d]iscussed before the Civil War at constitutional conventions (assembled in some cases just for that purpose), during election campaigns, at meetings of workingmens' associations, in newspapers and private conversations, the question of who had the vote transfixed mid-century Americans. More than a mechanism by which government derived its just power, voting became a hallowed ceremony."[13] Noah Webster's 1828 edition of his dictionary defined "citizen" as a "person native or naturalized who has the privilege of exercising the elective franchise or the qualifications which enable him to vote for rules."[14] In the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville observed that Americans were preoccupied with voting. He attributed American enthusiasm for voting and the extension of the right to vote to America's "unique democratic spirit."[15]

This idea of voting, of course, centers upon white men. Starting before the Civil War and accelerating after, states expanded democracy to include non-property owning white adult men in addition to elite white men. This story of expansion, though, also had an underside of contraction. As states removed property and taxpayer

[11] Donald W. Rogers, *Voting and the Spirit of American Democracy: Essays on the History of Voting and Voting Rights in America* (University of Illinois Press, 1992), 36.
[12] Marc W. Kruman, *Between Authority and Liberty: State Constitution-making in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 107-08.
[13] Jean Baker, *Affairs of Party: The Political Culture of Northern Democrats in the Mid-Nineteenth-Century* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998), 268-69.
[14] Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language: A Facsimile of Noah Webster's Original 1828 Edition*, (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1970).
[15] Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, Book 1, Ch. 14. (1840).

qualifications for suffrage, state constitutional convention delegates and legislators wrote in restrictions based on mental status. While before 1820 only 2 states listed suffrage explosions based on mental status, by 1880, 24 out of 38 Union states disfranchised people because they were "idiots," "insane" or "lunatics," "of unsound mind" or "non compos mentis," or "under guardianship."[16] Lunatics and idiots joined white women, children, and people of color as part of an array of people considered too mentally incompetent to vote. The same mental status regime that created a floor for white men also built a ceiling for African Americans, Indians, and women, who, despite their individual mental prowess, would be unable to penetrate it without a full-scale political and cultural assault.

Delegates to nineteenth-century state constitutional conventions openly discussed the question of whether to disenfranchise those with mental impairments. Arguments in favor of such restrictions often lumped together "women," "foreigners," "slaves," "children," "lunatics," and "idiots" as those undeserved of the franchise because of their inferior mental status. In 1853, Delegate Benjamin Franklin Hallett told his Massachusetts brethren that "[i]diots and insane, and those excluded from society by infamous crimes, are manifestly not a part of the acting society, and can make no contract." His fellow delegate Rufus Choate agreed, noting "you have to require capacity also; intelligence, free will, physical, and other qualifications. These all do not possess….the insane want discretion; the pauper, and the person under guardianship,

[16] Kay Schriner and Lisa A. Ochs, "Creating the Disabled Citizen: How Massachusetts Disenfranchised People under Guardianship," *Ohio State Law Journal* 62, no. 41 (2001): 489. Moses Daniel Naar, *The Law of Suffrage and Elections* (New York: Naar, Day & Naar, 1880), 11-72.

wants free will.…All do not possess the indispensable qualification to vote." Delegate Whiting Griswold chimed in, observing: "by the common consent of mankind women, minors, idiots, insane and perhaps paupers or persons under guardianship, are excluded from any active participation in the formation or administration of government."[17] Delegate Morton added that those who were enfranchised could serve as political guardians and represent those who were disenfranchised and in dependent relationships to them.

> Can a man come here and not represent woman? What is representation but a reflection of the opinions of the district which sends its representative here?... I do not mean to be extravagant, but it would not be far from the truth to say that we represent the women and nobody else....
>
> And not only so, but the children also are represented here....
>
> ... Are the women and children neglected in legislation? Are the insane and foreigners neglected in legislation? I apprehend not.[18]

Mental disability in their formulations incorporated a tangled conception of both incapacity and dependency. Lack of mental capacity led to an unacceptable level of dependency on others that could unduly influence the vote.

While state constitutional convention delegates and legislators wrote in the disenfranchisement of lunatics and idiots, they did not define those terms within their constitutions or statutes. Instead, they relied upon cultural common sense that people would know whom they were referring to when they spoke of lunacy or idiocy.[19] State constitutional convention delegates and legislators operated within a cultural regime

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[17] Official Report of the Debates and Proceedings in the State Convention to Revise and Amend the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts [1853], 3 vols. (Boston: White & Potter, 1853).
[18] Ibid.
[19] Roughly speaking, lunacy or insanity referred to an aberrant mental state and corresponds to present-day psychiatric disabilities such as schizophrenia. Idiocy or imbecility referred to an absence of mind and generally corresponds to developmental or intellectual disabilities today such as Down Syndrome.

that evidenced a deep preoccupation with locating, defining, classifying, and institutionalizing people because of perceived mental deficiency. 1844 saw the establishment of the Association of Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane, the precursor of the American Psychiatric Association, and the *American Journal of Insanity*, the forerunner of the *American Journal of Psychiatry*. Starting in 1840, the U.S. Census tracked lunacy and idiocy by gender, race, and country of origin and printed special reports on the "degenerate classes." Reference books such as the *World Almanac* published extensive statistics on lunacy and idiocy. Benevolent reformers such as Dorothea Dix enthralled and dismayed the public with their accounts of discovering untreated lunatics and idiots in prisons, basements, and poorhouses as they campaigned for institutions such as lunatic asylums. These buildings increasingly dotted the landscape as statistics and rhetoric suggested a large and growing number of people who were mentally incompetent.

Additionally, an increasingly complex and intrusive legal regime ensnared lunatics and idiots through guardianship determinations, lunatic and idiocy inquiries, the insanity defense in criminal law, and special exceptions to the general rule in torts and contracts law. In some cases, such as the insanity defense, experts weighed in on assessing idiocy or lunacy, but quite often the ultimate decision rested upon the opinion of community members without particular mental health expertise. Lunacy and idiocy saturated United States culture through state building efforts, reform activities, statistics, spectacle, and rhetoric.

Countering Biological Determinism

This discussion of mental deficiency had profound racial and gendered overtones. Alienists argued for the psychiatric inferiority of people of color as well as white women. The models of biological inferiority shifted as the century wore on, but all of them positioned women as mentally inferior to men and people of color as mentally deficient in comparison to white Anglo-Saxons.[20] Mental deficiency was defined both as inferior intelligence and susceptibility to insanity as compared to white

[20] The literature on gender, race, and biology is extensive. A sampling: "Carson, *Measure of Merit*, chapter 3. Samuel Cartwright, "Report on the Diseases and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race," *New Orleans Medical & Surgical Journal* 7 (1851), 715. Exemption of the Cherokee Indians and Africans from Insanity," *American Journal of Insanity* 1-2 (1846): 287. Dea Hadley Boster, *Unfit for Bondage: Disability and African American Slavery in the United States, 1800-1860,* Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2010; Andrew M. Fearnley, "Primitive Madness: Re-Writing the History of Mental Illness and Race," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 63 (April 2008): 245-257; Todd Lee Savitt, *Race and Medicine In Nineteenth- And Early-Twentieth-Century America* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2006); David McBride, "'Slavery As It Is': Medicine and Slaves of the Plantation South." *Magazine of History* 19 (September 2005): 36-39; Bruce R. Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); W. Michael Byrd and Linda A. Clayton, *An American Health Dilemma. Volume One: A Medical History of African Americans and the Problem of Race, Beginnings to 1900* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Katherine Bankole, *Slavery and Medicine: Enslavement and Medical Practices in Antebellum Louisiana* (New York: Garland, 1998); Todd Lee Savitt, "Slave Health and Southern Distinctiveness." *Disease and Distinctiveness in the American South*. Todd L. Savitt and James Harvey Young, eds., (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988): 120-53; Todd Lee Savitt, "The Use of Blacks for Medical Experimentation and Demonstration in the Old South," *Journal of Southern History* 48 (August 1982): 331-348; John S. Haller, Jr., "The Negro and the Southern Physician: A Study of Medical and Racial Attitudes 1800-1860," *Medical History* 16 (July 1972): 238-253; George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971); Walter Fisher, "Physicians and Slavery in the Antebellum Southern Medical Journal," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 23 (January 1968): 36-49; Herbert M. Morais, *The History of the Negro in Medicine* (New York: Publisher's Co. Inc. for the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1967); William Dosite Postell, "Mental Health Among the Slave Population on Southern Plantations," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 110 (July 1953): 52-54; Michael Perman, *The Health of Slaves on Southern Plantations* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951); Todd Lee Savitt, *Medicine and Slavery: The Diseases and Health Care of Blacks in Antebellum Virginia* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1978); Todd Lee Savitt, "Slave Life Insurance in Virginia and North Carolina," *Journal of Southern History* 43 (November 1977): 583-600; Thomas S. Szasz, "The Sane Slave: An Historical Note on the Use of Medical Diagnosis as Justificatory Rhetoric," *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 25 (April 1971): 228-239; William Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes Toward Race in America, 1815-59* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); Felice Swados, "Negro Health on the Ante Bellum Plantations," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 10 (1941): 460-472. "Exemption of the Cherokee Indians," 287. "Memorial of D.L. Dix, Praying a Grant of Land for the Relief and Support of the Indigent Curable and Incurable Insane in the United States." 30th Cong., 1st sees., 23 June 1843, S. Misc. Doc. 150, p. 4

Anglo-Saxon men. Anti-suffragist Grace Goodwin contended: "woman lacks endurance in things mental…she lacks nervous stability."[21] Additionally, anti-suffrage activists and doctors argued that women would suffer due to their biology if they overexerted themselves mentally by voting.[22] Neurophysiologist Charles L. Dana worried that woman suffrage would cause a twenty-five percent increase in female insanity and "throw into the electorate a mass of voters of delicate nervous stability….which might do injury to itself without promoting the community's good."[23]

Thus, suffragists had to overcome cultural stereotypes that women were in fact properly classed with lunatics and idiots as outcasts from the vote because they were mentally deficient to men. Activists refuted biological arguments with biological facts of their own.[24]

A key strategy that activists employed allowed them to reframe the biological argument by changing the terms of debate. Rather than challenging the comparison between the mental prowess of the typical white Anglo-Saxon man and the average white Anglo-Saxon woman, elite white woman suffrage activists instead highlighted those men who had suspicious mental acumen and less social power than themselves. Thus, they did not have to prove that they were equal mentally to the typical white

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[21] Baynton, "Slaves, Immigrants and Suffragists," 563.
[22] Baynton points out that multiple scholars of woman suffrage have noted this trend without subjecting it to a disability analysis or questioning why mental fragility should lead to disfranchisement. Baynton, "Slaves, Immigrants and Suffragists,"566.
[23] Ibid., 564.
[24] Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *Women Public Speakers in the United States, 1800-192*5 (ABC-CLIO, 1993), 3. Jackson Gougar, "Editorial." *Our Herald*, August 11, 1883, 3. Yvonne Pitts, "Disability, Scientific Authority, and Women's Political Participation"; Douglas Baynton, "Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History," in *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*, eds. Paul Longmore & Lauri Urmanksy (New York: NYU Press, 2001), 33-57.

man, just that they were more mentally competent than idiots and lunatics. Male lunatics and idiots, in other words, provided female activists the opportunity to change the subject. These men, who were "naturally" outcasts from political citizenship, were a useful foil for the women hoping to enter the political realm. As a result, activists deepened the naturalization of the political exile of lunatics and idiots through statistics, speeches, and spectacle.

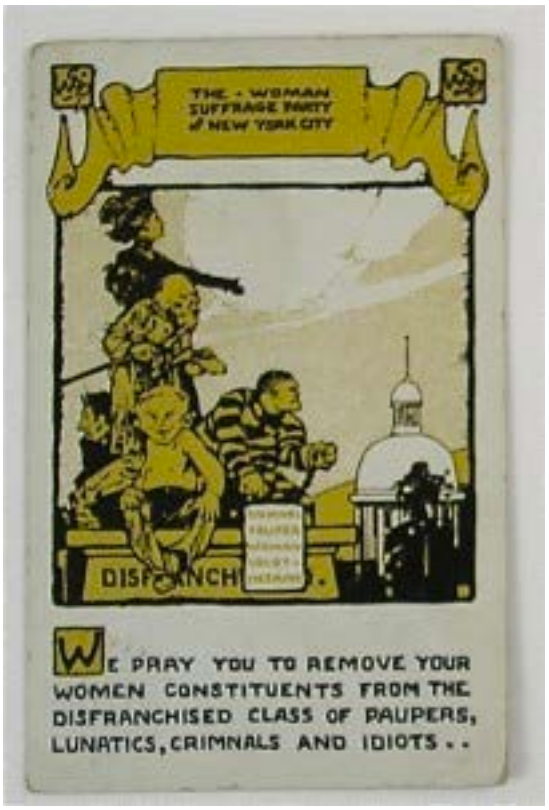
Mental Ableism as Spectacle

Perhaps the most potent means that woman suffrage activists employed to highlight their own mental reputations at others' expense was the use of imagery of lunatics and idiots in campaign literature and propaganda. "American Woman and Her Political Peers" was probably the most famous example. Activists propped up replicas of the poster and described it to listeners on the campaign field and in constitutional debates. In California, the poster was placed next to the speaker's stand as "an ironical work of art, the contemplation of which afforded the ladies much satisfaction."[25] Clara Bewick Colby made it a staple of her lectures. She said of the painting "[o]nce seen it will haunt the memory for years….Our suffrage women have been buying it and are taking it home not to hang it in their bedrooms or parlors but to hide it away and to bring it out as the last argument when they find a man actually impervious to every other argument in favor of woman suffrage."[26] She "considered it a shame and a

[25] "For Pure Politics: Women Demand the Right to Vote," *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 2, 1894, p. 8.
[26] Hearing before the Committee on Woman Suffrage February 21, 1894 [Senate] 53rd Congress, 2nd session, mis. doc. No. 121, Congressional Serial Set. US Government Printing Office, (1895).

disgrace to have a lovely woman classed with such specimens of mankind.[27] And it was "the best argument in favor [of suffrage] we can present to you and we trust that your chivalry and sense of justice will compel you to assist our efforts to release ourselves from this shameful category of the disfranchised."[28]

Activists harnessed their outrage at being classified with those men considered disreputable and stigmatized in other artistic renderings as well. Suffragists distributed postcards linking educated, affluent white women with caricatures of lunatics, idiots, foreigners, and convicts.[29]



[27] "What the Women Want," *The Morning Times*, January 26, 1896.
[28] Hearing before the Committee on Woman Suffrage February 21, 1894 [Senate] 53rd Congress, 2nd session, mis doc. No. 121, Congressional Serial Set. US Government Printing Office, (1895).
[29] http://womansuffragememorabilia.com/woman-suffrage-memorabilia/post-cards/ (last visited January 3, 2016).

They issued postcards with similar slogans, such as one that said: "We pray you to remove your women constituents from the disenfranchised class of paupers, lunatics, criminals and idiots" or with illustrations such as a woman chained to a pauper, a convict, and an idiot, with a caption saying "Linked Together By Law."[30] In 1910, Spokane suffragists created a gigantic float with portrayals of convicts and idiots connected by chains to women. One of the women held a sign saying "Brothers unshackle us from the criminal and idiot" and a banner read "Woman's Status Before the Law: Idiots, Criminals and Women do not vote." One of the suffragists reported: "this startling announcement brought forth a storm of protest."[31] Also in 1910, New York suffragists marched in a parade with 10,000 onlookers. Their banners included slogans such as "New York denies the vote to lunatics, idiots, criminals — and women."[32] South Dakota suffragists issued a poster "which has caused much comment":

Dangerous to the State!
Cannot Vote
Idiots, criminals, lunatics
And
Your mothers, wives, daughters
Men do you like this?
Change it
Nov. 1910[33]

[30] Kenneth Florey, *American Woman Suffrage Postcards: A Study and Catalog* (New York: McFarland, 2015), 1.
[31] *Spokane Spokesman Review*, September 11, 1910.
[32] Linda Lumsden, *Rampant Women: Suffragists and the Right of Assembly* (Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 75.
[33] "South Dakota Woman Issue Unite Poster," *The Labor World*, May 1910.

When woman suffragists took over the *New Rochelle Daily Standard* for a day, the top half of the front page of the paper contained a cartoon, titled "'Uncle Sam's Disfranchised Class,' [that] covered the lower half, depicting a convict, a woman, a lunatic and an idiot seated in a row on a bench, with Uncle Sam pacing before them. 'I'm a teapot!' cackles the lunatic. 'I want to be promoted,' pleads the woman. Uncle Sam is looking away in deep thought."[34]

Women composed songs and poems. Alice Duer Miller, in addition to her song lyrics in the epigraph to this paper, penned a sardonic song titled "America. (Slightly Adapted)" modeled after "America the Beautiful":

> My country, hear my plea,
> Save me from liberty,
> This current stem.
> Class me, as well befits,
> With males who've lost their wits,
> Felons and idiots,
> Class me with them.[35]

Women transformed their linkage with lunatics and idiots from a source of shame into a vehicle of outrage. They juxtaposed elegant images of elite white women that highlighted their intellectual prowess with grotesque caricatures of disreputable men. There were two potential audiences, women who would identify with the woman who was being disrespected and humiliated in the picture by her close association with

[34] "Women Run a Paper: New Rochelle Evening Standard Has a Suffrage Spree," *New York Tribune*, April 5, 1912, p. 3.
[35] Alice Duer Miller, "Are Women People?" *New York Tribune*, September 24, 1916, p. D8.

disreputable men, and the able-minded and respectable men expected to rescue women from that fate.

Chivalrous Disenfranchisement

White women suffrage activists leveraged male ideas of chivalry along with social stereotypes of white female innocent purity to incense white men at their identification with disreputable men.

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This line of attack allowed men to reassure themselves that they were not like the lunatics and idiots who were painted as disreputable, thus shoring up their own reputation and sense of able-mindedness. It performed a similar function for women,

[36] Minnesota Historical Society.

who were consolidated into one elite able-minded monolith for symbolic and strategic purposes. Kansas Representative Duncan declared: 'I am a dude, and I part my hair in the middle. I favor taking women from the ranks of idiots and imbeciles and allowing them to occupy the same rank and file as the gentleman from Africa."[37] Women suffrage activists asked able-minded men to rescue the honor and reputations of women from their association with disreputable men. Caroline Severance toasted "the noble knights or our woman's crusade, who struggled valiantly to rescue mothers, wives, daughters and sweethearts from the galling political bondage uniting them with infants, idiots, and criminals.[38] An editorial in the *Saint Paul Daily Globe* noted that "You don't allow an idiot to vote, neither do you permit your sweetheart, mother or sister to vote."[39] Alice Snitjer Burke sarcastically observed: "The chivalry of the men classes your own mother, wife, sweetheart or sister with the only three classes prohibited from the right of suffrage — criminals, idiots and imbeciles."[40] When New York was deciding upon suffrage, a metropolitan editor asked: "Will the men of the state decide that their mothers, wives, daughters and sisters shall remain classed with idiots?"[41] This strategy allowed men to appear honorable, reputable, and able-minded themselves in the role as saviors and chastised them for dishonoring women by denying them the franchise.

Listing the Outcasts

[37] "Female Suffrage in Kansas," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 15, 1891, p. 3.
[38] "Gives Credit To T'Other One," *Los Angeles Times*, April 11, 1911.
[39] *The Saint Paul Daily Globe,* March 10, 1890.
[40] "Suffragist's Jabs at the Man Made Laws"
[41] "The Underlying Issue," *The Seattle Star*, November 6, 1917, p. 6.

Numerous activists used phrases such as "insane, idiots, convicts, and women" as damning indictments of the assemblage of people unable to vote.[42] The point for the activists in listing these categories was not to catalyze a movement to enfranchise all members of this disenfranchised assemblage, but to point out the incongruity of linking women with these otherwise disreputable and incompetent men. The employment of these litanies as strategy was used throughout the nineteenth century, took place in all geographic regions, and had analogues abroad.[43]

In all variations, lunatics and idiots played a prominent role. Henry Ward Beecher claimed: "It is woman that is put lower than the slave, lower than the ignorant foreigner. She is put among the paupers whom the law won't allow to vote; among the insane whom the law won't allow to vote. But the days are numbered in which this can take place, and she too will vote."[44] In 1852, Lucy Stone lamented at the Woman's Rights Convention that "married women, insane persons and idiots are ranked together" while "[t]he foreigner, the negro, the drunkard, are all entrusted with the ballot, all placed by men politically higher than their own mothers, wives, sisters and

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[42] Elizabeth Cady Stanton & Susan B. Anthony, eds., *Report of the Sixteenth Annual Washington Convention, March 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th, 1884: With reports of the Forty-eighth Congress* (Rochester, NY: C. Mann, 1884), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress: 123; Carrie Chapman Catt & Nettie Rogers Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics; the Inner Story of the Suffrage Movement* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1926), 68-69; Parker Pillsbury, *The Mortality of Nations: An Address Delivered Before The American Equal Rights Association, In New York, Thursday Evening, May 9, 1867* (New York: R.J. Johnston, 1867), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress: 9.

[43] English suffrage activist Frances Power Cobbe published "Criminals, Idiots, Women, Minors, Is the Classification Sound?" in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1868. Lisa Tickner notes that "A favorite theme in suffrage imagery pictured women with her political peers: the voteless, immigrant, criminal, or lunatic." Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign, 1902-1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 159. A "French woman appeared at a political meeting accompanied by an idiot, who, she explained, had a right to vote under the law while she had not." "Woman Uses Idiot as Object Lesson," *The Washington Times*, June 14, 1910.

[44] Susan Brownell Anthony, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage, 1876-1885*, vol. 3 (1886), 53.

daughters!"[45] Two years later, Elizabeth Cady Stanton told the New York Legislature that women were "moral, virtuous, and intelligent, and in all respects quite equal to the proud white man himself and yet by your laws we are classed with idiots, lunatics, and negroes…."[46]

After the Fifteenth Amendment passed, the phrases changed from "idiots, lunatics, convicts, and negroes" to "idiots, lunatics, convicts, and foreigners." After Elizabeth Avery Meriwether illegally voted in 1876, she wrote: "when I tested the matter I was allowed to cast my ballot. Whether it was counted I cannot say. But counting my ballot was not important; what was important was to focus public attention to the monstrous injustice of including educated women with felons and lunatics as persons denied the right of suffrage."[47] In a hearing of the Women Suffrage Association before the House Committee on the Judiciary on January 18, 1892, Elizabeth Cady Stanton declared: "What we look forward to is part of the eternal order. It is not possible that forty millions of women should be held forever as lunatics, fools, and idiots."[48] The authors of the *Woman Suffrage Year Book* compiled lists of "adult citizens" disfranchised by state,[49] listing idiots and lunatics alongside women. A female letter writer to the *Chicago Daily Tribune* in 1895 bitterly called "criminals, idiots, the insane, paupers, aliens, minors, and women" the "Silent Seven."[50]

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[45] Ida Husted Harper, *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony, vol*. 1, (Bowen-Merrill Company, 1898), 73-74.
[46] Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Address to the Legislature of the State of New York," February 20, 1854.
[47] Tennessee Women's Suffrage Memorial, http://tnwomansmemorial.org/honored_women.html (last visited January 3, 2016).
[48] Hearing of the Woman Suffrage Association Before House Committee on the Judiciary (1892).
[49] *The Woman Suffrage Year Book* (National Woman Suffrage Publishing Company, Inc., 1917), 168.
[50] "Women, Do You Want To Vote?" *Chicago Daily Tribune,* May 6, 1895, p. 3.

Suffragists in the Western United States used the Chinese in lieu of or in addition to other men in the litany. An article in the *Concord Transcript* in support of Proposition 4 which would grant women the right to vote in California, yet also stated that "no native of China, no idiot, no insane person, no person convicted of any infamous crime…shall ever exercise the privileges of an elector in this state," wrote: "Intelligent and fair minded men everywhere are rallying to their support. They are beginning to think that the onus is resting pretty heavily upon them of having their mothers, wives and sweethearts rated along with Chinamen, idiots and insane persons when it comes to voting."[51]

The early twentieth century saw much the same message as the nineteenth century. Belle Kearney sarcastically orated in 1900: "Good morning, sister. You taught us and trained us in the way we should go. You gave us money from your hard earnings, and helped us to get a start in the world. You are interested infinitely more in good government and understand politics a thousand times better than we, but it is election day and we leave you at home with the idiots and Indians, incapables, paupers, lunatics, criminals and the other women that the authorities in this nation do not deem it proper to trust with the ballot; while we lordly men, march to the polls and express our opinions in a way that counts."[52] In 1904, Ida Husted Harper wrote that voting was so important that "[I]t is so considered, to such an extent that the privilege is not refused to any male citizen in the commonwealth, outside of the insane asylum and the

[51] *Concord Transcript*, July 29, 1911.
[52] Belle Kearney, "A Slaveholder's Daughter," *The St. Louis Christian Advocate Press*, 1900, 111-112.

penitentiaries.[53] On May 21, 1910, activists led by Harriot Stanton Blach, Elizabeth Cady Stanton's daughter, held banners proclaiming that "New York State Denies the Vote to Idiots, Lunatics, Criminals, and Women."[54]

Activists argued that not only were they classed with these disreputable men, but that they were in fact worse off than them because their gender status was immutable.[55] Here, the curability of lunacy and idiocy becomes an indictment while people of color — those perceived to have a more immutable status — are quietly absent from the complaints. George William Curtis contended:

> The boy will become a man and a voter; the lunatic may emerge from the cloud and resume his rights; the idiot, plastic under the tender hand of modern science, may be moulded into the full citizen; the criminal, whose hand still drips with the blood of his country and of liberty, may be pardoned and restored; but no age, no wisdom, no peculiar fitness, no public service, no effort, no desire, can remove from woman this enormous and extraordinary disability.[56]

Kate Trimble added:

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[53] Ida Husted Harper, Would Woman Suffrage Benefit the State, and Woman Herself? *The North American Review*, 178, no. 568, (March 1904), 368-69.

[54] http://theboweryboys.blogspot.com/2010/01/100-years-ago-women-cant-vote-but-they.html (last visited January 3, 2016)

[55] E.H. Heywood, *Uncivil Liberty: An Essay To Show The Injustice and Impolicy Of Ruling Woman Against Her Consent* (Princeton, MA: Cooperative Pub. Co., 1871), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress; Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Address to the Legislature of New-York, adopted by the State Woman's Rights Convention, held at Albany, Tuesday and Wednesday, February 14 and 15, 1854* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, 1854), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress; "Seeking the Right to Vote," *New York Times*, April 13, 1894, p. 1; Hearing before the Committee on Woman Suffrage February 21, 1894 [Senate] 53rd Congress, 2nd session, mis. doc. No. 121 Congressional Serial Set. US Government Printing Office, 1895, 6; *Official Report of the Proceedings and Debates of the Convention: Assembled at Salt Lake City on the Fourth Day of March 1895, to Adopt a Constitution for the State of Utah, Vol. 1*, (Utah. Constitutional Convention, Star Print. Company, 1898), 525; George William Curtis, *Speeches of George William Curtis and Henry Ward Beecher* (New York: The National American Woman Suffrage Association, 1898), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress.

[56] Stanton, *History of Woman Suffrage, 1848-1861* vol. 1, 288-89.

> And yet it grows worse, for our sex is not even equal, in the eyes of the Republic, with criminals and lunatics — for in nearly all the States, the lunatic, during his lucid intervals, has complete self-government, can vote and make laws for our women; and the criminal, when pardoned, has complete self-government, can vote and make laws for our women. No man is so low therein as woman, except the murderer *after* he is hanged. Women and dumb beasts are therein about upon a public equality and of all human things woman only is made a permanent outcast.[57]

The use of lunatics and idiots proved rhetorically effective even in the few states where they *were* enfranchised.[58] In Wisconsin, Evelyn Mason lamented that: "Once it was said that idiots, criminals and women could not vote. But I am told that idiots — acknowledged idiots I mean — can vote in the State of New Hampshire…Class after class of non-voters are in demand by politicians today, and class after class are being released from slavery. Idiocy is found very serviceable to our nation's needs and criminals are precious as auxiliaries; but for womanhood, my nation — great God! Hear it and judge — for womanhood my nation sees no use!"[59] In a speech by A.J. Ottley of Los Angeles, candidate for Superior Court Judge, he remarked that when California was formed, "there were four classes that could not vote — Indians, negroes, idiots and women. The exception had been removed as to Indians and negroes, and within the

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[57] Kate Trimble Woolsey, *Republics Versus Woman: Contrasting the Treatment Accorded to Woman in Aristocracies with that Meted Out to Her in Democracies*, (Grafton Press, 1903), 15-17.
[58] Harriet H. Robinson, *Massachusetts In The Woman Suffrage Movement: A General, Political, Legal and Legislative History From 1774, To 1881* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1883), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress; Report of Hearing before the Committee on Woman Suffrage, January 28, 1896 (Washington: GPO, 1896), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress; Carrie Chapman Catt, *Woman Suffrage by Federal Constitutional Amendment* (New York: National Woman Suffrage Publishing Co. Inc., 1917), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress; *Enfranchisement of women: reprinted from the Westminster and foreign quarterly review, for July, 185*1. (Syracuse: Lathrop's Print., 1852), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress.
[59] Ida Husted Harper, *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony: Including Public Addresses, Her Own Letters and Many from Her Contemporaries During Fifty Years, vol.* 3 (Bowen-Merrill Company, 1908).

past twenty-five years he thought it manifest that idiots had been voting, Only the women were left without the franchise…." Harriet K. Hunt, a Boston doctor, wrote a letter to the editor of *The Anti-Slavery Bugle* complaining that "[e]ven drunkards, felons, idiots and lunatics, if *men,* may still enjoy that right of voting, to which no woman however large the amount of taxes she pays, however respectable her character or useful her life, can ever attain."[60] In Lucy Stone's final verdict upon Colorado, she concluded: "The majority of the men of the state made a record to stay for all time, that while they had by law put the right of suffrage into the hands of every male pauper, idiot, lunatic, thief and felon, they on that day denied the same legal right every woman in that state."[61]

Idiocy, Insanity, Immigration, and Ignorance

Taxonomies of mental fitness became an important part of the political strategy of woman suffrage activists who used them to highlight their own intellectual prowess. Rather than comparing themselves to the average or elite white Anglo-Saxon man, white women compared themselves to men whose mental acumen and racial status was suspect — immigrant, black, or Indian men.[62] They constructed a moral and mental

[60] "Taxation Without Representation," *The Anti-Slavery Bugle*, (November 6, 1852), p. 8; *The National Era*, November 4, 1852, p. 1.
[61] *The Freeman*, November 7, 1877.
[62] Winnifred Harper Cooley, *The New Womanhood* (New York: Broadway Publishing Company, 1904), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress; Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Proceedings of the First Anniversary of the American Equal Rights Association, Held at the Church of the Puritans, New York, May 9 and 10, 1867* (New York: R.J. Johnston, 1867); Carrie Chapman Catt, *Woman Suffrage by Federal Constitutional Amendment* (New York: National Woman Suffrage Publishing Co. Inc., 1917), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress.

hierarchy with idiots and insane men on the bottom, followed by "ignorant" men.[63] Women questioned why any of these men should receive the vote while they themselves, who possessed more moral acumen, were disenfranchised. This emphasis on mental prowess had moral overtones. These men were easily corruptible. Their dependence on others created the potential for political shenanigans. They were also abundant. Able-minded women, then, were needed to overcome their influence. This in a sense created a "lunatic" menace similar to the "negro menace" or Chinese threat identified by other scholars, where activists argued that white political power was threatened by the large number of black or Chinese people who might vote, and thus white female voters were needed to reinforce white power.[64] Here, white women would join with able-minded white men to be an army of the able-minded, respectable, and uncorrupted that would dwarf the influence of the insane, ignorant, and idiotic.

Orators for suffrage reform pointedly directed aim at those men they considered unfit to exercise the vote while they themselves were categorically denied a political voice. Elizabeth Cady Stanton argued at Seneca Falls in 1848 that "to have drunkards, idiots, horseracing, rumselling rowdies, ignorant foreigners and silly boys fully recognized, while we ourselves are thrust out from all the rights that belong to citizens, it is too grossly insulting to the dignity of women."[65] She contended: "It is a consolation

[63] Ignorant is not defined by the women. Webster's 1913 dictionary defines "ignorant" as "destitute of knowledge; uninstructed or uninformed; untaught; unenlightened."
[64] Newman, White Women's Rights; Angela Behrens, Christopher Uggen & Jeff Manza, "Ballot Manipulation and the 'Menace of Negro Domination': Racial Threat and Felon Disenfranchisement in the United States, 1850-2002," *American Journal of Sociology* 109: 3 (November 2003): 559-605.
[65] Elizabeth Cady Stanton,"Address of Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, delivered at Seneca Falls & Rochester, NY," July 19 & August 2, 1848.

to the 'white male, to the popinjays in all our seminaries of learning, to the ignorant foreigner, the boot-black and barber, the idiot — for a 'white male- may vote if he be not more than nine-tenths a fool — took down on women of wealth and education, who write books, make speeches, and discuss principles with the savants of their age."[66] William Lloyd Garrison, at the Women's Rights Convention in Cleveland in 1853 thundered that "[s]o long as the most ignorant, degraded and worthless men are freely admitted to the ballot box, …It is preposterous to pretend that women are not qualified to use the elective franchise."[67] Woman suffrage activists recounted the following scene when a woman attempted to vote and was refused: "Just before us a cart rattled up bearing a male citizen, who was too drunk to know what he was doing, or even to do anything. He was lying on his back in the cart, with feet and hands up, hurrahing at the top of his voice. This disgusting, drunken idiot was picked up out of the cart by two men, who put a ticket into his hand, carried him to the window (he was too drunk to stand), shoved him up and raised his arm into the aperture; his vote received, he was tumbled back into the cart."[68]

The men considered too ignorant to vote were often targeted because of their ethnicity or race. Lucretia Mott recounted:

> In October, 1851, I went to pay my taxes in Boston. Going into the Assessor's office, I saw a tall, thin, weak, stupid-looking Irish boy. It was near election time, and I looked at him scrutinizingly. He held in his hand a document, which, I found on inquiry, was one of naturalization; and this hopeful son of Erin was made a citizen of the United States, and he could have a voice in determining the destinies of this mighty nation, while thousands of intellectual women,

[66] Stanton, *History of Woman Suffrage, 1848-1861* vol. 1, 188.
[67] William Lloyd Garrison, "Proceedings at the National Women's Rights Convention," (1854), 56.
[68] Stanton, *History of Woman Suffrage, 1876-85* vol 3, 785.

> daughters of the soil, no matter how intelligent, how respectable, or what amount of taxes they paid, were forced to be dumb![69]

"Think of Patrick and Sambo and Hans and Yung Tung," Stanton proclaimed in 1869, "who do not know the difference between a monarchy and a republic, who can not read the Declaration of Independence or Webster's spelling-book, making laws for Lucretia Mott, Ernestine L. Rose and Anna E. Dickinson."[70] The *National Republican* charged that women could not vote "while the half idiot from foreign lands, who can neither read nor write, is welcome to American citizenship."[71]

The perceived intellectual power of elite white women became a weapon to use against lunatics, idiots, and their cousins, ignorant men. This attack encompassed both white men of suspect mental status and men of varied races or ethnicities whose intellectual prowess was also under suspicion. It reinforced the importance of mental status to the vote and strengthened the rationale for disenfranchising lunatics and idiots. It also allowed white able-minded Anglo-Saxon men a way to justify enfranchising their white sisters, mothers, and daughters as allies in racial and mental purity without conceding their own mental superiority.

Scholars have picked up threads of this story in their discussion of the educated suffrage movement that appeared during the Progressive Era.[72] That account is one in

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[69] Lucretia Mott, *Proceedings of the Woman's Rights Convention held at the Broadway Tabernacle, in the city of New York, on Tuesday and Wednesday, Sept. 6th and 7th, 1853* (New York: Fowlers and Wells, 1853), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress, 61.
[70] Newman, *White Women's Rights*, 5.
[71] *The National Republican*, January 13, 1869.
[72] Suzanne Marilley, Woman Suffrage and the Origins of Liberal Feminism in the United States, 1820-1920 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Ellen Carol DuBois & Richard Candida Smith, eds., Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Feminist as Thinker: A Reader in Documents and Essays (New York: NYU Press, 2007)

which elite and educated white women highlighted their intelligence and pushed for requirements such as literacy tests as an attack against mostly immigrant men. What this paper demonstrates is that the use of intelligence – or more accurately, able-mindedness – was a far deeper and much older strategy than what had been previously described.

Moral Authority and Guardianship

In order to demonstrate their moral fitness and civic engagement, and as an attack against the perception of their own dependency, woman suffrage activists leveraged their leadership in the institutions of the burgeoning welfare state.[73] Frances Maule, for instance, trumpeted the "benefits" that woman voters performed once they were enfranchised, such as sterilizing lunatics and idiots.[74] Mary A. Livermore noted: "Women are allowed to look after the detectives and unfortunates, but they want to get back behind the causes of pauperism and insanity, and in nine-tenths of the cases these result from bad laws."[75] Institutions for the insane and idiotic demonstrated useful distinctions between their residents and the elite women at the helm, thus creating a hierarchy of dependents. While able-minded men voted as an extension of their

[73] As Peggy Pascoe has observed: "What they had was moral influence, not social power; what they sought was to turn their influence into authority." Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939* (Oxford University Press, 1993): xvi-xvii. *See also* Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).
[74] Frances Maule, ed., 'The Blue Book': Woman Suffrage, History, Arguments and Results (New York: National Woman Suffrage Publishing Co. Inc., 1917), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress.
[75] Mary A. Livermore, Mrs. Livermore on Suffrage (July 1905), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress.

guardianship power over the household, able-minded women showcased their power over a class of dependents of their own.[76] Adopting lunatics and idiots as symbolic dependents made suffrage activists into the virtual legal guardians of the very individuals that could complicate their path towards full political participation.[77] This strategy twisted the idea of "Republican Motherhood" advanced by scholars such as Linda Kerber and contemporaries such as Massachusetts Delegate Morton.[78] Rather than moral authority over dependents such as children serving to separate out and isolate women from the political realm, here, it operated as a justification for their political participation on the backs of other people who would remain disenfranchised and represented in the political process by these women.

Activists also marshaled statistics to argue that far from increasing the level of insanity in society, woman suffrage actually acted to reduce it. The 19th century saw an explosion of concern about lunatics and idiots as medical and social problems. This interest was captured in an abundance of statistical knowledge that was available to the public. Woman suffrage activists harnessed these indicators of social and moral

[76] Debate on woman suffrage in the Senate of the United States, 2d session, 49th Congress, December 8, 1886, and January 25, 1887, by Senators H.W. Blair, J.E. Brown, J.N. Dolph, G.G. Vest, and Geo. F. Hoar, National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress, 40.
[77] Christina Anne Farnham, ed. *Women and the American South: A Multicultural Reader* (New York: NYU Press, 1997), 208; Suzanne M. Marilley, *Woman Suffrage and the Origins of Liberal Feminism*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 186; *Indianapolis Journal*, July 2, 1889. Woman Suffrage: Hearing Before the Select Committee on Woman Suffrage, United States Senate, on the Joint Resolution (S. R. 53) Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, Extending the Right of Suffrage to Women, United States. Congress. Senate. Select Committee on Woman Suffrage, U.S. Government Printing Office, (1902), 18; National American Woman Suffrage Association, The Hand Book of the National American Woman Suffrage Association and Proceedings of the Annual Convention, Vol. 26-30 (1894), 88, 90, 112, 64, 95.
[78] Linda Kerber, Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America (Chapel Hill: UNC Press Books, 2000).

degradation to claim that their moral authority and political leadership would reverse worrisome trends that mental impairment was on the increase.[79] Thus, the idea of insanity was transformed from an indicator of female weakness as anti-suffragists argued into a symbol of societal breakdown that woman suffrage would be able to fix. Strikingly, as in the other strategies women suffrage activists employed, lunacy and idiocy appears as exclusively male and female lunatics and idiots are erased. The International Council of Women warned: "[W]hat you sow, that you shall reap." In this case, the harvest from disenfranchising women was a 155 percent increase in "the defective class," according to the 1880 U.S. Census.[80] On the other hand, Clara Belwick Colby lectured at the National Woman Suffrage Convention of 1892 about the improving statistics on "crime, insanity and divorce" in Wyoming, which allowed women to vote.[81] She contended in the 1895 *National Bulletin* that woman suffrage was conducive "to a tranquil state of mind and a high degree of intelligence." Her proof were statistics comparing Wyoming, where woman could vote, with "a typical Eastern State — Connecticut; where the latter has 1 insane person to every 363 of the population, Wyoming has but 1 to every 1,497. Nor is this wholly a difference of West

[79] Paulina Davis, comp. A History Of The National Woman's Rights Movement, For Twenty Years, With The Proceedings Of The Decade Meeting Held At Apollo Hall, October 20, 1870, From 1850 To 1870, With An Appendix Containing The History Of The Movement During The Winter Of 1871, In The National Capitol (New York: Journeymen Printers' Co-Operative Association, 1871), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress, 64, 71; Frances Maule, ed., 'The Blue Book': Woman Suffrage, History, Arguments and Results (New York: National Woman Suffrage Publishing Co. Inc., 1917), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress.
[80] International Council of Women, *Report of the International Council of Women, Assembled By The National Woman Suffrage Association Washington, D.C., U.S. Of America, March 25 To April 1, 1888: Condensed From The Stenographic Report Made By Mary F. Seymour And Assistants, For The Woman's Tribune, Published Daily During The Council* (Washington: R.H. Darby, printer, 1888), 275.
[81] Anonymous, *The National Woman Suffrage Convention; The American Magazine.* Vol. 4, Iss. 2 (1892), 53.

and West, for Idaho [which had not yet enfranchised women], its neighbor, shows 1 in every 1,029 insane. The proportion of idiots is, in Connecticut, 1 to 616; Idaho, 1 to 1,534, and Wyoming, 1 to 4,336. Especially would voting seem to increase the intelligence of women, for in both Connecticut and Idaho there are over seven-tenths as many female idiots as there are male idiots, while in Wyoming there are only four-tenths as many.[82] Elizabeth Cady Stanton directed: "Men and brethren, look into your asylums for the blind, the deaf and dumb, the idiot, the imbecile, the deformed, the insane; go out into the by-lanes and dens of this vast metropolis, and contemplate that reeking mass of depravity; pause before the terrible revelations made by statistics, of the rapid increase of all this moral and physical impotency, and learn how fearful a thing it is to violate the immutable laws of the beneficent Ruler of the universe; and there behold the terrible retribution of your violence on woman!"[83] Mrs. Spencer said before the Washington, D.C. Committee, "[b]orn of the unjust and cruel subjection of woman to man, we have in these United States a harvest of 116,000 paupers, 36,000 criminals, and such a mighty host of blind, deaf and dumb, idiotic, insane, feeble-minded and children with tendencies to crime, as almost to lead one for the hope for the extinction of the human race rather than its perpetuation after its own kind."[84] Statistics became a prophetic voice to bolster women's own moral authority and highlight their able-mindedness as a counter to biological claims of their mental unworthiness.

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[82] Hearing before the Committee on Woman Suffrage February 21, 1894 [Senate] 53rd Congress, 2nd session, mis doc. No. 121, Congressional Serial Set. US Government Printing Office, 1895, Concurrent Resolution 17.
[83] Stanton, *History of Woman Suffrage, 1848-1861* vol 1, 719.
[84] Stanton, *History of Woman Suffrage, 1876-85* vol 3, 13.

Legislating and Lobbying for Disenfranchisement

This cultural work and strategy was used to create the normative scaffolding to construct a new legal apparatus that disenfranchised lunatics and idiots while enfranchising women.[85] The spectacle of the movement became rhetorical material for legislative action. While Mary E. Marehand Milligan of Delaware never referred to "American Woman and Her Political Peers" by name when she addressed the Congressional Committee on Woman Suffrage, it was clearly on her mind when she declared: "We, the women of Delaware, decline being classified with the maniac, the convict, the blanketed Indian, and the simpering idiot."[86] Clara Bewick Colby also implored Congress: "that picture is the best argument in favor of the passage of the

[85] Revised Record of the Constitutional Convention of the State of New York, May 8, 1894, to September 1894, Vol. 2 (New York: Argus Co., 1900): 216; Hearing of the Woman suffrage association ... January 18, 1892. (Washington, DC: GPO, 1892), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress; Elizabeth Silverthorne & Geneva Fulham, *Women Pioneers in Texas Medicine* (Texas A&M University Press, 1997); Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, *Votes for Women!: The Woman Suffrage Movement in Tennessee, the South, and the Nation* (Tennessee: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1995), 291; A. Elizabeth Taylor, The Woman Suffrage Movement in North Carolina, *North Carolina Historical Review*, 38, no. 1-4 (January-October 1961), 54. Seeking the Right to Vote, *New York Times*, April 13, 1894, 1; 68; Alice Stone Blackwell, "A Rather Exciting Day," *The Woman Citizen*, 1, 3-26, (1917), 348; "House Decides Suffrage Shall have Committee," *New York Tribune*, September 25, 1917, 1; "Sague Champions Votes for Women," *New York Tribune*, November 6, 1914, 7; "Women Make Plea for the Ballot," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 5, 1911, 4; John Gibbon, "Why Women Should Have the Ballot," *North American Review* 163 (July 1896), 188-89; "Seeking the Right to Vote," *New York Times*, April 13, 1894,1;. Daniel Parker Livermore, "Woman Suffrage Defended by Irrefutable Arguments, and All Objections to Woman's Enfranchisement Carefully Examined and Completely Answered," (Lee & Shepard, 1885), vi.; Remarks of Hon. John Davis, M. C., Hearing before the Committee on Woman Suffrage, February 21, 1894, National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress, 7; Congressman Davis Before the United States Senate Committee, February 21, 1894, The Ballot and the Bullet, comp. by Carrie Chapman Catt (Philadelphia: National American Woman Suffrage Association, A.J. Ferris Press, 1897), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress, 67; Alice Stone Blackwell, Objections Answered, National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress, 1.

[86] Report of Hearing before the Committee on Woman Suffrage, January 28, 1896 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1896), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress.

joint resolution that we can present to you, and we trust that your chivalry and sense of justice will compel you to assist our efforts to release ourselves from this shameful category of the disfranchised."[87]

When suffrage activists brought up the disfranchisement of idiots and lunatics in legal realms, it was not to push for their enfranchisement. Quite the contrary.[88] When Lucy Stone delivered a proposal for woman suffrage in New Jersey in 1867, she proposed to enfranchise women and not idiots and lunatics "because they are incapable of rational choice and so cannot vote."[89] Henry Ward Beecher claimed: "In a republic the ballot belongs to every intelligent adult person who is innocent of crime. There is an obvious and sufficient reason for excluding minors, state-prison convicts, imbeciles and

[87] Report of Hearing before the Committee on Woman Suffrage, February 21, 1894 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1894), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress.
[88] An account of the proceedings on the trial of Susan B. Anthony, on the charge of illegal voting, at the presidential election in Nov. 1872, and on the trial of Beverly W. Jones, Edwin T. Marsh and William B. Hall, the inspectors of election by whom her vote was received…, National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress; Rachel Foster Avery, ed., Transactions of the National council of women of the United States, assembled in Washington, D.C., February 22 to 25, 1891 (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1891), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress; Report of hearing before the Committee on Woman Suffrage, January 28, 1896. (Washington, DC: GPO, 1896), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress; Woman suffrage. Hearing before the Select committee on woman suffrage ... [February 18, 1902] on the joint resolution (S.R. 53) proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States, extending the right of suffrage to women. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1902), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress; The Ohio convention reporter. Vol. 1, no. 2, February 1870 (Columbus, OH: J.G. Adel, 1870), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress; Woman suffrage. The argument of Carrie S. Burnham before Chief Justice Reed, and Associate Justices Agnew, Sharswood and Mercur, of the Supreme court of Pennsylvania, in banc, on the third and fourth of April, 1873. With an appendix containing the opinion of Hon. George Sharswood and a complete history of the case. Also, a compilation of the laws of Pennsylvania touching the rights of women, National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress; Remarks of Miss Mary Chase, Report of hearing before the Committee on Woman Suffrage, January 28, 1896 (Washington, GPO, 1896), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress; Suffrage conferred by the Fourteenth amendment. Woman's suffrage in the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia, in general term, October, 1871. Sara J. Spencer vs. The Board of registration, and Sarah E. Webster vs. The judges of election. Argument of the counsel for the plaintiffs. With the opinions of the court. Reported by J.O. Clephane. (Washington, D.C., Judd & Detweiler, 1871), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress.
[89] Lucy Stone, "Woman Suffrage In New Jersey," March 6th, 1867.

insane persons, but does the public safety require that we shall place the women of Connecticut with infants, criminals, idiots and lunatics? Do they deserve the classification?"[90] Ida Husted Harper argued: "[C]hildren, lunatics, idiots and felons" rightly belonged "in the governed class, they are incompetent or unfit to govern; but what moral or constitutional right have men to put all women in this governed class?"[91]

Activists introduced petitions to state constitutional conventions and to Congress advocating the disenfranchisement of lunatics, idiots, and convicts while at the same time pushing for the enfranchisement of women.[92] They protested the entrance of states

[90] *History of Woman Suffrage, vol* 3, 53; Henry Ward Beecher "The Advance of a Century. An Oration by Rev. Henry Ward Beecher," July 4, 1876.

[91] Ida Husted Harper, "Woman Suffrage a Right," *The North American Review* 183.4 (September 21, 1906): 497. Multiple state memorializations of women suffrage use the litany of women, convicts, and lunatics. The *Berkeley Daily Planet* wrote in 2011 that The Berkeley Political Equality League, under the leadership of Mary McHenry Keith, proposed placing a letter to the future in the cornerstone. "*We…hereby commit the cause of Equal Suffrage for man and woman to the judgment of future generations, in the confidence that in after years whoever shall read these lines will wonder that so late as the year 1908 the women of California were political serfs; they were taxed without representation, governed without their consent, and classed under the law with idiots, insane persons, criminals, minors and other defective classes…We, about to die, greet you, the inheritors of a better age, men and women of the future Berkeley, equal before the law, enfranchised citizen; co-operating in all public service.*" Adding that Sarah Shuey, a Berkeley doctor, said: "Why do I believe in suffrage for women? Because I am a human being as well as a woman, and I believe in true democracy, and wish to get into the company of rational human beings before the law, and not to be classed with the idiots, imbeciles, the insane and criminals—because the city, State or nation is only a larger family, therefore it is inevitable that women should share in the responsibility for the normal development of the race."[1] The Tennessee Women's Suffrage Memorial is inscribed with the words of Elizabeth Avery Meriwether: "Inspired by news of Susan B. Anthony's attempted 1872 vote, Elizabeth Avery Meriwether dared to vote in the 1876 presidential election and reported..."when I tested the matter I was allowed to cast my ballot. Whether it was counted I cannot say. But counting my ballot was not important; what was important was to focus public attention to the monstrous injustice of including educated women with felons and lunatics as persons denied the right of suffrage." Steven Finacom, "Centennial of Women's Vote in California is 2011: Berkeley Celebrations Planned," *The Berkeley Daily Planet*, March 1, 2011, 1.

[92] James Levi King & Winfield Freeman, eds., Kansas Constitutional Convention: A Reprint of the Proceedings and Debates of the Convention Which Framed the Constitution of Kansas at Wyandotte in July, 1859 (Kansas: Kansas State Printing Plant, 1920): 136; Elizabeth Cady Stanton & Susan B. Anthony, eds., Report of the Sixteenth Annual Washington Convention, March 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th, 1884 : with reports of the Forty-eighth Congress (Rochester, NY: C. Mann, 1884), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress, 20, 69; Damon Y. Kilgore, Legislative wrongs to labor and how to right them : address delivered before the committees of the Constitutional Convention of Pennsylvania, in Constitutional Hall, January 31, 1873 (Philadelphia: Co-operative Print. Co., 1873),

such as Oklahoma and Arizona into the union with provisions that disfranchised women along with "felons, lunatics, and other objectionable classes."[93] Legislators and constitutional convention delegates then picked up this language for enactment.

Thus, these tactics were not just spectacle and rhetoric in isolation. They were intended to change the laws that kept women, lunatics, and idiots disqualified from political citizenship. The movement of women out of political exile and the entrenchment of lunatics and idiots into civil death over the course of the 19th and early 20th centuries is a potent indicator of this strategy's effectiveness.

To be sure, not all woman suffrage activists utilized tropes of lunacy and idiocy.[94] This paper emphasizes the use of these strategies among elite white woman activists, where arguments about the superior intelligence of women would be at their most advantageous. Suffragists such as Harriot Stanton Blatch, Florence Kelly, and Jane Addams objected to calls for education or literacy requirements for voting and appealed

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National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress, 11; Woman suffrage in New Jersey. An address delivered by Lucy Stone, at a hearing before the New Jersey Legislature, March 6th, 1867 (Boston: C.H. Simonds, 1867), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress, 5-6; *Official Report of the Proceedings and Debates of the Third Constitutional Convention of Ohio* (Ohio: W.S. Robinson, 1874); *Report of the Debates and Proceedings of the Convention for the Revision of the Constitution of the State of Indiana, 1850* (Indiana: A.H. Brown, 1850); The Ohio convention reporter. Vol. 1, no. 2, February 1870 (Columbus, OH: J.G. Adel, 1870), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress, 113, 127; Woman Suffrage: Views of the Minority (Washington, DC: GPO, 1886), 2; Hearing of the Woman suffrage association ... January 18, 1892. (Washington, DC: GPO, 1892), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress; Hearing before the Committee on Woman Suffrage, February 21, 1894 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1894), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress;, 22.

[93] "Woman Suffragists' Just Protest," *Detroit Free Press* November 20, 1904, A4; Elnora Monroe Babcock, "Women In Hawaii: A Protest Against Their Perpetual Disfranchisement by Congress," *The Washington Post* May 20, 1900, 26.

[94] Anti-suffragists also referred to lunatics and idiots when making their arguments against the woman suffrage movement. Helen Kendrick Johnson, for example, referenced "American Woman and Her Political Peers" while arguing that each member of the painting was properly disenfranchised, including women. Helen Kendrick Johnson, Woman and the republic: a survey of the woman suffrage movement in the United States and a discussion of the claims and arguments of its foremost advocates (New York: Guidon Club, 1913), National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress, 86.

to their sister activists to focus more attention on working-class and immigrant women.[95] Further work on how working-class and poor women engaged with ideas about mental disability in their activism is needed. To my knowledge, appeals by more radical activists did not include lunatics or idiots as part of their community or outreach, nor did they challenge elite activists directly about their ableism. And even some radical activists such as Harriot Stanton Blatch used lunatics and idiots strategically. Thus, there was no countervailing public or legal voice that supported the enfranchisement of lunatics and idiots in contrast to calls for their continued disenfranchisement by suffrage activists and others.

Conclusion

In 1920, woman suffrage activists got their wish — the vote. Sarah Platt Decker, the president of the General Federation of Women's Clubs sighed, "there is an indescribably uplift in the thought that one is no longer classed with 'criminals, paupers, and idiots.'"[96] Still left out of the political community were those lunatics and idiots who remained disenfranchised by state law in 42 states.[97]

This work on the connections between the suffrage movement and disability turns a new page on the history of the suffrage movement. Initial scholarship on the woman suffrage movement by authors such as Aileen Kradior and Eleanor Flexnor took

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[95] Keyssar, 199, 203, Suzanne Marilley, *Woman Suffrage and the Origins of Liberal Feminism in the United States, 1820-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 192-94.
[96] Sarah Platt Decker, Mrs. Decker on Equal Suffrage, National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress.
[97] Martha G. Stapler, eds., *The Woman Suffrage Year Book 1917* (New York: National Woman Suffrage Publishing Company, Inc., 1917).

the writings of key elite white women suffrage activists in the National American Woman Suffrage Association such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony as an anchor for sketching out the trajectory of the movement from Seneca Falls in 1848 to the 19th Amendment in 1920.[98].

Subsequent works have expanded and revised these initial approaches. They have incorporated research involving Southern and Western suffragists and untethered the literature from its East Coast approach. Consequently, they have deemphasized a focus on the 19th amendment and highlighted the state-by-state victories that preceded 1920.[99] Furthermore, the voices of working-class women have been added to the chorus of elite activists. Scholars such as Rosalyn Terborg-Penn and Elsa Barkley-Brown have highlighted the efforts of black woman suffrage activists and diversified an otherwise monochromatic story.[100] These accounts have yielded a multifaceted story of woman suffrage over the course of the 19th century that started amidst the abolitionist

[98] Aileen S. Kraditor, The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890–1920 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965; repr., New York: Norton, 1981); Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1959; repr., New York: Atheneum, 1968, 1973). They used Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda, Joslyn Gage, eds., History of Woman Suffrage, vol. 1 (New York: Fowler & Wells, 1881); vol. 2 (New York: Fowler & Wells, 1882); and vol. 3 (Rochester: Susan B. Anthony, 1886), as their main reference point. This work noted that the movement did not stay the same over that course of time For example, Kraditor developed a highly influential model of progress of arguments about the woman suffrage movement starting with the "justice" of granting women's rights to "expediency," where activists in the Progressive Era emphasized the social benefits of woman suffrage.

[99] For example, Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, New Women of the New South: The Leaders of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the Southern States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Rebecca J. Mead, How the Vote Was Won: Woman Suffrage in the Western United States, 1868–1914 (New York: New York University Press, 2004)

[100] Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850–1920 (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1998); Ann D. Gordon, ed., African American Women and the Vote, 1837–196; Elsa Barkley Brown, "Negotiating an Transforming the Public Sphere: African American Political Life in the Transition From Slavery to Freedom," Public Culture 7 (Fall 1994): 107–46. The very different story of how black woman suffrage activists treated disability will be addressed in a subsequent piece.

movement and ended with the 19th amendment, but in between included an array of women from different classes and races, and a series of state-by-state campaigns. Their activities incorporated parades as well as speeches, and cultural crusades as well as legislative lobbying.

This paper transforms our scholarship on woman suffrage by foregrounding disability as a category of analysis. As disability historian Douglas Baynton famously wrote, "Disability is everywhere in history, once you begin to look for it, but conspicuously absent in the histories we write."[101] Using disability as our lens allows us to finally "see" the images in sources such as "American Woman and Her Political Peers," as well as the abundant other representations, rhetoric, and legislative action concerning disability in the long 19th century. That white woman suffrage activists utilized these tropes and tactics to subordinate lunatics, idiots, and other men is not evidence of their particular villainy, but instead evidence of the power and pervasiveness of the idea of compulsory able-mindedness within society that they harnessed and used for their own ends.

In addition, disability knits together the suffrage histories of the long 19th century that are often told separately. White male suffrage has been told as an ascension story that leaves out the disenfranchisement of white male lunatics and idiots; at the same time, the fight for African American and women suffrage are depicted as narratives of struggle with eventual triumph on the part of white women and even later success for

[101] Douglas C. Baynton, "Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History," in *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*, eds. Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky, 33-57 (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 52.

African Americans.[102] Scholarship written by historians such as Lisa Tetrault, Glenda Gilmore, and Louise Michele Newman has demonstrated the linkage between woman suffrage and the construction of race and white supremacy.[103] These scholars have shown how white woman suffrage activists used racial tropes and ideology as a way to make common cause with white men to their advantage in their quest for the vote. This paper illustrates that not only did woman suffrage activists shape race with their struggle, but they also fashioned disability and its governing laws. This intervention changes our understanding of the white suffrage movement as not just founded upon the image of white womanhood, but also white *able-minded* woman and manhood. To a certain extent, historians have noticed that woman suffrage activists brought up lunatics and idiots in their inventory of the disenfranchised, but these litanies, and the strategies they represent, have remained underdeveloped as a point of analysis.[104] Among other elements, historians have not connected this rhetoric with the actual disenfranchisement of lunatics and idiots that occurred simultaneously with the fight for woman suffrage. As we know, people with mental disabilities were not the only ones who were denied the franchise. And one of the key accusations against those other

[102] To my knowledge, there was no concerted organized movement by people with mental disabilities to gain the vote during the time period in question, though individual people resisted by voting despite the label of idiot or lunatic. Rabia Belt, "Mental Disability and the Right to Vote," Ph.D. Diss. (Univ. of Michigan, 2015).

[103] Lisa Tetrault, *The Myth of Seneca Falls: Memory and the Women's Suffrage Movement, 1848-1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014); Louise Michele Newman, *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1999); Glenda Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

[104] Douglas Baynton, "Slaves, Immigrants and Suffragists: The Uses of Disability in Citizenship Debates," *PMLA* 120 no. 2 (March 2005), 566; Yvonne Pitts, "Disability, Scientific Authority, and Women's Political Participation at the Turn of the Twentieth-Century United States," *Journal of Women's History* (2012) as important counterexamples.

groups — Indians, women, and African Americans — was that they lacked the mental capacity for full citizenship. Historians have a tendency to treat these accusations on a metaphorical level and in effect naturalize the subordination of people with mental disabilities, but I would like us to go further and think about how mental disability was classed, gendered, and racialized, and how the negative association between mental disability and degraded citizenship left people with mental disabilities without allies in their fight for full civil rights.

Far from contesting the logic that disenfranchised people based on their mental status, woman suffrage activists were an active part of creating and reifying the regime of compulsory able-mindedness for voting that ensnared lunatics and idiots within its wake. Woman suffrage activists did not challenge the assumption that political citizenship required mental fitness, but instead questioned whether they were classified correctly within that rubric. White woman suffrage activists used the category of mental disability to position themselves as mentally fit political actors. The lunatic and the idiot became useful — and successful — devices to highlight and set white women apart as enfranchiseable. Additionally, mental status acted to stigmatize those racialized men who were also potentially enfranchiseable. White woman suffrage activists utilized racial as well as mental disability tropes together to demonstrate their political position above racial and mental others. Using male lunatics and idiots as their foil acted to place white woman activists above some men in terms of respectability and mental status and conveniently elided more difficult comparisons with the typical Anglo-Saxon man that would place them lower in the social and mental hierarchy. Instead, these men

became their allies in the bulwark of able-minded white people against those who would sully the franchise with their mental incompetency.