

‘NOT BY MIGHT, NOR BY POWER, BUT BY SPIRIT’: THE GLOBAL REFORM
EFFORTS OF THE YOUNG WOMEN’S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED
STATES, 1895-1939

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

My dissertation uses the activities of the United States Young Women's Christian Association (USYWCA) as a case study to explore U.S. cultural imperialism in India, Argentina, the Philippines, and Nigeria. USYWCA Secretaries aspired to create an apolitical and non-governmental space, which I have labeled "Y-space." According to its proponents, Y-space would not only be located in physical places and programs, but would also extend to create a global fellowship of women. Liberal, emancipatory, and ecumenical, this space would be tied in Christian fellowship to other organizations such as the Young Men's Christian Association and the World Student Christian Federation. However, it would also ideally reach beyond a purely religious fellowship. USYWCA Secretaries intended that Y-space would be a feminist space, which would advance women's interests and equality with men. They envisioned Y-space as modern, egalitarian, and based in voluntary association that valued individualism and was ultimately generated from the grass-roots. USYWCA Secretaries also envisioned Y-space as transformative, as it enabled women to absorb a common sensibility, regardless of their geographic location. Women within Y-space would therefore be cosmopolitan and color blind, valuing women from diverse classes, races, and nations. Because USYWCA Secretaries generally eschewed rhetorics of nation and empire, they tended to view their efforts as politically neutral and even at times anti-imperial.

However, I find their efforts to be more mixed and nuanced. Each of the chapters therefore addresses not only the intentions of the USYWCA Secretaries, but also the ways that their attempts to achieve Y-space often served to bolster or perpetuate existing race, class, and national hierarchies. In chapter one, I assess the efforts of USYWCA Secretaries to establish Y-

space in the United States. While the Secretaries generally believed that they were meeting the needs of women and that their programs were egalitarian and democratic, I find that their efforts had racial and class limits, and often excluded poor and non-white women. Chapter two examines the USYWCA Secretaries' attempts to create a type of egalitarian and multicultural Social Gospel in India. However, I find that they were unable to transcend their colonial context, and despite their anti-imperial protestations, they served the interests of the British Empire. Chapter three considers the YWCA's building in Buenos Aires, which USYWCA Secretaries intended would help women enter the public sphere by providing a physically safe place for migrating women and a socially respectable space for working women. However, rather than serving the needs of poor women or women from Buenos Aires, the YWCA focused its efforts on the needs of white-collar and Euro-American women, and it served the interests of U.S. and British capital in Argentina. In the Philippines, the subject of chapter four, YWCA recreation programs appeared to value Filipinas and to overturn many colonial assumptions. However, these programs were also geared to facilitate women's internalization of colonial constructions of the body, establish U.S. women as experts, and perpetuate national difference and colonial culture. In the final chapter, I examine the activities of Celestine Smith, the only African-American USYWCA Secretary to go abroad with the YWCA prior to World War II. In Nigeria, Smith attempted to create the same types of programs that the USYWCA developed elsewhere. However, the USYWCA refused to support her work—not only because the overtly race-based British colonialism in Nigeria disrupted USYWCA Secretaries' sense of Y-space as race-blind, but also because white USYWCA leaders were unable to fully confront their own racism.

Taken together, these case studies show that although the USYWCA Secretaries viewed their projects as both liberatory and exceptional, their work tended to advance U.S. interests.

First, while USYWCA Secretaries believed that they were creating an apolitical and value-free space, Y-space was rooted in their conception that women should aspire to U.S. standards, regardless of who the women were or where they were located. This meant that the end goal of Y-space was Americanization, and it served imperial political functions that the Secretaries failed to recognize. For example, while USYWCA Secretaries perceived themselves as being exceptionally inclusive—particularly when compared against the exclusivity of other Euro-American entities—there were ways in which they maintained exclusivity. Whereas they saw themselves as anti-imperial, not only did they depend upon existing colonial structures, but they also often contributed to them. While they saw themselves as cosmopolitan, they advanced U.S. national interests as well as those of individual women. Second, once in the various locations—spanning different geographic, economic, and political contexts—USYWCA Secretaries had to contend with the politics of these places, which were often already deeply intertwined with both formal and informal colonial infrastructures. Because of this, Y-space could not escape local politics, either in the United States, where politics had a great deal to do with racial segregation and immigration, or outside of the United States, where the U.S. was a formal imperial power, an economic power, and a participant in the early 20th century global imperial system that was dominated by Great Britain. This meant that the USYWCA’s work was intrainperial, rather than apolitical.

The importance of this research goes beyond the insights it provides into the USYWCA and its international programs. The case of the USYWCA’s work abroad reveals how the *denial* of empire contributed to multiple forms of it: cultural transformation, economic dominance, direct colonial rule, and intrainperial collaborations.

To my parents, William C. and Kathie A. Phoenix

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INTRODUCTION

On November 12, 1931, members of the Young Women's Christian Association of the United States (USYWCA) gathered at their headquarters in New York City to memorialize USYWCA National Board member and former Student Secretary Juliette Derricotte. Derricotte had died five days before the memorial, after being denied medical treatment in a white hospital following a car accident outside of Dalton, Georgia. Her memorial at the YWCA was a moment of domestic racial awareness, in that it brought the realities of segregation home to many of the members of the National Board. Historian Nancy Robertson marks Derricotte's death as sparking a shift within the USYWCA, because her ill-treatment revealed the systemic injustice of Jim Crow. For example, USYWCA Secretary Lilly Hammond (who was white) "warned against white people's tendency to emphasize their 'friendliness' to 'the Negroes' instead of addressing their needs. She criticized a belief that 'individual kindness... to individual Negroes' fulfilled their Christian obligation."¹ Following Derricotte's memorial service, the Headquarters Board of the National Student Council condemned the treatment that had led to her death. The members vowed to embark on "an unremitting effort for a new and different civilization where segregation shall be abolished."²

Derricotte's memorial was not only a moment of domestic racial awareness, but also transnational racial awareness for the YWCA, as some groups within the YWCA highlighted her work with women in other nations. For example, the National Student Council's March 1932 issue of "Interracial News Bulletin," which was dedicated to Derricotte, began with her status as

¹ Lily Hardy Hammond, *In the Vanguard of a Race* (New York: Council of Women for Home Missions and Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada, 1922), 175. Quoted in: Nancy Marie Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-46* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 135.

² Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-46*, 136.

an international figure. The editors stated that “[t]his number of the Interracial News Bulletin is dedicated to Juliette Derricotte, a friend of students of all nations and races.” In their brief synopsis of her life, the editors continued to weave Derricotte’s national and transnational importance together. They stated that during her time with the YWCA, “she visited every Negro college and many white colleges in the Association. She was known and greatly loved by students in every part of this country, as well as in the countries abroad.” They pointed to Derricotte’s representation of the student movement at the 1924 World Student Christian Federation meeting at High Leigh, England, and the 1928 meeting at Mysore, India. It was *after* they had established Derricotte’s transnationalism that they returned to the U.S. context, and concluded by noting that Derricotte was Dean of Women at Fisk University as well as a member of the National Board of the USYWCA at the time of her death.³

While the USYWCA members assembled at the memorial service clearly understood that the USYWCA not only had a U.S. presence, but also a transnational one, historians have largely stopped their analysis at the national borders of the United States. With the exception of an in-house study of USYWCA Secretaries who served overseas, and a few scholarly works that deal with individual USYWCA Secretaries in a single foreign country, there are no scholarly works on the USYWCA’s activities outside of the United States.⁴ Historians have therefore largely ignored the USYWCA’s own assertion that the “home” and “foreign” sections of the USYWCA existed in a “co-ordinate” relationship, in which they were “equal- not in size or in internal development... but equal in rank or order, the work of each department to be regarded as

³ National Student Council, “Interracial News Bulletin” March 1932, 1, Microfilm Reel 107- Interracial- Negro-Juliette Derricotte, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁴ I will be discussing the historiography of the USYWCA within the United States in greater length in Chapter 1.

necessary to the other and dependent upon it.”⁵ This means that historians have missed a rather large level of the USYWCA’s scale; by limiting their inquiry to cities and nations, they have overlooked the fact that YWCAs were affiliated not only with each other through their membership with their national YWCA, but affiliated with YWCAs around the world through the national affiliation with the World YWCA (WYWCA).

My work demonstrates that these transnational ties, and the way that USYWCA Secretaries viewed themselves and their work, are foundational to understanding the USYWCA domestically. The transnational perspective reveals that USYWCA Secretaries aspired to create an apolitical and non-governmental space, in which a community would not only be located in physical places and programs, but be a global fellowship of women. Liberal, emancipatory, ecumenical, this space would be tied in Christian fellowship to other organizations such as the Young Men’s Christian Association, and the World Student Christian Federation. However, it would also ideally reach beyond a purely religious fellowship. USYWCA Secretaries intended that this would be a feminist space, which would advance women’s interests and equality with men. They envisioned the space as modern, egalitarian and based in voluntary association that valued individualism and was ultimately generated from the grass-roots. Women within this space would ideally be cosmopolitan and color blind, and value women from diverse classes, races, and nations. I call this physical infrastructure and community of fellowship, which the USYWCA Secretaries aspired to build, “Y-space.” USYWCA Secretaries saw this as a transformative space, in which women would absorb a common sensibility, regardless of their geographic location. The USYWCA Secretaries largely viewed their work as positive; because

⁵ Young Women's Christian Association, *The Foreign Department, 1907* (New York: National Board of the Young Women's Christian Associations of the United States of America, 1907), 1.

they generally eschewed rhetorics of nation, empire, or sisterhood, they tended to view their efforts as politically neutral and even at times anti-imperial.

However, I find their efforts to be more mixed and nuanced. Secretaries believed that women should aspire to American standards, regardless of who the women were or where they were located. This meant that while USYWCA Secretaries may have thought of Y-space as an apolitical and value-free space, it was in fact highly political. First, it had to contend with the politics of the local places, which were often already deeply intertwined with both formal and informal colonial infrastructures. Because of this, Y-space could not escape local politics, either in the United States, where politics had a great deal to do with racial segregation and immigration, or outside of the United States, where the U.S. was a formal imperial power, an economic power, and a participant in the early 20th century global imperial system that was dominated by Great Britain. Second, as a culturally transformative space, Y-space was therefore an attempt to culturally transform and homogenize women to fit American ideals and standards. This meant that the end goal of this project—Americanization—served imperial political functions that the Secretaries failed to recognize.

Y-space

Derricotte's memorial was more than just a national gathering to celebrate her life and international connections. At this very poignant and transformative moment, when the USYWCA Secretaries felt very keenly the deadly consequences of U.S. racism, USYWCA Secretaries read Derricotte's reflections of the 1928 World Student Federation meeting in Mysore, India. In them, Derricotte emphasized not only the universality of prejudice, but also the capacity for individuals to get along with one another in a transnational setting. Recalling a

specific moment, Derricotte stated that sitting to her left was “a Britisher... whom I happened to know had talked hard and fast in a discussion on England in India.” Nearby was a young Indian woman who recounted being “told that all the white [people] must be seated before they could give her a seat” in church. On Derricotte’s other side was her “little Korean tent-mate who had kept me awake till two in the morning telling me that I knew nothing of prejudice, segregation and discrimination, that to know the real meaning of those words I’d have to be a Korean under a Japanese government; and not far from her was my newly made friend from Japan who had asked me a few questions about our immigration laws.” Derricotte also pointed to the “white South Africans [who] had just told of the real spiritual experience which was theirs when they could shake hands with Max Yergan, a Negro.” She continued by stating that her “eyes roamed to those of us in that big meeting tent from the United States, those of us who were white, those of us who were brown, and I remembered that we did not represent the masses in the United States.”⁶ By reading these recollections, USYWCA Secretaries seemed to cast racism as universal, although as Derricotte’s pairings reveal, it was deeply entwined with imperial contact. First, there were the colonizer and colony, with Britain and India. Second, there were the rising imperial states of Japan and the United States, which were actively engaged in formal and informal imperialism. Third were the racist settler colonies of the U.S. and South Africa. Finally, there was her awareness that women at international conferences constituted a global elite.

As deeply as this racism ran, Derricotte’s recollections were a reminder of the types of idealized communities that the USYWCA Secretaries envisioned as their work. In this ideal, Christian youth movements had the power to transcend racial and national divisions. Derricotte

⁶ “Written by Juliette Derricotte after attending a World’s Student Christian Federation meeting in India and read at the memorial service held for her on November 12, 1931, 600 Lexington Avenue, New York” quoted in: National Student Council, Young Women’s Christian Associations of the United States of America, “A Pilgrimage of Friendship from the United States to India in 1935,” 3, Microfilm Reel 134- Student- Interracial- Negro Delegation to India, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

continued her remembrances by stating that at that same moment that she realized the divisions above, she also saw the potentials for Christian fellowship; the gathering was “prophetic in the sense that this is what can happen to all the world. With all the differences and difficulties, with all the entanglements of international attitudes and policies, with all the bitterness and prejudice and hatred that are between any two or more of these countries, you are here friends working, thinking, playing, living together in the finest sort of fellowship.”⁷ Here, then, was a fellowship that could not only cross national divides, but racial, ethnic, and class divides as well.

The idealized cultural space described by Derricotte lay at the heart of the YWCA’s work. This Y-space was composed partially of the visible elements including buildings, women, and programs, and partly of the intangible YWCA community built from these elements. The most obvious physical element of Y-space was its physical infrastructure: the buildings, hostels, and camps that located Y-space on *terra firma*. These were the foundations of Y-space in that they provided a physical place, in which the YWCA Secretaries would presumably have greater control than in surrounding places. In YWCA buildings around the world, women from many different classes, races, and nationalities gathered together. These women included members and non-members of the YWCA; they came from down the street and around the world; and they stayed in the buildings for different lengths of time, from an afternoon lecture to several weeks or months of residence in a YWCA hostel. These women came together largely for the programs of Y-space: Bible study and religious education; career services and job training; camps and physical fitness; crafts and domestic education; and folk festivals and events. The USYWCA

⁷ Although Derricotte concluded by stating that this was the “dream of the World Student Christian Federation ‘That All May Be One’” (which was their motto), the same held true of the USYWCA, which was deeply intertwined with the WSCF. “Written by Juliette Derricotte after attending a World’s Student Christian Federation meeting in India and read at the memorial service held for her on November 12, 1931, 600 Lexington Avenue, New York” quoted in: National Student Council, Young Women’s Christian Associations of the United States of America, “A Pilgrimage of Friendship from the United States to India in 1935,” 3, Microfilm Reel 134- Student-Interracial- Negro Delegation to India, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

intended that the buildings, women, and programs would work together and mutually support each other in ever-expanding cycles. For example, building campaign drives brought interested women together and then buildings themselves served as a meeting place for many different groups of women. These women could subsequently be a bridge between the YWCA and the broader community, bringing other women who were interested in the YWCA's programs but not yet YWCA members. This would perpetually expand the YWCA's sphere of influence.

As important as the physical elements of Y-space were, they were more than the sum of their parts because they were the scaffolding for the second Y-space element: the ideological, abstract, idealistic and imagined ideal aspired to by USYWCA Secretaries, who took the lead in establishing new YWCAs. This was a Y-space of global community—a system of social and cultural interrelations that USYWCA Secretaries hoped would emerge among the women who stood within the YWCA's physical infrastructures and participated in its programs. The USYWCA intended that this space would transcend localism, by someday bringing all women together.

Y-space therefore rested on a notion of fellowship. Although historians have noted the use of the term “sisterhood” and its attendant familial connotations, I have found that USYWCA leaders tended to not use that term at a national level or abroad.⁸ Instead, they used the word “fellowship,” which gestured towards relationships that could not be encompassed by the notion of “sisterhood.” Their conception of fellowship was drawn partly from Christianity, in which a fellowship was the community of believers. The USYWCA's use of “fellowship” was therefore

⁸ See: Karen J. Blair, “The Limits of Sisterhood: The Woman's Building in Seattle, 1908-1921,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 8, no. 1 (1984): 45-52; Christine Bolt, *Sisterhood Questioned?: Race, Class and Internationalism in the American and British Women's Movements, C.1880s-1970s* (London: Routledge, 2004); Katherine Chaddock Reynolds and Susan L. Schramm, *A Separate Sisterhood: Women Who Shaped Southern Education in the Progressive Era* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002); Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-46*.

likely partly pragmatic, given their work with the co-ed World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), as well as the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), for whom "sisterhood" would not have been applicable.⁹

However, for USYWCA Secretaries, "fellowship" seems to have gone beyond a term to rhetorically join with male-dominated global Christian movements, and USYWCA Secretaries viewed fellowship as egalitarian in other ways. Unlike maternalistic and hierarchical "sisterhood," USYWCA Secretaries envisioned the fellowship of Y-space as voluntary and generated from a grassroots level.¹⁰ The word "fellowship" fit with their vision of an organization in which members would exercise considerable power upon each other—there would be no "big" or "little" sisters, only equals. USYWCA Secretaries also saw fellowship as potentially inclusive of all women. This differentiated the USYWCA from other women's organizations, which tended to be based in exclusion (such as the Daughters of the American Revolution), specific issues (such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union, despite their "do everything" dictum), status (such as the Association of University Women), or denomination (such as the various women's mission boards). In the USWCA's idealized Y-space, individual women could embody the valued qualities of Y-space, such as democracy, individual merit, tolerance, and self-sufficiency, regardless of background.

These egalitarian and inclusive qualities of Y-space highlight the fact that a key component to this fellowship was the USYWCA's cosmopolitan ideal. Secretaries saw Y-space as a neutral ground, in which women could learn cultural appreciation. USYWCA Secretaries

⁹ For ease of distinction between the similar acronyms of YWCA and YMCA, I have underlined the "M," as YWCA Secretaries themselves sometimes did.

¹⁰ Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, "Womanly Duties: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States in France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States, 1880-1920," *The American Historical Review* 95, no. 4 (October 1990): 1076-1108; Bolt, *Sisterhood Questioned?*; Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-46*.

envisioned that disparate groups of women would learn about, and find a common ground with women from different classes, races, and nations within Y-space. They wanted women to develop a sense of similarity and fellowship with the women whom they came directly into contact within their own YWCA building *and* those within the global imagined community of the YWCA.¹¹ USYWCA Secretaries thought that through this contact and common ground, individual women would gain greater tolerance and understanding, which they would then use to influence their communities.

The USYWCA Secretaries seem to have been sincere in their desire that this cosmopolitanism not be superficial or Orientalist. For example, in a 1933 issue of *The Woman's Press*, Ruth Woodsmall chastised readers for having outdated notions of women around the world. She stated that if U.S. women had an Orientalist view of “the poetry and romance of the [Turkish] harem,” the “child brides and child widows and women in seclusion” of India, Chinese women with bound feet, or “kimono-clad women in lovely Japanese gardens,” they were “living in the past.” She continued that women everywhere were engaging in “the thrill of a new life” of opportunities. The YWCA “has brought women of conflicting nationalities together... in the harmony of common interests.” In this “joy of working and playing together” women found “the meaning of service. Barriers of religion and traditional antagonisms are broken down in the contagious atmosphere of friendship.”¹² Rather than maintaining a cultural aesthetic which cast non-U.S. women as backward, Woodsmall intended to emphasize the similarities of women within Y-space. These were not isolated and backward women, but rather women engaging in the same types of activities as the U.S. readers of *The Woman's Press*.

¹¹ For more on “imagined community” see: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. and Extended Ed. (London: Verso, 1991).

¹² Ruth F. Woodsmall, “A Post-War Panorama of Women” *The Woman's Press*, January 1933, 29.

In sum, USYWCA Secretaries envisioned Y-space as a type of cultural space that would transform women regardless of their geographic location. The ultimate ideological goal of Y-space, for the USYWCA Secretaries, seems to have been for women abroad to internalize several qualities. First, within the “neutral” and “democratic” setting of Y-space, the USYWCA intended that women would recognize their individuality. This would occur through contact with women from disparate groups. As individual women learned more about each other and bonded together across class, race, and ethnic lines in common activities, they would abandon most of their old group prejudices and limitations, and become cosmopolitan individuals in a voluntary organization.¹³ Second, the USYWCA aimed to create women who were able to adapt to multiple contexts. Culturally, these women would be aware of and participate in non-local traditions and events in addition to their local cultural and religious functions. For example, YWCA women participated in religious events in their own churches and communities, as well as in global religious events, such as the World YWCA’s “Week of Prayer.” These women would also be geographically mobile, as YWCA buildings facilitated the movement of women from rural to urban areas and from nation to nation, particularly as they looked for employment. This was important because USYWCA Secretaries intended that women be independent and self-sufficient wage earners, who were well acquainted with the underlying requirements of industrial life, such as individualism, mobility, and self-control. While the YWCA did not eschew domesticity, and regularly ran domestic training classes, they also assumed that women

¹³ Scholars have generally seen membership in voluntary organizations as one of the keys to Americanization, manifested in the Progressive Era as ethnic mutual benefit societies (even though they differ in the degree to which this process was voluntary as well as the degree of resultant diversity). See: Gary Gerstle, “Liberty, Coercion, and the Making of Americans,” *The Journal of American History* 84, no. 2 (September 1997): 524-558; Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); James R. Barrett, *Work and Community in the Jungle: Chicago's Packinghouse Workers, 1894-1922* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990); David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, Rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1999); Russell A. Kazal, “Revisiting Assimilation: The Rise, Fall, and Reappraisal of a Concept in American Ethnic History,” *The American Historical Review* 100, no. 2 (April 1995): 437-471.

would likely make a transition from wage earning to taking care of a household and raising children and back to wage earning. It was therefore important that women be able to support themselves independent of men. This financial self-support was also important because USYWCA Secretaries believed that individual attainments, rather than inherited positions or those derived from family status, should be the measure of a woman's worth.

Y-space and imperialism

It is likely that USYWCA Secretaries viewed their efforts in a positive light; after all, they dedicated significant amounts of time and energy to it. However, their efforts to create Y-space were ultimately an imperial project in two main ways. First, USYWCA Secretaries' ideas and ideals were fundamentally based on a U.S. understanding of these terms, in which the example of the institutions and cultures of United States could be utilized and applied to other geographic contexts. This meant that, as historians have demonstrated for other transnational movements, the USYWCA Secretaries' claims to intervention were ultimately based upon imperial hierarchies that privileged themselves. For example, women's organizations that claimed feminism or a type of universal sisterhood often based their participation in the public sphere (and suffrage in particular) upon speaking for subaltern women.¹⁴ These claims to speak

¹⁴ For the transnational context, see: Antoinette M. Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Mrinalini Sinha, Donna J. Guy, and Angela Woollacott, eds., *Feminisms and Internationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999). For the US context, see: Louise Michele Newman, *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Glenda Elizabeth 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); Peggy A. Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). For the USYWCA and race in particular, see: Dorothea Browder, "From Uplift to Agitation: Working women, race, and coalition in the Young Women's Christian Association, 1908-1950" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin - Madison, 2008); Stephanie Yvette Felix, "Committed to Their Own: African American women leaders in the YWCA. The YWCA of Germantown, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1870-1970" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Temple University, 1999); Lauri Johnson, "A Generation of Women Activists: African American Female Educators in Harlem, 1930-1950," *The Journal of African American History* 89, no. 3 (Summer 2004): 223-240; Anne Meis Knupfer, "'If You Can't Push, Pull, if You Can't Pull, Please Get Out of the

on behalf of women were partially based on cosmopolitanism, in which women who knew *about* specific places could, through their institutional position, speak *for* the women in those places.¹⁵ In other words, events such as conferences and “folk festivals” could foster reductive stereotypes as well as celebrate multiculturalism.¹⁶

This was true for the USYWCA as well; by and large, the only contact most USYWCA women had with their fellows around the world was through the regular column, “Under a Foreign Stamp,” and the more occasional “News from Other Countries” sections of the USYWCA’s magazine, *The Woman’s Press*. Like Ruth Woodsmall’s article, these articles were generally geared to demonstrate that the common USYWCA ideals of self-sufficiency, internationalism, democracy, fellowship, and kindness towards others were being carried out in YWCAs around the globe. For example, in the January 1933 issue, “Under a Foreign Stamp” contained very brief snippets of events such as a nature hike in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, an international dinner in Madras, India, a discussion of membership in T’oi Shan, China, campfire chats in Santiago Chile, and a spirit of fellowship in Melbourne, Australia.¹⁷ However, these

Way”: The Phyllis Wheatley Club and Home in Chicago, 1896 to 1920,” *The Journal of Negro History* 82, no. 2 (Spring 1997): 221-231; Michelle Rief, “Thinking Locally, Acting Globally: The International Agenda of African American Clubwomen, 1880-1940,” *The Journal of African American History* 89, no. 3 (Summer 2004): 203-222; Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-46*.

¹⁵ Burton, *Burdens of History*. There has been a tremendous amount written in the past few years on the subject of cosmopolitanism, much of which utilizes different understandings of the term. The scholarship that focuses on cosmopolitanism as a theory generally draws from the work of Ulrich Beck and links it to changes in communication, technology, and mobility that occurred in the twentieth century. For Beck’s main work with this, see: Ulrich Beck, *The Cosmopolitan Vision* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006). For a discussion of cosmopolitanism in the Social Sciences, see *The British Journal of Sociology*, 57, no. 1 (March 2006). In their introduction, Ulrich Beck and Natan Sznaider call for greater attention to cosmopolitanism, as distinct from globalization, and the end to “methodological nationalism.” Beck and Sznaider also provide a bibliography of the current literature on cosmopolitanism. See: Ulrich Beck and Natan Sznaider, “A Literature on Cosmopolitanism: An Overview,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 57, no. 1 (March 2006): 153-164. Historians have incorporated the ideas of cosmopolitanism slightly differently than other scholars. For example, Kristin Hoganson’s *Consumer’s Imperium* places cosmopolitanism in an earlier time and discussed the ways that people within the United States engaged in a type of consumer cosmopolitanism. See Kristin L. Hoganson, *Consumers’ Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007) See also Mica Nava, *Visceral Cosmopolitanism: Gender, Culture and the Normalisation of Difference* (Oxford: Berg, 2007).

¹⁶ Hoganson, *Consumers’ Imperium*, see Chapter 5 in particular.

¹⁷ “Under a Foreign Stamp,” *The Woman’s Press*, January 1933, 55.

sections also reveal that such superficiality, most notably in the performance and consumption of national stereotypes, was not limited to the U.S. phenomena. YWCAs around the world often engaged in international folk-culture plays or pageants, and when they did so, U.S. racial stereotypes could be among those women performed and consumed. For example, *The Woman's Press* reported that the Buenos Aires YWCA held a "Grand Festival" in which they had a "Pageant of Nations" entitled "Aspiration." One of the "very successful" events was a "Pow-Wow Tea" given by finance secretary "Señorita Mary Barreix" (who was not from the U.S.) in which "entertainers were dressed as Indians, and the programs had attractive Indian pictures on them."¹⁸ Given the history of removal of native peoples from Argentina, it is perhaps revealing that Barreix chose stereotypes of *North* American native peoples to "play Indian."¹⁹

Second, because they came from this U.S. perspective, it proved very difficult for the USYWCA Secretaries to leave their national status, and their own perceptions of its superiority (even within the YWCA), behind. As Sarah Lyon discovered in a 1928 trip to Jerusalem, this could reveal that the transnationality of Y-space was often a fiction as Secretaries keenly felt their own nationalities. In a letter to the USYWCA Foreign Department, Lyon stated that "[t]he self-consciousness of the English that this is their Association and that they must run it their way is very evident... Dorothy Brown [the General Secretary] is in their eyes a little too tinged with America from her contacts in Rumania and Turkey."²⁰ On the other hand, as Lyon noted that Edith Gates, a Physical Education Secretary who had served in Belgium, Poland, Russia, and

¹⁸ "News from Other Countries," *The Woman's Press*, January 1933, 48-49.

¹⁹ There have been some recent studies examining Spanish removal policies in both the Northern and Southern Hemispheres. See David J. Weber, *Barbaros: Spaniards and their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005). For "playing Indian" see Philip Joseph Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

²⁰ "Copy of Letter from Miss Lyon to Mrs. Slack, Foreign Division," April 23, 1928, 1, Sarah Lyon, "Reports to the Foreign Division," Paper Records, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. Note: my archival research was completed prior to the reorganization of the paper documents in the YWCA Collection. I have therefore utilized "Paper Records" to denote these records as opposed to those on microfilm. Please check with the archivists for exact locations of the documents.

Latvia, “made a tremendous hit. Everybody loved her and everybody wants to add an American physical director to the staff. Aren’t these inconsistencies and paradoxes delightful.”²¹ Lyon reported that if an American Physical Director were sent to Jerusalem, “she would be accepted,” because, as one Jerusalem board member stated, “a physical director does not change the policy or management of an Association and it could still be English.” Lyon commented that “this may be the solution of setting an international flavor in their midst. How little they realize what changes in policy would take place if an American physical director became permanently attached to their staff.”²² Here, Lyon was in essence asserting that a U.S. woman could have a transformative influence because of her nationality, even if she was not in the highest position in the Association.

USYWCA Secretaries saw themselves as being non-imperial partially because they understood Y-space as originating from a local grassroots, in which non-USYWCA women had a great deal of authority. For example, in a confidential talk at the meeting of the Foreign Division in February 1930, entitled “Trends and Problems of the Foreign Division,” Sarah Lyon framed the USYWCA’s efforts as being accomplished through a spirit of cooperation. She stated that “[t]hus go into the discard the ideas of the West sending down to the East, giving of our largesse, aid to backward countries, America to the rescue, and even the idea of the ‘missionary spirit’ in certain of its connotations. Cooperation alone is acceptable.” This type of effort was difficult for Secretaries, however, and as Lyon acknowledged that it was hard for USYWCA Secretaries to set their feelings of superiority aside. She stated “[i]t is not easy for a foreign

²¹ Edith Gates, Personnel Record, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. Lyon’s statement is from “Copy of Letter from Miss Lyon to Mrs. Slack, Foreign Division” April 23, 1928, 2. See also: Sarah Lyon, “Reports to the Foreign Division,” Paper Records, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

²² “Copy of Letter from Miss Lyon to Mrs. Slack, Foreign Division” April 23, 1928, 2, Sarah Lyon, “Reports to the Foreign Division,” Paper Records, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

secretary to act every day and hour on the principle that she is in a sovereign nation with whose women she cooperates, who can teach her as well as learn from her.” This could only be done when Secretaries learned to set aside their feelings of dominance which were an “inherited characteristic,” and got to know the non-U.S. women through “personal contact.” In these efforts, Lyon asserted that [i]nterchange of visits and of officers may be more helpful than a flow only outward from the Foreign Division office.”²³ USYWCA Secretaries saw these efforts, in which they at least made rhetorical attempts to be on par with the “local” women, as distinguishing themselves—and Y-space by extension—from Orientalist missionaries and narrow-minded and domineering agents of change.²⁴

Indeed, USYWCA Secretaries imagined Y-space as fundamentally superior to European attempts to culturally transform people, because they understood these projects as being based in a dictatorial and violent approach. USYWCA Secretaries saw Y-space as the evolution of these efforts because it was presumably based in cooperation and fellowship. For example, in one of her “pastoral letters,” Sarah Lyon addressed her “Fellow Conquistadores” and attempted to co-opt colonizing language and technologies for what she saw as a alternative purpose (despite the fact that she was at that moment replicating an imperial journey by being en route from Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro, after a week-long tour of Spain and Portugal “to acquire a proper background” for visiting South America). Her letter was written in the chatty tone of “we,” taking imperial metaphors and revising them. Lyon mused on “the task on which we are all engaged.” She stated that:

²³ Sarah Lyon “Trends and Problems of the Foreign Division” February 1930, 2, Sarah Lyon, “Reports to the Foreign Division,” Paper Records, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

²⁴ Some scholars have termed this perception that the U.S. was acquiescing to local demand an “empire by invitation” or “invitation to empire” as Geir Lundestad sees it. See Geir Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe Since 1945: From "Empire" by Invitation to Transatlantic Drift* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Detachment brings perspective and thoughts of today's work are set against the recently observed civilizations going back to the middle ages. Over and over I find myself saying, 'To serve the present age.' Aren't we explorers of a new world for women? Conquerors of the archenemy of an overpowering materialism? We seek to expel prejudices and limiting ideas. We are promoters of world cooperation, aqueduct builders for streams of friendly contacts. Not with sword or simiter [sic] but through association and fellowship, not in the name of the King or Pope but in the name of the Son of Man.²⁵

Lyon's use of "Conquistadores" then was intended to turn at least parts of the term on its head. In drawing attention the attention of her readers to her repetition of the physical journey of the Spanish colonizers, and by rhetorically including her readers in that journey, her intent was not to replicate their violence or quest for material goods, but the opposite. In this effort, the implication was that engaging with people would bring modern "friendly contacts" and "association and fellowship." People would be bound together, however, through Protestant Christianity, rather than the Catholicism that she implied was anachronistic, commerce that was the implied source of overpowering materialism, or government that she identified not as a modern democracy, but a medieval monarchy. In the process, she set up an intellectual binary, whereby the USYWCA was retracing the path of empire, but with a "modern" purpose that would "serve the present age" by creating a Christian empire without violence, exploitation, or derision of local customs.

In making these types of assertions, the USYWCA Secretaries were tapping into a much longer rhetoric in which imperialism hid under the guise of benevolence. This was particularly true in places such as the Philippines, in which officials imagined themselves as "aiding" colonial people by "giving" them infrastructures and medical advances. However, these same technologies served to pathologize, surveil, and control colonial people, and colonial agents

²⁵ Sarah Lyon to "Fellow Conquistadores," May 2, 1929, 2, Paper Records, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

sought to rhetorically connect “western” to “modern” and “colonial” to “traditional.”²⁶ It is important to recognize, however, that the politics of benevolence go beyond these simple equations, and that there are substantial and important differences between the YWCA’s voluntary efforts and the government’s and military’s more explicitly coercive efforts.²⁷ As a voluntary organization, the YWCA’s ability to be overtly hegemonic was relatively limited, partially because it generally operated outside of formal local colonial institutions (although it often worked in tandem with them), and therefore did not have the ability to compel reform in the same ways that the government or military did. Instead, the YWCA used the affective ties of fellowship and culture, not only to negotiate with other secular and religious international organizations, but also to attempt to attract members from among local women.

While USYWCA Secretaries may have envisioned Y-space, and their efforts to create it, in a positive light, this body of scholarship reveals the critical ideological fault lines that lay beneath the USYWCA Secretaries’ idealized Y-space. While USYWCA Secretaries appeared to prize individualism, it was acceptable only in ways that were dictated by the Y-space mold. While they seemed to foster cosmopolitanism, it was only permissible when it mimicked their

²⁶ Warwick Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Julian Go and Anne L. Foster, eds., *The American Colonial State in the Philippines: Global Perspectives* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, & the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Stuart Creighton Miller, *"Benevolent Assimilation": The American Conquest of the Philippines, 1899-1903* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); Vicente L. Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

²⁷ This has been termed “soft” power in the recent historiography. See Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, 1st ed. (New York: Public Affairs, 2004). See also: Walter Russell Mead, “America’s Sticky Power,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 141 (April 2004): 46-53; Walter Russell Mead, *Power, Terror, Peace, and War: America’s Grand Strategy in a World at Risk* (New York: Knopf, 2004). Historians of American foreign relations have also begun to be critical of the relationships and distinctions between “hard” and “soft” powers, as they are often coexistent and reliant upon each other. Indeed, I do not mean to suggest here that the kinds of cultural “soft” power that the USYWCA utilized were any less parts of a imperial process because they were not military “boots on the ground.” As the following chapters show, the YWCA sought to transform and re-order culture and society at very fundamental levels, and were in many ways therefore *more* imperial by being “soft” than by being “hard.”

understandings of Americanism. While they stated a desire to advance fellowship, it was often bounded by racial, class, and national parameters.

Histories of the USYWCA abroad have largely been uncritical of these types of issues, particularly Nancy Boyd's in-house examination of prominent USYWCA women. While the few published scholarly works have incorporated the local conditions more than Boyd did, they have also been largely biographical.²⁸ In the chapters that follow, I will bring an awareness of the power dynamics and cultural assumptions that undergirded the USYWCA Secretaries' construction of Y-space by looking more critically at the USYWCA Secretaries' efforts to create Y-space, and their perceived failures as well as their successes.

Chapter Outline

Each of the five chapters in my dissertation focuses on a particular time, place and programmatic emphasis to examine the ways that context affected USYWCA Secretaries' understanding of Y-space, and in turn, how their understandings of Y-space affected their programs in a wide range of sites. Chapter 1 outlines the USYWCA's work within the United States in each of the aspects of Y-space that I explore at length in the subsequent chapters: religion, housing, recreation, and race. Over the time period of 1895-1939, these aspects of Y-space were not uncontested or stable "exports" to locations abroad; indeed they changed within the United States perhaps as much as they did in other areas of the world. At the same time, I begin with the United States because the things that USYWCA Secretaries learned about Y-

²⁸ See Nancy Boyd, *Emissaries: The Overseas Work of the American YWCA 1895-1970* (New York: Woman's Press, 1986). For USYWCA Secretaries in individual locations, see Karen Garner, *Precious Fire: Maud Russell and the Chinese Revolution* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003). Recently, there has been a recent increase of work on the YWCA abroad, mostly in dissertations. See: Elizabeth A. Littell-Lamb, "Going public: The YWCA, "new" women, and social feminism in Republican China" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Carnegie Mellon University, 2002); M. Sasaki-Gayle, "Entangled with empire: American women and the creation of the 'New Woman' in China, 1898--1937" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 2009).

space within the United States had implications for the ways that they tried to construct Y-space overseas. At the end of the chapter, I describe the commonalities between the USYWCA Secretaries who would take these constructions of Y-space to the various places around the world.

Chapter 2 addresses the USYWCA's work in India. I show that the YWCA aimed to build a large membership by appealing to broad Social Gospel ideals that emphasized the value of the individual. Rather than limit their programs to Christian women, YWCA Secretaries welcomed all women who struck them as embodying the YWCA's broadly Christian values. They saw their ostensible inclusiveness as more than just a recruiting tactic, but as an alternative to both British imperial clubland and mission-oriented church space in India in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, in the context of colonial India, religion was not merely a matter of faith and denomination, but of colonialism, nationalism, and caste, and USYWCA Secretaries' attempts to create a Social Gospel Y-space could not transcend these issues. Despite their efforts to position themselves as different from British imperialists, USYWCA Secretaries ended up supporting many of the same culturally transformative ends.

In Chapter 3, I examine the construction of the physical aspects of Y-space, in buildings that were designed to house both programs and women. Taking Buenos Aires as my case study, I argue that USYWCA Secretaries attempted to foster mobility via the creation of similar physical places. USYWCA Secretaries regarded YWCA buildings as places that would not only accommodate transnationally transient women, but also cultivate a sensibility and skill set among local women that would enable them to become transnationally mobile themselves. This was particularly relevant to Buenos Aires because it was undergoing a period of rapid population growth (particularly from Europe) and urbanization, and was a receiving point of women

captives in the white slave trade. In this context, YWCA buildings catered not only to some women's needs but also advanced U.S. and British capital by building a community of transnational, professional, cosmopolitan women who could provide clerical work for U.S. and British corporations.

In Chapter 4, I focus on USYWCA Secretaries' efforts to create Y-space in a formal U.S. colony, the Philippines, in the 1930's via recreation programs. USYWCA Secretaries envisioned recreation programs as fostering self-reliance, individualism, competition, and interracial co-operation. While these objectives may seem condescending, on the eve of independence they were radical notions for U.S. women to espouse. However, there were also stark limitations to this radicalism. USYWCA Secretaries failed to live up to some of their rhetoric, as demonstrated by the charges of discrimination raised by some of the Filipina women who participated in physical fitness programs, and in the segregated camps they created. In this context, in which the U.S. was not in contest with a European power, we see that USYWCA Secretaries continued U.S. colonialism by practicing the types of "politics of recognition" that had been a long hallmark of U.S. colonial rule.²⁹

Chapter 5 focuses on Nigeria in the 1930's, a British colony. I examine the efforts to create Y-space by USYWCA Secretary Celestine Smith. Smith, an African-American, attempted to create programs that were similar to those the USYWCA had developed primarily for white working class women in the United States. Local Nigerian women, who had seemed hesitant to join an organization led by a white British YWCA Secretary, seemed receptive to Smith's presence and attempts at programs. However, the USYWCA refused to extend Smith's time in Nigeria or to send another African-American woman to continue her work. This reveals the racism that underlay most of the USYWCA's work during this time period. For the USYWCA,

²⁹ Kramer, *The Blood of Government*, 18-19.

beginning work in Nigeria in a formal way, beyond Smith's brief work there, would prove too disruptive to the YWCA leaderships' sense of Y-space as race blind. In the context of a segregated YWCA even within the United States, Secretaries would have had a difficult time claiming U.S. superiority, particularly if they were African-American women who would have experienced this racism first hand. On the other hand, USYWCA leaders were loathe to send a white Secretary, who could easily be identified not only with the overt racism of British colonialism by both white and African women. A Nigerian context, in short, threatened to reveal the fatal flaws in the USYWCA Secretaries' sense of a race-blind Y-space, in which merit, individualism, and cosmopolitanism trumped race.

In the conclusion, I address the broader implications of these case studies. While USYWCA Secretaries perceived themselves as being exceptionally inclusive—particularly when compared against the exclusivity of other Euro-American entities—there were ways in which they maintained exclusivity. Whereas they saw themselves as anti-imperial, not only did they depend upon existing colonial structures, but they also often contributed to them. In other words, as proponents of Americanization who were working within a global context dominated by the British Empire, USYWCA Secretaries operated intrainperially. While they saw themselves as cosmopolitan, they advanced U.S. national interests as well as those of individual women. These discrepancies between the Secretaries' attempts to create Y-space, and the reality of their efforts, demonstrate that U.S. imperialism can be aided by the *denial* of empire. In this, one of the foundations of U.S. imperialism was the belief of U.S. agents, who often perceived themselves specifically, and the project of U.S. cultural transformation generally, to be liberatory and exceptionalist, has been one of the foundations of U.S. imperialism. In short, while USYWCA

Secretaries *imagined* that they were creating an *international* and cosmopolitan Y-space, they were in fact participating in an *intraimperial* expansion of U.S. culture.

Methodology

Looking at Y-space in a variety of contexts allows us to see the ways that U.S. imperialism worked as a global system, as well as the ways women in nongovernmental institutions contributed to U.S. imperial efforts. This is important because American historiography has tended to be localized and inwardly focused; despite the calls of the La Pietra report, U.S. historians are still just beginning to look beyond the geographic borders of the United States. My dissertation adds to this trend.³⁰ I not only look beyond national borders, but I

³⁰ For La Pietra, see: <http://www.oah.org/activities/lapietra/index.html#Anchor-20246>, April 22, 2009. Instead, U.S. historians tend to limit their examinations to subjects that are either completely outside or completely inside the geographic borders of the US, rather than comparing the two. Work on women's international political activism has previously been centered around suffrage or feminist associations such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the International Council of Women, the International Alliance of Women, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. See: Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Ian R. Tyrrell, *Woman's World, Woman's Empire: The Woman's Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Fiona Paisley, *Glamour in the Pacific: Cultural Internationalism and Race Politics in the Women's Pan-Pacific* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009); Sinha, Guy, and Woollacott, *Feminisms and Internationalism* particularly: Christine Ehrick "Madrinas and Missionaries: Uruguay and the Pan-American Women's Movement"; Angela Woollacott "Inventing Commonwealth and Pan-Pacific Feminisms: Australian Women's Internationalist Activism in the 1920's-1930's;" and Donna J. Guy "The Politics of Pan-American Cooperation: Maternalist Feminism and the Child Rights Movement, 1913-1960." Work on Progressive Era women's reform groups often neglects the "World" aspects of the groups. Even excellent works, such as Peggy Pascoe's *Relations of Rescue*, stop their analysis of the power dynamics between reformers and subjects of reform at the national borders. See: Lynne Curry, *Modern Mothers in the Heartland: Gender, Health, and Progress in Illinois, 1900-1930* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999); Sarah Deutsch, *Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Wendy J. Deichmann Edwards and Carolyn De Swarte Gifford, eds., *Gender and the Social Gospel* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003); Elizabeth Ewen, *Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars: Life and Culture on the Lower East Side, 1890-1925* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1985); Susan Anita Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl: Life and Labor in the Immigrant Generation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue*; Daphne Spain, *How Women Saved the City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001) One of the few areas of scholarship that has begun to cross these geographic boundaries are works on women missionaries. Works such as Patricia R. Hill's *The World Their Household* and Jane Hunter's *The Gospel of Gentility* examine the role of women both in cultural change abroad and the perception of female missionaries within the United States. See: Patricia Ruth Hill, *The World Their Household: The American Woman's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870-1920* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985); Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women*

look at U.S. imperialism from a multi-sited perspective.³¹ The picture that I am able to draw is therefore multi-lateral, instead of the primarily bi- or tri-lateral ones that characterize much of the transnational scholarship. This allows me to see the fullness of an entire web of connections, rather than the isolated strands traced by most studies of U.S. imperialism, and to see the ways that the system looked and worked when operated by Christian women who saw themselves as attempting to create universality and tolerance.

Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984). However, by and large the efforts of these women were focused on women's roles in religious conversion within the domestic sphere.

³¹ Even many of those who do look at U.S. activities abroad tend to be limited geographically; while there are many excellent works on individual locations, there are very few that examine US influence in multiple sites. See: Emily S. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890-1945* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982); Emily S. Rosenberg, *Financial Missionaries to the World: The Politics and Culture of Dollar Diplomacy, 1900-1930* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); Donald E. Pease and Amy Kaplan, eds., *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993); G. M. Joseph, Catherine LeGrand, and Ricardo Donato Salvatore, eds., *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998). Instead, the historiography is generally limited to specific geographies. First there are the works on specific geographic areas where the US government was overtly colonial, such as the Philippines and the Caribbean. See: Kramer, *The Blood of Government*; Warwick Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies*; Go and Foster, *The American Colonial State in the Philippines*; Vicente L. Rafael, *Discrepant Histories: Translocal Essays on Filipino Cultures* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995); Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History*; César J. Ayala, *American Sugar Kingdom: The Plantation Economy of the Spanish Caribbean, 1898-1934* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Eileen Findlay, *Imposing Decency: The Politics of Sexuality and Race in Puerto Rico, 1870-1920* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); Louis A. Pérez, *The War of 1898: The United States and Cuba in History and Historiography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Jason Parker, *Brother's Keeper: The United States, Race, and Empire in the British Caribbean, 1937-1962* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Lester D. Langley, *The Banana Wars: United States Intervention in the Caribbean, 1898-1934* (Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 2002); Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano, eds., *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009). Recently there has also been an upsurge in discussions of American influence in Europe, particularly during the Cold War. See: Philip Bell and Roger J. Bell, eds., *Americanization and Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1998); C. W. E. Bigsby, ed., *Superculture: American Popular Culture and Europe* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1975); Victoria De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance Through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005); Richard F. Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Richard H. Pells, *Not Like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture Since World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997); Robert W. Rydell and Rob Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna: The Americanization of the World, 1869-1922* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria After the Second World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Ralph Willett, *The Americanization of Germany, 1945-1949* (London: Routledge, 1989). However, there are also the different "types" of agents, who are divided into formal state actors, although the place and role of diplomatic history in the broader U.S. historiography is in flux. For diplomatic history, see the recent roundtable on recent trends in American Diplomatic history, "Diplomatic History Today: A Round Table" in *Journal of American History* Vol. 95, No. 4 (March 2009). For the work on transnational organizations: Christine Bolt, *The Women's Movements in the United States and Britain from the 1790s to the 1920s* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993); Bolt, *Sisterhood Questioned?*; Rupp, *Worlds of Women*; Tyrrell, *Woman's World, Woman's Empire*.

This is not a comprehensive history of the USYWCA as an organization, either within the United States or abroad, for both pragmatic and ideological reasons. Practically, a detailed and in-depth history of either the USYWCA or the WYWCA as organizations would be the work of a lifetime, given both of their sizes.³² Second, researching the USYWCA is difficult because of the availability of documents. As Nancy Robertson and Elizabeth Norris noted in their essay outlining the challenges of working with the YWCA, “Without Documents No History,” while there were “vast quantities of material saved and made available to researchers” there are “frustrating gaps in documentation.”³³ Archivally, the records of the USYWCA on a national level are difficult to work with. Until recently, when they were reorganized by the archivists at Smith College, the paper records were essentially in the same (dis)order that they were when transferred from the USYWCA National Board headquarters in New York City. Much of the paper record had been microfilmed, but due to poor filming practices it is largely unreadable without advanced digital microfilm scanning technologies. The end result of this is that while there are studies of particular aspects of the USYWCA’s activities on a national level, such as

³² For example, a report at the 1930 convention stated that there were 968 affiliated Associations (259 city, 134 town, 32 rural, and 543 student). The largest subsection, the Student Associations, had approximately 100,000 members and was in “all state universities” except “Utah, Montana, and Michigan.” They also included 120 African-American student Associations. *Report of the National Board of the Young Womens Christian Associations of the United States of America to the Eleventh National Convention at Detroit, Michigan, April 25 to May 1, 1930* (New York: The Woman's Press, 1930), 22-24. When we consider the YWCA on a global scale, the numbers make this task even more daunting. For example, in 1930 the YWCA claimed a membership of almost a million women around the world. The places and numbers (which they listed by continent) were: Africa: Algeria (50); Egypt (910); Kenya (77); Nigeria (93); Sierra Leone (43); South Africa (3,450). America: Canada (24,000); Mexico (500); South America, including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay (2,710); USA (591,574); West Indies (930). Asia: China (8,000); Dutch East Indies (300); India (7,875); Korea (2,550); Malaya (490); Palestine (390); Japan (6,500) Philippines (50); Syria (552). Australia (5,500). New Zealand (4,000). Europe: Austria (500); Belgium (5,000); Bulgaria (160); Czechoslovakia (4,000); Denmark (31,500); Estonia (1,160); Finland (5,200); France (15,000); Germany (185,000); Great Britain (33,800); Greece (600); Holland (13,500); Hungary (2,000); Iceland (568); Italy (2,000); Latvia (165); Malta (40); Norway (26,000); Portugal (350); Romania (1,180); Sweden (3,322); Switzerland (3,750). World's YWCA Directory, quoted in Publicity Department and Foreign Division, National Board YWCA, *Foreign Facts* (New York: National Board of the Young Women's Christian Associations of the United States of America, 1930), 4-5.

³³ Nancy Marie Robertson and Elizabeth Norris, “Without Documents no History: Sources and Strategies for Researching the YWCA,” in *Men and Women Adrift: the YMCA and the YWCA in the City*, ed. Nina Mjagkij and Margaret Spratt (New York: New, 1997), 271.

Nancy Robertson's *Sisterhood Questioned*, scholars have tend to primarily focus on local YWCAs.

Researching and writing a dissertation from a multi-sited perspective involves many challenges, not the least of which are language and the ability to travel the world on a graduate student budget. For the purposes of this work, I have relied upon the records of the USYWCA (housed mainly at Smith College) and WYWCA (housed in Geneva), which are primarily in English. Although these documents primarily present the perspectives of U.S. and European women, I have tried not to take USYWCA Secretaries' self-assessments at face value, but to regard them with a critical perspective informed by recent colonial and post-colonial scholarship. Furthermore, I have assiduously sought out local voices within the USYWCA and WYWCA's records. What I have found is that many of the "local" leaders did write to the USYWCA in English, and often had significant contact with Anglo-American culture. These factors point to the fact that often "local" does not correlate with "indigenous" or subaltern. The women with whom the YWCA interacted were often a mixture of races (as we think of the term) and nationalities, and they encompassed migrant women who stayed in the YWCA hostels, colonial elites, women who had been born in the area, and many others. As Derricotte pointed out, these women did not represent the masses. Instead, they represented the ways the USYWCA incorporated and helped to nurture a group of elite women within an intrainperial context that utilized a form of cosmopolitanism on an American model.

CHAPTER 1—Y-SPACE IN THE UNITED STATES

In her 1916 history of the USYWCA, Secretary Elizabeth Wilson described its founding in December 1906 as being amid “grey days drenched with rain” that were “bitterly cold.” However, this bad weather “did not dishearten the delegates,” the members of the National Board, or the “secretaries, superintendents and department directors” who gathered to hear the keynote address by Grace Dodge.¹ In her speech, Dodge stated that the most important elements of the new movement were cooperation and patience. Dodge asserted that “cooperative patience” meant that the delegates should “not expect from us too much at once.” Delegates should also be attentive to the ways and degrees “we ourselves [are] fitted and worthy for the responsibilities which God has put upon us.” While the YWCA could have “the greatest of buildings, the greatest number of educational classes,” if Secretaries were not “true spiritually, and have not true fellowship with the friends who come into our buildings,” then “these great buildings are not worthy for the girls to come into. This would mean no spirit of patronage, but the loving working with, and not for, the members and girls who are in touch with Association work.”² In other words, a “true fellowship” was one of equals.

It is telling that at this moment, Dodge called for patience and invoked a feeling of fellowship. Her keynote speech had been preceded by a period of intense mediation as she and other leaders sought to unite the two YWCA’s that existed in the United States—the International Board and the American Board had been deeply (and somewhat acrimoniously) bifurcated between “city” and “student” associations. In her rhetoric of “true fellowship,” Dodge drew from several current trends in social welfare. Dodge’s speech was therefore prescriptive in

¹ Elizabeth Wilson, *Fifty Years of Association Work Among Young Women, 1866-1916: A History of Young Women's Christian Associations in the United States of America* (New York: National Board of the Young Women's Christian Associations of the United States of America, 1916), 233.

² Quoted in: Elizabeth Wilson, *Fifty Years of Association Work Among Young Women, 1866-1916*, 235-236.

some ways; it was a marker of what YWCA members *should* do rather than what they had been doing. Drawing from the Social Gospel, she constructed fellowship as partially religious—it was a responsibility “which God has put upon us.”³ While this fellowship of believers was the manifestation of a spiritual relationship with God, fellowship was also open to all women. Drawing from Settlement House models, Dodge asserted that the USYWCA would provide buildings and educational classes to physically house its fellowship.⁴ Unlike those institutions in which there was a “spirit of patronage,” the USYWCA would provide an egalitarian spirit, in which Secretaries worked “with, and not for” other women. Only then would the YWCA Secretaries be “worthy for the responsibilities which God has put upon us.”

As much as Dodge’s speech was intended to heal the bitter divides within the YWCA, it was also intensely forward-looking in that it set the tone for many of the USYWCA’s goals. For example, the fellowship that Dodge described was a domestic-U.S. forerunner of that described

³ For the Social Gospel in the United States, see: Susan Curtis, *A Consuming Faith: The Social Gospel and Modern American Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991); Jacob H. Dorn, “The Social Gospel and Socialism: A Comparison of the Thought of Francis Greenwood Peabody, Washington Gladden, and Walter Rauschenbusch,” *Church History* 62, no. 1 (March 1993): 82-100; Edwards and Gifford, *Gender and the Social Gospel*; Janet F. Fishburn, “The Social Gospel as Missionary Ideology,” in *North American Foreign Missions, 1810-1914: Theology, Theory, and Policy*, ed. Wilbert R. Shenk (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 218-242; Donald K. Gorrell, *The Age of Social Responsibility: The Social Gospel in the Progressive Era, 1900-1920* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1988); Ralph E. Luker, *The Social Gospel in Black and White: American Racial Reform, 1885-1912* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); John Patrick McDowell, *The Social Gospel in the South: The Woman's Home Mission Movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1886-1939* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917); Doug Rossinow, “The Radicalization of the Social Gospel: Harry F. Ward and the Search for a New Social Order, 1898-1936,” *Religion and American Culture* 15, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 63-106; Ronald C. White, *Liberty and Justice for All: Racial Reform and the Social Gospel (1877-1925)* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990); Ronald C. White and Charles Howard Hopkins, *The Social Gospel: Religion and Reform in Changing America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976).

⁴ For the Settlement House movement in the United States, see: Howard Jacob Karger, *The Sentinels of Order: A Case Study of Social Control and the Minneapolis Settlement House Movement, 1897-1950*, 1985; Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, *Black Neighbors: Race and the Limits of Reform in the American Settlement House Movement, 1890-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Ralph E. Luker, “Missions, Institutional Churches, and Settlement Houses: The Black Experience, 1885-1910,” *The Journal of Negro History* 69, no. 3/4 (Summer - Autumn 1984): 101-113; Judith Ann Trolander, *Professionalism and Social Change: From the Settlement House Movement to Neighborhood Centers, 1886 to the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987); Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House* (New York: New American Library, 1981); Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Florence Kelley and the Nation's Work* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

by Juliette Derricotte. Even within the United States, however, Y-space proved difficult for the USYWCA Secretaries to construct. Time and again, the USYWCA's publications and conference speeches urged these ideals of fellowship, in which state of the art buildings offered resources and community to a diverse group of women who would interact with each other on an equal footing. As the individual programs reveal, however, these rhetorics of Y-space were often easier for the National Board to espouse than for the individual members to perform. As the changes in these programs reveal, Y-space was never either fully created, or completely stable.

Religion

During the time period 1895 to 1939, the role of religion in the USYWCA underwent a transformation. Initially, the YWCA was explicitly Protestant, as evidenced by the fact that many Associations were founded with the mission to encourage women to join churches of the denomination of their choice.⁵ As a student group, the YWCA was also very closely tied with other proselytizing Christian student and missionary movements, such as the YMCA, the Student Volunteer Movement, and the World Student Christian Federation. By the early twentieth century, however, the USYWCA had moved away from the overtly Christian focus of the earlier periods, and was increasingly ecumenical and focused on adherence to the ideals of the Social Gospel. One example of this is the official record of the Secretaries' religious identification. While USYWCA personnel records initially list a variety of denominations, the Secretaries

⁵ For example, the 1858 "Duties of Members" of the YWCA in New York included "seek[ing] out especially young women of the operative classes" in order to "aid them in procuring employment and in obtaining suitable boarding places, furnish[ing] them with proper reading matter" and doing things to encourage their religious education, such as offering Bible classes, religious exercises, and "secure[ing] their attendance at places of public worship." Elizabeth Wilson, *Fifty Years of Association Work Among Young Women, 1866-1916*, 23.

creating the records soon stopped noting church affiliation, or noted women simply as “Christian.”⁶

The cessation of tracking the Secretaries’ denomination was part of a global shift of the YWCA into a more ecumenical stance. In the case of the USYWCA, this trend was driven by the USYWCA’s ties to the World Student Christian Federation and the WYWCA. Both of these groups were trying to increase the numbers of potential members in the 1910’s. In fact, WYWCA Historian Una Saunders notes that ecumenicalism could be useful in not only recruiting Catholic women as YWCA members, but also in easing tensions in predominantly Catholic and Orthodox areas such as Estonia, Romania, and South America.⁷ However, that the change was driven from abroad does not mean that the USYWCA did not see the move to ecumenicalism as expeditious for increasing membership in the United States. For example, at the USYWCA’s national conference in 1915, Winnifred Wygal, who was representing the University of Nevada, asserted that the girls there “have come from mining camps and ranches and in nine cases out of ten not only have never been in a church as a member but have not had the opportunity or the home training that would enable them to be even participants in church services.” For Wygal, the change in basis to remove the church membership requirement was a “new plan growing out of our needs” so that “as never before we might lead the girls who have

⁶ Personnel Records, Paper Records, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁷ As Una Saunders explained in a pamphlet on the ecumenicalism of the World YWCA, there were calls from Orthodox women in Russia and Bulgaria for the YWCA to allow Orthodox women members in the 1910’s. Una M. Saunders, *The Æcumenical Policy of the World’s YWCA*, Revised. (Geneva, Switzerland: World’s Young Women’s Christian Association, 1939), 3- 4. Saunders stated that the reasons were also that “(a) the fact that after fifteen years of use of the original basis, a younger generation felt its wording to be old-fashioned, (b) that the World’s Student Christian Federation were also re-wording their basis, and in many countries the same women student leaders were also leaders of the National YWCA, some of them even members of the World’s Committee,” The new basis of the World YWCA became a statement of faith that was “more fully Trinitarian” and “much nearer in its wording to the historic creeds used by the Orthodox as well as other Churches.” It also shifted the “more personal side of the old Basis” to the Aim, in which “knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour... shall manifest itself in character and conduct.” (4).

just come there with an innate scorn of the Church and of religion.”⁸ Changing the membership basis would therefore not only increase the numbers of non-Protestant women who could join—a concern abroad—but also allow women who were increasingly secular to join the USYWCA.

Even though the YWCA was increasingly religiously liberal, however, it was still a Christian-based organization. For example, although membership in an evangelical church was removed from the YWCA’s membership basis, it shifted to the preamble. The basis was to affirm “the Christian faith in God, the Father; and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, or Lord and Savior; and in the Holy Spirit, the Revealer of truth and Source of power for life and service.” Among the purposes was to “lead students to faith in God through Jesus Christ” and “into membership and service in the Christian Church” to “promote their growth in Christian faith and character” and finally to “influence them to devote themselves, in united effort with all Christians, to making the will of Christ effective in human society, and to extending the Kingdom of God throughout the world.” In taking membership in the Association, women had to affirm that they were “in sympathy with the Purpose” and make the declaration that it was her “purpose to live as a true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁹ As these statements illustrate, as the YWCA shifted from a church membership to a personal membership, it worked to internalize faith.

This internalization of faith meant that the USYWCA was part of broader trends within the United States to apply the gospel and progressive religious rhetorics to daily life.¹⁰ Whereas

⁸ *Fifth National Convention of the Young Women’s Christian Association of the United States of America, Los Angeles, California, May 5-11, 1915* (New York: National Board of the Young Women’s Christian Associations of the United States of America), 53.

⁹ *Fifth Biennial Convention of the Young Women’s Christian Associations of the United States of America, Los Angeles, California, May 5-11, 1915*, 37.

¹⁰ This was also true of organizations such as the Women’s Christian Temperance Union and Salvation Army. See: Lillian Taiz, *Hallelujah Lads & Lasses: Remaking the Salvation Army in America, 1880-1930* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Rief, “Thinking Locally, Acting Globally”; Tyrrell, *Woman’s World, Woman’s Empire*; Spain, *How Women Saved the City*. For the cultural coercion of these types of organizations

denominational and missionary groups of the late 19th century had been inherently inwardly focused—in a literal sense they brought more members *into* a Church—this broader movement attempted turn Christianity outward. As part of this trend, theologians such as Walter Rauchenbusch, who spoke at the 1915 USYWCA meeting in Los Angeles, and Shailer Mathews asserted the need for a Social Gospel, which Mathews defined as “the application of teaching of Jesus and the total message of the Christian salvation to society, the economic life, and social institutions such as the state [and] the family, as well as to individuals.”¹¹ In this Social Gospel, then, success was based on a type of transformative social salvation rather than individual salvation. The amorphousness of the Social Gospel has meant that it appears to scholars as being both everywhere and nowhere in the Progressive Era. Historians and religious scholars have therefore generally focused on the degree of radicalism and the successfulness of religious social movements. For the most part, religious scholars tend to assess the degree to which the Social Gospel movement had liberatory potential and failed to live up to it. Historians tend to debate whether the ways these types of social movements were inherently intended to stabilize society and were therefore politically conservative, or whether they were politically radical, with a strong bent towards supporting radicalism in the socialist and labor movements.¹²

within the United States, see Katherine Osburn, *Southern Ute Women: Autonomy and Assimilation on the Reservation, 1887-1934* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998).

¹¹ Quoted in: Edwards and Gifford, *Gender and the Social Gospel*, 3.

¹² For the Social Gospel as failed liberation, see Christopher Lasch, “Religious Contributions to Social Movements: Walter Rauschenbusch, the Social Gospel, and Its Critics,” *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 18, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 7-25. For the Social Gospel and social movements as conservative, see: Curtis, *A Consuming Faith*; Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967); T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimoderism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981); Luker, *The Social Gospel in Black and White*. For Christian Socialism and unions, see: Dorn, “The Social Gospel and Socialism”; Jacob H. Dorn, “‘In Spiritual Communion’: Eugene V. Debs and the Socialist Christians,” *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 2, no. 3: New Perspectives on Socialism I (July 2003): 303-325; Ken Fones-Wolf, *Trade Union Gospel: Christianity and Labor in Industrial Philadelphia, 1865-1915* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989); Elizabeth Fones-Wolf and Ken Fones-Wolf, “Lending a Hand to Labor: James Myers and the Federal Council of Churches, 1926-1947,” *Church History* 68, no. 1 (March 1999): 62-86.

The USYWCA attempted to combine these two impulses—an adherence to a Social Gospel model that generally reduced overtly Christian rhetoric as it turned Christianity outward into society, and the continuation of a Christian basis—by interweaving Christian tenets into all aspects of the YWCA’s work. In other words, as Grace Wilson asserted in her study of religion in the USYWCA, the concepts of “all is education” and “all is religion” became “fused” in the 1920’s.¹³ However, Wilson was a little bit late in her periodization, and even by the mid-1910’s the “fusing” of religion and all YWCA work was evident. As the USYWCA’s 1914 *Handbook* stated, “[t]hrough every department throbs the spirit of the Risen lord. This is the element which unifies all the work, which makes.... the warm welcome of the Association building as essentially religious in purpose as the Bible circle or the vesper service. In the profoundest sense of the word all work of the Association is religious work.” The authors of the *Handbook* asserted that in this interweaving, “the Association may more truly exemplify allegiance to the standards of Christ... by making every part of the work not formally but truly religious.”¹⁴ That this change occurred in the mid-1910’s was important because it occurred at the same time as the shift in membership basis, and strengthened the ways the USYWCA made religion a silent bedrock of all of its programs. Religion was not housed in denominational membership or in separate religious classes within the YWCA’s broad spectrum of programs, but in individual membership and in all aspects of all programs.

This shift in the role of religion within the USYWCA’s work resulted in Secretaries’ attempts to foster women’s internalization and personalization of Christianity; it became a type

¹³ Grace Hannah Wilson, *The Religious and Educational Philosophy of the Young Women's Christian Association: A Historical Study of the Changing Religious and Social Emphases of the Association as They Relate to Changes in Its Educational Philosophy and to Observable Trends in Current Religious Thought, Educational Philosophy, and Social Situations* (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1933), 120.

¹⁴ *Handbook of the Young Womens Christian Association Movement* (New York City: National Board of the Young Women's Christian Associations of the United States of America, 1914), 17.

of personalized Social Gospel that I call “lived Christianity.” This personalization of Christ was evident not only in studies of Jesus’ life written and utilized by USYWCA Secretaries, but in their attempts to apply Christian teachings to daily life.¹⁵ The USYWCA, in conjunction with groups such as the YMCA, World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), and Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (SVM), produced Bible study materials that were geared to these purposes. For example, Bible study books such as the *Student Standards of Action* and biographies such as Elvira J. Slack’s *Jesus, the Man of Galilee* (published by the USYWCA) and Harry Emerson Fosdick’s *The Manhood of the Master* show the ways that the USYWCA aided in the personalization of Christ and the application of Christian teachings to everyday life.¹⁶ Each chapter of Fosdick’s *Manhood* reveals a different of “the Master’s” qualities: Joy; Magnanimity; Indignation; Loyalty to His Cause; Power of Endurance; Sincerity; Self-Restraint; Fearlessness; Affection; Scale of Values; and Spirit.¹⁷ For the USYWCA Secretaries, identifying and studying the biographical characteristics that Jesus revealed personally would help young men and women manifest these characteristics in their own lives.

¹⁵ One example of this is the increase in biographies and histories of Jesus. For some of the major works, see: Edward Increase Bosworth, *Studies in the Life of Jesus Christ* (New York: Young Men's Christian Associations, 1907); Edward Increase Bosworth, *Christ in Everyday Life* (New York: Association press, 1910); Anson Phelps Stokes, *What Jesus Christ Thought of Himself; an Outline Study and Interpretation of His Self-Revelation in the Gospels* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916); Elvira J. Slack, *Jesus, the Man of Galilee: Studies in the Life of Jesus Arranged for Secondary School Students, Adapted Both to Class Use and Personal Study*, 4th ed. (New York: National board of the Young Women's Christian Associations of the United States of America, 1916); G. Stanley Hall, *Jesus, the Christ, in the Light of Psychology* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page, 1917); Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1911); Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianizing the Social Order* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1914); Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*; Elbert Russell, *The Parables of Jesus: A Course of Ten Lessons Arranged for Daily Study* (New York: Young Womens Christian Association, 1912).

¹⁶ A report of the Commission on Religious Work stated that “[t]hese books have been found helpful: The *Manhood of the Master* Fosdick; *The Meaning of Prayer*; *Meeting the Master*, Ozora S. Davis; The Acts of the Apostles. Outlines prepared by leader. Several secretaries spoke of using Dr. Fosdick’s books, which are liked for their daily studies.” “Report of the Commission on Religious Work” in “Seventh Quadrennial Conference young Women’s Christian Association of India, Burma & Ceylon” Ranchi November 17-22 1920 (Mysore: Printed at the Wesleyan Mission Press, 1921), 25, Microfilm Reel 56- India- Conferences, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹⁷ Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Manhood of the Master* (New York: Association Press, 1935).

Student Standards of Action, written by Harrison Sackett Elliott and Ethel Cutler, Bible Studies Secretaries of the YMCA and YWCA, and published by the YWCA, reveals that ways the YWCA tended to essentialize Christianity into characteristics and actions which could (and should) be manifested by anyone. These tied personal conduct to broad goals and relationships, such as improving society and spreading Christianity. For example, the *Student Standards* emphasized the individual obligation of college men and women to utilize their education for the good of society; the “challenge” of a “college opportunity” was what use students made of their skills in society, both while they were in college and after.¹⁸ Spreading Christianity meant belonging to a community of believers, rather than membership in a formal church.¹⁹ In this community, people worked for the benefit of others, and were loyal to their friends. In addition to these very large relationships, *Student Standards* also utilized “lived Christianity” as guidance for more personal conduct, in which faith was manifested through character traits such as adaptability, efficiency through balance, honor, and chivalry.²⁰

The YWCA’s interweaving of religion into all of the programs, and the emphasis on lived Christianity is important because Historians have tend to see World War I as marking the end of progressive religious movements, particularly global millennial movements such as the SVM.²¹ Some, such as Nathan Showalter mark, World War I specifically as the end of zealous Christian claims, such as the SVM’s goal to “evangelize the world in this generation” because

¹⁸ Harrison Sacket Elliott and Ethel Cutler, *Student Standards of Action* (New York: National Board of the Young Women's Christian Associations of the United States of America, 1914), 17.

¹⁹ Elliott and Cutler, *Student Standards of Action*, 92-95.

²⁰ Elliott and Cutler, *Student Standards of Action* .

²¹ Michael Parker, *The Kingdom of Character: The Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (1886-1926)* (Lanham, MD: American Society of Missiology, 1998); Nathan D. Showalter, *The End of a Crusade: The Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions and the Great War* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998).

the war brought the superiority of both Christianity and Western Civilization into question.²² Even those more directly focused on the Social Gospel abroad, such as Janet F. Fishburn, also mark World War I as an ending point for both the Social Gospel and missions (despite Rauschenbusch's writing during the War), saying that ideologies like the Social Gospel were "form[s] of progressive thought past its prime by 1920."²³ Scholars of the Social Gospel in the United States are more willing to extend its lifespan into the interwar period, although most also end it at World War I.²⁴

However, in contrast to these works, the rhetoric of the Social Gospel persisted in the YWCA's reworking of faith to be individual and personal. For the USYWCA, this new awareness of social justice and lived Christianity manifested in several ways. First, the Secretaries' experiences with industrial women caused them to align the USYWCA with ecumenical religious groups, such as Federal Council of Churches (FCC), which were concerned with industrial and social justice from a specifically religious vantage point.²⁵ Second, the USYWCA also allied itself with peace movements, which leaders interpreted as having an inherently Christian basis. For example, the 1922 WYWCA meeting added a paragraph to their "Aim" that essentially stated that because it was Christian, the WYWCA was to stand for the

²² Showalter, *The End of a Crusade*. For others who look at the impact of World War I on colonial liberation movements, see for example Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

²³ Janet F. Fishburn, "The Social Gospel as Missionary Ideology," in *North American Foreign Missions, 1810-1914: Theology, Theory, and Policy*, ed. Wilbert R. Shenk (Grand: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 218-242, 241.

²⁴ For a continuation, see McDowell, *The Social Gospel in the South*. For a general historiographic overview of women in the Social Gospel in the United States, see the introduction in: Edwards and Gifford, *Gender and the Social Gospel*.

²⁵ For example, at their 1920 Convention, the USYWCA adopted the FCC's "Social Ideals of the Churches," a broad and very liberal statement about the relationship of Christianity to labor and workers rights, without making any changes. Grace Hannah Wilson, *The Religious and Educational Philosophy of the Young Women's Christian Association*, 83-85. This close relationship with the FCC would cause the YWCA problems over the years as they were labeled too radical by more conservative religious and social groups. For example, Wilson states that [i]n Los Angeles, for instance the Better America Federation of California issued several letters and statement suggesting withdrawal of financial support" from the LA YWCA. (89)

promotion of peace and better understanding among all people.²⁶ The USYWCA interpreted these aims as best served by the development of religious education and fostering individual and group development, and this became their goal for much of the 1920's. The key to this was the "development of personality" in which women learned "to adapt themselves to their social environment, to appreciate the world in which they live, and to be intelligent and creative citizens of the social order of their day."²⁷ As a result, much of the USYWCA's religious education was geared towards "character education" through "purposeful activity" which Secretaries intended to build "right habits of thinking and feeling, as well as of outward behaving."²⁸ Through purposeful activities, Secretaries hoped to not only transform the individual, but also the ways that the individual related to society more generally. World War I therefore may have marked a change in the ways that the rhetoric was expressed, but it was far from a death knell or the final blow to American religious progressivism.

Indeed, by the time that USYWCA leader Mabel Cratty wrote the 1928 National Board report, the transition to lived Christianity seems to have been more or less complete. Cratty wrote that what was "really important... for the Association is what is the thinking of Jesus, how consciously it is following Him. Are its buildings visible expressions of the love of Christ, available to those who need them most? Are its programs his visitations to the colleges, cities, towns and hamlets of our beloved young nation, and out to the uttermost parts of the world to which the Association has gone?"²⁹ With this, Cratty completed the interweaving of religion with the rest of the USYWCA's work, even as she echoed Grace Dodge's speech at the 1906

²⁶ Grace Hannah Wilson, *The Religious and Educational Philosophy of the Young Women's Christian Association*, 93.

²⁷ *Educational Principles and Methods*, 3. Quoted in Grace Hannah Wilson, *The Religious and Educational Philosophy of the Young Women's Christian Association*, 104.

²⁸ Grace Hannah Wilson, *The Religious and Educational Philosophy of the Young Women's Christian Association*, 114. Wilson points to these ideas as being influenced by William Heard Kilpatrick and John Dewey.

²⁹ *Report of the National Board of the USYWCA*, 1928, 75. Quoted in Grace Hannah Wilson, *The Religious and Educational Philosophy of the Young Women's Christian Association*, 126.

Convention. In Dodge's speech, the USYWCA had to be *worthy* of being called Christian; in Cratty's speech, each part of the USYWCA's work had to prove it was *manifesting* Christ.

Housing

YWCA buildings provided the physical environment for Y-space.³⁰ As Mary Sims stated in her 1936 history of the USYWCA, "[n]ext to emphasis on the development of the trained professional secretary it appears that no one factor helped more to stabilize the movement as a whole than did the erection of Young Women's Christian Association buildings in all the larger cities and many of the smaller ones of this country."³¹ This grounding was both literal and conceptual. The idea that physical environment shaped people and communities was one that would have been very familiar to the USYWCA Secretaries, with their strong backgrounds in the Social Gospel and their close connections to Settlement Houses and Women's Clubs.³² In these other types of places, one of the goals was to bind immigrants into the built environment of homes, localities, and nations. Within these bounded places, upper-class women "taught" immigrant women domesticity and child-care in a setting that was primarily concerned with local governmental issues and proper "American" roles.

³⁰ For works specifically on the USYWCA's buildings, see: Elizabeth Edwards Harris, "Phoebe Apperson Hearst and the changing nature of 19th century architectural patronage" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2002); Raymond A. Mohl, "Cultural Pluralism in Immigrant Education: The YWCA's International Institutes, 1910- 1940," in *Men and Women Adrift: the YMCA and the YWCA in the City*, ed. Nina Mjagkij and Margaret Spratt (New York: New, 1997); Spain, *How Women Saved the City*.

³¹ Mary Sophia Stephens Sims, *The Natural History of a Social Institution- The Young Women's Christian Association* (New York: The Woman's Press, 1936), 55.

³² This historiography has two major trends; those that consider the more "internal" qualities of programs run within the buildings (generally the realm of Women's History), and the impact of these groups on broader urban environments (i.e. public interest and environmental history, but when discussed in terms of women is often labeled "municipal housekeeping"). For the former, see: Mina Julia Carson, *Settlement Folk: Social Thought and the American Settlement Movement, 1885-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Ruth Crocker, *Social Work and Social Order: The Settlement Movement in Two Industrial Cities, 1889-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Curry, *Modern Mothers in the Heartland*; Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue*. For the latter, see: Suellen M. Hoy, *Chasing Dirt: The American Pursuit of Cleanliness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) particularly ch. 3: "City Cleansing"; Spain, *How Women Saved the City*. There are some works which bridge this general division between "public" and "private," for example, Sarah Deutsch, *Women and the City*.

The USYWCA took this idea of the impact of physical environments upon individuals, and attempted to turn it outward in several ways. Instead of fixing a population to a place, USYWCA Secretaries intended that YWCA buildings would allow women to be regionally and transnationally mobile. Instead of recreating conservative domestic “homes,” YWCA buildings would be “residences” for single women. Instead of orienting women towards familial duty through language of “sisterhood,” USYWCA Secretaries emphasized the broad obligations of fellowship in the buildings. Instead of attempting to “melt” women into a specific nationality, YWCA buildings would facilitate the merging of women into cosmopolitan Y-space.

Buildings bolstered Y-space through their common physical characteristics, which could serve to bridge geographic distance. Through similar layouts, YWCA buildings mimicked sacred spaces; a person could walk into a YWCA almost anywhere in the world and encounter the same elements in much the same locations in the building.³³ This was a project that Secretaries devoted considerable time and effort to, and to this end the USYWCA National Board disseminated very detailed building requirements—including not only the elements that each building was to contain, but the preferred dimensions of each of the rooms and even some of the amenities within each of the rooms.³⁴

³³ I have used sacred church spaces as an example here, rather than governmental buildings, because the US did not have a strong formal physical presence abroad. See Richard White, “The Nationalization of Nature,” *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 3, *The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History: A Special Issue* (December 1999): 976-986. This use of architectural structure to create community spaces (although recognizing that every individual *experiences* these spaces differently) is widespread across religions. See, for example, Lee Shai Weissbach, “The Architecture of the Bimah in American Synagogues: Framing the Ritual,” *American Jewish History* 91, no. 1 (2003): 29-51.

³⁴ For example, a 1925 building guide, “Suggested list of requirements for a new YWCA building,” explained the dimensions and requirements of each of the components in great detail in an attempt to ensure their uniformity. The first floor would contain entrance elements such as a lobby with fireplace, a coat check, and elevators. It should also have food service, which included: a dining room with 12-15 square feet per person; private dining room; service room; counter service; kitchen and dependencies; dining room for help; rest room for help; directors office; refrigeration system; serving kitchens; a dumb-waiter system; and sufficient ventilation. Also located on the first floor was the health education area, including: a gymnasium measuring 50’ x 70’ x 22’, with visitors’ gallery; special exercises room; bowling alleys; a pool of a minimum 20’ x 60’ and spectators’ gallery; lockers and showers; office spaces and examining rooms; and a recreation room with stage. The second floor was composed primarily of

Through their presence and similar functioning, buildings facilitated women's ability to be physically, economically, and socially mobile. This was particularly true as women moved into cities, which middle-class reformers generally viewed as unsafe for women. These reformers perceived an urban double threat to women's respectability—that economic difficulties or unscrupulous men would force unsuspecting women into prostitution or “white slavery,” and/or that the lack of community accountability would allow those women inclined to promiscuity to “fall.”³⁵ Maternalists used these types of tropes to intervene on behalf of “downtrodden” and subaltern women, and therefore often supported conservative notions of domesticity.³⁶ Somewhat in contrast to these tropes, YWCA buildings addressed these concerns with two somewhat separate but interrelated functions: residences assured women traveling of safe lodgings, and logistical support and a community structure.

In some ways, these functions were geared to allay conservative's concerns about the safety and moral respectability of migrating women. Indeed, safe and morally respectable

clubrooms for industrial, girl reserve, and business girl's clubs. It was also to have a room registry office and waiting room, an employment office and waiting room, and facilities for the department of education. In addition to these rooms, there were offices for the Secretaries of Girl Reserve, Industrial, Educational, Young Business Women's, and Business divisions, as well as the General Secretary. The building should also house a library, chapel, “committee room which can be used for other purposes,” rest room and lavatories, “closet space for all departments,” a “workshop” in the basement, along with a boiler room and incinerator. Lavatories were to be located throughout the building for women, for men on the first floor, and for the help (both “colored” and “white” as well as “men” and “women” help). The residence that accompanied the main building was to have a separate entrance from the administration building, with a small lobby, parlors, small reception rooms including a “beau parlor,” dining room, serving kitchen, sewing rooms, storage, bedrooms (measuring 7' 6" x 13' 6" for a single and “a few double rooms” measuring 8' x 12' and 9' x 14'), lavatory accommodations of “1 wash bowl- enclosed- 1 bath or shower and 1 toilet to five or six beds,” a serving kitchen, laundry, sewing or pressing room, isolation suite or infirmary; emergency rooms with bath adjoining; house secretary suite- living room, bedroom, bath, big closet; house secretary office; business office for residence; checking room; “recreation room for residence girls, unless parlors provide space for recreation;” and a maid's closet on each floor. Suggested list of requirements for a new YWCA building, July 1925, 1-3, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

³⁵ Donna J. Guy, *Sex & Danger in Buenos Aires: Prostitution, Family, and Nation in Argentina* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991); Joanne J. Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift: Independent Wage Earners in Chicago, 1880-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (London: Virago Press, 1992).

³⁶ See: Burton, *Burdens of History*; Guy, *Sex & Danger in Buenos Aires*; Mara L. Keire, “The Vice Trust: A Reinterpretation of the White Slavery Scare in the United States, 1907-1917,” *Journal of Social History* 35, no. 1 (2001): 5-41; Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*; Gail Hershtatter, *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Shanghai* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

residences for migrant women had been one of the foundations of YWCA work, both in London and in the US; the YWCA acquired a reputation for safety and respectability partially by severely restricting their clientele to those of “good character” when the residences were established in the 1860’s.³⁷ These early establishments were called “homes,” and replicated ideas of female respectability through measures such as mandatory church attendance and curfews.³⁸ By the 1910’s, however, YWCA “homes” had become “residences,” and as historian Joanne Meyerowitz states for Chicago, by the late 1920’s, the “image of the orphaned and innocent woman adrift [had] faded.”³⁹ In the course of this transition, YWCA buildings retained their respectable reputations even after they had for the most part become more liberal in requiring women to (at least ostensibly) conform to certain values. While formal requirements for residents may have faded, however, the YWCA structured buildings to attract the same types of women (they just did so less overtly). As historians have demonstrated, social respectability in many of the YWCA residences was linked to both women’s whiteness and an adherence to middle-class social mores.⁴⁰

Rather than simply sheltering women until they could enter the domestic sphere, however, USYWCA Secretaries envisioned the YWCA buildings as a place from which women could continually enter the public sphere. USYWCA Secretaries did this by constructing YWCA

³⁷ Safe residence had been one of the first and key functions of YWCA buildings, from the time that Mrs. Kinnaird (later Lady Kinnaird) established a “Young Women’s Christian Association” building in London in 1885. Kinnaird was motivated by concerns for women migrating to London for work. Anna V. Rice, *A History of the World’s Young Women’s Christian Association* (New York: The Womans Press, 1947), 8-9. When initially established in Boston and New York in the 1860’s, YWCA boarding house eligibility requirements assured that women “whose references in regard to character are not perfectly satisfactory” would be admitted. Elizabeth Wilson, *Fifty Years of Association Work Among Young Women, 1866-1916*, 35. This was in reference to Boston in the 1860’s.

³⁸ Elizabeth Wilson, *Fifty Years of Association Work Among Young Women, 1866-1916*, 35-36.

³⁹ Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift*, 48-54.

⁴⁰ Sarah Heath, “Negotiating White Womanhood: the Cincinnati YWCA and White Wage-earning Women, 1918-1929,” in *Men and Women Adrift: the YMCA and the YWCA in the City*, ed. Nina Mjagkij and Margaret Spratt (New York: New York University Press, 1997); Marion W. Roydhouse, “Bridging Chasms: Community and the Southern YWCA,” in *Visible Women: New Essays on American Activism*, ed. Nancy A. Hewitt and Suzanne Lebsock (Urbana, Ill: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

buildings as both public and private—“vernacular” spaces—in which the building was similar to domestic spaces by being “every day” and in the control of women, even as it was geographically located in the urban public sphere.⁴¹ It was therefore neither completely private and domestic, nor completely public. This meant that the YWCA’s work tended to differ from that of settlement houses and boarding houses.⁴² That is not to say that the USYWCA Secretaries made a clean break with domesticity—there is strong evidence that some USYWCA Secretaries saw YWCA work as inherently supporting the domestic sphere.⁴³ However, by and large, USYWCA Secretaries sought to make the buildings neither “houses” (in the vein of settlement houses), “institutions” (in the vein of government buildings), or hotels. For USYWCA

⁴¹ Historians of urban development and architecture have tended to bifurcate between public, monumental, spaces planned by men, and private, common, “vernacular” spaces generally under the control of women. Elizabeth Collins Cromley and Carter L. Hudgins define “vernacular” as “the language spoken at home: it is informal and intimate. When applied to architectural objects, it identifies that body of buildings and landscapes made for everyday use. When used to identify a method, ‘vernacular’ studies suggest an analysis of everyday qualities: common uses for buildings, the ethnic traditions of builders and building users, or the meanings embodied in buildings and landscapes that preserve and convey cultural knowledge to the next generation” p. xi. Elizabeth C. Cromley and Carter L. Hudgins, eds., *Gender, Class, and Shelter*, 1st ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995). See also: Elizabeth C. Cromley and Carter L. Hudgins, eds., *Shaping Communities* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997); Alison K. Hoagland and Kenneth A. Breisch, eds., *Constructing Image, Identity, and Place: Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003). There is an increasing and excellent body of works that come under the rubric of “vernacular architecture,” most notably the “Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture” series, referenced above. In looking architecture and urban socialization, Daphne Spain asserts in *How Women Saved the City*, that “[v]ernacular space belongs to the community and serves as the site of activities that are too large for dwellings to accommodate, such as weddings or family reunions. Individuals have no legal title to it, but custom allows its use by everyone on a daily basis.” Spain, *How Women Saved the City*, 21.

⁴² See: Sarah Deutsch, *Women and the City*; Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift*; Spain, *How Women Saved the City*; Heath, “Negotiating White Womanhood: the Cincinnati YWCA and White Wage-earning Women, 1918-1929.” Historians have typically viewed the relationship of women in women’s organizations, including some YWCAs, as conservative places in which middle-class leaders served as mothers to lower-class “sisters.” These scholars emphasize the ways reformers advocated (although not modeled) conservative qualities of the domesticity, such as women’s roles as wives and mothers. Some scholars have attempted to demonstrate the agency of these clients to speak against these efforts (even if it was to “vote with their feet”). Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women’s Campaign Against Lynching*, Rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Heath, “Negotiating White Womanhood: the Cincinnati YWCA and White Wage-earning Women, 1918-1929”; Knupfer, “If You Can’t Push, Pull, if You Can’t Pull, Please Get Out of the Way”; Roydhouse, “Bridging Chasms: Community and the Southern YWCA.”

⁴³ As Daphne Spain asserts, “[t]hrough public kitchens, cooking classes, cookbooks, and model tenements, settlement workers taught immigrant women how to keep house like Americans.” Spain, *How Women Saved the City*, 48. YWCAs in the United States also sometimes did blur the boundaries between residences and homes. The 1914 *Handbook of the Young Women’s Christian Association Movement* was heavy handed advocating that residences mimic familial structure, with the YWCA “sign flashing out in vivid letters by day or night... itself a pledge of sisterliness to the utmost.” *Handbook of the Young Womens Christian Association Movement*, 41.

Secretaries, the purpose of being a “vernacular” building was to provide a safe base from which women could learn to navigate urban life.⁴⁴ This meant that while the YWCA building catered to conservative concerns about the urban danger of the city, YWCA also buildings facilitated social mobility and the presence of women in the urban public sphere that these conservatives decried.

The USYWCA emphasized their intention that as a vernacular space, the building itself would serve as a central place for women of many different ages and classes to gather. As YWCA Industrial Work Secretary Florence Simms asserted, the Association building belonged “to the women of the city.”⁴⁵ In taking this position, USYWCA leaders aimed to establish connections between women and the building itself in ways that differed from the relationships fostered by benevolent organizations.⁴⁶ The USYWCA attempted to draw both elite and non-elite women to the building by emphasizing egalitarianism and equality, through two relationships. First, despite a reliance upon major donors for building construction funds, USYWCA leaders stressed the equal access of women to the building, and the importance of making the building particularly hospitable for lower-class women.⁴⁷ USYWCA leaders also

⁴⁴ YWCA buildings were not sites of assimilation into a specific national context, as scholars have argued for more conservative women’s organizations, benevolent associations, and “redemptive places.” For a clear and succinct definition of the shared elements of “redemptive places” see Spain, *How Women Saved the City*, 24- 27.

⁴⁵ Florence Simms, “Extension: A Problem in Mathematics” *The Association Monthly*, Vol. VI, No. 4 (May, 1912), 117.

⁴⁶ Benevolent groups generally based their intervention on a sense of societal obligation or control, and elite or middle-class leaders gave money or their time in order to maintain “redemptive” or structure maternalist roles vis a vis lower-class clients. See: Carson, *Settlement Folk*; Crocker, *Social Work and Social Order*; Curry, *Modern Mothers in the Heartland*; Sarah Deutsch, *Women and the City*; Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift*; Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue*; Spain, *How Women Saved the City*.

⁴⁷ The YWCA did indeed have strong ties to major donors and progressive philanthropists, who tended to donate to buildings, such as in 1904 when John D. Rockefeller doubled a \$50,000 donation to the Cleveland, Ohio YWCA’s building campaign when they came up almost \$60,000 short. See: “Gives \$100,000 to Y.W.C.A.; J.D. Rockefeller Enables It to Erect a Building in Cleveland” *New York Times* September 14, 1904, 1. In her dissertation, which examines the relationship of Phoebe Apperson Hearst with various institutions including the USYWCA, Elizabeth Harris asserts that there was a shift in architecture at the end of the nineteenth century from patronage to clients. See: Elizabeth Edwards Harris, “Phoebe Apperson Hearst and the changing nature of 19th century architectural patronage.”

emphasized the building's non-institutional qualities. For example, the "Information for Building Committees" explained that even the front of the building could "speak eloquently for the organization." The building was not like a "a bank or a city institution or an office building, but distinctly a woman's building, housing activities for women and girls."⁴⁸ This position as a "woman's building" rather than an institution was important because it embodied the relationship between individual women and the building itself. USYWCA leaders seem to have hoped that by spreading the responsibility and privileges of ownership of the building, they could foster grass-roots qualities of the USYWCA as an organization. There were no caveats or linguistic limits in the relationship of women and the building—this was not a building for specific groups of women, but for all women.

In addition to space within the building itself, many of the USYWCA's activities were geared towards aiding women's continued presence in the city. For example, USYWCA Secretaries encouraged women's activities in white-collar work by relocating the YWCA's employment boards and job training to be near business districts. USYWCA Secretaries sought to place buildings in locations that would bring them specific clientele by being close to workers.⁴⁹ In this drive to be attractive to young women, the YWCA was forced to attend to the wishes of their clients—both as the structure and amenities of the building were being planned,

⁴⁸ "Entrance" in "Information for Building Committees" Issued by the City Department, National Board, Young Women's Christian Associations," March 6, 1926, 1, Microfilm, Reel 69- South America- Property YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁴⁹ As National Board member (and former Industrial Secretary) Florence Simms explained, the building had to be attractive not only to those who would be naturally inclined to be members, but the women would find other attractions alluring. Sims asked readers to "[i]magine...a center located at the very door of a group of factories, where it cannot be missed because it is *in the way*, where it must be seen because its entrance is speakingly attractive. Whence once a girl is inside, its friendliness, its gay decorations, its brightness, its music and life will comit [sic] her to the wish to come again. Its smooth floor for roller skating, its reflectroscope or moving pictures, will give her what she wants for her evening leisure. Such a place might easily be the magnet for five hundred or a thousand girls." Florence Simms, "Extension: A Problem in Mathematics" *The Association Monthly* Vol. VI, No. 4 (May, 1912), 117.

and later in making the building available for their usage.⁵⁰ While USYWCA Secretaries may have therefore envisioned buildings as being inherently democratic, there were strong implied class dynamics in the location and usage of the building. For example, when reminding USYWCA members about the building location and target audience, Florence Simms assumed that the “hard sell” was going to be younger and poorer women, who would likely feel that the YWCA had a tendency to be maternalistic, and therefore the building *itself* had to be inviting to those groups. Simms asserted that “[t]he entrance should be simple and friendly, with an easy approach from the street and an absence of the often seen long flight of steps or the architecturally elaborate approach.”⁵¹ In addition to location, then, USYWCA Secretaries were aware of the ways that the physical appearance of the building itself could determine whether their audience was middle- or working-class.

The location of YWCAs often reflected this goal, and main branches in a city were specifically located and geared to meet businesswomen’s needs.⁵² The general trend of the YWCA was to have the main building located near the business district, with “branches” in other

⁵⁰ These types of concerns were also part of a broader rhetoric of concern about young women’s (particularly working women in urban areas) leisure activities. See: Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift*. While this scholarship tends to emphasize the maternalist aspects of reformers, of interest here is the element of persuasion that gives these young women a larger degree of agency.

⁵¹ This simplicity would create “the kind of entrance which will attract the sixteen year old girl who has just finished her first day’s work in the department store at the bundle counter and is looking for a place to drop in and find friends before she goes to the little room she calls home or to the movie.” This type of girl would not get past “[l]ong flights of steps or a building of the character of a city institution.” Simple and attractive architecture would be “attractive” to both “hundreds of girls” as well as the community. “Entrance” in “Information for Building Committees” Issued by the City Department, National Board, Young Women’s Christian Associations,” March 6, 1926, 1, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁵² Some YWCAs in the United States changed the locations of their services in order to attract greater numbers of businesswomen. For example, in *Souls of the Skyscraper*, Lisa M. Fine discusses the Chicago YWCA’s shift in employment emphasis over the first decades of the twentieth century. Prior to World War I, the employment bureau had placed women in traditional jobs, such as “nurses, domestic servants, governesses, companions, maids, and seamstresses.” Lisa M. Fine, *The Souls of the Skyscraper: Female Clerical Workers in Chicago, 1870-1930* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 131. In the 1920’s, however, the Chicago YWCA recognized that these professions were out of sync with its membership, and that “they would have to supply services oriented to the economic and personal needs of the business woman.” The employment bureau therefore moved, from just south of the Loop to the central branch, located in the middle of the loop, and by 1924, 92 percent of their placements were clerical positions. Fine, *The Souls of the Skyscraper*, 184-5.

areas.⁵³ This reveals several broader assumptions that YWCA leaders made about their target populations, most notably the racial and ethnic composition. One of the most telling things about USYWCA building locations, particularly that of the main branch, was where they were *not*— in the heavily immigrant neighborhoods in New York City, the North End in Boston, or near the Stockyards in Chicago. In those areas one was likelier to find Progressive institutions such as settlement houses, Salvation Army hotels, and bathhouses. The YWCA’s location outside of these areas was partially due to the difference in clientele; despite Florence Simms’ urgings, the YWCA primarily targeted rural and immigrant women who would subsequently be involved in white collar clerical types of work, rather than in jobs in factories. Through the locations of the buildings and wage limits for residents, the YWCA constructed a system that de facto excluded occupations open to immigrant and African-American women. Thus the YWCA membership who used the central building were something of a self-fulfilling prophecy—the location guaranteed that white, middle-class women would be the ones frequenting the building.

In addition to being physically located near the white-collar business districts, the USYWCA Secretaries intended that buildings would facilitate women’s employment in the public sphere by providing classroom space and equipment for job training programs.⁵⁴ Some of

⁵³ An example of this is the relocation of the National Board from Chicago to New York City in 1913. The new building was located in the heart of Manhattan- at 600 Lexington Avenue- less than ten blocks from Central Park in one direction, the waterfront in the other, and in close proximity to the business districts. Spain, *How Women Saved the City* “Appendix C: Addresses of Redemptive Places for Boston, New York City, and Chicago” The sites in Boston were similar- locations at 25 Beach Street, 23 Chauncey Street, and 68 Warrenton Street were arrayed only a few blocks from Boston Common, with the YWCA at 40 Berkeley Street slightly farther south. The Chicago YWCAs were more spread out, perhaps because of the more diffused locations of business within the city itself. The main building at 1001 North Dearborn Street was in the prestigious “Gold Coast” neighborhood, and was a few blocks from the shore of Lake Michigan. The second location, at 288 Michigan Ave, was almost within the Loop- across from Grant Park.

⁵⁴ As scholars have demonstrated, the USYWCA was very much involved with the concerns of women in both domestic service and industry, particularly in terms of professionalizing and increasing training for these women. The National Board conducted studies on household employment in the late 1910’s, and recommended that domestic workers professionalize by engaging in training, changing in nomenclature (to “household employee”), and agitating for limits on working hours. Faye E. Dudden, “Experts and Servants: The National Council on

this work was aimed at blue-collar workers, and the USYWCA created activities in collaboration with industrial women and some labor organizations through its Industrial Department.⁵⁵

However, many parts of the YWCA building and services were geared towards young, single, working women who were looking for white-collar careers. For example, along with the employment boards, the YWCA provided job training that aimed to increase women's white-collar employable skills. These programs were largely aimed at women who were looking to increase their professional mobility, rather than the poor and factory women who have traditionally worked outside the home.⁵⁶ Through these programs and facilities, USYWCA Secretaries seem to have intended for their buildings to create a different kind of "new" women who would be employed in the public sphere in white-collar jobs—and, as Chapter 3 demonstrates, one who could shift not only from factory to office work, but also from domestic to transnational capitalism.

However, just as the location of the building tended to exclude working-class women, there were also racial and class limits to the YWCA's job training programs, which were

Household Employment and the Decline of Domestic Service in the Twentieth Century," *Journal of Social History* 20, no. 2 (Winter 1986): 269-289, 271.

⁵⁵ Mary Ann Dzuback, "Women and Social Research at Bryn Mawr College, 1915-40," *History of Education Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (Winter 1993): 579-608; Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "Disorderly Women: Gender and Labor Militancy in the Appalachian South," *The Journal of American History* 73, no. 2 (September 1986): 354-382; Mary Frederickson and Joyce L. Kornbluh, eds., *Sisterhood and Solidarity: Workers' Education for Women, 1914-1984* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984).

⁵⁶ There are a few works that examine the role of white-collar women workers. See: Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Fine, *The Souls of the Skyscraper* But these are numerically dwarfed by the historiography on factory women. For the major works, see: Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense & a Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States, 1900-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Ulla Wikander, Jane Lewis, and Alice Kessler-Harris, eds., *Protecting Women: Labor Legislation in Europe, the United States, and Australia, 1880-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995); Glenn Feldman, *Daughters of the Shtetl*; Ewen, *Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars*; Hasia R. Diner, *Lower East Side Memories: A Jewish Place in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

primarily aimed at white, native born women.⁵⁷ Although present and involved in some of the activities, African-American women were underrepresented within the USYWCA in general, and tended to be more involved in parallel organizations, such as the Phyllis Wheatley Societies, which in some cases were connected to the local YWCAs. As Anne Meis Knupfer found in her study of Chicago, while the USYWCA's Industrial Department did help some African-American women find jobs, it was the Phyllis Wheatley home that "was the best known home for young [African American] working girls."⁵⁸ This meant that segregation of African-American women, either into separate branches or into separate affiliated organizations, had real economic consequences in that these women were excluded from the types of economic mobility the USYWCA fostered in white women.

Physical Fitness

Women's bodies also played a prominent role in the creation of Y-space. For example, the third cornerstone of the YWCA's "blue triangle"—the symbol of the YWCA—was the body. USYWCA Secretaries utilized physical fitness programs in several ways. First, they asserted that women's bodies were valuable for their own lives, and not solely for childbirth. This involved a rhetorical reworking of many of the ties between the body, gender, and civilization. One example of this was the diagnosis of "neurasthenia." As Gail Bederman argues in *Manliness and Civilization*, middle-class white men became concerned at the turn of the century about

⁵⁷ The Cavans stated that there were "few college graduates in offices. A study of the records of an employment bureau which specializes in placing college-trained women shows that many girls just out of college or who have taught for a few years apply for positions but that in many cases they are handicapped by the lack of business training or by too many years in the schoolroom. This does not mean that college training is not a good background for the better business positions, but it does mean that the college-trained girl needs specific technical training in stenography, typing, accounting, or whatever other branch of business she expects to enter." Ruth Shonle Cavan and Jordan True Cavan, "Education and the Business Girl," *Journal of Educational Sociology* 3, no. 2 (October 1929): 83-93, 88.

⁵⁸ Knupfer, "If You Can't Push, Pull, if You Can't Pull, Please Get Out of the Way," 227.

becoming increasingly physically weak due to their sedentary lifestyles, working conditions, and the self-restraint imposed by civilization.⁵⁹ For women, diagnoses of neurasthenia most often occurred with college women, engaged in “brainwork” which conservatives asserted was taking energy away from the development of women’s reproductive organs.⁶⁰ In order to counter these concerns, women’s colleges instituted both physical education classes and programs to monitor student’s changing physical conditions.

However, as college women, USYWCA Secretaries seem to have been suspicious of these claims of the negative effects of “brainwork.” They therefore took the ideas that were circulating around the supposed crisis of masculinity and asserted that these were problems of modernity that affected *everyone*—both male and female. As a result, USYWCA Secretaries argued that women as well as men would benefit from the same types of body-building programs that have been characterized as “muscular” remedies for elite white men’s ills. By making these claims, the USYWCA was in essence asserting that the purpose of women’s bodies was not solely to be child bearers. As opposed to older ideals of “femininity,” and to some extent even the sexually liberated aspects of “new womanhood,” the USYWCA attempted to rework women’s conception of their own bodies so that reproduction and domesticity was not the basis for commonality among women.⁶¹ Instead, Secretaries argued that women should be healthy for

⁵⁹ These were encapsulated within diagnoses such as “neurasthenia” which for men. See Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), particularly Chapter 3.

⁶⁰ See J. A. Mangan and Roberta J. Park, eds., *From 'Fair Sex' to Feminism: Sport and the Socialization of Women in the Industrial and Post-Industrial Eras* (London, England: F. Cass, 1987), particularly Roberta J. Park, “Sports, Gender and Society in a Transatlantic Victorian Perspective,” and Patricia Vertinsky, “Body Shapes: the Role of the Medical Establishment in Informing Female Exercise and Physical Education in Nineteenth-Century North America.”

⁶¹ For “new woman” see Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1985), particularly “The New Woman as Androgyne: Social Disorder and Gender Crisis, 1870-1936,” 245-296. The “Modern Girl Around the World” project has also examined these issues within a transnational context. See The Modern Girl Around the World Research Group, *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

their own benefit and for the immediate good of society, rather than the deferred good that healthy children would bring.

This emphasis on the immediate benefit of women's physical health was reflected in the USYWCA's belief that the mind, body and spirit (the areas of the blue triangle) were interrelated—each had a tidal force upon the others, and bad or good health in one area affected the other two. In the mid-1910's, these interrelationships took on added importance for the YWCA. Like many reform organizations in the Progressive Era, the YWCA asserted that recreation was the solution to two related problems in society: the negative effects of repetitive factory work on the body; and the de-personalization of increasingly mechanized and specialized work due to industrialization and the growth of white-collar work. In other words, reformers argued that the more assembly lines there were, the less time women had available for leisure. Rather than utilizing their free time to fulfill people's creative needs, reformers characterized women as watching movies, reading dime novels, and consuming goods, impersonal and fundamentally passive activities.⁶² For the YWCA, then, women who were not in good shape physically could not possibly be in good shape mentally or spiritually.

The USYWCA's work during World War I seems to have affirmed these rhetorics, and the leaders drew two main conclusions from the YWCA's activities. First, that people were generally unwell, and second, that they needed to be physically fit in order to function productively—both for their own wellbeing and for war work for the nation. For example, the Bureau of Social Education stated that the “draft figures taught us how small a proportion of

⁶² Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003); Lizabeth Cohen, “Encountering Mass Culture at the Grassroots: The Experience of Chicago Workers in the 1920s,” *American Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (March 1989): 6-33; Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure*; Lears, *No Place of Grace*; Kathy Lee Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in New York City, 1880 to 1920* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); Timothy Lloyd, “Whole Work, Whole Play, Whole People: Folklore and Social Therapeutics in 1920s and 1930s America,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 110, no. 437 (Summer 1997): 239-259.

young men were 100% well or in Class A. it took months of education and training and better understanding of living to bring them up to Class A.” The Bureau estimated that by comparison 10% of women were either “Class C”/ill or “Class A”/well, with the remaining 80% as “Class B” which was “neither ill nor yet well.” ⁶³

Echoing tropes of the degenerative effects of civilization upon men, the USYWCA asserted that this was a problem of civilization itself, which led to *both* men and women being “unwell.” E.C. Lindeman, then a Professor of Sociology at North Carolina College for Women and later at Social Work at Columbia University, stated this frankly in the “Recreation” pamphlet, which he co-authored with the USYWCA’s Bureau of Social Education. Using genderless language such as “man” and “we,” Lindeman asserted that “[w]e now live in a civilization which is deeply affected by organized industry” and one in which in “many cases the mother must spend their working hours away from the family.” Lindeman stated that industry required workers to “conform to certain rules. Not the least of these rules is to obey the machines.” ⁶⁴ Arguing similar points to what reformers had argued for men, Lindeman asserted that in the process of individual adaptation to working with machines, work had become “labor.” ⁶⁵ While industrialization specifically had a deleterious effect upon women’s health, the *Hand Book* authors also re-iterated the same types of concerns about the damaging effects of “civilization” and the problems of modernity more generally. Lindeman compared “modern civilization” to a “giant machine” that “either man will learn to control... or the machine will

⁶³ Bureau Social Education, Young Women's Christian Association of the U.S.A, “Chapter II. The Individual and the Community,” in *Hand Book on Positive Health*, ed. Women's Foundation for Health, Inc, American Medical Association, and Young Women's Christian Associations, Rev. Ed. (New York: Women's Foundation for Health, Inc, 1928), “What is Your Grade in Health?”

⁶⁴ E. C. Lindeman, “Chapter VI. Recreation. Part One- Recreation for Health-Building,” in *Hand Book on Positive Health*, ed. Women's Foundation for Health, Inc, American Medical Association, and Young Women's Christian Associations, Rev. Ed. (New York: Women's Foundation for Health, Inc, 1928), 1.

⁶⁵ Lindeman, “Chapter VI. Recreation. Part One- Recreation for Health-Building,” 1-2.

control him.”⁶⁶ In a post-war context, in which modern civilization had run out of control— in a literal sense in that the war spread to colonies which were commercially tied to Europe— the consequences for the “machine” controlling people likely seemed both real and deadly.

In order to foster the health and recreation the USYWCA helped develop the concept of “positive health,” as outlined in the handbook co-authored by the USYWCA’s Bureau of Social Education, called the *Hand Book for Positive Health*. This was a recreation program, in which recreation was “more than the playing of games. It is renewal of life- all life, not physical life without relation to mental, nor spiritual life without relation to physical. This renewal is evidenced through health and in terms of the whole personality- mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual.”⁶⁷ Somewhat ironically, this made “positive health” something of a cure to “civilization;” scientific expertise, could be civilization’s redemption.

These assertions were partially an attempt to restore faith in progressive, modern, Western science, which had caused physical degeneration through industrialism, and death through the mechanized warfare of World War I. The USYWCA made the argument that technology was liberatory by contrasting Positive Health to theories in which health was “no more than the absence of disease, [t]he great forward step that is now being taken means an exact reversal of that way of seeing things. It means recognizing that health is really the positive fact” and that disease was the “interruption.”⁶⁸ While lay women could identify the *presence* of disease, only properly trained USYWCA Secretary experts could identify the *lack* of health. This identification process was founded on the health examination, which was composed of an

⁶⁶ Lindeman, “Chapter VI. Recreation. Part One- Recreation for Health-Building,” 2.

⁶⁷ Bureau Social Education, Young Women's Christian Association of the U.S.A., “Chapter VI. Recreation. Part Two- Recreation and Health,” in *Hand Book on Positive Health*, ed. Women's Foundation for Health, Inc, American Medical Association, and Young Women's Christian Associations, Rev. Ed. (New York: Women's Foundation for Health, Inc, 1928).

⁶⁸ Bureau Social Education, Young Women's Christian Association of the U.S.A., “Chapter II. The Individual and the Community,” 3.

extensive inventory and record of a woman's physical, mental, and social condition and habits. These examinations had strong roots in colleges and universities, as female educators sought to combat the idea that physical decline was inevitable in such institutions. For the most part, however, these school examinations had been focused around the specific areas of the body that had the strongest potential to be damaged by academic work: height, weight, backbones, and eyes.⁶⁹ While some institutions did implement more comprehensive exams, these were only available to select college women. In contrast to these exams which tended to target elite white college women, USYWCA Secretaries envisioned Positive Health as democratizing health care by offering comprehensive exams to the masses of women.

USYWCA Secretaries asserted that the proper experts to conduct these examinations were women appropriately trained in the latest methods who had access to the latest technologies. For example, the first pamphlet in the *Hand Book* was comprised of an extensive discussion of not only the necessary medical equipment, but measurement charts and point systems, and "Health Examination" cards, which included both "Medical" and "Physical" sections, to be completed by a doctor (preferably a female doctor), and the YWCAs Health Education Secretary, respectively. The authors of the *Hand Book* asserted that although these tools were very expensive (1921 estimates of the equipment for the physical examinations were almost \$400), they were absolutely necessary for comprehensive examinations. If "there are substitutions, the examinee should understand that she is receiving the examination only in

⁶⁹ Paul Atkinson, "The Feminist Physique: Physical Education and the Medicalization of Women's Education," in *From 'Fair Sex' to Feminism: Sport and the Socialization of Women in the Industrial and Post-Industrial Eras*, ed. J. A. Mangan and Roberta J. Park (London: F. Cass, 1987). He states that "Mills College (in California) provides a pertinent example, which reflects the concern with *weight*." (50) He also cites an article from a 1901 anthology, in which the author states that "[i]n many schools periodical examinations of backbones, and ankles and eyesight are made. Records are kept, skilled and scientific physical training is carried out. Nothing is neglected which can serve to make the body straight and strong and to develop perfectly in all its powers." (51)

part.”⁷⁰ Only with the full complement of technological gadgets and measurements, would there be enough scientific evidence to conclusively determine women’s level of health.

In addition to this scientific evaluation and monitoring of women’s bodies, USYWCA Secretaries also intended that Positive Health would foster social functions that were integral to Y-space, particularly that women had a place within the world system. For example, in a pamphlet entitled the “Individual and the Community,” the Bureau of Social Education emphasized the importance of the individual as part of a larger system. It argued that it was beneficial to “the whole world of which you are a part” for all women to know their own health. This included not only “your own family or household,” but “your immediate circle of friends, fellow-workers and chance associates; for your neighborhood, your town, your race.”⁷¹

Women’s health was important not for their progeny (as was the case with most Social Darwinist or maternalist arguments), but for themselves. This ran counter to the types of claims historians of women’s groups in the Progressive Era have made. After all, “civic housekeeping” and maternalism placed women’s *raison d’être* in these reforms upon women’s relationship with others: she became involved in civic life on other’s behalf and for their benefit.⁷² In other words, much like they had constructed the roles of religion and physical buildings to be outwardly focused, the YWCA also attempted utilize individualism to demonstrate women’s connections to the world, turning maternalism on its head. Whereas maternalism attempted to privatize the public sphere, the YWCA claimed that women were part of the public sphere because the public sphere was part of them individually.

⁷⁰ Women's Foundation for Health, Inc, American Medical Association, and Young Women's Christian Associations, eds., “Chapter I: The Newer Conception of Health,” in *Hand Book on Positive Health*, Rev. Ed. (New York: Women's Foundation for Health, Inc, 1928), 11.

⁷¹ Bureau Social Education, Young Women's Christian Association of the U.S.A, “Chapter II. The Individual and the Community,” 7.

⁷² Koven and Michel, “Womanly Duties”; Paula Baker, “The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920,” *The American Historical Review* 89, no. 3 (June 1984): 620-647; Nancy F. Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

In keeping with the idea that women's bodies were of immediate rather than future concern, USYWCA Secretaries asserted that recreation programs could foster Y-space that enabled women to be economically productive members of a global society. As the foreword of the YWCA's co-authored *A Hand Book on Positive Health* asserted, "[t]he woman of today realizes that the world does not owe her a living; but rather that she owes it to herself to make her individual economic contribution in some constructive and useful form. In the same way, she owes it to herself to maintain health and to assume in this respect a constructive, not a passive and submissive attitude."⁷³ For USWYCA Secretaries, Y-space could assure this productivity by inculcating several traits, including: a sense of individuality through self-monitoring; self-control; and self-sufficiency.

The USYWCA interwove self-monitoring, self-control, and self-sufficiency together through goals of constant individual improvement. For example, the Bureau of Social Education asserted that "[i]t matters to me how you work" because this was a key to happiness. The Bureau stated that if women "put yourself into it, find happiness in it, express what you are in it, use what you are to make the world richer" that work would make them "not only the happier, but the better in daily health- because of the work you do and the way you do it." On the other hand lay drudgery, shirking and destruction, or even worse, women who "resent and continue, which is perhaps the worst state of all for your health. You cannot work right unless your health is good."⁷⁴ That individual women should function productively and happily was important because these women could not only disrupt themselves and Y-space, but civilization. The Bureau asserted that there were "hosts of unhappy people of all ages on the treadmill of

⁷³ Preface, *Hand Book on Positive Health*, ed. Women's Foundation for Health, Inc, American Medical Association and Young Women's Christian Associations, Rev. Ed. (New York: Women's Foundation for Health, Inc, 1928), iv.

⁷⁴ Bureau Social Education, Young Women's Christian Association of the U.S.A, "Chapter II. The Individual and the Community," 7.

civilization, complaining of their conditions and failing to make the psychological adjustments required by the tremendous economic changes.”⁷⁵ In responding to these issues, positive health incorporated the lived Christian ideals of adaptability and balance within a context of self-monitoring. It was incumbent upon individual women to function productively and with positive attitudes. As the Bureau stated, “the individual’s problem of personal adjustment cannot wait until the social environment has been made better or more human. Personal health and happiness must be striven for day by day, and through every channel of work and play which is open to us; we must make the most of our opportunities instead of making the most of our obstacles.”⁷⁶ The Bureau emphasized that when individual women made the decision to change, they exercised both self-control and their own will. They stated that “[t]he master key that controls all the potentialities, is the will to build health- your own will. You are the one. Your life is yours.... You have the power. Medical science is yours, too, to command; its wisdom is at your service; but only you can work miracles.”⁷⁷ While this rhetoric was very empowering, by placing the onus for change upon the individual, the YWCA removed the possibility that it might be the system (industrialization, capitalism, etc) that was flawed; if an individual failed, it was because she didn’t try hard enough.

While USYWCA Secretaries structured recreation programs around individuality, they also sought to foster group cohesion. USYWCA Secretaries envisioned recreation programs as a way to bond women to each other across racial, class, and national lines. Within gyms and camps, USYWCA Secretaries saw Y-space as facilitating girls’ skills in learning to function as

⁷⁵ Bureau Social Education, Young Women's Christian Association of the U.S.A, “Chapter II. The Individual and the Community,” 29.

⁷⁶ Bureau Social Education, Young Women's Christian Association of the U.S.A, “Chapter II. The Individual and the Community,” 29.

⁷⁷ Bureau Social Education, Young Women's Christian Association of the U.S.A, “Chapter II. The Individual and the Community,” 4.

individuals within a group. *Hand Book* author Lindeman asserted that during recreation, there were two forces (which were central to Y-space) at work—cooperation and competition. He stated that in the process of playing a game, a person “unconsciously forgets himself in order that the team of the group may win. In recreation, competition rises to its highest plane; it becomes a form of socialized competition.”⁷⁸ The Bureau of Social Education put it in less competitive terms, by portraying team games as developing fellowship—“the spirit of comradeship”—because they gave women a basis for interaction. The Bureau asserted that after group activities, “after you’ve played a game with a person, or taken a long hike, or spent a day in camp,” women would “naturally be friends.” Sports were therefore not merely a facilitator of friendship, but a kind of informal relationship, and the Bureau continued by stating that “the little formal preliminaries will be dispensed with, just as if you walked into a yard and found the front door of the house open instead of having to knock.”⁷⁹ In other words, whatever barriers had preexisted between women, games and sports automatically made women close friends.

While these skills could be developed within the YWCA building, through physical fitness classes in the gym and outdoor courts, they could also be honed in summer camps. The ideologies of these places generally fell along the lines that historians have described for the summer camps of other organizations, such as the Boy and Girl Scouts.⁸⁰ Here were not only recuperative respites from the machines of modern civilization that Lineman described, but contact with nature and the camp environment could also teach the same types of lived

⁷⁸ Lindeman, “Chapter VI. Recreation. Part One- Recreation for Health-Building,” 5.

⁷⁹ Bureau of Social Education, War Work Council of the National Board of the Young Women’s Christian Associations, “Putting the Shine on,” Microfilm Reel 96.1- Health-Bureau of Social Education, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁸⁰ See: Deloria, *Playing Indian*. For the YWCA’s camps in the U.S., see Susan A. Miller, “Girls in nature/the nature of girls: Transforming female adolescence at summer camp, 1900--1939” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2001). For a history of camps in general, from a more spatial and architectural point of view, see: Abigail A. Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness: Summer Camps and the Shaping of American Youth, 1890-1960* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

Christianity through self-sufficiency and independence. This could culminate in the types of transnationalism that Derricotte had imagined in Mysore. For example, in 1933 USYWCA Secretary Anne Guthrie wrote of a camp she went to in Piriapolis, Uruguay. Guthrie stated that from “January 10 to 20, forty students and professional men and women gathered at the international Camp of the Y.W.C.A. in Piriapolis.... Chile, Argentina, Bolivia, Uruguay, Brazil, Paraguay and Mexico were all represented.” The countries shared leadership, and Guthrie asserted that this international division of power seemed to have positive effects on the participants of the countries at war with each other. Guthrie stated that at the end of the conference manifestos were sent to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in each country, ending with “We beg of the contestants, a supreme effort of abnegation and Christian love, that the war cease immediately and the solution of their differences be given over to international justice. The lives that would be saved, the productive work that would be revived, and the extinction of hatred are of more vital worth than the disputed territories; the less of the centuries teaches that solutions gained by violence have been precarious and sterile.”⁸¹ In this instance, at least according to Guthrie, YWCA recreation allowed for Y-space to not only bridge national divides it fostered peace and international economic and political stability.

Race

As some of the YWCA’s programs, such as buildings, make very obvious, while the USYWCA Secretaries sought to make Y-space inclusive, they were also consistently willing to limit their efforts primarily to white women. However, beyond these individual programmatic limits, race played a very complicated role within Y-space—although Y-space was ostensibly

⁸¹ “News from Other Countries: Camp Imports from Abroad” *The Woman’s Press*, Vol XXVII, No. 5, May 1933, 245.

race-blind, the USWYCA remained racially segregated until 1946.⁸² This dichotomy led to a system in which USYWCA leadership coped with the discrepancies between a Y-space that was both based rhetorically in race-blindness and meritocracy, and the realities of white leaders (primarily from the South, although there were African-American branches in Northern cities such as New York as well) who wanted the YWCA to be segregated. The “branch system,” in which a policy of de facto segregation was institutionalized, shows the complexities of these disconnects. Instituted at the 1915 convention, the branch policy subordinated branches under a central city association, the boards of which were generally populated and run by white women. African-American women essentially lost administrative control over their own branches, as the central YWCA could block the opening or functioning of branches, took part in hiring staff, and chose delegates for conventions.⁸³ While it was not the formal system of segregation as was instituted by the Young Men’s Christian Association (in that white and African-American YWCA leaders still interacted with each other), it produced a system of de facto segregation, and in many ways reduced the likelihood that African-American women would be able to build cross-geographic coalitions.⁸⁴

USYWCA Secretaries negotiated the discrepancy between rhetoric and practice in several ways. First, although they did have some groups and activism aimed at specific racial groups (such as their anti-lynching campaigns in the 1930’s and 1940’s), the USYWCA National

⁸² For works that generally address the role of race in the USYWCA, see: Browder, “From uplift to agitation”; Mary Jane Brown, “‘Eradicating this evil’: Women in the American anti-lynching movement, 1892-1940” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Ohio State University, 1998); Felix, “Committed to their own”; Knupfer, “If You Can’t Push, Pull, if You Can’t Pull, Please Get Out of the Way”; Rose M. Murdock, “The Persistence of Black Women at the Williams Avenue YWCA,” *Journal of Women’s History* 15, no. 3 (2003): 190-196; Rief, “Thinking Locally, Acting Globally”; Judith Weisenfeld, *African American Women and Christian Activism: New York’s Black YWCA, 1905-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-46*; Frances Sanders Taylor, “On the Edge of Tomorrow’: Southern Women, the Student YWCA, and Race, 1920-1944” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Stanford University, 1984).

⁸³ Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-46*, 39.

⁸⁴ For the YMCA, see: Nina Mjagkij, *Light in the Darkness: African Americans and the YMCA, 1852-1946* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994).

Board dealt with “race” as a broad category as much as possible, rather than specific races. The National Board did this by generally group all non-white women together under the rubric of fostering interracial cooperation (as they understood it) within a geographic area, rather than attempting to build alliances with women of the same race from different areas.⁸⁵ In other words, the USYWCA leadership tended to try to foster women’s interracial relationships, rather than diasporic coalitions among the same race. An example of this an 1936 article by Tsai Kwei in *The Woman’s Press*. Kwei, who was a YWCA Secretary in China, wrote of her experiences while studying at Columbia. In her article, titled “A Jew, a Negro and a Chinaman!” she personalized racism against her, and stated that “it becomes plain why it is that it is easier for me to be the friend of Jews and Negroes than of anyone else in this country. We belong, in this sense, in the same category; I need not fear their unwillingness to be my friends, for they already bear all the social stigmata that can be heaped upon them.” Kwei’s advice “to remedy the situation” was “more intergroup organizations to change the feeling of belonging to only one exclusive group; more scientific study of the similarities and differences between different nations and races; more appreciation courses given in foreign arts and culture on the college level.” She concluded by stating that “[a]ll people... should be induced to study the real causes of their own prejudices against the members of other groups.”⁸⁶ Kwei’s presentation and advice were aimed at dealing with multiple races and ethnicities, rather than a single race; a type of advice that fit well with the USYWCA’s conception of Y-space as working to cross multiple types of groups. In other words, rather than a comparison of how Chinese people were treated in San Francisco, Chicago and New York, which could have served foster connections between

⁸⁵ There were some exceptions to this in that in larger cities there were sometimes branches of women grouped by nationality, in addition to African-American women, although these also tended to be under the USYWCA’s International Institute program. For example, San Francisco had a “Japanese” branch, although this type of explicit grouping was relatively rare (much more prevalent was the informal segregation of the “branch” system).

⁸⁶ Tsai Kwei, “A Jew, a Negro and a Chinaman!” *The Woman’s Press*, Vol. 30, No. 10, November 1936, 474-5.

Chinese women in these areas, Kwei presented an argument about racism in general, and emphasized interracial connections.

Second, USYWCA Secretaries envisioned Y-space as being based in meritocracy. In some ways, this idea supported racial segregation because it precluded building coalitions among women of different “merits” who were of one race. In other words, fostering African-American activism would in some ways reveal the extent to which African-Americans women as a group were underrepresented in Y-space because it would remove the local and individual levels that a meritocracy involved. Keeping the rhetoric focused on interracial cooperation therefore also kept the focus on all women within a geographic area, and when relationships broke down, the USYWCA was able to argue that the causes were individual, rather than group-based and systemic. For example, when a young African-American girl protested that she was being discriminated against in registering for a dressmaking class at her local YWCA, the General Secretary of the Association placed the blame on her. After meeting with the General Secretary upon the urging of a “Negro professional woman in the city,” whom the General Secretary had contacted, the Secretary asserted that the girl “realized that a new situation might develop in the Association, although she was not willing to help with it.” In response to the incident, the YWCA held conferences, the “Negro social worker who gave so much of her time and thought to this matter, was willing to try to understand the fears of the white people, to discuss the exclusion of the Negro girl from the class impartially and to work with unusual patience and understanding.” The General Secretary stated that “[t]his helped markedly to interpret to the white members of the Association the courtesy of her race.”⁸⁷ For the General Secretary,

⁸⁷ “Notes on the Development of Interracial Understanding in a Young Women’s Christian Association, March [illeg] 1926, 2-3, Microfilm Reel 108- Interracial- Negro- History, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

positive cooperation was based on the willingness of African-American women to patiently understand the concerns of white women members. It was not the integration of the YWCA.

The USYWCA's rhetoric that Y-space was merit-based also supported elite African-American women's claims to power over branches because only they had access to the types of education and training that the merit was based upon (whereas many of the white Secretaries were middle-class). Although most often it was an unspoken assumption that the favor would go in the direction of white women (as evidenced by the sparse numbers of African-American women on the National Board), the National Board occasionally spoke out when they perceived that their actions could potentially be read as favoring African-American women. For example, when the USYWCA National Board elected Juliette Derricotte in 1930, USYWCA Secretary Eva Bowles asserted that this was "solely upon her qualification and not because she was colored. This, to my way of thinking, clears away the sentimental approach on the part of whites toward Negro representation based upon color, and gives the Negro the courage to feel that one is chosen because of merit."⁸⁸ While the USYWCA did have some African-American leaders, it was in spite of their race, at least in the eyes of the USYWCA Secretaries. While it was assumed that white USYWCA Secretaries would be judged on their merit rather than their race, thus obscuring their racial privilege, as Bowles comment reveals, USYWCA leaders tended to assume African-American merited leadership positions in spite of their race. With maneuvers such as this, the USYWCA confirmed its stance as an interracial organization, even as leaders insisted that they were not violating the ideal of merit, or stigmatizing the African-American women they appointed.

⁸⁸ Lester A. Walton, "YWCA Has Achieved Great Work for Negro," *New York World* (8 June 1930), 8. Quoted in Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-46*, 133.

The USWYCA's attempts to construct Y-space as both ostensibly race-blind and based in meritocracy meant that leadership roles tended to be only accessible to very elite African-American women. As Historian Nancy Robertson illustrates, both African American and white women in the USYWCA generally adhered to policies of leadership of African-American sections by "better woman" or "talented tenth." She states that one of the reasons why African-American women eventually accepted the branch system was that it "allowed for black leadership."⁸⁹ This provided a "class-based racial solidarity" in which African-American YWCA women sought to deploy both "politics of respectability" as well as "racial self-help."⁹⁰ Class played a role in this the racial aspects of Y-space because there were relatively few African-American college educated women at the turn of the century, and therefore the African-American women who were part of the YWCA tended to be more accomplished than their white YWCA colleagues.⁹¹ For example, by the time of her election to the USYWCA National Board, Derricotte had been a highly successful Student Secretary with the USYWCA. This included being one of two African-American delegates to the 1924 World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) meeting in England, and one of three delegates to the 1928 meeting. She was well known internationally through a lecture tour of several countries, as well as to women in the United States through her writings for *the Woman's Press* and missionary publications. In 1929, Derricotte left the YWCA to become Dean of Women at Fisk University. Robertson asserts that her election was proof that "[e]xposed to refined, articulate black women, white women could be

⁸⁹ Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-46*, 26.

⁹⁰ Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-46*, 29-30. "Politics of Respectability" is a term from Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

⁹¹ Robertson states that "African American women who were active within the YWCA appear to have been relatively more prominent than their white counterparts." Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-46*, 146.

educated to recognize the former's abilities.”⁹² Despite this assertion of the USYWCA as ostensibly race-blind, then, the branch system and meritocracy reveal that both race and class played a role within the formation of Y-space within the United States.

By the early 1930's, there were signs that USYWCA Secretaries were becoming more conscious of the underlying racism within a race-blind Y-space. Juliette Derricotte's death was, as Robertson asserts, a moment of racial awareness within the USYWCA. It was also a marker of how far the YWCA had come by the 1930's that the USYWCA supported a “Negro Delegation to India” that had been requested by the Indian Student movement as a result of Derricotte's visit to Mysore. The rationale (as explained by a leader in the Indian Student Movement) was that “since Christianity in India is the ‘oppressor’s’ religion, there would be a unique value in having representatives of another oppressed group speak on the vitality and contribution of Christianity.”⁹³ The four allotted spots on the delegation were initially held by Howard Thurman (who would meet Gandhi for the first time on the tour, and help bring back Gandhi's non-violent tactics to influence the Civil Rights movement), his wife and former USYWCA Secretary Sue Bailey Thurman, and USYWCA Secretary Celestine Smith (the subject of Chapter 5).⁹⁴

Even in the face of the strength of the Indian student's request for a specifically African-American delegation, the USYWCA initially attempted to hold to a race-blind sense of Y-space by sending a multi-racial delegation to India, rather than a completely African-American one. In the meeting minutes, the Committee's deliberations reveal that although they found the “feature” of an interracial delegation “attractive”, the drawbacks outweighed the benefits. In addition to

⁹² Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-46*, 134.

⁹³ “Minutes: Committee on Negro Delegation to India, 600 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. March 13, 1934,” 1, Microfilm Reel 134- Student- Interracial- Negro Delegation to India, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁹⁴ For more on Howard Thurman, see: Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949); Howard Thurman, *A Strange Freedom: The Best of Howard Thurman on Religious Experience and Public Life* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998); Howard Thurman, *Howard Thurman: Essential Writings* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006).

being “contrary to the invitation from the Student Movement of India” it would “distinctly alter the purpose and objectives of the delegation” and “change the nature of the service rendered by an otherwise entirely Negro delegation.”⁹⁵ This interchange shows the extent to which the National Board was not only invested in interracial (and therefore in some ways race-blind) conceptions of Y-space, but also the ways they attempted to ignore the potential for connections with transnational Black activist groups. This was particularly remarkable given that the Foreign Division was located in New York City, which was a nexus of both African-American and Caribbean cultural and political activism.⁹⁶

One of the reasons that the USYWCA National Board may have attempted to send a multi-racial delegation to India was, as Robertson points out, that they saw Christianity as intimately tied to both democracy, racial justice, and fellowship (although she calls it “Christian sisterhood”).⁹⁷ Under this type of rhetoric, it would have been difficult to admit to the depth of segregation that the Indian Student Movement seemed to see. And indeed, by the late 1930’s and early 1940’s, it became increasingly evident to most members that the ideals of Y-space were fundamentally inconsistent with segregation. This did not mean that the path towards a desegregated USYWCA was either quick or smooth, however. Robertson states that in the light of the “Double Victory” campaign of World War II, African-American women were able to push for changes that culminated in the “Interracial Charter” at the 1946 convention, which formally ended racial segregation in the USYWCA.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ “Minutes Regarding the Decision on the Personnel of the Proposed Delegation to India,” date stamped April 19, 1934, Microfilm Reel 134- Student- Interracial- Negro Delegation to India, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁹⁶ See: Jason Parker, ““Capital of the Caribbean”: The African American-West Indian “Harlem Nexus” and the Transnational Drive for Black Freedom, 1940-1948,” *The Journal of African American History* 89, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 98-117; Jason Parker, *Brother's Keeper*; Ula Y. Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey: The Life & Times of Amy Jacques Garvey* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

⁹⁷ Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-46*, 154-5.

⁹⁸ Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-46*. See particularly Chapters 6 and 7.

USYWCA Secretaries- The Individual and the Global Community

As the preceding examples of religion, buildings, and recreation have demonstrated, USYWCA Secretaries had difficulties creating Y-space even within the United States. While the ideals of Y-space were supported in some ways—such as though lived Christianity, the presence of buildings, the importance of female expertise and women’s physical strength—it was also critically undermined in others. The most fundamental of these was race; while Y-space was ostensibly race-blind, the YWCA’s efforts were primarily geared to foster Y-space among white women. As the preceding examples also show, the programs within Y-space also shifted according to the broader cultural and social changes that were occurring in the United States. Given the degree and depth of these divisions and changes, the USYWCA used two key elements of the USYWCA to hold the community together. The first was in personnel, through a group of USYWCA Secretaries that were remarkably similar. Second was the organization itself, through a network of communications and meetings.

The USYWCA Secretaries who went abroad were remarkably similar in several key traits. In her history of the Foreign Division of the YWCA, Nancy Boyd has called these “Women of the First Class,” yet the reality was more complicated than such a phrase implies. First, Secretaries were college graduates, usually from the elite Northeastern women’s colleges, or Midwestern land-grant universities.⁹⁹ According to the personnel records, at least one-quarter of the Secretaries who went overseas had Bachelor’s degrees, although this number was probably higher, as the records include both Secretaries for whom the YWCA was a career, as well as those who went abroad more temporarily for events such as World War I work. Given the

⁹⁹ A random sampling from the personnel records shows this diversity. Colleges included Mississippi State College for Women; the University of California; Oberlin; University of Wisconsin; Syracuse University; University of Washington; Vassar; University of Nebraska; Stanford University; Lake Forest; Pomona College; Iowa State; the Mechanics Institute in Rochester, NY; Middlebury College; Teacher’s College; and Mt. Holyoke College. Personnel Records, Paper Records, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

USYWCA's emphasis on a college education, it is likely that almost all of the Secretaries who went abroad at non-war times had at least some undergraduate experience, if not a verifiable degree. A significant minority additionally held advanced degrees, such as Masters, Medical and Doctorates. A larger percentage of Secretaries, however, had some graduate work but not a full degree.¹⁰⁰

USYWCA Secretaries utilized this college education and further training to mark their perceptions of themselves as a group of professional women.¹⁰¹ Many had come into contact with the USYWCA in college, where they were encouraged to engage in social reform. However, women interested in social reform as a career had relatively few options, and so the USYWCA attempted to fill this niche by creating a "New Profession for Women."¹⁰² While some of the USYWCA's leadership positions were filled by volunteers, particularly at local levels, Secretaries themselves consistently emphasized their status as working professionals rather than unpaid volunteers. As was the case with the professionalization of other vocations also occurring at this time, this process involved several elements. First, USYWCA leadership asserted the Secretaries' professional status in their rhetoric. As Emma Bailey Speer, the President of the USYWCA National Board, put it in a report to the 1926 National Convention that it was the

¹⁰⁰ Persis M. Breed was typical of this trend. She graduated from Hampton College in Louisville, Kentucky in 1894, received her A.B. from Vassar in 1899, and during the 1907-1908 school year did some graduate work at Teachers College and Columbia. She capped off her training at the National Training School in 1913 before going to Argentina from 1913-1920. "Persis M. Breed," Personnel Record, Paper Records, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹⁰¹ This made them fundamentally different from the women of other groups, such as Hull House. As Blomberg argues in "Zenanas and Girlless Villages," the foreign missionary movement was also largely one of the middle-class. She asserts that "[t]he success of foreign-missionary fund raising was inextricably linked to the rise of the middle class" because these women were perceived to have "the means to support both women's charity work and their own leisure" Joan Jacobs Brumberg, "Zenanas and Girlless Villages: The Ethnology of American Evangelical Women, 1870-1910," *The Journal of American History* 69, no. 2 (September 1982): 347-371, 351-52.

¹⁰² Johanna Selles argues that Ruth Rouse and Agnes de Selincourt, both prominent members of the WSCF, "managed to transfer the ideals of social settlement work- which involved serving a community by living among its people- from college life into missions. In 1894 they outlined a plan for the Missionary Settlement for University Women (MSUW) in which women from English universities would establish a hostel in India and do educational, medical, and evangelistic work." Johanna M. Selles, "The Role of Women in the Formation of the World Student Christian Federation," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 30, no. 4 (October 2006): 189-194, 193.

women of the YWCA, such as Mabel Cratty, who “have worked out a new profession for women.” Through these efforts “there has come into being a profession that is and will be of as great value to the human race as are the recognized learned professions of the past, the professions on which human progress is dependent.” Speer’s assertion of professional and learned qualities was important, because it placed women’s value to “human progress” on these rather than biological reproduction. Speer emphasized the stakes of this shift into a new profession for women. She stated that the Secretaries’ work in the public sphere had enormous significance because it involved the awakening of women into public life. Speer asserted that that “[s]ometime this age in which we live will be looked upon by historians as significant chiefly because it was a period in which women emerged into consciousness and into a new desire to develop all their abilities and use all those abilities for the fullest benefit of the human race. They have been, until now, the world’s greatest unused resource.”¹⁰³ In this, Speer was positing a valuing of women that was not dependent on either marital or maternal status, which they had previously been valued for. Instead, as professionals they would “develop all their abilities,” not just the physical ability to bear children.

This assertion of professional status carried with it a veneer of neutrality among the YWCA’s constituents; USYWCA leaders asserted that through their professionalism, the Secretaries could serve as liaisons between the wealthy men and women who often supported YWCA work, and the poorer clientele. As Henrietta Roelofs stated at the 1940 Convention of the National Association Employed Officers, the position of the employed Secretary “was advantageous. As nearly as could be achieved, she was ‘classless’ and carried the confidence of a

¹⁰³ Mrs. Robert E. Speer, “Report of the National Board” in *The Ninth National Convention of the Young Women’s Christian Associations of the United States of America, Indianapolis at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, April 21-27, 1926, A Handbook for Study and Discussion* (New York: National Board of the Young Women’s Christian Associations of the United States of America, 1926). 44.

more favored group economically, that is the [volunteer] board and committee group, and she carried the confidence of the less favored economic group, as found in the general membership. Her integrity, objectivity, and personal disinterestedness were questioned by neither.”¹⁰⁴ The ideal Secretary was therefore a mediator, an advisor, and a negotiator; positions that the YWCA sought for itself as an organization, between religious, cultural, political, class, and racial groups.

USYWCA leaders asserted their professionalism not only in name and in position within the organization, but also in their professional training. For example, Miss Nettie Dunn, the first General Secretary of the National Committee, reported in a paper entitled “The Work of the General Secretary” in 1888, that: “the first real work of the secretary is to obtain accurate knowledge of all its [the USYWCA’s] definite objects and methods.” This included study of the organization: “its history, its theories, and the practical working of those theories in the best Associations. In her own mind she must reduce the work to a science and familiarize herself with its details. A clear understanding of the whole subject will alone fit her for wise plans and careful execution.”¹⁰⁵ Dunn’s assertions of this training as both theoretical and a science were part of the USYWCA leadership’s claim to professional qualities equivalent to those claimed by the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA)’s Secretaries.

In addition to this professional status and training, the USYWCA Secretaries had their own union: the National Association of Employed Officers (or NAEO). The NAEO was also divided into sections that reflected the different Secretarial specializations: Business and Professional; Girl Reserve; Industrial; Food Service Professional; Health Education; and General

¹⁰⁴ Henrietta Roelofs “The Challenge of the New Era” in “Fifteenth Biennial Convention, National Association of Employed Officers, Young Women’s Christian Association, April 6-8 1940, Hotel Chelsea, Atlantic City”, 1, Microfilm Reel 112-Leadership-NAPW, YWCA USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in Elizabeth Wilson, “Training of Young Women’s Christian Association Secretaries in the United States of America: A record of such training from 1891 to 1918 inclusive, amplifying printed history by Elizabeth Wilson, January 1933,” 4, Microfilm Reel 114- Leadership Training- NTS History thru Registration Cards- History, YWCA USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

Secretary.¹⁰⁶ The standards for admission to the NAEO reflected its standing as a professional organization. For “Senior Membership” Secretaries had to fulfill the following requirements: “1. Graduation from an accredited college or four year technical school... One semesters work shall be of graduate standing. 2. At least one course in the history and philosophy of the Y.W.C.A. 3. At least one course of college grade in religious education. 4. Two years of experience in the Y.W.C.A. or closely related field of educational or social work.”¹⁰⁷ Junior membership was open to those “employed officers entering the Y.W.C.A. who are graduates of an accredited college or technical school. Within three years junior members must qualify for senior membership.”¹⁰⁸ While junior membership was relatively easy for USYWCA Secretaries given their general educational background, they would have had to be relatively dedicated to being a USYWCA leader in order to take the further training required for senior membership. The strenuous requirements and time limits were likely not only geared towards a professional standing, but to ensure that women were focused on their professional advancement.

This professionalization had a cost however, and the USYWCA tended to view their status as professional women as largely incompatible with marriage. USYWCA Secretaries were therefore all single; if a Secretary married, even if abroad, she generally left the YWCA’s formal employ. Of the approximately 922 American Secretaries whom I have calculated went overseas from 1890-1939, only 132 (or just over 14%) of them have married names listed in their records,

¹⁰⁶ However, not everyone who held the title of that section was a member of the NAEO. For example, at the 1936 convention, a “Report of the meetings of The General Secretaries’ Section of the NAEO” revealed that of the 501 General Secretaries and Branch Executives of the YWCA, only 78 were members of the NAEO and the General Secretaries’ Section. “Report of the meetings of The General Secretaries’ Section of the N.A.E.O., Colorado Springs Convention, 1936,” 5, Microfilm Reel 112- Leadership Services-NAPW, YWCA USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹⁰⁷ “National Association of Employed Officers of the Y.W.C.A., MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS FOR ADMISSION TO N.A.E.O., In operation from January [illeg] 1935 to February [illeg] 1937,” 1, Microfilm Reel 112, YWCA USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹⁰⁸ “National Association of Employed Officers of the Y.W.C.A., MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS FOR ADMISSION TO N.A.E.O., In operation from January [illeg] 1935 to February [illeg] 1937,” 1, Microfilm Reel 112, YWCA USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

and so were either married at the time, or much more likely, were married after returning to the US.¹⁰⁹ This incompatibility of Secretarial work and marriage—and the sense of loss when a Secretary married—was a common theme in the YWCA records. For example, one of the reasons for “Unsatisfactory Service” according to the NAEO was that of a “[m]arried secretary putting obligation as wife above that of work.”¹¹⁰ Privately, Secretaries’ marriages were often reported matter-of-factly or with a sense of loss. More publicly, they tended to be expressed in a teasing manner, such as in Miss Davis’ address to the 1930 convention, when she stated in an aside, “Some of you remember Effie Price, so lovely, so beautiful and a Mr. Gladding who snatched her away from a Silver Bay conference and married her without our leave.”¹¹¹ The implication of these incompatibilities was that marriage and running a household was a full-time job. One was either a professional working Secretary or a wife, but not both.

Perhaps because they were single, Secretaries seem to have viewed the YWCA as a type of alternate family. Many of the partnerships between YWCA Secretaries were lifelong relationships, some of which were romantic, as Karen Garner explains in her biography of Maude Russell. Garner explains that Russell had relationships with Mary Bentley, who had hired her to work in the San Francisco YWCA office, and Ann Gron Seesholtz who was “an American YWCA foreign secretary who visited Student and City Associations throughout China on behalf

¹⁰⁹ I have compiled these numbers from the “Roster of Advisory Secretaries” (p 287-320) in Boyd, *Emissaries*, as well as the personnel files in the YWCA USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹¹⁰ *Proceedings of the Ninth Convention of the National Association of Employed Officers of the Young Women’s Christian Association of the United States of America, Asilomar, California, April 10-12, 1928*, 35, Microfilm Reel 112- Leadership Services-NAPW, YWCA USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹¹¹ Miss [Helen?] Davis, “Address- Once Upon a Time Not So Very Long Ago,” 66, in “Proceedings of the Tenth Convention, National Association of Employed Officers of the Young Women’s Christian Association of the United States of America, Detroit, Michigan, April 20-23, 1930,” Microfilm Reel 112- Leadership Services-National Association of Professional Workers, YWCA USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

of the National Board in Shanghai.”¹¹² Garner asserts that although it is impossible to know whether Russell would have embraced the term “lesbian,” her relationships with Bentley and Seesholtz were romantic. “[T]he letters she [Russell] wrote to Mary Bentley were explicit enough to spark an extreme reaction: when her papers were deposited at the New York Public Library in 1990, the executor of Russell’s will decided to destroy the Russell-Bentley correspondence, labeled ‘love letters’ by the archivist who initially sorted through them.”¹¹³ While the relationship may have been embarrassing to Russell’s family, it does not seem to have been a problem for the USYWCA. When Bentley died in 1940, Russell’s “YWCA friends in the United States and throughout China sent cables and letters to her in Guiyang expressing their deepest sympathy.” In the U.S., YWCA leaders “Deng Yuzhi and Sarah Lyon attended the memorial service in Germantown, and their presence at the service also comforted Russell; they represented her and her love for Bentley.”¹¹⁴ It is difficult if not impossible to determine the extent of these types of romantic relationships within the YWCA from the existing record base. What is important to note is that the USYWCA was willing to provide open community support to at least some partners.¹¹⁵

In some ways, this USYWCA community may have replaced the Secretaries’ natal families, as evidenced by their tendency to list non-natal family members as emergency contacts.

¹¹² Garner, *Precious Fire*, 44.

¹¹³ Garner, *Precious Fire*, 35-36.

¹¹⁴ Garner, *Precious Fire*, 178.

¹¹⁵ For works that discuss lesbianism prior to World War II, see: Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); John D’Emilio and Estelle B Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Sarah Potter, ““Undesirable Relations”: Same-Sex Relationships and the Meaning of Sexual Desire at a Women’s Reformatory during the Progressive Era,” *Feminist Studies* 30, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 394-415; Heather Lee Miller, “Sexologists Examine Lesbians and Prostitutes in the United States, 1840-1940,” *NWSA Journal* 12, no. 3 (Autumn 2000): 67-91.

Some, like Elizabeth Boies Cotton, were orphaned.¹¹⁶ Relatively few Secretaries listed their fathers as emergency contacts, instead listing mothers or parents jointly. This may have been because fathers and brothers could exert influence on women not to go abroad; if a father was not present, there might have been a greater chance that a woman would go into the Foreign Division. In fact, family obligations could and did bring Secretaries home and prevented them from returning abroad. A 1930 survey by the Foreign Division of returned Secretaries revealed that “Family” obligations were the third highest reason for Secretaries to return from abroad (behind “end of Term” and Health”), and the most cited reason for not returning to the foreign field.¹¹⁷ Familial obligations included care-taking of various family members, or being present for a family member’s funeral and settling of affairs.¹¹⁸

In addition to being professional, single women, USYWCA Secretaries were a peer group. Although the YWCA often did not note the birth dates of Secretaries (which would make an age going abroad calculation possible), in a study of Secretaries who returned to the US from 1920-1930, Elizabeth McFarland asserted that most of the women who went abroad with the USYWCA were between the ages of 25 and 35. As she stated, they were “mature yet young

¹¹⁶ Personnel Record for “Cotton, Elizabeth Boies.” Paper Records, YWCA USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. Of those who listed relatives as emergency contacts, the relationship was overwhelmingly that of “sister,” with just over 7% of the total the emergency contacts falling into that category. Next were “brother” and “father” at about 4.5% each. However, there were relatively few Secretaries who listed family as contacts, and the vast majority of relationships—almost 50%--of those who named contacts were not noted, and almost 24% did not name anyone as an emergency contact. Of the those who named a contact without stating a relationship to them, only 10% had the same address as the home address for the Secretary. The rest of these, which comprised almost 39% of the total number of contacts, had no relationship listed and the contract address was not the same as the Secretaries’ home address. Paper Records, YWCA USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹¹⁷ Elizabeth McFarland, “Report of a Study of the Experience of Returned Foreign Secretaries, June 1931,” 8, Microfilm Reel 112- Leadership Services-NAPW, YWCA USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹¹⁸ Maude Russell returned to California from China in 1919 when her father passed away. She went back “as soon as her father’s affairs were settled.” Garner, *Precious Fire*, 36.

enough to adapt easily to different living conditions and a new language.”¹¹⁹ From McFarland’s assessment in the 1930 study, only eight of the 139 respondents were under age 25, and 86 were between ages 25 and 35. This was “ninety-four or a little more than two-thirds of the entire number” who entered the foreign field “before they were thirty-five.”¹²⁰

With the exception of Celestine Smith (the subject of Chapter 5), all of the Secretaries who went abroad were white. To some degree, the college education requirements meant that racial composition of the USYWCA overseas Secretaries was something of a self-fulfilling category. At the turn of the century, there were comparatively few opportunities for African-American women, either at African-American colleges, or the few colleges that were integrated, and this therefore limited the pool of potential African-American YWCA Secretaries. For example, Linda Perkins notes in her article on the integration of the Seven Sister’s colleges that while some of the schools admitted African-American women, many did not. At Mount Holyoke, for example, “only 39” African-American women graduated between 1883 and 1964.¹²¹ However, as the racial politics of the YWCA both in the U.S. and abroad illustrate, there was also substantially more at issue than college education.

Finally, unlike missionaries, USYWCA Secretaries were all temporarily located abroad. The USYWCA intended that Secretaries’ time abroad would generally last four to five years, and would be part of a longer period of professional service in the USYWCA within the United States. Indeed, the 1936 survey revealed that the time in which the Secretary served abroad was one of the key components to both the desirability of foreign service to Secretaries, and it greatly

¹¹⁹ Elizabeth McFarland, “Report of a Study of the Experience of Returned Foreign Secretaries, June 1931,” 8, Microfilm Reel 112-Leadership Services- NAPW, YWCA USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹²⁰ Elizabeth McFarland, “Report of a Study of the Experience of Returned Foreign Secretaries, June 1931,” 8, Microfilm Reel 112-Leadership Services- NAPW, YWCA USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹²¹ Linda M. Perkins, “The Racial Integration of the Seven Sister Colleges,” *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, no. 19 (Spring 1998): 104-108, 106.

impacted the perception of the US Secretaries about their compatriots who had served abroad. When asked if their “immediate reaction be favorable or unfavorable” to a length abroad of “several years with continuance of your professional experience at home on your return,” Secretaries’ reactions were good—87% of Secretaries with foreign experience and 77% without foreign experience had positive responses. These same respondents replied considerably less favorably to the proposition that “service abroad were suggested to you as a life career, with due provision for furlough”—only 46% of Secretaries with foreign experience, and a mere 17% of those without had favorable reactions.¹²² When asked to elaborate on these reactions over the course of several questions, Secretaries’ responses supported these percentages, generally marking ten years as the turning point. For example, in response to whether Secretaries returned to the U.S. less than ten years after leaving were “looked upon by local board and staff people as more valuable because of her world outlook and broader contacts, than the secretary who has had continuous experience in the United States for the same time,” the responses were positive. Forty-one Secretaries said that the Secretary was “More Valuable,” only nine said “Less,” three “Equal,” and four “Uncertain.” These numbers changed dramatically for those in service more than ten years—only four said “More Valuable,” forty-five said “Less,” and eight were “Uncertain.”¹²³ Just as in other imperial institutions, this reveals that USYWCA Secretaries perceived that one of the principal dangers of being on the periphery of the community was that one could become too assimilated to that periphery, instead of maintaining ties to the center.

¹²² “National Association of Employed Officers of the YWCA Report of Committee on Study of Foreign Service,” 1, Microfilm Reel 112- Leadership Services-NAPW, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹²³ “National Association of Employed Officers of the YWCA Report of Committee on Study of Foreign Service,” 2, Microfilm Reel 112-Leadership Services-NAPW, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

By constructing this group of women with very similar characteristics, it is obvious that the USYWCA leaders thought that Secretaries would have something of a syncretic effect, transporting their work between the United States and various areas abroad. Training in the U.S., both in terms of the schooling and service in individual YWCAs, would prepare USYWCA Secretaries in the latest methods, which they would then utilize abroad. Upon their return after only a few years, their worldly experiences would make them true cosmopolitans. For example, when Elizabeth Wilson built a house for her retirement after being in India, she had a Christian blessing ceremony which mimicked the dedication of houses in India; she even named the house “Asrama” which was a Hindu word for a hermit’s retreat or tranquil place—a name that she evidently did not feel conflicted with her status as a Deacon of the Methodist Episcopal Church.¹²⁴

However, the USYWCA was tied to YWCAs around the world by more than just Secretaries, and the organization was also populated by women who were not part of the USYWCA. The YWCA as an organization therefore worked in several ways to foster uniformity and connections among the various Associations, and there were opportunities for non-USYWCA women to access USYWCA resources. For example, YWCA Secretaries also generally shared training experiences. Leadership ranks tended to be dominated by USYWCA Secretaries, whose training was dictated by the USYWCA National Board. This training generally occurred at the National Training School (NTS), which began its first academic year in September 1908. Although students specialized into one of several areas, depending on which

¹²⁴ See: Elizabeth Wilson to “Dear Friends who have sent Christmas Greetings” December 31 1928; newspaper article, “Uses Indian Rights for Dedication;” and Elizabeth Wilson to Friends, September 17, 1927, Microfilm Reel 57- India- Personal Correspondence- Elizabeth Wilson YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

job they were preparing for, they were all required to take a wide variety of courses, and the curriculum did not distinguish between those staying within the United States and those going abroad.¹²⁵

NTS students also met Secretaries from other countries in their classes. While these tended to be from Britain and its dependencies, some came from countries with a large US mission presence. For example, in the first class of ten graduates in Chicago in 1909, there were seven from the US, and one from England, one from Scotland, and one from Canada. In addition to these students, visiting Secretaries also stayed at the residence and sometimes took classes. In the first year Katie Spaulding, who had been the office secretary for the WYWCA and Christabel Barker, who was General Secretary of the Pretoria, South Africa YWCA, were also in residence part of the time.¹²⁶ These students also took the same classes as the USYWCA Secretaries. For example, Roberta Chang (Chen-Lo Chang) from the YWCA in Shanghai, took courses on Educational work and Association work at the NTS as well as Sociology at Columbia, Educational classes at Teacher's College, and "Christian Ethics" at the Union Theological Seminary.¹²⁷ Their work at the NTS was intended not only to provide USYWCA Secretaries with professional training but also to help USYWCA Secretaries foster connections with both other organizations within the United States and Secretaries abroad.

¹²⁵ Most of the general courses were in the first semester or two, so that students could specialize in later coursework. These included: "Old Testament History and Literature;" "Life of Christ;" "Principles and Methods of Bible Teaching;" "Hymnody;" "Economics;" "Current Movements;" "History, Polity and Administration of the YWCA;" "Public Speaking;" and "Personal, Domestic, and Community Living." Elizabeth Wilson, "Training of Young Women's Christian Association Secretaries in the United States of America: A record of such training from 1891 to 1918 inclusive, amplifying printed history by Elizabeth Wilson, January 1933," 1, Microfilm Reel 114 "Leadership Training- NTS History thru Registration Cards- History," YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹²⁶ Elizabeth Wilson, "Training of Young Women's Christian Association Secretaries in the United States of America: A record of such training from 1891 to 1918 inclusive, amplifying printed history by Elizabeth Wilson, January 1933," 32, Microfilm Reel 114 "Leadership Training- NTS History thru Registration Cards- History," YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹²⁷ Registration card for "Chang, Roberta," USYWCA Microfilm Reel 114- National Training School- History thru Registration Cards- Registration Cards," YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

The YWCA also attempted to maintain global connections through an almost constant round of conferences, retreats, and camps.¹²⁸ Conferences took place in rotating locations, drew together different groups of women, and provided a common experience that often cut across geographic boundaries. For example, within the United States, USYWCA national conferences often took place outside of the headquarters in New York.¹²⁹ Internationally, WYWCA Conferences usually took place far from the WYWCA's Geneva headquarters, although they were still predominantly located in Europe.¹³⁰ Although the attendees tended to be mainly Euro-American, non-Western nations were represented and sent representatives. While these were often Euro-American women who had spent time in a particular country, at times indigenous women attended as representatives, and thus had access to the YWCA's global community, particularly in the later period of my study. For example, at the 1911 convention, USYWCA Secretaries Mary B. Hill and Caroline Macdonald spoke about the YWCA in India and China, respectively.¹³¹ By the mid 1920's there were more non-USYWCA Secretaries attending USWYCA conferences, such as Soledad Garduno from Manila, Michi Kawai from Japan, Elena Ramirez from Mexico, and Grace Yang from China.¹³²

¹²⁸ The local conferences were generally most frequent, but there were also regional, national, and WYWCA conferences at various intervals, with the greatest length of time being four years for WYWCA conferences.

¹²⁹ They were held in: St. Paul, MN (1909); Indianapolis, IN (1911); Richmond, VA (1913); Los Angeles, CA (1915); Milwaukee, WI (1926); Detroit, MI (1930); Colorado Springs, CO (1936); and Columbus, OH (1940).

¹³⁰ For example, conferences were held in London (1898); Geneva (1902); Paris (1906); Berlin (1910); Stockholm (1914); Washington (1924); Oxford (1926); Budapest (1928); Geneva (1934); Muskoka, Canada (1938); and Washington (1941).

¹³¹ *Report of Proceedings, Third Biennial Convention of the Young Womens Christian Associations of the United States of America, Indianapolis, Indiana April 19-24, 1911* (New York: National Board of the Young Women's Christian Associations of the United States of America, 1911).

¹³² "Special Guests, Fraternal Delegates and Subject Specialists" *Report of Proceedings, Ninth Biennial Convention of the Young Women's Christian Associations of the United States of America at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, April 21-27, 1926* (New York: National Board of the Young Women's Christian Associations of the United States of America), 244-248.

These conferences not only fostered connections between individual women, but also bolstered the USYWCA's imagined community.¹³³ The YWCA's various news sources reported on gatherings in order to give the broader YWCA community access to the speeches and business of the conferences. For example, the Foreign Division meeting in Richmond, Virginia, in early 1935 was summarized by Margaret Brown Moore in the March 1935 issue of *The Woman's Press*. Moore asserted that the meeting allowed global fellowship to materialize; in "three days of discussion, it ceased to be a remote piece of machinery operated from Geneva by individuals who are merely names." Instead, it "became a warm fellowship in which American women... realized their oneness" with German and Japanese women—the two nationalities which in 1935 would have had particular resonance.¹³⁴

In addition to conferences, the YWCA drew its vast membership together through its global communications network. A significant part of this was generated by the USYWCA's publications department, the *Woman's Press*. This produced a large number of works including tracts on religious subjects, biographies of prominent YWCA women, guides for producing folk festivals, and manuals for civic participation. The various bureaus within the USYWCA also authored and distributed many handbooks on specific issues, such as how to lay out buildings, lead meetings, and raise funds. However, many books on more general subjects were authored by individuals who were leaders in their fields rather than leaders of the YWCA—such as suffragist Harriot Stanton Blatch, Carrie Chapman Catt, and ethnologist Frances Densmore. Occasionally, books were written by "insiders," such as *The Red Flag at Ararat*, published by the YWCA's *Woman's Press* in 1932. This was an account of a trip to Armenia written by

¹³³ For more on the ideas of an imagined community as supported specifically by print culture, see: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*. While there are some important differences between the USYWCA as a transnational organization and Anderson's imagined communities as fostering nationalism, the fact that print played an important part in creating community is common to both.

¹³⁴ Margaret Brown Moore "A World Service Plan" *The Woman's Press*, Vol. 29, No. 3, March 1935, 132.

National Board member A. Y. Yeghenian, an Armenian American.¹³⁵ These publications helped to link the YWCAs in the United States with those abroad. For example, in 1911 the publication department sent the *Foreign Department Annual* to “every city and student Association” because they “felt that every Association would want to have the information therein contained and that it ought to have a place in every Association library.”¹³⁶

While the publications were accessible for everyone (ideally located in all Association libraries), the USYWCA also worked to create a more informal community specifically centered around USYWCA Secretaries working abroad. The main originator of this effort was Sarah Lyon, the head of the Foreign Department from 1923 to 1944.¹³⁷ As part of her duties, Lyon regularly wrote to the Secretaries abroad. This correspondence generally followed two tracks: logistical/business information, and community-building. In the former category, correspondence was generally more formal. For example, when discussing issues such as wages and pay, leave, and official USYWCA business, she addressed her readers as “Foreign Secretaries,” “American Secretaries in Foreign Division Service,” “My dear Colleague in Foreign Service.”¹³⁸ In contrast to these were her “pastoral letters.” These were “pastoral” in both senses of the term; Lyon was

¹³⁵ Aghavnic Yeghia Yeghenian, *The Red Flag at Ararat*, (New York: The Woman's Press, 1932). For more on Yeghenian, see: Benjamin F. Alexander, “Armenian and American: The Changing Face of Ethnic Identity and Diasporic Nationalism, 1915-1955” (Ph.D. Dissertation, City University of New York, 2005); Neil Betten and Raymond A. Mohl, “From Discrimination to Repatriation: Mexican Life in Gary, Indiana, during the Great Depression,” *The Pacific Historical Review* 42, no. 3 (August 1973): 370-388

¹³⁶ “Editorial” *The Association Monthly* Vol. V, Number 11, (December 1911) (New York: National Board of the Young Womens Christian Associations of the United States of America), 463.

¹³⁷ Sarah Lyon Personnel Record, Paper Records, YWCA USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. Lyon had been steeped in both foreign missionary culture and the YWCA. A graduate of Mount Holyoke college in 1906, Lyon went almost immediately to the YWCA National Training School in Chicago. She served as the Industrial Secretary for the Akron, Ohio, YWCA from 1906 to 1907, returning to Mount Holyoke during 1907 and 1908 as Student Secretary. In 1908, she went back to Akron to be the General Secretary of the YWCA, where she remained until 1917 when, according to the Mt. Holyoke directory, she became the Executive Secretary of the Foreign Division. *One Hundred Year Biographical Directory of Mount Holyoke College 1837-1937*, Bulletin Series 30, no. 5; published and compiled by the Alumnae Association of Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Massachusetts <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/~dalbino/women20/slyon.html>

¹³⁸ Sarah Lyon, August 9, 1929, September 10, 1928, and July 3, 1928. Paper Records, YWCA USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

both leader of a far-flung flock on a common mission, and she also sat at the center of that community, with the national metropole as her vantage point. As a leader, Lyon tended to take a humorous track, calling the reader by a never-repeating series of what she considered to be endearments: “ ‘Worldly’ Friends’,” “Foreign Folk,” “Folksy Foreigners,” “Sister Travelers,” “Travelled Sisters,” “World Cooperators,” and “Bridge Builders” to name a few.¹³⁹ With this informal tone, Lyon likely intended to foster a sense of fellowship and democratic community; the tone of the letters was not of a boss to her subordinates, but rather one of one friend to another.

The letters were also pastoral in the sense that Lyon frequently described events in New York as a shared experience. For example, one letter to “Boon Companions” began “[a] soft haze over the river, the Stars and Stripes floating gaily above the Claremont’s green lawn and a ceaseless procession of cars passing by on the Drive provide the natural and humanly natural scene observable from our apartment windows as I ‘take pen in hand.’” She then attempted to bring her readers literally into this scene: “thoughts fly farther and faster than eyesight, making it easy enough to pretend that each of you is sitting in the big chair at the window ready for a companionable chat.”¹⁴⁰ While Lyon may have assumed shared New York vantage point, there is evidence that information and requests for information did not flow unidirectionally. For example, one letter closed with questions about reading materials. Lyon asked, “[w]hat papers and magazines do you see? Do you get new books? What sorts? How do you get your reading matter? By ordering yourself or from friends? About how much do you spend a year on reading

¹³⁹ “ ‘Worldly’ Friends’,” September 12, 1929; “Foreign Folk,” December 4, 1929; “Folksy Foreigners,” March 28, 1930; “Sister Travelers,” September 3 1930; “Travelled Sisters,” January 1 1931; “World Cooperators,” April 16 1931; and “Bridge Builders” November 8 1931 all in Paper Records, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹⁴⁰ Sarah Lyon to “Boon Companions,” Sunday, May 31, 1936, Paper Records, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

matter? What do you need to make it a balanced ration? Don't answer these seriation, just discourse on the subject ad lib!"¹⁴¹ These connections, built through personnel, training, conferences, and communications, show that the USYWCA sought to foster connections with YWCAs around the world.

Conclusion

This example of the ways that the USYWCA worked within the United States illustrates the fragility and instability of Y-space, even where USYWCA Secretaries were part of the racial and cultural majority. As would be the case in the programs that Secretaries ran elsewhere, one of the central tensions in Y-space was between their rhetoric and the reality on the ground. While USYWCA Secretaries aspired to create Y-space that was feminist, egalitarian, inclusive, and race-blind, their efforts were usually unsuccessful, even in the United States. At times, the USYWCA Secretaries undermined their own rhetoric, such as when they placed main branch buildings near white-collar businesses, rather than locating them nearer to factories. At times there were geographic divisions that undermined ideal Y-space, such as when the Southern YWCA leaders pushed for the branch system. At still other times, the USYWCA Secretaries' vision was also undermined by their alliances, such as when they depended upon money from philanthropists for buildings, even while they espoused the ownership of buildings by all women.

This tension between idealized Y-space and the practice on the ground also reveals that the place of Y-space was never assured, and it was almost always being contested by a variety of groups. From the membership and basis of the USYWCA, to their buildings and their usage, to the purposes of women's bodies, to the inclusion of African-American women, USYWCA

¹⁴¹ Sarah Lyon, May 2, 1929, 3, Paper Records, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

Secretaries constantly juggled a variety of competing interests which were often trying to lay claim or co-opt some aspect of Y-space. At times opposition came from within the USYWCA itself, such as with the case of changing the membership basis and racial inclusion.

In the face of these fluctuations and inconsistencies, the USYWCA attempted to construct a group of Secretaries who shared many characteristics and had a similar mentality. Secretaries went through the same educational process and often served in USYWCA's before they went abroad, so it is logical to assume that the ones who went abroad shared most of the characteristics as those who stayed in the United States. This meant that the Secretarial pool may have been the most consistent aspect of Y-space, either inside or outside the United States. As the most stable aspect of the USYWCA's sprawling global efforts, the USYWCA's attempts to hold these women together in a global community were therefore foundational to the success of Y-space, even if it was to only exist in the shared rhetoric of these women.

This cohesion was an important part of the USYWCA's work as they sought to extend Y-space into other areas of the world. Once the Secretaries left the U.S., they became part of the USYWCA with the other global YWCA players operating outside of the United States. Indeed the YWCA had originated in the 1840's in London, and the British YWCA played a major role both in British colonies and within the global umbrella organization, the World YWCA (WYWCA).¹⁴² The WYWCA had, in the words of WYWCA Secretary Anna Rice, a "double character: on the one hand, it was a center uniting National Associations for fellowship and common purpose; on the other hand, in carrying out its object of the 'development and extension of the YWCA in all lands,' it of necessity performed for many Associations functions normally belonging to a national movement." Rice states that this was particularly important "[a]s time went on" and Secretaries from the U.S. and Britain in particular had a "natural tendency... to

¹⁴² Rice, *A History of the World's Young Women's Christian Association*, 7-16.

look to their own home national office rather than to the World's office for guidance.”¹⁴³

However, this distinction between the WYWCA and the U.S. and British YWCAs is something of a false distinction because the WYWCA was dominated by U.S. and British YWCA leaders from its inception. Rice states that “[t]he immediate responsibility” for forming the WYWCA “rested almost entirely upon the shoulders of a small number of leaders in Great Britain and America.”¹⁴⁴ Indeed, the U.S. and British YWCA continued to control the WYWCA's governing boards; British women were the President and American women were the General Secretary of the WYWCA until World War II (with the exception of Ms. C. M. van Asch van Wijck, from the Netherlands, who was President from 1930-1938).

On this global stage, the USYWCA was also not always the most powerful group within the YWCA. Initially, the British YWCA was more prominent, partially through its “colonial” division, which controlled their activities within British colonies. However, the USYWCA quickly gained influence during the first few decades of the twentieth century, particularly during and following World War I. As Rice states, the USYWCA's presence in Europe through the U.S. war effort, and the ability of Secretaries to influence European YWCAs meant that “the responsible leaders” of the USYWCA “were to be found working continuously and closely with those who administered world policies.”¹⁴⁵ The close relationship between the USYWCA and the WYWCA worked to expand the power and influence of the USYWCA. For example, when local women asked for a YWCA, they officially did so through the WYWCA, however, they also often petitioned the USYWCA directly. This meant that it was very likely that a USYWCA Secretary would be sent to answer calls from various locations around the world, where she was usually in a position of power in that local YWCA. The USYWCA, and in particular the

¹⁴³ Rice, *A History of the World's Young Women's Christian Association*, 82.

¹⁴⁴ Rice, *A History of the World's Young Women's Christian Association*, 57.

¹⁴⁵ Rice, *A History of the World's Young Women's Christian Association*, 169.

National Board in New York City, therefore wielded a great deal of material and ideological power within the YWCA.

When the USYWCA sent its Secretaries into this global context, the leaders may have hoped that Y-space was both stable and able to be transported to any geographic location. However, as the preceding discussion of the roles of religion, housing, physical fitness, and race in the USYWCA illustrates, Y-space was often unstable (or at least rarely fully realized), even within the “metropole.” And as the following chapters will illustrate, as USYWCA Secretaries fanned out across the globe, their project of recreating Y-space was also often unstable and incomplete. In other words, while the USYWCA Secretaries attempted to create a space of global fellowship, time and again Y-space proved to rest on a foundation that was more wobbly than solid.

CHAPTER 2: INDIA—SPIRITUAL SUBJECTS

In February 1895, Agnes Hill, the first USYWCA Secretary to go abroad, arrived in Bombay, India. There, she gave an address entitled “The Model Young Women’s Christian Association” to the YWCA of Bombay. Hill later recalled that when she started, “there was great enthusiasm to think the first American Secretary had come out, but I noticed that as I spoke the atmosphere of the meeting kept going lower, till I thought it would reach zero.” She attributed this discouragement to the fact that with her “American training” she “laid stress on the four departments of work, physical, social, intellectual and spiritual, and what each should mean.” She characterized her audience as “glad that I was going to Madras and was not to stop in Bombay” because they said “[t]hat is very lovely for London or for the United States, but it can never be worked in India.” Hill got their message that she needed to adjust to local conditions and accordingly adapted; she decided that at least “until [she] got [her] bearings” and acclimated to local dynamics, “it would be better to stick to spiritual subjects.”¹ According to USYWCA Secretary Elizabeth Wilson, who later wrote of the incident, the Bombay YWCA Newsletter characterized the encounter differently. The author recounted that Hill’s speech, at Mrs. Squire’s house on Malabar Hill, was an “account of an organization lately formed, having London for its centre, with the object of widening the basis of the Y.W.C.A. so as to embrace the whole world.” The article concluded that the Bombay Association “heartily wish Godspeed to Miss Hill in her work for the great Master among the young women of this country.”²

¹ From the journal of Agnes Hill (no further citation available). Quoted in Elizabeth Wilson, *The Story of Fifty Years: Of the Young Women’s Christian Association of India, Burma and Ceylon* (Calcutta: YMCA Association Press, 1925), 23.

² Bombay YWCA Newsletter (no further citation available). Quoted in Elizabeth Wilson, *The Story of Fifty Years*, 23.

At first glance, the disconnect between Hill and the Bombay YWCA women seems to be merely a struggle for whose voice would prevail within the YWCA in India. In some senses, the incident proved the success of the local colonial elite over a representative from the metropole. Hill's presence garnered excitement in the Bombay YWCA, until it became clear that she was radically out of step with the views of Bombay YWCA leaders, and the women told her so. Hill's response was to take these women's advice and adjust her rhetoric to the program areas that they were more comfortable with. The obvious sticking point was that the Bombay YWCA women viewed the WYWCA as trying to claim the work that was already established in India. The newsletter account demonstrated this by minimizing the WYWCA; the article did not refer to the World YWCA by name, but as, an "organization lately formed" that sought to widen the scope of the YWCA's work beyond what the Bombay YWCA leaders felt was beneficial to them. By associating Hill with the WYWCA, the newsletter article also minimized her importance; Hill and her plans did not matter much to the Bombay YWCA and they could simply wish her "Godspeed" on her way to Madras.

At work here, however, was much more than a simple internal power struggle between the World and Bombay YWCAs. The incident also points to larger undercurrents in which USYWCA Secretaries navigated the British imperial society as Americans, in which they could speak for or against Empire. In the late 1890's there were strong currents of Anglo-American collaboration in Empire, particularly following the Spanish-American-Philippine War.³ Even into the 1920's and 1930's, after events in India such as the massacre at Amritsar, some American women also directly supported the British imperial cause, through works such as

³ Paul A. Kramer, "Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons: Race and Rule between the British and United States Empires, 1880-1910," *The Journal of American History* 88, no. 4 (March 2002): 1315-1353.

Katherine Mayo's pro-imperial *Mother India*.⁴ More often, however, American participation in the British Empire took place through reform movements. For example, the Executive Committee of the American Ramabai Association wrote the constitution for Pandita Ramabai's school for widows, Sharada Sadan.⁵ There were also Americans who were prominent in explicitly nationalist movements, such as Samuel Evans Stokes, the only American to participate in the All India Congress Committee, as well as those in the U.S. who supported Indian independence and Gandhi, such as John Haynes Holmes, pastor of the Community Church in New York, and Roger Baldwin, founder of the American Civil Liberties Union.⁶

While some Americans actively supported British imperial aims, such support was far from a certain, and it is clear from Hill's account that the British women were unsure whether Hill would work with or against them, and that they were making it clear to her that they had the home field advantage. And, given the location and composition of the YWCA in India, they did have a clear advantage. When Hill arrived at the YWCA in India, it was essentially a British organization. Individual YWCAs were primarily located along the country's extensive railway network, in the various denominational missions, and in women's educational institutions. The women who ran these YWCAs were largely British "volunteers" and their efforts were unpaid by the YWCA, which meant that they had to be wealthy enough to support unpaid work, or that they had income through another institution, such as a mission or school. These volunteer statuses and institutional connections meant that many of the women at the top of the local YWCAs were also in the upper echelons of society, such as the women at the Bombay YWCA meeting. The meeting occurred at a house in Malabar Hill, a very exclusive section of Bombay,

⁴ Katherine Mayo, *Mother India*, ed. Mrinalini Sinha (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

⁵ Padma Anagol, "Indian Christian Women and Indigenous Feminism, c. 1850-c.1920," in *Gender and Imperialism*, ed. Clare Midgley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 79-103, 91.

⁶ Kenton J. Clymer, "Samuel Evans Stokes, Mahatma Gandhi, and Indian Nationalism," *The Pacific Historical Review* 59, no. 1 (February 1990): 51-76, 52.

and Hill describes them as “all English speaking although some of them were Indian, some Anglo-Indian and some from the English official life in India.”⁷ Therefore, what their cool reception to Hill also reveals is the ways class and nationality played off of each other, as middle-class Americans such as Hill encountered British colonial elites. Although Hill had connections at the upper levels of the YWCA and YMCA—for example, Mr. Bierce of Dayton, the President of the International Committee of the YMCA of North America was her uncle—she was very firmly in the American middle class; her bachelor’s degree was from the University of Illinois, a land-grant university, rather than an elite women’s school.⁸ Despite this middle-class status, as USYWCA Secretary Elizabeth Wilson stated, “the fame of American secretaries, truly trained and professional officers” as opposed to British volunteers “had reached both England and India,” and Hill had the explicit support of Lady Emily Kinnaird, who had specifically requested an American to head the YWCA she had founded in Madras.⁹ The Bombay YWCA women were therefore in something of a tricky spot. They were likely initially receptive because they perceived Hill’s efforts as subsumable under their own work. However, when it became clear that she had a radically different agenda, and one that potentially undermined rather than supported their claims to racial, national, and class positions, Hill was something of a threat. At the same time, her connections to their own social hierarchy meant that she could not be easily dismissed. It seems that the easiest move, therefore, was for the Bombay women to be polite yet firm as they moved Hill along her way.

As the Bombay YWCA women’s reaction also indicates, they seem to have been not only unsure of Hill herself, but her work. In Hill’s version of the encounter, she perceived herself as a

⁷ From the journal of Agnes Hill, quoted Elizabeth Wilson, *The Story of Fifty Years*, 23.

⁸ Elizabeth Wilson, *Fifty Years of Association Work Among Young Women, 1866-1916*, 185; Boyd, *Emissaries*, 34.

⁹ Elizabeth Wilson, *Fifty Years of Association Work Among Young Women, 1866-1916*, 184.

little naïve, presenting her “American” four-fold program. It also seems to have been comparatively easy for her to shift to “sticking to spiritual subjects.” This could have been because in her mind, “spiritual subjects” were so deeply intertwined with the other areas of work as to be inseparable. While religious programs weren’t as interwoven into the YWCA’s other work as they would be until the 1910’s and 1920’s in the United States, Hill’s emphasis on the very broad role of religion in social reform reflects the trends in the U.S. towards the Social Gospel, the rhetorics of which were already in place by the 1890s.¹⁰ This meant that if Hill framed the YWCA’s work in India in terms of American religious conceptions, she was still likely to run afoul of the elite women in the colonial government. This was due to the USWYCA’s Social Gospel interpretation of Christianity, which espoused values of inclusivity and grass-roots democracy, and which likely threatened British “clubland”—the replication of the British social sphere was most essentially based in maintaining divisions between British and Indian people.¹¹

These types of issues, in which American women were active in the religious and reform circles of India have generally not been present in the historiography of India. With a very few exceptions, work on missions in India still tends to focus primarily on British efforts at conversion and the “indigenization” of churches by fostering individual church leaders.¹²

¹⁰ See: Edwards and Gifford, *Gender and the Social Gospel*, introduction.

¹¹ See: Mrinalini Sinha, “Britishness, Clubbability, and the Colonial Public Sphere: The Genealogy of an Imperial Institution in Colonial India,” *The Journal of British Studies* 40, no. 4 (October 2001): 489-521.

¹² For the British mission focus, see: Tony Ballantyne, “Religion, Difference, and the Limits of British Imperial History,” *Victorian Studies* 47, no. 3 (2005): 427-455; Jeffrey Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines: Christianity and Colonial Power in India, 1818-1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); Norman Etherington, ed., *Missions and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). The historiographic focus of American’s missionary efforts is in China. See: Carol C. Chin, “Beneficent Imperialists: American Women Missionaries in China at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,” *Diplomatic History* 27, no. 3 (June 2003): 327-352; Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility*; Xi Lian, *The Conversion of Missionaries: Liberalism in American Protestant Missions in China, 1907-1932* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); Jessie Gregory Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions: The Anti-Christian Movements of 1920-28* (Notre Dame: Cross Cultural Publications, Inc, 1988). For the main work on women in Asia, see: Maina Chawla Singh, *Gender, Religion, and "Heathen Lands": American Missionary Women in South Asia, (1860s-1940s)* (New York: Garland Pub, 2000). This literature has tended to take the form of

American religious involvement in India therefore appears to be superficial. For example, in his study of missions in the Punjab from 1818-1940, Jeffrey Cox lists thirty-four “Mission Societies.”¹³ Despite the presence of many groups from the United States on his list, Cox views missionary work in India almost entirely from the vantage point of connections with Britain—the title of his first substantive chapter is “The Empire of Christ and the Empire of Britain.” However, Cox’s list itself shows that U.S. groups or groups with strong connections to the U.S. made up a significant portion of the religious work in India. Conversely, India was the target for a large number of the missionaries from many U.S. religious organizations. For example, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) sent roughly half of their total missionaries to India, and it was also a prominent destination among denominational mission boards not part of the ABCFM.¹⁴ According to missionary personnel compiled from Student Volunteer Movement numbers in 1910, India was only slightly behind China in terms of

biographies of prominent indigenous church leaders. See, for example Susan Billington Harper, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma: Bishop V.S. Azariah and the Travails of Christianity in British India* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2000).

¹³ These included the: “Presbyterian Church in the USA; Associate Reformed Presbyterian Mission; British and Foreign Bible Society; Baptist Missionary Society; Baptist Zenana Missionary Society; Central Asian Mission; Church of England in Canada Missionary Society; Church of England Zenana Missionary Society; Cambridge Mission to Delhi; Christian missions in Many Lands (“Open” Brethren); Church Missionary Society (Anglican); Church of Scotland; Danish Pathan Mission; Evangelical Society of the Pittsburgh Bible Institute; Female Education Society; Indian Female Normal School; India North West Mission; Methodist Episcopal Church North; Mission to Lepers in India; Moravians; National Missionary Society (Indian); New Zealand Presbyterian Mission; Punjab Religious Book Society; Roman Catholic; Salvation Army; Seventh Day Adventists; Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (Anglican); Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (Anglican) Unevangelized Fields Mission; United Presbyterian Church of North America; World Evangelization Crusade; The Young Men’s Christian Association; The Young Women’s Christian Association; Zenana Bible and Medical Mission.” Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*, 2.

¹⁴ Hutchinson, 46. For example, of the anthology, Wilbert R. Shenk, ed., *North American Foreign Missions, 1810-1914: Theology, Theory, and Policy* (Grand: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004) primarily deals with individual missionaries in China, with the exception of Ruth Compton Brouwer’s chapter, “Canadian Presbyterians and India Missions, 1877-1914: The Policy and Politics of Women’s Work for Women,” and a section of Paul Harris’ chapter, “Denomination and Democracy: Ecclesiastical Issues Underlying Rufus Anderson’s Three Self Program.” There were also other non Anglo-American nationalities represented, such as the Danish Missionary Society in southern India, who were influenced by ecumenicalism of both the Student Volunteer Movement and the Young Men’s Christian Association. See Torben Christensen, “Danish Missions in India,” in *Missionary Ideologies in the Imperialist Era: 1880-1920*, ed. Torben Christensen and William R. Hutchinson (Arhus: Aros, 1982), 121-130.

total missionaries from North America, with 1667 (compared to 493 “Continental European”) people.¹⁵

While Americans have generally been absent from the historiography, there are many excellent works that address gender in India in the context of British imperialism. Missions and women’s reform issues were particularly aimed at the creation of educational institutions, and work with women in *zenanas* (women’s quarters).¹⁶ As scholars have demonstrated, these efforts were not entirely altruistic, and many women who espoused disinterested reform often utilized these religious and reform efforts to shore up their own claims to power.¹⁷ For example, Antoinette Burton shows in *Burdens of History* that British feminists staked their claims to the public sphere upon acting on behalf of Indian women’s interests.¹⁸ Within a colonial context, the politics of religion, nationality, gender, and race were formed in relation to each other. As the

¹⁵ “Appendix: Numbers of Different Types of (American and European) Missionary Personnel, and of “Civilizing” Institutions, Seen in the Relation to the Total Missionary force in three Overseas Areas,” William R. Hutchison, “A Moral Equivalent for Imperialism: Americans and the Promotion of “Christian Civilization”, 1880-1910,” in *Missionary Ideologies in the Imperialist Era: 1880-1920*, ed. Torben Christensen and William R. Hutchinson (Aarhus: Aros, 1982), 167-178.

¹⁶ Janaki Nair, “Uncovering the Zenana: Visions of Indian Womanhood in Englishwomen’s Writings: 1813-1940,” *Journal of Women’s History* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 8-34; Eliza F. Kent, “Tamil Bible Women and the Zenana Missions of Colonial South India,” *History of Religions* 39, no. 2 (November 1999): 117-149; Antoinette M. Burton, “Contesting the Zenana: The Mission to Make “Lady Doctors for India,” 1874-1885,” *The Journal of British Studies* 35, no. 3 (July 1996): 368-397; Brumberg, “Zenanas and Girlless Villages: The Ethnology of American Evangelical Women, 1870-1910.”

¹⁷ Ruth Compton Brouwer, “Canadian Presbyterians and India Missions 1877-1914: The Policy and Politics of ‘Women’s Work for Women’,” in *North American Foreign Missions, 1810-1914: Theology, Theory, and Policy*, ed. Wilbert R. Shenk (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 218-242; Antoinette M. Burton, “The white woman’s burden : British feminists and the Indian woman, 1865-1915,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 13, no. 4 (1990): 295-308; Leslie A. Flemming, ed., *Women’s Work for Women: Missionaries and Social Change in Asia* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989); Leslie A. Flemming, “A New Humanity: American Missionaries’ Ideals for Women in North India, 1870-1930,” in *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*, ed. Margaret Strobel and Nupur Chaudhuri (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 192-206; Padma Anagol, *The Emergence of Feminism in India, 1850-1920* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2006).

¹⁸ Antoinette M. Burton, “From Child Bride to “Hindoo Lady”: Rukhmabai and the Debate on Sexual Respectability in Imperial Britain,” *The American Historical Review* 103, no. 4 (October 1998): 1119-1146; Burton, *Burdens of History*. See also Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The ‘Manly Englishman’ and the ‘Effeminate Bengali’ in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995). The problems of representation and voice have formed a central line of inquiry with post-colonial studies. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271-316.

work of scholars have demonstrated, both in regards to Age of Consent Act of 1891—only four years before Hill’s arrival—and on women’s reform movements both in India and in Great Britain, these dynamics and relationships were both unstable and constituted in multiple directions simultaneously.¹⁹

My purpose here is not to rehearse these already very well-articulated works, but rather to examine the ways that USWYCA Secretaries, like their British female reformer counterparts, attempted to position their work. By focusing on the USYWCA Secretaries’ efforts to import the Social Gospel, with its emphasis on ecumenicalism, inclusivity, and grass-roots democracy, we can see the ways that agents from a U.S. organization attempted to position themselves among—and often against—British institutions. In some cases, the USYWCA’s efforts seem to have been successful, such as when Secretaries promoted the ecumenicalism of Y-space as a common ground between missions. However, more often their efforts seem to have been less welcomed by either the British women or the Indian women with whom the USYWCA Secretaries were trying to cultivate, and in the end the Indian YWCA often served to continue hierarchies of culture and religion that privileged British and Christian women. For example, while the USYWCA Secretaries promoted what they saw as the Indian YWCA’s racial inclusiveness to the USYWCA, it was often very shallow because the Indian YWCA retained a strong Christian emphasis that likely prevented many Hindu and Muslim women from fully participating.²⁰ By the 1920s and 1930s, Secretaries in the Indian YWCA (both U.S. and non-U.S.) were positioning the YWCA’s work in the context of Gandhi and Indian nationalism, even as they tried to protect

¹⁹ Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity*; Sinha, Guy, and Woollacott, *Feminisms and Internationalism*; Burton, *Burdens of History*. This claiming to speak for subaltern women was present in earlier debates on Sati, and would persist in later periods through works such as Katherine Mayo’s apologist tract in defense of British Imperialism, *Mother India*. See: Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions: the Debate on Sati in Colonial India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Mayo, *Mother India*.

²⁰ During the time period of my study, the YWCA in India was officially named the Young Women’s Christian Association of India, Burma, and Ceylon. For ease of reference I have shortened this to “India YWCA” throughout the chapter.

the women they saw as in danger from that nationalism: Indian Christian professional women in rural areas.

Much of the USYWCA's work in India falls into three broad chronological time spans. From the time of Agnes Hill's arrival in 1895 to World War I, the YWCA was primarily a European-focused organization, in both membership and programs. The work in these branches was generally decentralized, and Wilson noted that "[o]ne notices the steady lapse of Branches once bearing the name, Young Women's Christian Association. Whether they all did what we now call Y.W.C.A. work, the development of the spiritual, intellectual, social and physical life of young women is not always clearly proved."²¹ The locations of these YWCAs reveal their close connection to the missions and colonial infrastructures. USYWCA Secretary Elizabeth Wilson stated that in 1895, when the first national India YWCA constitution was passed, there were English branches in 47 places, and the centers commerce, government, and religion—Bombay, Calcutta, Colombo, and Madras—each had six to nine small branches. In addition to these, there were forty "scattered members" branches in Bengal, the Wynaad, and the Punjab. Against these 87 primarily British branches were the "Vernacular" branches, which Wilson characterized as a Bengali branch in Calcutta, a Kanarese branch in Bangalore, a Marathi branch in Bombay, and five Tamil, six Malayalam, and 26 Hindustani Branches scattered around the rest of the country.²² These vernacular branches were primarily Christian; many were likely located in the Mission schools, where they had been started the Kinnaird sisters during their tour of India in 1890-92.²³ In this way, the category of "vernacular" as opposed to regular (or Anglo-American)

²¹ Elizabeth Wilson, *The Story of Fifty Years*, 72.

²² Elizabeth Wilson, *The Story of Fifty Years*, 30.

²³ Elizabeth Wilson, *The Story of Fifty Years*, 103.

branches is slightly deceptive, because almost all of these branches were located in British institutions.

YWCA in India were not only closely tied to religious and mission institutions, they often came into being *within* these groups, and as a result were heavily focused on religious work and the types of charity that were common in England. Not only was Bible Study “the main part of the Association programme,” but “[m]ost of the secretaries were chosen, or accepted, because of their ability as Bible teachers.”²⁴ This missionary type of emphasis was reflected in the early relationships between the YWCA and religious and colonial institutions. For example, when Lady Kinnaird (co-founder of the British YWCA and ardent supporter of mission work in India) opened the Female Normal School in Calcutta, Miss Neal organized a YWCA there in 1883. This led to the creation of the Indian Female Normal School and Instruction Society, which later changed its name to the Zenana Bible and Medical Missions. Neal, who had been a YWCA Secretary in Birmingham, England, organized a Bengali branch of the YWCA in Agarpara, a jute manufacturing town near Calcutta.²⁵ This appears to have been limited to English speakers, however, because there was not a Bengali speaking Department until Miss Daw arrived in 1894 and learned the language.²⁶

In contrast to these few instances where branches were specifically composed of Indian women, British women were both the primary members and focus of programming in the majority of branches. For example, by 1898 there were 4,000 members, of whom 2,500 were English, and 1,500 were Indian.²⁷ In many places, the YWCA was a specifically British group,

²⁴ Elizabeth Wilson, *The Story of Fifty Years*, 60.

²⁵ For more on Agarpara as a Jute town, see Omkar Goswami, “Multiple Images: Jute Mill Strikes of 1929 and 1937 Seen through Other’s Eyes,” *Modern Asian Studies* 21, no. 3 (1987): 547-583.

²⁶ Padmini Sengupta, *A Hundred Years of Service: Centenary Volume of the Y.W.C.A. of Calcutta, 1878-1978* (Calcutta: Bibhash Gupta (on behalf of Y.W.C.A. of Calcutta), 1987), 5.

²⁷ “Survey of Association Work in India” in “Notes taken from the Minutes of the Joint Conference of the India National Committee of the World’s Committee Delegation held on January 23-24 1923 at the Headquarters in

and according to Wilson these “early Branches... had kept close linked to the work in Great Britain, with which they had been associated.”²⁸ These YWCAs were started by women associated with official colonial infrastructures, such as the Bombay association, begun by Mrs. Partridge, “the wife of an Army Surgeon” who began it as a Prayer Union among British women who were “domiciled” in India.²⁹ In the early days of the Bombay Association, there were English, Scottish and Indian and Anglo-Indian branches, which ran programs of Bible classes, sewing classes, and “Flower and Pillow missions.”³⁰ These ties to the British YWCA meant that, like the women in Bombay who met Agnes Hill, the local Branches were likely to maintain a British character, regardless of their official affiliation with the Indian National Committee in Calcutta, much less the WYWCA beyond that.

After World War I, the role of religion in the India YWCA changed slightly, in that it became less focused on the conversion of Indians to Christianity and more concerned with supporting the already existent Christian community. For example, in 1924, the “Commission on Revision” decided that, in Elizabeth Wilson’s words, “the members of the Hindi, Marathi, and Bengali Branches stood in close enough relation to various bodies of Christian Missions so that their highest interests would not suffer” if the India YWCA was not able to continue working with these “vernacular” women.³¹ At the same time, the consolidation and support of a Christian community meant that the YWCA expanded across some racial lines by establishing hostels for students and Indian business and professional women, both of which groups tended to be

Calcutta,” 1, Microfilm Reel 56- India- Conferences- Misc., YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

²⁸ Elizabeth Wilson, *The Story of Fifty Years*, 27.

²⁹ This population was initially known as Eurasians and then Anglo-Indian by the British at the time. However, Americans seem to have also meant referred to mixed –race populations with this tem (particularly when writing to the USYWCA). In an attempt to distinguish this group from mixed-race populations that I will describe later, I will use the term “domiciled British” to refer to this population throughout the chapter.

³⁰ Sengupta, *A Hundred Years of Service: Centenary Volume of the Y.W.C.A. of Calcutta, 1878-1978*, 7.

³¹ Elizabeth Wilson, *The Story of Fifty Years*, 105.

predominantly (although by no means entirely) Christian. The focus on Indian Christian students was facilitated by their location in prominent institutions such as the Isabella Thoburn College, and their joint affiliation with the World Student Christian Federation. For example, the All-India Student Conference, held in late December 1923 gathered 123 representatives together at Bishop's College in Calcutta. All but two of these were Christians- the others were Parsee and Brahmo-Somaj.³²

By the 1930's, YWCA Secretaries asserted that the India YWCA had crossed further racial boundaries, this time beyond the British and Anglo-Indian groups, and into the Indian community. In a report from the mid 1930's, Jean Begg, the India YWCA General Secretary from New Zealand who was being paid by the British YWCA, claimed that the Association was predominantly Indian. She listed "91 branches, with 6716 members of whom 4173 are Indian, Burmese or Singalese [sic], 1819 Burgher, Anglo Indian or Domiciled European... the remainder are women who do not come under these two general categories (the majority British)." These members funded a significant portion of the secretarial staff; 35 of the 54 Secretaries in the India YWCA were "supported in India, Burma and Ceylon." While the support may have come from India, Burma, and Ceylon, the Secretaries themselves were still primarily from areas outside of India. Out of 54 staff members, there were "18 Indian, Burmese, Burgher or Anglo Indian, 8 Domiciled European, 1 Danish, 2 New Zealand, 4 Australian, 3 Canadian, 12 British and 6 American." The Indian National Committee of the YWCA also had a majority from outside of India. Begg listed "thirty members of whom 13 are Indian, 2 Anglo Indian, 4 American, 2 Australian, and 9 British."³³ However, these numbers were slightly misleading; in order to argue

³² Elizabeth Wilson, *The Story of Fifty Years*, 109.

³³ Jean Begg, "Facts about the YWCA in India, Burma & Ceylon" n.d. [likely 1932 or 1933] Microfilm Reel 57- India- Staff Reports- Jean Begg, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

that the YWCA was indigenous, Begg combined the numbers of non-Anglo-Europeans into one category, and broke apart the others by nationality. While there were eighteen “Indian, Burmese, Burgher or Anglo Indians” they were outnumbered almost two to one by the 36 Secretaries from other countries.

As these numbers illustrate, while the USYWCA Secretarial staff was a vital part of the India YWCA, they were not the sole part. At times, due to funding cuts in the USYWCA, they were not even a particularly large portion of the staff. For example, the USYWCA radically decreased their involvement in the India YWCA during the depression. The 1932 *Foreign Facts* report, published by the USYWCA Foreign Division, reveals the drastic results of these financial cuts for the India YWCA. Of the 63 USYWCA Secretaries located abroad, only eight were stationed in India. In monetary terms, the USYWCA cut its 1932 budget for India to \$7,500, which was a 62% drop from the 1928 amount.³⁴ By the time Begg was citing the numbers above, the American Secretarial staff in India had halved again.

Despite their low numbers, USYWCA Secretaries tended to be very influential because they often occupied the upper echelons of the organization. For example, of the General Secretaries who led the India YWCA from Agnes Hill’s organization of it in 1896 until 1939, six of the ten were from the United States. Three of the other four were from Britain or its dependencies. Only one, Miss Maya Das, who served as Associate General Secretary with USYWCA Secretary Faith Parmelee from 1920-1923, was a Christian Indian.³⁵ This meant that the USYWCA Secretaries were often in leadership positions in which they had to negotiate

³⁴ Foreign Division, United States Young Women’s Christian Association, *World Co-operation of the National Young Women’s Christian Associations, 1932-33* (New York: National Board of the Young Women’s Christian Associations), 19-20.

³⁵ For the list of General Secretaries from 1896-1924 see: “Appendix C: Indian National Committee,” Elizabeth Wilson, *The Story of Fifty Years*, 116. For the subsequent dates see the listings in the individual Annual Reports, Microfilm Reel 56- National Annual Reports, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

relationships with a transnational group of fellow Secretaries, in the context of a predominantly British organization and in a British colony. These were dynamics which had serious implications for their ability to implement their own version of programs.³⁶

Within this broader arc of the YWCA in India, USYWCA Secretaries attempted to utilize the Social Gospel to position Y-space as an alternative to the types of “clubland” spaces that that Mrinalini Sinha describes in her article “Britishness, Clubbability, and the Colonial Public Sphere.” Sinha asserts that “clubland” was an attempt by colonial officials to “reproduce the comfort and familiarity of ‘home’ for Europeans living in an alien land,” and served as places where Europeans could replicate British club culture.³⁷ For Sinha, the “Eurocentrism” at the center of these attempted replications, in which “the idea of modern Europe” was “unique and exceptional” existed in constant tension with “the idea of the universality and the generalizability of the European experience, the possibility for the endless replication of European modernity in other far-off lands.”³⁸ Many YWCA women, even those who were British, would have been among those whom Sinha terms the “rebels” who rejected the “norms of Anglo-Indian social life,” because of their missionary ties or status as single women.³⁹ Despite the position of these women as being outside clubland, USYWCA Secretaries attempted to structure Y-space to ways that were both similar to and different from clubland. On one hand, like clubland, USYWCA Secretaries envisioned Y-space itself as simultaneously exceptional and universal. However, rather than basing these in cultural and social notions of the British upper class, USWYCA

³⁶ Because USYWCA Secretaries were often in leadership positions rather than in charge of specific programs, some of the evidence for the ways that religion worked in the India YWCA is from non-USYWCA Secretaries. I have been attentive to these distinctions, and have tried to note the national origin of Secretaries where possible and appropriate. If this information is not available, I have noted them simply as YWCA Secretaries.

³⁷ Sinha, “Britishness, Clubbability, and the Colonial Public Sphere,” 489.

³⁸ Sinha, “Britishness, Clubbability, and the Colonial Public Sphere,” 492.

³⁹ Sinha, “Britishness, Clubbability, and the Colonial Public Sphere,” 501.

Secretaries' vision of Y-space was a fellowship that was rooted in, among other ideals, religious principles from the Social Gospel. Although the USYWCA Secretaries did not critique the British class system publicly, and adhered to the British practice of having "Patroness" for the various YWCA branches in India, USYWCA Secretaries also utilized Social Gospel rhetorics, which had the potential to be socially-leveling through their emphasis on ecumenicalism, egalitarianism, and multiculturalism. USYWCA Secretaries intended that Y-space in India would be an inclusive, rather than an exclusive space, that would foster the Indian YWCA as an "indigenous" movement. In other words, the USYWCA Secretaries intended for the YWCA to be a type of clubland not only open to non-Europeans, but eventually dominated by them.

Working on the edges of clubland meant that Hill and the other YWCA Secretaries had to position the YWCA among the other large-scale Euro-American institutions—the denominational missions. For Hill and the YWCA Secretaries, ecumenicalism could be a useful tool to present the YWCA as unifying rather than threatening or competitive. For example, in a 1899 letter to Mrs. Tritton of the WYWCA, Hill described the work of the Mission Settlement for University Women (MSUW), which was attempting to establish itself in Bombay. Hill explained that the MSUW was being disparaged by the missions for being interlopers. Missionaries felt "that the M.S.U.W. is more or less clashing with 'their field' but if it came as distinctly a Student operation- they are quite willing to accept its coming as inevitable & even welcome it- as a work for students." ⁴⁰ Hill told Tritton that she was often asked by missions what Agnes de Selincourt, the leader of the MSUW, and later an India YWCA Secretary, was "doing here- can't she find any mission work to do- that she must go poking about in the missions?" Hill stated that this was "not because it is Miss de Selincourt at all- but simply

⁴⁰ Agnes Hill to Mrs. Tritton, June 7 1899, 5-6, India 07, Folder 1, Records of the Young Women's Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

because the societies in this field don't want any more societies- unless as I say it should be distinctly a student work. Had the idea been started 20 years ago- it would not have been looked upon in the same light.”⁴¹ By relating the MSUW's experience, Hill was implying that the YWCA had both successfully negotiated the process, and was now serving as a mediator between the MSUW and the missions.

Even though USYWCA Secretaries utilized ecumenicalism to help ally Y-space with missions, there were important differences between the USYWCA Secretaries' agendas and the types of missionary work characterized as “women's work for women.” Whereas women's work for women largely depended upon discourses of maternalism and was a conscious attempt on the part of female missionaries to inculcate a type of U.S. domestic sphere, the USYWCA Secretaries often worked to counter a specifically domestic sphere for women. Although the India YWCA was associated with some of the organizations that expressly worked with *zenanas*, such as the Zenana Bible and Medical missions, and some secretaries did make home visits, the majority of YWCA work took place within the YWCA buildings and camps. As was the case in with buildings in the United States, these were semi-public vernacular places similar to the clubland organizations, not the private domestic space of the home. These semi-public places were in essence the YWCA's “home” turf, in which YWCA Secretaries were in control of the physical environment, the activities, and the participants.

Within these places, USYWCA Secretaries attempted to foster ecumenical and inclusive Y-space. For example, at their summer camp, Anandagiri, Secretaries specifically geared some activities to foster interconfessional ties. In 1939, a year in which USYWCA Secretary Margaret Wilson was the “warden” of the Association Conference, an unknown author described the

⁴¹ Agnes Hill to Mrs. Tritton, June 7 1899, 5-6, India 07, Folder 1, Records of the Young Women's Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

“Morning Worship.”⁴² It began with an affirmation of the “Ecumenical Practice” which was manifested by the worship being “conducted by different members of the staff.” The author noted that there had been “Roman Catholic, Parsees and Hindus in our number.” In this, the divisions were not between the Christians and non-Christians, but between the Catholics and Protestant denominations. The author stated that “we found it was more difficult for the Roman Catholics to worship with us than for the non-Christians. They did not attend the morning service but sometimes remained for evening prayers.”⁴³ Unfortunately, the individual participants’ accounts of these types of ceremonies are not part of the USYWCA’s historical record. However, from this description one wonders if the non-Christians may have found it easier to participate because they viewed these activities as a type of spectacle rather than sacred event—a notion that would have turned the usual Euro-American reduction of Hindu religious practices into spectacle on its head, particularly if the non-Christian women were lower caste, which is likely.

While this interfaith stance lent weight to Secretaries’ claims of inclusiveness, it was also most likely a pragmatic position because Secretaries envisioned non-Christians as potential converts. For example, a conference in 1939 emphasized the conversion of prominent people who had subsequently become involved in mission activities. Participants read papers on “the lives of great people” such as “Sadha Sandra Singh, Hudson Taylor, Pandita Ramabai, and Kagawa- people who had made Jesus the center of their lives.”⁴⁴ Sadhu Sundar Singh, Pandita Ramabai, and Toyohiko Kagawa were prominent Indian and Japanese Christians who had all

⁴² “Association Conference- Anandagiri, 4-24 April, 1939,” List of Delegates, Microfilm Reel 56- India Conferences- Misc, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁴³ “Association Conference- Anandagiri, 4-24 April, 1939,” 1, Microfilm Reel 56- India- Conferences- Misc, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁴⁴ “The Blue Triangle, Published by the Columbo Young Women’s Christian Association” Vol. XVI no. 5 & 6 May and June 1939, 1, Microfilm Reel 56- India- Conferences- Misc, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. “Sadha Sandra Singh” was likely a typo, and instead they meant Sadhu Sundar Singh, who was an Indian Christian missionary. Toyohiko Kagawa was a prominent Japanese Christian missionary.

converted to Christianity. In addition, Singh and Kagawa had embarked on missions of Christ-like acts of service.⁴⁵ The choice of these figures is interesting given the national and religious context of the late 1930's. On one hand, each of the people could exemplify ideals of Christian self-sacrifice. As a high-caste convert, Ramabai was particularly important to the USYWCA Secretaries' conception of Christianity as racially inclusive, and able to cross class boundaries. That converts lost their social status when they converted—an aspect of conversion which the USYWCA Secretaries generally seem to have ignored—could have been proof of the self-sacrifice of the converts themselves, as the composition of the list seemed to imply. Therefore, citing these people was also an attempt to tie Christianity to a broader ideological framework of class uplift. However, these were connections that were not necessarily incompatible with nationalism. For example, Pandita Ramabai, although a very prominent Christian convert, had chosen to return to India to establish educational institutions. Sadhu Sundar Singh was persecuted for his faith, but continued to do what he saw as applying Christianity to Indian issues.⁴⁶

USYWCA Secretaries sought to portray Y-space as enabling women to cross social, racial, and class lines *because* of its Christianity. In an echo of the “lived” Christianity and Social Gospel within the USYWCA, Mabel Rae stated in the 1931 Annual report for the Calcutta YWCA that the YWCA was “a fellowship of women and girls. The value of their fellowship lies

⁴⁵ Hudson Taylor was the outlier on this list, as a prominent British missionary to China and founder of the China Inland Mission. For Toyohiko, see "Kagawa Toyohiko" *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*. Ed. John Bowker. Oxford University Press, 2000. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. University of Illinois - Urbana Champaign. 14 July 2009
<<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t101.e3769>>

⁴⁶ For Singh, see: A. J. Appasamy, ed., *The Cross is Heaven: The Life and Writings of Sadhu Sundar Singh* (London: United Society for Christian Literature, 1956). There has been a tremendous amount written on Pandita Ramabai. See: Burton, *Burdens of History*; Antoinette M. Burton, “Colonial Encounters in Late-Victorian England: Pandita Ramabai at Cheltenham and Wantage 1883-6,” *Feminist Review*, no. 49, Feminist Politics: Colonial/Postcolonial Worlds (Spring 1995): 29-49; Anagol, *The Emergence of Feminism in India, 1850-1920*; Anagol, “Indian Christian Women and Indigenous Feminism, c. 1850-c.1920”; Geraldine Hancock Forbes, *Women in Modern India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

in whatever it may contribute to self-expression, discipline, and growth of the whole life of each of its members and in the effectiveness of that group as it functions in the life of the community.” This was not a group set to a random standard however, it was “expressed in the name ‘Christian’ and makes the teachings of Jesus the informing and directing principles of any of the Association’s programmes.” One of the key tenets of fellowship was that it was at least theoretically open to everyone. The author stated that “[a]ny girls may enter this fellowship” and that there was “nothing selective” about membership. She continued by asserting that “[w]ithin the fellowship of our Calcutta Association is represented a varied cross section of our whole community, including business girls, school and teachers, the so-called women of leisure, and girls of many nationalities and racial groups and religions.”⁴⁷ This made the USYWCA Secretaries’ promotion of the Social Gospel a direct assault on British clubland which was based on a “cult of exclusiveness, superiority and isolation.”⁴⁸

By positioning Y-space as adhering to the Social Gospel, USYWCA Secretaries were attempting to form a new type of woman, whom I call a Y-woman. To the USYWCA Secretaries, a Y-woman occupied a type of middle position between the stereotypes of *memsahibs* and “modern girls.” She who would be better than the self-centered the British *memsahib* of the nineteenth century, who could be found in clubland, while avoiding the pitfalls of the “modern girl” image that pervaded American film and popular culture. Y-women were Indian or Anglo-Indian rather than European; they were Christian; and they were not focused on material concerns, but were politically and socially engaged in ways that were acceptable to the USYWCA Secretaries. In short, and in a strong echo of Lord Macaulay’s “little brown

⁴⁷ “Young Women’s Christian Association Calcutta 1932 Year book,” 7, Microfilm Reel 56- India- Printed Matter- Calcutta, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁴⁸ Leonard Woolf, quoted in Sinha, “Britishness, Clubbability, and the Colonial Public Sphere,” 490.

Englishmen,” the Y-women would look a lot like the USYWCA Secretaries themselves in all but skin color.⁴⁹ The issue of political engagement was a thorny one, however, because USYWCA Secretaries were often more sympathetic to Nationalist causes than they were to British Imperialism (even if this support was more private than public).

USYWCA Secretaries utilized the universal rhetorics in the Social Gospel in their attempt to create these Y-women. In doing so, they worked to rhetorically turn not only Indian religious and nationalist ideologies, but also nationalist figures such as Gandhi and the Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore, into de facto Christian agents. For example, in the dedication service for Anandagiri, on April 8th, 1929, USYWCA Secretaries interwove Tagore’s poems with Christian internationalism. The ceremony began with Agnes Hill giving the grounds to the Indian YWCA “[o]n behalf of many friends” in the United States, who intended it for “the service of God and the promotion of fellowship and goodwill between all races and communities within and without these countries.” After an offering, two “Prayers for India” by Tagore were read. Following these was a “Prayer for International Fellowship and Peace” and a benediction pronounced by Hon. Emily Kinnaird, the daughter of Lady Kinnaird, who had been instrumental both in the YWCA in England and in establishing educational and missionary institutions in India.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ In Macaulay’s words: “We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.” See: Thomas Babington Macaulay, “Minute of 2 February 1835 on Indian Education,” *Macaulay, Prose and Poetry*, selected by G. M. Young (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1833macaulay-india.html>, November 12, 2009.

⁵⁰ “Appendix III Dedication Service, Anadagiri- Ootacamund, April 8th, 1929” in “Report of the ninth Quadrennial Conference of the Young Women’s Christian Association of India, Burma, and Ceylon” Ootacamund, April 6 to 15, 1929,” 77-79, Microfilm Reel 56- India- Conferences, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. For Kinnaird, see Elizabeth Wilson, *The Story of Fifty Years*.

What is particularly striking about the poems from Tagore was that they were specifically anti-imperial and nationalistic. The first poem extolled the mind, “where knowledge is free.” In this space, the world was international and public; it had “not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls.” It was progressive, and “the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit.” Instead, “the mind is led forward by Thee into ever widening thought and action.” The poem concluded with “[i]nto that heaven of freedom, my Father let my country awake.” The second poem was a type of national prayer. Composed of just four lines, it read, “Let the earth and the water, the air and the fruits of my country be sweet, my God, Let the home and marts, the forests and fields of my country be full, my God, Let the promises and hopes, the deeds and words of my country be true, my God, Let the lives and the hearts of the sons and daughters of my country be one my God. Amen.”⁵¹ Here, rather than reflecting Tagore’s more typical critiques of western culture and particularly the focus on materialism, USYWCA Secretaries chose works that would support their notions of Y-space based in the progressive Social Gospel ideologies.⁵² The first poem was progressive, outward looking, reasonable rather than based in habit, and divinely guided into freedom. In the second, the nation was a land of plenty and unity, in harmony with God. Ultimately both of these poems urged peaceful transformation, coming from the minds and the hearts of the citizens. These types of non-violent and democratically based changes were rhetorics that appealed not only to the

⁵¹ “Appendix III Dedication Service, Anadagiri- Ootacamund, April 8th, 1929” in “Report of the ninth Quadrennial Conference of the Young Women’s Christian Association of India, Burma, and Ceylon” Ootacamund, April 6 to 15, 1929,” 78-79, Microfilm Reel 56- India- Conferences, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁵² For more on Tagore’s critiques, see: Michael Adas, “Contested Hegemony: The Great War and the Afro-Asian Assault on the Civilizing Mission Ideology,” *Journal of World History* 15, no. 1 (March 2004): 31-63 particularly 50- 53. See also: Leilah C. Danielson, “In my Extremity I Turned to Gandhi’: American Pacifists, Christianity, and Gandhian Nonviolence, 1915-1941,” *Church History* 72, no. 2 (June 2003): 361-388; Leonard A. Gordon, “Mahatma Gandhi's Dialogues with Americans,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 37, no. 4 (February 26, 2002): 337-352.

USYWCA Secretaries, but also to advocates of the U.S. Social Gospel more broadly. They were also ones that would have fit in with Gandhi's teachings.

USYWCA Secretaries, along with other theologians and religious leaders from the United States, viewed Gandhi as an advocate of Social Gospel ideologies.⁵³ Some Christian leaders, such as the former missionary E. Stanley Jones, found similarities between Gandhi's promotion of selfless service and work for others and Christian teaching—a position that was not without political consequence, as the British government had begun to deport American missionaries whom officials deemed politically radical.⁵⁴ Despite these risks, Jones made the connections between Gandhi and Christ explicit in his book, *The Christ of the Indian Road* in which he stated that even “though Gandhi called himself a Hindu and not a Christian, ‘by his life and outlook and methods he has been the medium through which a great deal of this interest in Christ has come.’”⁵⁵ USYWCA Secretaries also emphasized what seemed to them as the more Christian aspects of Gandhi's teachings, and appear to have been almost star-struck when he visited. For example, when he went to the YWCA in Colombo in 1928, USYWCA Secretary Faith Parmelee stated that it was “hard to sum up my impression of him and it would have been easy in utmost simplicity, to miss greatness.” In answering questions from the audience, Parmelee was particularly struck by “his thought of forgiveness. It seemed just the Christian idea. We sang at the beginning the hymn ‘In the Cross of Christ I glory’ which they told us was one of his favourites. There seemed to be an infinite patience and tolerance and love in his words and manner and a fine courtesy through which a delicious humour broke now and then. There was not opportunity for personal conversation as he could give us only an hour and then was

⁵³ See: Danielson, “In my Extremity I Turned to Gandhi”: American Pacifists, Christianity, and Gandhian Nonviolence, 1915-1941”; Gordon, “Mahatma Gandhi's Dialogues with Americans”; Adas, “Contested Hegemony.”

⁵⁴ Clymer, “Samuel Evans Stokes, Mahatma Gandhi, and Indian Nationalism,” 54.

⁵⁵ E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ of the Indian Road* (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1925) quoted in: Gordon, “Mahatma Gandhi's Dialogues with Americans,” 339.

whirled away (yes, even in the slow moving East we whirl!) to another meeting. I felt all that day a great man had been amongst us.”⁵⁶ As this demonstrates, USYWCA Secretaries viewed political leaders like Gandhi, and cultural leaders like Tagore, primarily through the lens of Christianity. In this, USYWCA Secretaries, and other American advocates of the Social Gospel, asserted that Gandhi was Christ-like through his teachings and his life, regardless of his own claims to Hinduism. For the USYWCA Secretaries this was something of a final turn into the idea of “lived Christianity” that had first started in the YWCA’s changes to the membership basis in the 1910’s. Not only was formal church membership unnecessary, personal conversion was not required; if one lived a Christ-like life, one was Christian.

While they were likely meant to be flattering, these assertions of the Christianity of Tagore and Gandhi were also attempts to claim the spirituality of these leaders for the Secretaries’ (and the other American advocates of the Social Gospel, such as Jones) own purposes. These claimings were important to the USYWCA Secretaries because they provided a rhetorical vehicle that USWYCA Secretaries could utilize in their attempts to resolve tensions within their own rhetoric about the role of women in anti-imperial nationalism. Through their assertions of women as purveyors of a Social Gospel Christianity, USYWCA Secretaries attempted to invert the binary that Partha Chatterjee describes in his article “The Nationalist Resolution of the Woman Question.” Chatterjee states that the education that women received was designed to inculcate bourgeois virtues of “orderliness, thrift, cleanliness, and a personal sense of responsibility... literacy, accounting, and hygiene.” The literal navigation of the “world outside the home” was acceptable as long as women were also both spiritual and feminine. The nationalists fixed this “femininity” “in terms of certain cultural visible ‘spiritual’ qualities” such

⁵⁶ Faith Parmelee to “Dear Friends” December 5, 1928, 3, Microfilm Reel 57- India- Personal Correspondence- Faith Parmelee, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

as dress, diet, “social demeanour” and “religiosity.”⁵⁷ For nationalists, each of these aspects was based on Hindu practices, many of which were counter to the USYWCA Secretaries’ ideas of what constituted progressive modernity. Instead of aligning Y-space with this Hindu based nationalism, the USYWCA Secretaries attempted to create a type of parallel Christian nationalism. For example, the National Annual Report for 1936 described the new role for Christian women leaders. Echoing Social Gospel tropes, it stated that “[i]n India we need more than ever before a group of women not only called to social service and the ‘uplift’ of those less fortunate than themselves, but also conscious of a vocation, and anxious to make a definite contribution to the mental, physical and religious life of the nation.” This was not only a religious task, but a political and a social one, as with “the new Constitution” the nation was “on the eve of great things.” This meant not only “[m]ore power and initiative” for women, but also “a new door of opportunity” for the YWCA. Secretaries envisioned that “[w]omen will be a greater force than ever in the political world; the weak traditions that hamper us as a nation are being rapidly removed in the social world, and we have therefore to look all the more to the brighter shining of our witness in the religious world.” This religious, social and political “uplift” was a calling and a “vocation” that YWCA Secretaries envisioned would spread beyond themselves and “office bearers and Committee members” and out to everyone that utilized the YWCA.⁵⁸ In short, USYWCA Secretaries were attempting to recreate themselves in their version of an Indian “new woman”—a Y-woman—who would serve as a witness for

⁵⁷ Partha Chatterjee, “The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question,” in *Postcolonial Discourses: an Anthology*, ed. Gregory Castle (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 151-166, 162. Although Chatterjee’s essay is one of the most prominent in the field, historians have also been critical of it. See in particular the introduction to Vina Mazumdar and Leela Kasturi, eds., *Women and Indian Nationalism* (New Delhi: Vikas Pub. House, 1994) and Himani Bannerji, “Pygmalion Nation: Towards a Critique of Subaltern Studies and the ‘Resolution of the Women's Question,’” in *Of Property and Propriety: The Role of Gender and Class in Imperialism and Nationalism*, ed. Himani Bannerji, Shahrzad Mojab, and Judith Whitehead (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 34-84.

⁵⁸ National Young Women’s Christian Association of India, Burma and Ceylon, Annual Report 1936, 1, Microfilm Reel 56- India- National Annual Reports, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

Christianity, remove what Secretaries saw as weak or anachronistic traditions, and attempt to foster political change that would conform to Y-space ideals. These goals generally tended towards an anti-imperial stance, and it proved very difficult for USYWCA Secretaries to reconcile these rhetorics with their position of racial and national privilege as Americans, particularly in a predominantly British organization.

Ultimately, the USYWCA Secretaries' attempts at negotiating the religious and imperial context in India illustrate the very complex and fraught position that the YWCA *itself* occupied in India. It is clear that USYWCA Secretaries aspired to create a Y-space rooted in Social Gospel principles of egalitarianism, inclusion, and fellowship. However, the reality was more complicated because of the YWCA's connections with the missions and the USYWCA Secretaries' somewhat tenuous position as Americans in India. And in the end, the USYWCA Secretaries' efforts were often hamstrung or undermined by their ties to British colonialism. First, rather than an ecumenical, racially diverse, and "lived" Social Gospel, their ties to the missionary movement meant that USYWCA Secretaries often perpetuated a system that bifurcated people into Christians and non-Christians. Second, while USYWCA Secretaries seem to have emphasized the interfaith nature of Y-space, the India YWCA's emphasis on Christians, and Christian leadership in particular, worked to perpetuate control of the YWCA primarily by members of the British and Anglo-Indian elite. Finally, the general silence of the India YWCA on nationalist movements, and the silencing of USYWCA Secretaries within the India YWCA, demonstrates that in their negotiations with the British colonial structure, USYWCA Secretaries often gave way to British interests, rather than the other way around.

The closeness of the ties between the YWCA and the missions meant that the religious programs in the India YWCA retained a focus on conversion much later than the YWCA in other areas, despite USYWCA Secretaries' efforts to move them towards a Social Gospel based program. For example, the India YWCA's 1929 Quadrennial Conference asserted that "a religious purpose underlies all the work of the Y.W.C.A.... during the next quadrennium religious education should take the first place in its program."⁵⁹ By comparison, at the same time period in the United States, religion was already interwoven with all of the other programs; it was in the background of all of the USYWCA's work rather than the foreground as in the India YWCA. This continued prominence of religion, and YWCA's close relationship with the missions meant that YWCA Secretaries tended to look at religion fairly simply as a matter of faith, rather than recognizing that it was intertwined with the political and social structures. For example, Canadian YWCA Secretary Estelle Amaron, who was the District Secretary for Ceylon, relayed the conversion of a Burmese Buddhist woman at a YWCA camp. Amaron stated that after talking with her and experiencing "Christian Fellowship," the woman had decided to convert. For Amaron, this was a "wise" and "great moral decision."⁶⁰ It is possible that woman genuinely found a comfort in Christianity that she evidently had not found in Buddhism. However, that positive view is the only possibility that Amaron seemed to allow; it was a change that Amaron approved of, and so she only failed to articulate either the politics involved in the woman's choice or the consequences for the woman in her broader community.

Much of the historical scholarship on missions reveals the complexity of women's conversion to Christianity, a density only occasionally revealed by USYWCA Secretaries. As

⁵⁹ *Foreign Facts*, 1929, (New York: National Board of the Young Women's Christian Association of the United States of America, 1929), 16.

⁶⁰ Report, [July] 1, 1937, 3, Microfilm Reel 57- India- Staff Reports- Estelle Amaron, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

much of the recent historical scholarship on missions illustrates, most notably Jean and John Comaroff's study of missions in Africa, missions always sought to reorder not only religious practices, but broad cultural norms in a "colonization of consciousness."⁶¹ These issues were particularly present for women, who might see conversion as a way to gain access to educational institutions run by missions, or greater freedom, particularly if they were from a lower caste or a very traditional community. However, in many cases conversion meant the loss of community for the woman; one of the reasons why Ramabi's young Hindu widows may have been attracted to her school, and other institutions like it, was that they had no other place to go.⁶² Professions of faith and conversion were also not necessarily sincere or uncomplicated by non-religious concerns. In a rare acknowledgement of this fact, YWCA Secretary Nina Brentnall described the difficulties of determining whether conversions were bona fide.⁶³ Writing after the opening of a Welfare Center, Brentnall stated that this type of work provided "an outlet for practical Christianity to the membership of the Association." She continued that "[o]ne of the besetting sins of Indian Christians (of which however they have not the monopoly) is the habit of making

⁶¹ Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Ryan Dunch, "Beyond Cultural Imperialism: Cultural Theory, Christian Missions, and Global Modernity," *History and Theory* 41, no. 3 (October 2002): 301-325; Etherington, *Missions and Empire*; Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy Lutkehaus, eds., *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999); Lian, *The Conversion of Missionaries*; A. N. Porter, *Religion Versus Empire?: British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); Dana L. Robert, *Gospel Bearers, Gender Barriers: Missionary Women in the Twentieth Century* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002).

⁶² Mission schools were some of the few educational opportunities for women, along with institutions such as Pandita Ramabi's home for widows, which provided both a place to live and job training. While some historians have viewed these as positive, because they moved women out of *purdah* and the *zenanas*, other historians emphasize these as fundamentally colonial. See: Forbes, *Women in Modern India*; Geraldine Hancock Forbes, *Indian Women and the Freedom Movement: A Historian's Perspective* (Mumbai: Research Centre for Women's Studies, S.N.D.T. Women's University, 1997); Burton, "Contesting the Zenana"; Antoinette M. Burton, "Some Trajectories of 'Feminism' and 'Imperialism'," in *Feminisms and Internationalism*, ed. Mrinalini Sinha, Donna J Guy, and Angela Woollacott (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 214-224; Dagmar Engels, *Beyond Purdah?: Women in Bengal 1890-1939* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996); Azra Asghar Ali, *The Emergence of Feminism Among Indian Muslim Women, 1920-1947* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Brumberg, "Zenanas and Girlless Villages: The Ethnology of American Evangelical Women, 1870-1910"; Kent, "Tamil Bible Women and the Zenana Missions of Colonial South India."

⁶³ For conversion, see Richard M. Eaton, "Comparative History as World History: Religious Conversion in Modern India," *Journal of World History* 8, no. 2 (Fall 1997): 243-271.

loud protestations of faith without doing anything practical to uphold it.” Brentnall then likened this lack of action to the “widespread demonstrations connected with Mr. Gandhi. There is lots of talk but very little real action.” For Brentnall, the Welfare Work was therefore a way to cross caste barriers, “giving them a chance to put into practice all the theories they hold about doing away with social barriers and making the depressed classes lives more worth while.”⁶⁴

Brentnall’s assessment that many times local women were merely giving lip service to Christian tenets, rather than enacting them, hinted at the broader doubts of sincere conversion that missionaries sometimes expressed. While missionaries deliberately offered a variety of incentives such as education and healthcare, to entice potential converts into their institutions, it meant that missionaries could rarely be completely certain that people were there for the faith rather than the incentives.

Because they maintained an emphasis on conversion, USYWCA Secretaries’ celebration of cosmopolitanism and advocacy of indigeneity were often covers for their attempts to foster conversion to Christianity. For example, in a February 1926 report, USYWCA Secretary Ruth Cowdrey wrote of an “International Fellowship” meeting in Poonamalinee, just outside of Madras. She stated that “[t]his is a group that meets at the Y.W.C.A. regularly once a month, and the membership is both men and women, European and Indian, Christian, Hindu and Moslem.” Initially this group had been “a form of inter-racial friendship among Christians, but has developed into an inter-religious group organized to promote understanding and sympathy between people often too far separated by prejudice.” Here, Europeans were the minority, and were “jokingly referred to as ‘out-casts,’ a reversal of the unusual attitude toward the dominant race.” After a dinner, in which there were “frank discussions of race relationships, and

⁶⁴ Nina Brentnall to “My Dear Friends” September 29, 1932, 2, Microfilm Reel 57- India- Staff Reports- Nina Brentnall, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

misunderstandings” the group had “talks by representatives of the three religions on their conception of prayer.” In her assessment of this meeting, Cowdrey asserted that she was “more convinced than ever that India must be evangelized by Indians, who know the thought and background of the Indian mind. The non-Christians listened with close attention and respect when Miss Devasahayan, a teacher in the Women’s Christian College, and one of our Vice-Presidents, spoke on Jesus’ conception of Prayer.” Cowdrey characterized Devasahayan as “a fine example of the influence of Christianity in the development of the best kind of womanhood.”⁶⁵ In her account of the meeting, Cowdrey says nothing about the potential that she was swayed by the Hindu or Muslim speakers, who were likely as educated, erudite, and well connected as Miss Devasahayan. For Cowdrey herself, then, the meeting was therefore less an exercise in interfaith and interracial understanding, than it was a potential opportunity for converting non-Christians. This conversion was most likely, in her assessment, when non-Christians were approached by Christians who were not European. What made Devasahayan “the best kind of womanhood” was a combination of her race, her status as a teacher, her association with the YWCA, and most of all, her Christianity.

USYWCA Secretaries also tended to view non-Christian women as both exotic and anachronistic. One example of this was the reports and letters of Benedicte Wilhjelm, a Danish YWCA Secretary who had been recruited by the USYWCA to go to India under their auspices. Wilhjelm related the accommodation of Muslim religious practices such as *purdah* in an account of the YWCA’s “Seasons Fair” in 1935. Wilhjelm stated that the YWCA “set aside” some time “for the visit of women in purdah. All men servants were carefully kept behind in their quarters and Girl Guides watched the gate strictly keeping all male persons out! Quite a number of

⁶⁵ Ruth Cowdrey, February 1926, 2, Microfilm Reel 57- India- Staff Reports- Cowdrey, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

women of the Mohamedan community had accepted our invitation and seemed to appreciate very much the opportunity of seeing what other women may do.”⁶⁶ While the YWCA accommodated religious practices of these Muslim women, Wilhjelm’s comments reveal that she viewed these women as anachronistic. The implication of her comments was that the YWCA’s event was a chance for some women of a religious minority (after all, the exhibit did not conform to *purdah* rules all the time) to experience what all or many other women had a chance to do.

Even when Muslim women were not adhering strictly to *purdah*, Wilhjelm’s accounts marked them as behind the Christian women in a type of feminist teleology. For example, she wrote in a 1937 letter that the YWCA there had helped Muslim women form a “Moslem Young Women’s Association.” Wilhjelm stated that “[t]hey turned to the Y.W.C.A. for help, asked us to advise them in organizing their Association and their library.” She interpreted this as “a young sister turning to the older sister to benefit from her experiences.”⁶⁷ While these Muslim women were at least part of a broader sisterhood for Wilhjelm—an idea that was counter to many of the types of exclusionary sisterhood historians have more commonly found in British and U.S. women’s associations—they were nonetheless still subordinate and under the rightful and natural guidance of the YWCA.⁶⁸ One of the end goals of this influence was getting women in general into the public sphere. This is evident in Wilhjelm’s description of the YWCA’s party for Lady Stubbs, the wife of the departing Governor. She stated that “a great number of the Mohammedan women came and occupied an upstairs balcony from where they could see us all; and their leading personality was on the platform with others and she was the one to hand the presentation

⁶⁶ Benedicte Wilhjelm to “Dear Friends,” August 14, 1935, 1, Microfilm Reel 57- India- Personal Correspondence- Benedict Wilhjelm, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁶⁷ Benedicte Wilhjelm to Miss McFarland, October 16, 1937, 2, Microfilm Reel 57- India- Personal Correspondence- Benedict Wilhjelm, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁶⁸ Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-46*; Bolt, *Sisterhood Questioned?*; Blair, “The Limits of Sisterhood”.

to Lady Stubbs in front of all of us.” Wilhjelm asserted that this was proof that these women were “gradually taking their places as citizens with the rest of us.”⁶⁹ For Wilhelm, then, the YWCA’s influence extended into Muslim communities not by going into the individual women’s quarters, but by bringing women out of them and into the public sphere, where they could benefit more directly from the “older sister’s” organizational advice and take “their places as citizens.” These may have been new developments to Wilhjelm, but as Gail Minault asserts in her work on Muslim feminists and nationalism, women’s groups such as the All-India Muslim Ladies’ Conference (Anjuman-e-Khawatin-e-Islam) dated to the 1910’s, and schools such as the Aligarh College, which was for elite Muslim girls, had been in existence since the late eighteenth century.⁷⁰

Like other YWCA Secretaries, Wilhjelm largely marked British and American feminists, and their groups, as the origin for feminism in India, and praised Hindu and Muslim women who most manifested these characteristics. For example, at the All India Women’s Conference (AIWC) in 1936, Wilhelm marked the changes that she saw in the level of Muslim women’s participation from the conference she had attended in 1932. She stated that the “move out of purdah” was evidenced by the integration of the Press (who had been segregated before) and changes in dress. Wilhjelm asserted that she “could not help feeling that the educated women in India at large are training themselves to become a strong force in the social improvement and educational development in India of tomorrow. It was most encouraging to meet with this

⁶⁹ Benedicte Wilhjelm to Miss McFarland, October 16, 1937, 3, Microfilm Reel 57- India- Personal Correspondence- Benedict Wilhjelm, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁷⁰ Gail Minault, “Sisterhood or Separatism? The All-India Muslim Ladies' Conference and the Nationalist Movement,” in *The Extended Family: Women and Political Participation in India and Pakistan*, ed. Gail Minault, (Columbia, Mo: South Asia Books, 1981), 85-87.

selected cross-section from among them.”⁷¹ Here, Wilhjelm drew the connections between elite women and positive reform organizations fairly tightly. For her, the women at the All India Conference, because they were educated and somewhat diverse, were the ones who could become a strong force in social improvement.

With some of these women, USYWCA Secretaries emphasized what they saw as the women’s progressive feminism. For example, when Mrs. Ammu Swaminadhan, a high-caste Hindu woman was traveling in the United States with her daughter Mrinalini, two USYWCA Secretaries—Ruth Cowdrey, and India YWCA General Secretary Faith Parmelee—wrote effusive letters of introduction for her. Although both women phrased their praise differently, it contained the same basic elements. First, there was Swaminadhan’s personality and education, and her active participation in public life and speaking. Parmelee asserted that the YWCA women would “find them cultured, progressive in their thinking, intelligent and thoroughly charming to meet.” Second, there were Swaminadhan’s skills as a hostess. Cowdrey stated that Swaminadhan was “one of the most charming hostesses you have ever known. Everyone ‘who is anyone’ is sure to meet the Swaminadhan when they visit Madras.” Faith Parmelee asserted that that “Mrs. Swaminadhan is an interested member of our Y.W.C.A. and has met through it many overseas visitors. She has always been one of the first to offer them the hospitality of her home.” Third, there were Swaminadhan’s connections to the women’s movement. Cowdrey stated that “[f]rom its beginning she has been one of the officers and chief supporters of the All India Women’s Conference” and Parmelee added that “[s]he is always to be found among the leaders

⁷¹ Benedicte Wilhjelm to Miss McFarland, April 21, 1936, 1, Microfilm Reel 57- India- Personal Correspondence- Benedict Wilhjelm, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

in any movement here for social and civic betterment.”⁷² It was not a coincidence that the qualities that Parmelee and Cowdrey highlighted in their letters to the USYWCA were the same ones that were part of lived Christianity and the Social Gospel—loyalty, friendless, chivalry, and service. However, their highlighting these qualities as making Swaminadhan outstanding in India did Orientalize subaltern women by comparison; Swaminadhan was outstanding *because* she embodied all of those qualities, and by implication, many other Indian women were unremarkable, because they did not.

While the Swaminadhan embodied the qualities of an American Social Gospel, which the USYWCA would presumably approved of, Cowdrey and Parmelee also specifically cited Swaminadhan’s connections to the nationalist movement in their letters. Cowdrey stated that “she has been very prominent in the Congress Party, and is at present a Principal Councilor in the corporation of Madras; and she is an ardent leader in all social reform activities. In addition to all of this she found time to organize a Swadeshi Emporium, where one may purchase the lovely handwoven materials which the Congress Party urges all of us to use.”⁷³ Cowdrey’s use of “us” here is particularly revealing, because it links her specifically to anti-imperial nationalism. These kinds of explicit ties do not seem to have been present in the materials that the India YWCA generated for use within India—either because they would not be well received by the YWCA members or, more likely, because such ties could cause reprisals from the British government in India. However, an anti-imperial stance was likely to be significantly more popular in the United States, where there were groups that supported Gandhi and funded specifically nationalist

⁷² Ruth Cowdrey to “Dear Friends” July 26 1939, Microfilm Reel 57- India- Personal Correspondence- Ruth Cowdrey, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.; Faith Parmelee to Mrs. Finley and Miss Lyon, May 2 1939, Microfilm Reel 57- India- Personal Correspondence- Faith Parmelee., YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁷³ Ruth Cowdrey to “Dear Friends” July 26 1939, Microfilm Reel 57- India- Personal Correspondence- Ruth Cowdrey, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.; Faith Parmelee to Mrs. Finley and Miss Lyon, May 2 1939, Microfilm Reel 57- India- Personal Correspondence- Faith Parmelee., YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

causes.⁷⁴ And this would not have been the first time Swaminadhan would have traveled to the United States as a spokeswoman for India. Although Cowdrey and Parmelee only mentioned Swaminadhan's connection with the AIWC in passing, she had already been to the United States a "representative" progressive Indian woman in the late 1920's, at the behest of her close friend of Margaret Cousins, the de facto leader of the AIWC. In her article discussing the way that Cousins attempted to cultivate relationships with U.S. feminists, Catharine Candy asserts that Cousins had sent Swaminadhan to the United States in an attempt to counter the pro-imperial sentiment Katharine Mayo's *Mother India* had generated.⁷⁵ Unlike Cousin's overt efforts, however, Cowdrey and Parmelee extolled Swaminadhan privately in letters to the USYWCA rather than publically in India itself.⁷⁶

While USYWCA Secretaries championed non-Christian women in private to the USYWCA, their public stance in India was more firmly aligned with Christian and Anglo-Indian women, a position that was facilitated by the bifurcation between Christians and non-Christians.⁷⁷ For the USYWCA Secretaries, who had firmly embraced the Social Gospel, and who likely understood "Anglo-Indian" as solely a racial category, this cultivation of Anglo-

⁷⁴ Gary R. Hess, *America Encounters India, 1941-1947* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971); Alan Raucher, "American Anti-Imperialists and the Pro-India Movement, 1900-1932," *The Pacific Historical Review* 43, no. 1 (February 1974): 83-110; Danielson, "In my Extremity I Turned to Gandhi: American Pacifists, Christianity, and Gandhian Nonviolence, 1915-1941"; Gordon, "Mahatma Gandhi's Dialogues with Americans."

⁷⁵ Catherine Candy, "The Inscrutable Irish-Indian Feminist Management of Anglo-American Hegemony, 1917-1947," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2001).

⁷⁶ This generally mirrored the stance of US officials in India. While the bulk of historiography on the diplomatic ties between the United States and India focuses on the post-World War II era, there are some recent works on pre-World War II relations, particularly in the context of African-Americans and the early Civil Rights movement. See: Hess, *America Encounters India, 1941-1947*; Gary R. Hess, "Global Expansion and Regional Balances: The Emerging Scholarship on United States Relations with India and Pakistan," *The Pacific Historical Review* 56, no. 2 (May 1987): 259-295; Clymer, "Samuel Evans Stokes, Mahatma Gandhi, and Indian Nationalism"; Kenton J. Clymer, *Quest for Freedom: The United States and India's Independence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995); Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

⁷⁷ Alison Blunt defines the group as "English-speaking, Christian and culturally more European than Indian." Alison Blunt, *Domicile and Diaspora: Anglo-Indian Women and the Spatial Politics of Home* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2005)2.

Indian leadership was likely evidence of indigenization. However, the status of Anglo-Indian was not just a racial category; it was also a locational one which could encompass Europeans domiciled in India (and the India YWCA seems to have used the term to refer to both populations).

And, unlike the connections between Social Gospel Christianity and anti-imperialism likely imagined by the Secretaries in the United States, the connections between Christianity and race could also be utilized in ways that were not necessarily anti-imperialist or pro-nationalist. As Alison Blunt states in her work on Anglo-Indians, “Anglo-Indian images of India as motherland in the years before Independence were fundamentally different from the images of Bharat Mata- Mother India- invoked by anti-imperial nationalists. Rather than represent a Hindu vision of a united India, Anglo-Indian images of the motherland sought to identify the national loyalty of a small, Christian minority.” In these discourses, a “Mother India” walked hand-in-hand with a Father Britain.⁷⁸

YWCA Secretaries in India seem to also have viewed Anglo-Indians as a uniquely situated population; while they were the closest to the YWCA’s conception of the Indian Y-woman, they were also a marginalized population. For example, in 1915, an Indian YWCA Secretary stated that there were “three main divisions- the resident European population, the Eurasian community, or, as they are now called, Anglo-Indians, and the vast mass of the women of the many Indian races.” The author stated that “to each of them falls a large share of the responsibility for the future of the Empire.”⁷⁹ For European women, “the relations of race to race are changing, and very wide possibilities open before English women resident in the country who are willing to use their privileges of education and experience in the help of the Indian

⁷⁸ Blunt, *Domicile and Diaspora*, 43.

⁷⁹ “The Present Situation in India and the Young Women’s Christian Association,” 1915, 1, India 01 Folder 3, Records of the World’s Young Women’s Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

women among whom they live.” The author asserted that the education of Anglo-Indian had been “neglected” and that many “have no home except the YWCA hostel” once they had left school. However, “[s]ome of them ...occupy important positions in business houses, and one of the most capable Association Secretaries to-day, in India, is an Anglo-Indian girl. These facts speak for themselves as to the value of any attempt made to bring these women to a worthy position in the community.” Finally were the Indian women, who largely needed education, although “a very large number of schools for the depressed classes are now being maintained by ladies of high caste.”⁸⁰ Of these three groups, the Secretary asserted that Anglo-Indian women were the most important. She stated that “it is not too much to say that to a large extent the very fate of the Empire will depend upon the quality of the leadership” which would “control and direct” the “awakening” womanhood in India.⁸¹ According to this Secretary, then, the Empire would rise or fall based not on other strengths, which must have been prominent in 1915 such as military might or British men, but upon Anglo-Indian women.

In this Secretary’s estimation, the India YWCA was in a unique position to cultivate and direct these women into leadership roles, for several reasons. First, “the Association went to India to help solve the Anglo-Indian problem by giving the girls and women of this community higher ideals of life and service and trying to fit them to fulfill those ideals. Since then it has branched out into every stratum of educated or semi-educated womanhood- with general branches in 68 towns, student branches in 27 towns and a membership of 9,570.” This was also a comprehensive effort through the fourfold aim of “the spiritual, social, intellectual, and physical development of its members, and along these lines all the work is carried on, due balance and

⁸⁰ “The Present Situation in India and the Young Women’s Christian Association,” 1915, 1, India 01, Folder 3, Records of the World’s Young Women’s Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

⁸¹ “The Present Situation in India and the Young Women’s Christian Association,” 1915, 2, India 01, Folder 3, Records of the World’s Young Women’s Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

proportion being maintained between them.”⁸² As this shows, at least for this author in 1915, the YWCA was a bridge that would facilitate the Anglo-Indian women’s salvation of the empire.

Although these types of discourses continued through the 1920’s and 1930’s, they shifted from an Anglo-Indian salvation of Empire to the salvation of Indian society by a Christian community. A 1939 report stated that the YWCA was “endeavoring to provide the need of friendship, through the bringing together of the Christian women in a small community; the need of spiritual refreshment by providing daily Bible readings in a monthly newssheet and a prayer fellowship; and the need of good reading matter by influencing friends to send magazines and other suitable reading matter to lonely members.” USYWCA Secretaries viewed this community as being in danger from several changes, primarily rising secularism and nationalism, which Secretaries seem to have continued to view as separate issues. The report stated that “when we find young people in revolt against unthinking leaders within the Church, and secularism gaining ground, the only way to face these issues with courage is the Christian motive.” This Christian motive would provide stability in the face of cultural disruption, in which “[t]he place of women is one of new freedom, and older barriers have gone, and young people are growing up without the guidance of tradition. Young professional women find themselves in new places of responsibility and often loneliness and temptation, and they also face the conflict between professional ideals and Christian behavior.”⁸³ Although the report does not specify, the group of isolated Christian women whom they were concerned about were likely Anglo-Indians, who were also negotiating changing economic, racial, and national statuses. As Alison Blunt states, these were the bulk of women in the professions. While some Indian women had begun to work

⁸² “The Present Situation in India and the Young Women’s Christian Association,” 1915, 2, India 01, Folder 3, Records of the World’s Young Women’s Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

⁸³ “Everymember: Monthly News Sheet of the Y.W.C.A. of India, Burma and Ceylon, 184 Corporation Street, Calcutta” May & June 1939, 5, Microfilm Reel 56- India- National Annual Reports, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

in professions such as “doctors, lawyers, asocial reformers and teachers from the late nineteenth century.... Anglo-Indian women were the first to be employed in large numbers as nurses, secretaries and stenographers.”⁸⁴ As Priti Ramamurthy asserts in her study of Indian “modern girls” and film, Anglo-Indian women were not only at the forefront of the burgeoning “commercial establishments of Calcutta and Bombay... They also worked in the entertainment business,” which was generally considered to be less sexually respectable than other professions.⁸⁵ The YWCA’s emphasis on the importance of a Christian community was not only their attempt to counter what they likely perceived as these types of moral vulnerability, but to remake Anglo-Indian “modern girls” into Y-women.

When the USYWCA Secretaries envisioned this transformation, they likely envisioned these Anglo-Indian women becoming like the Indian women who were already involved in the YWCA. These were women who tended to have deep connections to the British colonial establishment. For example, in her preface to a history of the Calcutta YWCA (written in 1978), Padmini Sengupta stated that her first contacts with the YWCA came when she “was a schoolgirl in London, in 1919.” Her family was friends with the Kinnairds, and Emily Kinnaird “saw to it” that Sengupta’s mother became a World YWCA Committee member. Sengupta traveled with her mother and World YWCA President Lady Parnoor to the World YWCA conference in Champéry, Switzerland. From that experience, “as a mere girlish appendage to my mother” she stated that she “always thought of the ‘Y’ as a romantic organization of travel and experience.” Upon her return to Calcutta in 1934 she became a member of the Y “as a working girl” and found that “the home-cum-hostel scene in Calcutta was interesting and opened a new world of

⁸⁴ Blunt, *Domicile and Diaspora*, 60.

⁸⁵ Priti Ramamurthy, “All-Consuming Nationalism: The Indian Modern Girl in the 1920's and 1930's,” in *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 147-173, 161.

fellowship to me.”⁸⁶ The fact that Sengupta went to school in London, and her family was friends with Lady Parnoor and Lady Kinnaird would have made her very elite, and meant that she had access to financial and logistical resources that were beyond the reach of most Indian women.

If the Indian YWCA leaders did not have such connections, the YWCA worked to facilitate them, as the example of Maya Das (also known as “Dora Maya Das”), shows. One of thirteen children, Das’ parents were first and second-generation Christians, and were in close contact with several missionaries. She and two other female students had been the first women to enroll in classes at Forman Christian College at Lahore, and in 1906 she enrolled at Mt. Holyoke College as the first Indian student. After her time at Mt. Holyoke she spent a year at the YWCA Training School in New York. After her return to India she held positions as acting principal of Kinnaird College, and then the Associate National Secretary of the Indian YWCA.⁸⁷

While women such as Das were politically active and engaged, the USYWCA Secretaries tended to portray their efforts as geared more towards social uplift and reform than anti-colonial nationalism. However, the fact that such efforts could be in line with anti-colonialism—even if not the nationalist movement itself—was what may have kept women like Das interested in working with the YWCA in spite of the racism they found within it. One example of this was a YWCA weaving program organized by Maya Das and USYWCA Secretary Elizabeth Wilson. In the early 1920’s Das spearheaded a program within the Indian YWCA (and with funding help from American magnate Cyrus McCormick) to train women to teach weaving. This weaving program may have been one of the few things to have kept Das interested in the YWCA; in 1920

⁸⁶ Sengupta, *A Hundred Years of Service: Centenary Volume of the Y.W.C.A. of Calcutta, 1878-1978*, viii.

⁸⁷ For basic biographical information (albeit with an obvious slant), see: Alice Boucher Van Doren, *Lighted to Lighten the Hope of India* (West Medford, MA: The Central Committee on the United Study of Foreign Missions, 1922), 138-143.

she had essentially hit the Indian YWCA's glass ceiling when she was appointed Assistant General Secretary to USYWCA Secretary Faith Parmelee, rather than General Secretary in her own right. USYWCA Secretary Harriet Taylor reported after seeing Das in Peking in 1922 that Das was "most critical of the Association as a whole, and of India in particular." She "was coming to the conclusion" that the YWCA "could never meet the needs of Indian women, and that in the near future it might be that the Association concentrated its efforts upon the Anglo-Indian women and a purely Indian Association would be started to meet the needs of the women of the country" although she "wished it were not necessary." Taylor wondered if Das was "disappointed in not being made general secretary" although in the end she put Das' dissatisfaction down to being tired.⁸⁸ For Taylor, the problem was personal, either in the form of Das' disappointment or her fatigue, rather than a systemic and racial one within the India YWCA.

Other Indian women within the YWCA also do not seem to have been hesitant to assert their own feelings to the USYWCA leaders, and to correct them when necessary. For example, in the late 1930's four Indian Secretaries had further training in the United States: Suganthi Isaiyah, Sosa Matthew, Marguerite Pinchaud, and Ila Sircar. Each of them traveled in the United States and Europe, largely to attend YWCA (and Student Christian Movement, in the case of Sircar) meetings.⁸⁹ As much as Jean Begg asserted that Sircar and Isaiyah were "exact opposite types" in terms of their looks and geographic origins, the USYWCA seems to have generally assumed that they would share similar viewpoints as Indian women. This was evident when they suggested

⁸⁸ Harriet Taylor to Elizabeth Wilson, June 6, 1922, 1-2, Microfilm Reel 57- India- Personal Correspondence- Elizabeth Wilson, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁸⁹ See: Jean Begg to Sarah Lyon May 31, 1939 and Jean Begg to Sarah Lyon January 1939, Microfilm Reel 56- India- Personnel Correspondence- Jean Begg, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. , Matthew and Pinchaud were the India YWCA delegates to the World's Council meeting in Canada, and were on a "year's study leave" Jean Begg to Koto Yamamoto, National YWCA of Japan, May 27, 1938, Microfilm Reel 56- India- Personnel Correspondence- Jean Begg, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

that Isaiah sign her name to an article for *The Woman's Press* written by Sircar.⁹⁰ In response to this plan, Isaiah wrote a brief note to Mrs. Cotton, in which she stated that the YWCA could “publish it in her name for I do not agree with some of the things... I have been connected with the S.C.M. and the Y.W.C.A. since 1926 and I have a very different interpretation to give for the formation of the Student Movement. When I do have some time I shall discuss things with you. If you want an article on India later on, I will be glad to give you one.”⁹¹ As this polite but firm letter from Isaiah illustrates, Indian YWCA Secretaries were far from powerless in their relationship with the USYWCA, which was deeply invested in them as Indian YWCA workers upon their return.⁹²

It is difficult to be definitive given the archival record, but at least some Indian YWCA Secretaries, particularly those at the upper levels who had the freedom to assert themselves to the USYWCA, seem to have also believed that the YWCA was a beneficial organization for Indian women, even in a highly political colonial context. For example, USYWCA Secretaries generally portrayed Das' weaving program as just a rural uplift work. However, in the context of the beginning of the home rule (*Swaraj*) movement, in which Gandhi and other nationalist leaders advocated the boycott of British made goods and the utilization of Indian made goods

⁹⁰ For Begg's comment, see Jean Begg to Sarah Lyon, May 31, 1939, 2, Microfilm Reel 56- India- Personnel Correspondence- Jean Begg, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁹¹ Suganthy Isaiah to Mrs. Cotton, October 2, 1939, Microfilm Reel 56- India- Personnel Correspondence- Suganthy Isaiah, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁹² As was Jean Begg, who instructed Sarah Lyon on a gentle campaign of persuasion with Sircar. See: Jean Begg to Sarah Lyon, January 1939, Microfilm Reel 56- Personnel Correspondence- Jean Begg, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. It would also be very interesting to know how they were viewed upon their return. As Margaret Wilson stated in a 1934 letter to Lyon, the YWCA had to become “linked up with the people of the land. Until a certain level is reached in this part of the work we are only ‘holding on’ to a Western organization.” She asserted that while city Associations had committees, “[s]ome of which are entirely Indian... here on the land such is referred to as copying the Westerner, or it's only European, and for the Indian who have been abroad allowance is accepted with the hope that sooner or later he will return to his village and live the old way of life.” Margaret Wilson to Sarah Lyon, August 22, 1934, 2, Microfilm Reel 57- India- Personal Correspondence- Margaret Wilson, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

(*Swadeshi*) instead, teaching women to weave was a deeply political act. Das seems to have been aware of this, and in a 1922 book on Christian women in India, Alice Boucher Van Doren reported that Das had been a little bit tart about the program in an interview with Gandhi. Van Doren stated that “Miss Maya Das told him that she had even anticipated him in this [spinning wheel] movement, for she and other Christian women of advanced education are following a regular course in spinning and weaving, with the purpose of passing on this skill through the Rural Department of the Y.W.C.A.”⁹³ However, as much as Van Doren painted Das as unaligned with Gandhi, as Das’ statements above show, she was not necessarily content in the YWCA. Therefore, rather than Van Doren’s assumed binary, Das may have been sympathetic to elements within both groups, and her comment to Gandhi may have been more of an issue of timing, rather than an opposition to his goals. USYWCA Secretaries were quick to emphasize that this was the first effort to train women to teach weaving—indeed, much of the correspondence between USYWCA Secretary Elizabeth Wilson and the USYWCA and Mrs. McCormick consisted of the logistical difficulties of setting up the facilities specifically for women rather than men.⁹⁴ Although Gandhi had already begun the *Swadeshi* movement, Das’ conversation with him would have been relatively early in his calls for women’s inclusion.⁹⁵ Therefore, this may have been a case where feminism took the center stage in Das’ comment, however, it does not mean that she was anti-nationalist, either in the early 1920’s or after she left the YWCA.

⁹³ Van Doren, *Lighted to Lighten the Hope of India*, 141-142. Although Van Doren seems to have met Das in Calcutta, and Das may have relayed the story to her, Van Doren seems to have also been generally against non-cooperation, so it is likely that she exaggerated the story.

⁹⁴ See: Elizabeth Wilson to “Mrs. McCormick and my other Friends in America,” January (9?) 1923, and Elizabeth Wilson to Friends (at State Agricultural and Industrial College), November 21 1922, Microfilm Reel 57-India- Staff Reports- Elizabeth Wilson, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁹⁵ Most of the quotes that Leela Kasturi and Vina Mazumdar cite for Gandhi’s calls for women’s participation in *Swadeshi* come from the mid 1920’s and 1930’s. See: Mazumdar and Kasturi, *Women and Indian Nationalism*, lii-liv.

As they had been with Das' weaving program, USYWCA Secretaries, and the Indian YWCA generally, were largely silent in public about much of the nationalist activity that was occurring around the YWCA. The annual reports from the 1920's and 1930's are striking in their apparent normalcy. Despite their locations generally in the major cities, which were sites of nationalist activity, and the Indian National Committee's location in Calcutta specifically, the annual reports make no mention of Gandhi, *Swaraj*, *Swadeshi*, or events such as the Salt March in 1930. Instead, the India YWCA reports focused inward, on the changes in internal structures, the events pertinent to the YWCA itself, and the personnel who ran them. When YWCA reports did refer to political events in official YWCA documents that were open to the public, they did so obliquely. For example, rather than mentioning Gandhi or the Indian National Congress, the 1939 Annual report stated that the Indian YWCA "welcome[s] the desire to understand the *political problems* of the country by study and thought." Without mentioning the anti-colonial movements, the author asserted that the YWCA intersected with "[t]he great experiments which are being undertaken in prohibition, primary education and rural uplift" and the conference "commended to all associations that it be their concern to inform themselves and take action upon, all matters of social reform before the country." In the midst of this political storm, the author argued that the Indian YWCA was an area of cooperation and calm. She stated that "while nationality and racial groupings within all organizations must be recognized such distinctions are no longer regarded as fundamental in the Y.W.C.A. Although the complete integration of all the groups represented in our membership is not yet an accomplished fact within every local Association, it is a fact that the oneness of the membership is accepted."⁹⁶ This portrayal attempted to show that all evidence contrary to the Indian YWCA's unity was therefore invalid.

⁹⁶ "Everymember: Monthly News Sheet of the Y.W.C.A. of India, Burma and Ceylon, 184 Corporation Street, Calcutta," May & June 1939, 5, Microfilm Reel 56- India- National Annual Reports, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

As was, apparently, the relationship of the Indian YWCA for and against nationalist movements—they were subjects to consider, and not to act upon.

This silencing could be echoed with the USYWCA Secretaries themselves, for Agnes Hill's experience of bending to the existing predominantly British norms was repeated by the USYWCA Secretaries who followed her. In the early 1900's, Hill addressed this directly when she conducted an "informal conference of American secretaries" at Bombay, in which "the advantages and disadvantages of the American secretary working in India" were the primary subject of discussion. WYWCA Secretary Clarissa Spencer (who was British), reported the event. She stated that "even the English language as spoken on one side of the Atlantic was found to differ so that the American was obliged to drop expressions and words dear to her from childhood and learn others unfamiliar in order to speak intelligently and acceptably to those around her." Despite these rather fundamental differences, "the picture was not altogether gloomy; those present acknowledged the great blessing that had come into their lives as a result of being associated in the work in India with British colleagues and British committees. Indeed it was even suggested that in two or three points the American secretary had the advantage over her British sister." At the same time, however, "it was urged that every American secretary coming to India should serve an apprenticeship under a more experienced worker in order that she might have time to get rid of any provincialism which might prove offensive and to adapt herself to new surroundings."⁹⁷ Here, the "provincialism" seems to have been the USYWCA Secretaries' American-ness. To become cosmopolitan was evidently to take on a British colonial sensibility. And, as Hill herself had discovered when she "stuck to spiritual subjects," it was the USYWCA Secretaries who would have to bend.

⁹⁷ Clarissa Spencer, "Lahore," [1904?], 9, India 07, Folder 3, Records of the World's Young Women's Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

As much as USYWCA Secretaries very likely did feel silenced by their British colonial context, their assertions of their discomfort could be a useful tool in distancing themselves from British imperialism when writing for a U.S. audience. In the 1920's, particularly after the Amritsar massacre in 1919, and as Gandhi was becoming increasingly active, USYWCA Secretaries utilized their sense of being silenced, and the fact that the India YWCA was primarily British, to distance themselves from imperial efforts. For example, in a letter to her sorority magazine (subsequently entered into the minutes of the "India Section" of the USYWCA Foreign Division), Martha Downey wrote of the "conditions" and "difficulties" of the work in Madras. In her letter, she cited the "awakening to an intensely national feeling, which we are most happy to see" although it came with "unrest and often resentment at 'Western interference.'" She continued that "[i]t is a most natural and justifiable feeling" even though it "intensifies the problem" of race. In negotiating their position as Americans within a British organization, Downey asserted that Americans moved somewhat delicately because they were faced with "adjusting themselves to the British point of view." USYWCA Secretaries had to "adopt an English vocabulary and must with studied effort seek to put aside any Americanisms that set up a barrier between ourselves and our British co-workers."⁹⁸ Downey asserted that "America is in none too good favour with the British in India, but individual Americans can do much to break down the barrier by being willing to do their part." While they could not "cover up the fact that we are Americans," they could "try to 'rub off the Corners' that emphasize our differences."⁹⁹ While those differences may have proven difficult for USYWCA Secretaries "in

⁹⁸ "Copy of Letter written by Martha Downey for her fraternity magazine" *Vesper*, Madras, India, November 6, 1920, 1, Paper Records, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁹⁹ "Copy of Letter written by Martha Downey for her fraternity magazine" *Vesper*, Madras, India, November 6, 1920, 2, Paper Records, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

the field,” maintaining them was an integral part of USYWCA Secretaries’ perception of themselves as embodying “American” ideals, most particularly the egalitarian and inclusive qualities of the Social Gospel that shaped their visions of Y-space.

At times, however, USYWCA Secretaries were far from silent or uncritical of British imperialism in public, such as when USYWCA Secretary Ruth Cowdrey gave a speech at a convention in 1928. The speech, entitled “Modern Women of India,” began with Cowdrey speaking against fellow American Katherine Mayo’s *Mother India*, in which Mayo argued for a continuation of British rule.¹⁰⁰ Cowdrey reminded the audience that when Columbus “accidentally discovered the continent of America he was not looking for a new world but for India, which even at that date was old and cultured and fabulously rich?” She claimed to speak to the “other half of the story of India’s women which Miss Mayo left untouched in her three hundred pages.”¹⁰¹ This “half” was the Indian feminist elite, rather than the downtrodden mothers and sexual slaves of Mayo’s account. In support of the progress that Cowdrey felt Indian women had made, she recapped the events of “Women’s Day, December 29” in 1928, as well as the activities of several prominent Indian women, including Mrs. Sarojini Naidu and Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddi. Cowdrey asserted that “while these leaders are far ahead of the mass of India’s women, the very fact that they are discussing” issues such as “the same standards of sex purity and sex morality as men” was proof that “a new day has dawned.” She stated that “[r]eform of social and religious customs and abuses will no longer depend entirely on the championship of a few courageous, intelligent men, but will have the support of a large body of

¹⁰⁰ For an excellent analysis of the work and the political controversies it created, see Mayo, *Mother India* particularly Sinha’s introduction.

¹⁰¹ Ruth Cowdrey, “Modern Women of India” April 1928 Convention, 1, Microfilm Reel 57- India- Staff Reports- Ruth Cowdrey, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

educated and enthusiastic Indian women.”¹⁰² These arguments were in line with other reform movements, such as the Women’s Indian Association (WIA), which Reddi was a prominent member of.

Cowdrey’s use of Reddi as an example was telling because the WIA asserted that the basis for women’s activism could be found in Hindu mythology, rather than as the result of tutelage by Western feminists—much less the continuance of British imperialism.¹⁰³ As Cowdrey had invoked the “old and cultured and fabulously rich” past of India, Reddi had harkened to Hindu figures to point out what she saw as a modern lack of spirituality in a speech only the year before. She “demanded that ancient values illustrated ‘in the life of Harishchandra who sacrificed everything of this world for truth, the lives of Damayanti and Sala, of Savitri and Satyavan, must be taught first to our boys and girls.’”¹⁰⁴ These Hindu references were in some ways relatively conservative references to domesticity because they were couples in which the women remained morally pure and sexually faithful in spite of domestic hardship. However, both Reddi and Sarojini Naidu were at the forefront of progressive movements for women’s education and political participation; and Naidu was not only a prominent member of the AIWC, she was a more overtly political figure, and an early and ardent supporter of Gandhi.¹⁰⁵

For Cowdrey’s part, despite an apparent championing of Hinduism and prominent Indian women, she also asserted that Christianity was superior and more progressive. Hinduism would not “provide incentive to sacrificial service” in the way that Christianity did and that America

¹⁰² Ruth Cowdrey, “Modern Women of India” April 1928 Convention, 2, Microfilm Reel 57- India- Staff Reports- Ruth Cowdrey, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹⁰³ Prabha Rani states that “While the early reformers sought to justify their progressive ideas on grounds of a revival of an ancient and glorious past, the members of the WIA sought in the characters of mythology a source of support for their activities.” Prabha Rani, “The Women’s Indian Association and the Self-Respect Movement in Madras, 1925-1936: Perceptions on Women,” in *Women and Indian Nationalism*, ed. Vina Mazumdar and Leela Kasturi (New Delhi: Vikas Pub. House, 1994), 94-109, 95.

¹⁰⁴ Rani, “The Women’s Indian Association and the Self-Respect Movement in Madras, 1925-1936: Perceptions on Women” 95.

¹⁰⁵ See Forbes, *Women in Modern India*.

had a “unique opportunity to show these women the life of him who came not to be ministered unto but to minister.”¹⁰⁶ At the same time, however, Cowdrey immediately condemned Americans for being un-Christian by being prejudiced against Indians. She asked “do you realize how hard it is for us Americans to talk to Indians about the brotherhood of men when we have to tell our Indian friends who come to America that they must not wear their turbans if they wish to avoid being rudely treated in Christian America?” She concluded by suggesting that her audience read *An Uphill Road in India* by missionary M.L. Christlieb instead of *Mother India*. She stated that *Mother India* was a sensational exaggeration and Christlieb’s account was the true story; they were as “the lurid pictures of the cinema and the tragic story of every day life.”¹⁰⁷ Although the speech wandered around a fair amount, and seemed to aim critiques at almost everyone, it is important that Cowdrey did not shy away from being critical, not just in a private communiqué to the USYWCA, but in a very public venue in India. What Cowdrey’s speech demonstrates is that while at least some USYWCA Secretaries rejected the continuance of the British imperialism, they were not necessarily against its ultimate aims—even if it recast those ends as the goal of U.S.-based reform and religious transformation.

While some USYWCA Secretaries felt silenced by their British context, there was also a general sense within the YWCA that USYWCA Secretaries were necessary for the India YWCA’s work, perhaps because they were seemed to be more efficacious in creating Y-space. Starting with Agnes Hill’s cachet as a professional, both the India YWCA and USYWCA Secretaries issued relatively consistent calls for the USYWCA to be involved in the India

¹⁰⁶ Ruth Cowdrey, “Modern Women of India” April 1928 Convention, 2, Microfilm Reel 57- India- Staff Reports- Ruth Cowdrey, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹⁰⁷ Ruth Cowdrey, “Modern Women of India” April 1928 Convention, 3, Microfilm Reel 57- India- Staff Reports- Ruth Cowdrey, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. Cowdrey quoted “From the unreal lead us to the real; From the darkness lead us to the light; From death lead us to immortality” which she asserted was an “ancient prayer from the Vedas.” However she had likely heard of it from Swami Vivekananda’s translation in the late 1890’s.

YWCA. For example, in the mid 1920's, when the USYWCA was beginning to reduce its budget for the Foreign Division, India YWCA Secretary Iris Wingate (who was British) wrote to Sarah Lyon in 1924 to urge Lyon to keep up the funding. Wingate stated that "American secretaries can contribute very definite things" most notably their "experience in other countries of starting work with the idea of handing it over to the people of the country." Wingate asserted that "[n]o other Association has had just that experience and I believe that it is one of the unique contributions of Americans to India." Wingate stated plainly that "mostly sincerely that I believe most emphatically that we need America's contribution to Association life and ideals out here... It would be disaster if we did not have the thought and ideals and the special contribution which only you can give. We just can't do without it."¹⁰⁸ Here was a British YWCA Secretary asserting not only the uniqueness of an "American contribution" to the Indian YWCA, but the necessity of that contribution.

USYWCA Secretaries sometimes asserted that their presence added both internationalism and cosmopolitanism to the India YWCA, obscuring the Britishness of the India YWCA. American Ruth Woodsmall, who was serving as the General Secretary for the WYWCA, wrote to Sarah Lyon in December of 1939 of the necessity of sending Anne Guthrie to India. Woodsmall stated that "it is very important that we should remember the value of international staff in a country like India. The problems of England and India should not be regarded as an internal problem, separately from world peace and international understanding. We have, I think, too long tended to think of India as the special province of England." Woodsmall asserted that this was not merely the concern of the USYWCA, and relayed the efforts of British YWCA Secretary Agatha Harrison who had been in Geneva meeting with the WYWCA to ask "why

¹⁰⁸ Wingate to Sarah Lyon, February 14 1924, 2, Microfilm Reel 56- India-Personal Correspondence- Iris Wingate, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

there is not more concern in international groups on the problem of Great Britain and the Indian relationships.” Harrison had “expressed the very eager hope that other countries may begin to play more constructively into the solution of the India problem which is a fundamental problem in reference to the whole question of imperialism and the future peace settlement.” Woodsmall asserted that “[h]aving an Indian national general secretary from America would be a definite indication that the YWCA cuts across the usual political concept. This is a feature which I think we cannot overlook. Agatha expressed particularly the hope that America might play a more vital role in British Indian relationships.”¹⁰⁹ With this, the India YWCA seemed to have come full circle from the USYWCA Secretaries’ adapting themselves to British power. Instead, the British Secretaries needed to adapt themselves to an international cosmopolitan context, embodied—literally—in the form of U.S. leadership.

When Agnes Hill arrived in Bombay in 1895, and gave her speech to the Bombay YWCA women, she began a process of negotiation in which she positioned herself, and the Indian YWCA vis a vis the existing British colonial structure. This process would be repeated time and again over the course of the next 45 years, as USYWCA Secretaries also attempted to institute what they saw as the positive values of Social Gospel, such as ecumenicalism, and the inclusion of women from different races and classes. Despite—or perhaps because of the potential for social leveling—these efforts were largely unsuccessful. While USYWCA Secretaries claimed to be inclusive of subaltern women, the India YWCA remained heavily tied to both the Missions and the British colonial structure, particularly in the earlier time period of the India YWCA’s activity. This had several implications, the most notable of which was the

¹⁰⁹ Ruth Woodsmall (YWCA) to Sarah Lyon, December 23, 1939, 2, Microfilm Reel 56- India-Personal Correspondence- Anne Guthrie, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

continuation of a distinction between Christian and non-Christian women, which often extended Orientalist stereotypes, and tended to re-enforce the hegemony of British and Anglo-Indian Christian women. When confronted with this colonial context, and in the face of rising nationalism and anti-imperialism, USYWCA Secretaries initially remained silent. Over the course of the 1920's and 1930's, however, they sought to foster some degree of anti-imperialism, by pointing to the Christian characteristics they perceived in Nationalist leaders such as Gandhi, and by being publicly critical of pro-imperialist tracts such as *Mother India*. These efforts demonstrate the USYWCA Secretaries' attempts to reconcile their position as Americans who tended to be sympathetic to both the anti-colonial claims of Indian nationalists, even as they also generally supported the need for feminist reform. In coping with these two agendas, USYWCA Secretaries emphasized Y-women, who embodied many of the qualities of both categories as mixed-race Christian women. These women, the USYWCA Secretaries hoped, would take up an agenda that was essentially a continuation of the "civilizing mission" and make it the basis for the emerging Indian nation.

CHAPTER 3: ARGENTINA—A NEW WOMAN'S BUILDING

In March 1937, USYWCA Secretary Elizabeth McFarland made an emergency trip from the USYWCA's New York headquarters to Buenos Aires, Argentina. The Buenos Aires YWCA was in serious financial trouble; it had moved into a new building in 1935, and debts from rent, refurbishing, and moving had been accruing. By 1937, the lenders had begun to call in the loans, and the YWCA faced imminent bankruptcy. The USYWCA National Board, alarmed by the urgency of the situation, decided that McFarland should get to Buenos Aires as soon as possible. She departed New York by airplane on March 26 and hop scotched her way down the east coasts of North, Central, and South America, finally arriving in Buenos Aires exactly one week after leaving New York.¹ McFarland's trip was part of extraordinary measures that the USYWCA put into saving the Buenos Aires YWCA building. Already strapped for cash and cutting back funding to YWCAs abroad, the USYWCA granted a substantial amount of money to the Buenos Aires YWCA. Upon her return to the United States, McFarland wrote to Buenos Aires YWCA President Mrs. Robina Drysdale that this aid to the Buenos Aires YWCA had serious financial consequences for other YWCAs. Mindful of the fact that Drysdale had also contributed a significant amount of her own money to ensure that the YWCA would keep the building, McFarland emphasized the USYWCA's efforts. She stated that Drysdale would "appreciate this has been done at a sacrifice of work in other parts of the world. Among other things it has meant that the secretary whom we had planned to send to China this year, cannot go, most of the amount which had been reserved for special projects in a number of countries has gone to help

¹ "Emergency trip of YWCA National Board member to Buenos Aires, 1937," Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina-Community-Buildings, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

the Buenos Aires Association meet its emergency.”² With this, McFarland made it clear that not only had the USYWCA expended effort for Buenos Aires at the expense of other work, but that such efforts were unlikely to be forthcoming again.

However, the hesitancy of the USYWCA to act had meant that they had largely ignored the warnings of the impending crisis. Throughout the summer and fall of 1936, Drysdale had written to the USYWCA, asking them for help and informing them of the Buenos Aires YWCA’s financial difficulties. In July she wrote to McFarland in reference to the financial reports she had sent earlier, which were “by no means pleasant reading” even through “such things have a habit of presenting themselves, [and] demanding a hearing.” Drysdale asserted that the Buenos Aires YWCA was “doing what we can to interest friends in the work; but unless some help...is forthcoming, we are up against a very difficult task.”³ It seems that these warnings went generally unheeded, until Drysdale wrote again in early December. In a letter to Mrs. Finley, the USYWCA National Board President, Drysdale essentially laid blame for Buenos Aires’ financial situation directly on the USYWCA, through the oversight of Miss Clara Roe, the USYWCA Secretary who had been in charge of the move to the new building. Drysdale explained that when it had become necessary to change locations, the Board had been “unanimously in favor” of expansion, “in which they were actively supported by Miss Roe.”⁴ Although the building was “on a very desirable site,” it was also more expensive to “modernize” and “adapt specially for the purpose of the Association” than the buildings the YWCA then occupied. Drysdale asserted that things had started going wrong financially soon after the

² Elizabeth McFarland to Mrs. Drysdale, June 25, 1937, 1, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Miscellaneous, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

³ Robina M. Drysdale to Elizabeth McFarland, July 14, 1936, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Miscellaneous, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁴ Robina M. Drysdale to Mrs. John H. Finley, December 7, 1936, 1, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Miscellaneous, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

YWCA took the building, to the point where “the staff were working at high pressure. The Association was very short of funds, so much so that the local staff were often in arrear with their salaries.” During this, Roe “apart from a superficial intervention in the purchase of furnishings, took no steps to assist, towards the opening of a campaign for the securing of funds.” When the Buenos Aires YWCA Board learned that Roe planned to take her year’s leave just as the YWCA was occupying the new building, they pointed out to her that this was a “singularly inopportune” time as well as an “unfair” obligation “to unload on a new and temporary general secretary the weight of responsibilities which had been incurred, when not by Miss Roe herself, at least with her consent and on her advice.” Drysdale concluded her letter by reminding Finley that the Buenos Aires General Secretary was “and has always been under the direction of a secretary appointed by the [USYWCA Foreign] Division” and therefore they deserved the National Board’s attention and assistance.⁵ In essence, Drysdale was asserting that it was the USYWCA, through their agent, that had generated the financial problems of the building; it was their job to fix it.

Despite the urgency of the need spelled out in Drysdale’s letter, the USYWCA National Board did not fully respond to her for almost three months, when after a series of telegrams they decided to send McFarland to assess the situation. In a letter to Drysdale, a member of the National Board (likely Mrs. Finley) stated that the USYWCA was working as hard and as fast as it could; aware “of the critical nature of the present period” the Buenos Aires YWCA had the USYWCA’s “full sympathy and understanding.” The author affirmed Drysdale’s claims, stating that “[a]lthough we have only assumed a limited responsibility as far as actual commitments are concerned, we recognize a continuing responsibility due to the length and extent of our advisory

⁵ Robina M. Drysdale to Mrs. John H. Finley, December 7, 1936, 2, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Miscellaneous, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

relationship and we have a deep desire to cooperate in the most constructive way.” The author acknowledged that the National Board “must have seemed very slow to you in sensing your situation and in attempting to meet it. I assure you we have thought and prayed and been active in regard to it. It is the first time we have ever considered making a large grant to meet an emergency in another country.”⁶ That they were about to make this grant was partially proof of Drysdale’s claims of USWYCA responsibility.

While Drysdale’s assertions may have been compelling, however, given the amount of money that it took to secure the Buenos Aires YWCA’s building, and considering their own dire financial straits in 1937, the fact that the USYWCA was willing to extend the aid indicates that there were likely other considerations at work than a sense of intra-organizational culpability. Perhaps most importantly, as the only YWCA building in South America and the seat of the YWCA’s South American Continental Committee, the Buenos Aires building was a logistical “toehold” for the expansion of the YWCA in South America. A 1928 report from the Foreign Division stated that the Associations in South America were “at a stage where the establishment of an adequate Association building would prove of inestimable value in strengthening the place and program of the Associations and give an inspiring demonstration of the possibilities of the organization.” Buenos Aires was “the logical place in which to erect such a building” because it was “outstanding as a cultural and economic center of Latin America, the cosmopolitan nature of its population and its location geographically make it the city from which ideas will permeate most easily the whole of South America.”⁷ These assertions of Buenos Aires’ importance, both

⁶ Unknown to Mrs. J. Monteith Drysdale, March 12, 1937, 1 (page 2 missing from film) Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Miscellaneous, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁷ “Buenos Aires Building” January 25, 1928, 1, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Staff Correspondence and Reports- Emma Chapin, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

within Argentina and in a broader Atlantic context, were not overstatements. In the early part of the twentieth century, Argentina was, as one historian of Buenos Aires has stated, “Latin America’s wealthiest and most advanced nation.”⁸ The population had boomed from 180,000 in 1870 to 1.2 million in 1910, and would grow further to 1.6 million in 1914.⁹ By 1914, 25% of Argentines lived in Buenos Aires, and the vast majority of those lived in the city itself.¹⁰ This urban expansion was fueled by the city’s commercial connections with Europe, particularly in beef and other agricultural products.¹¹ This population and development made it comparable to many cities in the United States; indeed, as Jose Moya states, “[b]y the outbreak of World War I, the city had become the second largest metropolis in the Atlantic World, after New York.”¹² USYWCA Secretary Emma Chapin noted in 1927 that “[t]o make a North American comparison it is a combination of New York, Chicago and Washington. It is the financial center and most important seaport, the grain and meat center of the country, and the national capital.”¹³ With Buenos Aires as the physical locus for these various factors, the YWCA could draw membership and influence a much larger number of women than they would elsewhere on the continent.

In addition to the numbers of people whom the YWCA could potentially influence, the composition of the population likely made it very attractive for the USYWCA. The period of 1880 to 1940 was a time of substantial European immigration to Argentina. The census in 1914 reported that almost half of the population as foreign-born, and Italians and Spaniards made up

⁸ Richard J. Walter, *Politics and Urban Growth in Buenos Aires, 1910-1942* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 6.

⁹ Walter, *Politics and Urban Growth in Buenos Aires, 1910-1942*, 6.

¹⁰ Walter, *Politics and Urban Growth in Buenos Aires, 1910-1942*, 7.

¹¹ Walter, *Politics and Urban Growth in Buenos Aires, 1910-1942*, 6.

¹² Jose C. Moya, “The Positive Side of Stereotypes: Jewish Anarchists in Early-Twentieth-Century Buenos Aires,” *Jewish History* 18, no. 1: Gender Ethnicity, and Politics: Latin American Jewry Revisited (2004): 19-48, 20.

¹³ “Building Questionnaire” September 1927, 1, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Staff Correspondence and Reports- Chapin, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

almost eighty percent of the total number of immigrants.¹⁴ These immigrants recreated the types of cultural and urban structures that the USYWCA was already very familiar with in the United States. In the case of the urban expansion of the city itself, these immigrants had an impact on character of certain areas and neighborhoods. For example, the Avenida de Mayo was termed the “Champs d’Elysées” of Buenos Aires because it was inspired by Haussmann’s architectural style in Paris.¹⁵ Immigrants also settled in specific districts of the city, and influenced the character of those neighborhoods. The area around the center of the city, surrounding the Avenida de Mayo, was primarily Spanish, with the districts near the waterfront tending to be Italian. To the north, the area around the Plaza Once de Septiembre, and the railroad terminus, was primarily Jewish.¹⁶ An article from a 1912 edition of the publication *Cara y Caretas* illustrated this individual character through specific descriptions of the parts of the city. There were “English squares,” parts that were “as French as Montmartre,” and still others that were essentially “a suburb of old Istanbul.”¹⁷ Despite these distinct qualities, historian Richard Walter asserts that “Buenos Aires in general had fewer of the well-defined ethnic neighborhoods that characterized North American cities.”¹⁸ Indeed, when USYWCA Secretary Emma Chapin emphasized Buenos Aires’ status as a “cosmopolitan metropolis,” she cited the blending of these various groups; the “large colonies of Italians, French, English, Germans and Scandinavians” were “building a great city, which is not Spanish, Italian or Scandinavian but Argentine.”¹⁹

¹⁴ Walter, *Politics and Urban Growth in Buenos Aires, 1910-1942*, 7.

¹⁵ Walter, *Politics and Urban Growth in Buenos Aires, 1910-1942*, 6. See also Jeffrey D. Needell, “Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires: Public Space and Public Consciousness in Fin-De-Siecle Latin America,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37, no. 3 (July 1995): 519-540.

¹⁶ Walter, *Politics and Urban Growth in Buenos Aires, 1910-1942*, 9-10.

¹⁷ Coyo Cuello, “Buenos Aires Cosmopolita,” *Caras y Caretas*, 15, 716 (Buenos Aires: June 22, 1912) Quoted in Walter, *Politics and Urban Growth in Buenos Aires, 1910-1942*, 10.

¹⁸ Walter, *Politics and Urban Growth in Buenos Aires, 1910-1942*, 10.

¹⁹ “Building Questionnaire” September 1927, 1, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Staff Correspondence and Reports- Chapin, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

For the USYWCA, then, part of the importance of maintaining a physical building in Buenos Aires was that it would be among these immigrants who were likely already familiar with—and receptive to—the YWCA through potential contact with the YWCA in their “home” countries in Europe. And ties between the Buenos Aires and Euro-American YWCAs were fairly strong, as indicated by the volume of letters of introduction to and from the Buenos Aires YWCA, and the prominence of the visitor aid program. This European immigration had given Buenos Aires a distinct culture from Argentina’s rural hinterlands, as revealed by the fact that inhabitants of Buenos Aires are called *porteños* or “people of the port.” What this distinctive character of Buenos Aires meant for the YWCA was that Buenos Aires not only provided a good entrée point into Argentina, it seems to have been the *only* entrée point to the USYWCA leadership.

In addition to providing an entrée point for the YWCA, a building strategically located among these groups was part of a broader expansion of the United States into South America. This was partly a commercial interest on the part of corporations within the United States—Argentina was a part of extensive attempts by U.S. firms to market U.S. goods around the world at the beginning of the twentieth century.²⁰ A 1915 study listed over one thousand North American manufacturing companies which had “offices or sold goods in Argentina.”²¹ These included car manufacturers, such as General Motors and Ford, and banks such as National

²⁰ See: De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire* particularly the introduction; Jennifer Scanlon, “Mediators in the International Marketplace: U.S. Advertising in Latin America in the Early Twentieth Century,” *The Business History Review* 77, no. 3 (Autumn 2003): 387-415; Elizabeth Durham Esch, “Fordtown: Managing Race and Nation in the American Empire, 1925-1945” (Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 2004); Mira Wilkins, *The Emergence of Multinational Enterprise: American Business Abroad from the Colonial Era to 1914* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970); Mira Wilkins, *The Maturing of Multinational Enterprise: American Business Abroad from 1914 to 1970* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1974); Mira Wilkins and Frank Ernest Hill, *American Business Abroad: Ford on Six Continents*, Detroit. (Wayne State University Press, 1964).

²¹ Wilkins, *The Maturing of Multinational Enterprise*, 22.

City.²² However, it also included companies that processed agricultural goods, which were a large sector of the South American economy. For example, the “big three” U.S. meat packing companies, Swift, Armour, and Wilson “slaughtered more than 67 per cent of the Argentine cattle that went to market.”²³ In this commercial expansion, U.S. companies had to contend with the existing British commercial supremacy in Argentina. As historian Jennifer Scanlon points out, “British investment in the region continued unabated in the first decades of the twentieth century; in fact, Argentina received more direct investment from Britain between 1904 and 1913 than it had during the entire previous century.” In this, the “Americans were clearly second in terms of understanding either the local economies and customs or the new economies and customs that resulted from the Argentine-British relationship.”²⁴ U.S. businesses, therefore, had to contend with not only the Argentine corporations within their Buenos Aires context, but corporations that had an additional transnational business context—one that was already allied with Britain and Europe rather than the United States.

The YWCA’s efforts were a corollary to these commercial interests, and were part of a cultural thrust of U.S. interests into South America. As Mr. S.C. Inman stated in a speech at the Cause and Cure of War Conference in 1928, the YWCA building itself could be a “visible evidence of the interest of the United States in Latin America” as more than just “commercial.” According to Inman, “the giving of a Y.W.C.A. building in Buenos Aires would be an important and practical way of promoting goodwill and understanding between the people of Latin America, who are fundamentally interested in the cultural aspects of life, and those in the United

²² Scanlon, “Mediators in the International Marketplace: U.S. Advertising in Latin America in the Early Twentieth Century” 404.

²³ Wilkins, *The Maturing of Multinational Enterprise*, 94.

²⁴ Scanlon, “Mediators in the International Marketplace: U.S. Advertising in Latin America in the Early Twentieth Century,” 405.

States.”²⁵ Rather than constructing a profit-oriented building, which sought relationships that were potentially economically exploitative, the YWCA could build a structure intended to foster cultural exchange and supranational fellowship.

It did so by replicating USYWCA buildings. Inherent in this relationship between buildings and cultural change was the concept that buildings were not only created by people, but that buildings, and the cultural space within them, created people. In other words, even as human agents shaped the form of the building, the resulting structure would help the USYWCA Secretaries re-create and spread U.S. culture. These ideas of the formative power of architecture fit with what architecture and urban design scholar Kim Dovey’s assertion that through “literal and discursive framings, the built environment mediates, constructs, and reproduces power relations.”²⁶ By holding to designs based on a U.S. model, YWCA buildings around the globe were therefore the USYWCA’s attempt to utilize an embedded and unseen U.S.-based framework for Y-space.²⁷ The YWCA allocated areas within its building for the same functions, ideally in the same configurations, so that women could perform roughly the same activities at the same times. In other words, YWCA leaders believed that their locations provided both a physical framework and coherence for Y-space. In this way, the community within the buildings literally moved at the same time and space on a global level. It simultaneously surged and ebbed through the building’s activities, ranging from major celebrations such as Christian holidays and the World Week of Fellowship, to the daily YWCA classes and services offered in the buildings.

²⁵ “Buenos Aires Building” January 25, 1928, 1, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina-Staff Correspondence and Reports- Emma Chapin, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. Inman was with the Committee on Cooperation in Latin America at the conference.

²⁶ Kim Dovey, *Framing Places: Mediating Power in Built Form*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2008), 1.

²⁷ As stated in the introduction, I am attentive here to the differences between “space” and “place.” Using Doreen Massey’s formulations of space as products of a multiplicity of relationships, and “through which, in the negotiation of relations within multiplicities, the social is constructed.” Doreen B. Massey, *For Space* (London: SAGE, 2005), 13. Against this geographic conception, I use “place” to denote the more architectural physical and material of the buildings themselves.

As Chapter One explained, buildings therefore functioned in ways paralleling sacred spaces, insofar as they enabled women to act out YWCA rituals in similarly structured spaces, regardless of their particular place on the globe. This parallel construction and functioning reveals that YWCA leaders designed buildings to conceptually “slip” or collapse the geographic distance between the physical places—not only between YWCAs on a national level, but on a transnational one between Buenos Aires and the United States.

Part of the power of architecture was that it functioned unseen, and the replication of a YWCA building based upon USYWCA specifications was seemingly natural, at least to USYWCA Secretaries. As Dovey asserts, “[t]he more that the structures and representations of power can be embedded in the framework of everyday life, the less questionable they become and the more effectively they can work.”²⁸ In the case of Buenos Aires, USYWCA Secretaries intended that buildings would not only spread the types of U.S. cultural norms that Inman asserted, but also to facilitate the mobility of women—both those migrating physically to Buenos Aires, and those migrating conceptually into the public sphere. As was the case with the buildings in the United States, USYWCA Secretaries envisioned that buildings would ostensibly facilitate mobility by providing a physical place that was both safe and respectable, by being “vernacular” rather than public or private, and by facilitating a fellowship that was also ideally democratic and diverse. As uniform physical places, buildings would serve as alternatives to “local” places, and help give women a safe and easily accessible point from which they could have physical access to unfamiliar geographic areas. As educational facilities, they would provide women with alternatives to working in the domestic sphere. As points of contact for women from different classes, they would encourage social mobility. And as nodes in a multinational network of locations and communities, they would assist cultural diversity.

²⁸ Dovey, *Framing Places*, 2.

However, while each of these aspects implied the Y-space goal of an equal power relationship between women, this was rarely the case. The building structures and agendas were founded on U.S. models and Euro-American notions of the ideal functions of a YWCA building. This meant that buildings often served the needs of the middle-and-upper class U.S. and European women of Buenos Aires' transnational community, even as they provided opportunities for other women to come into contact with these women and to some extent acculturate into these groups.

The types of cultural transformation which the USYWCA Secretaries were attempting, in which they utilized space to create a mobile population of women, have generally not been part of the historiography on Buenos Aires. While there are works that examine the economic development of Argentina, very few address the impact of the United States prior to World War II.²⁹ There are excellent comparison studies of immigrants who went to South and North America. However, these are generally viewed through a lens of diaspora, where the emphasis is on the nationality of the sending countries, and the ways that this nationality was re-interpreted in "new world" places. The United States therefore only appears as a physical destination rather than acting to influence policy outside its borders.³⁰ In terms of the various people within Buenos Aires as a city, there are outstanding studies of the urban development of Buenos Aires, including the recent translated work on the spatial/cultural interactions of the people—

Intersecting Tango. By and large, however, these works focus either on the very wealthy, for

²⁹ Roy Hora, "The Making and Evolution of the Buenos Aires Economic Elite in the Nineteenth Century: The Example of the Senillosas," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 83 (August 2003): 451-486; Ricardo Donato Salvatore, "The Normalization of Economic Life: Representations of the Economy in Golden-Age Buenos Aires, 1890-1913," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 81 (February 2001): 1-44.

³⁰ Jose C. Moya, *Cousins and Strangers: Spanish Immigrants in Buenos Aires, 1850-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Samuel L. Baily, *Immigrants in the Lands of Promise: Italians in Buenos Aires and New York City, 1870-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); Eugene F. Sofer, *From Pale to Pampa: A Social History of the Jews of Buenos Aires* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1982); Moya, "The Positive Side of Stereotypes: Jewish Anarchists in Early-Twentieth-Century Buenos Aires"; Donna J. Guy and Thomas E. Sheridan, eds., *Contested Ground: Comparative Frontiers on the Northern and Southern Edges of the Spanish Empire* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998).

example the commercial and agricultural elite who patronized the Jockey Club, or the very poor and marginalized, such as Jewish immigrants, working-class Spanish and Italian immigrants, and prostitutes.³¹ Finally, women tend to appear only in very small ways in the majority of these works, although there are a number of excellent works on prostitution and white slavery.³² The YWCA in Buenos Aires, seen from the vantage point of the building itself, therefore adds to the existing historiography by contributing to our understanding of the U.S. presence that goes beyond explicitly commercial relations. By looking at the ways that USYWCA Secretaries constructed a cultural space, we see not only the attempt to utilize vernacular architecture to influence people outside the United States, but the ways that that this architecture worked in tandem with U.S. interests abroad.

When USYWCA Secretaries traveled to their stations around the world, they took up leadership positions that often included having influence over the structure and location of the YWCA building, just as Clara Roe had in Buenos Aires. What the USYWCA Secretaries seem to have done with this influence was to attempt to create buildings based on the USYWCA's model. Secretaries attempted to literally recreate the physical layout of the building based on USYWCA standards, and often utilized these efforts to argue for increased funds from the United States. Among the records on the Buenos Aires YWCA building are very detailed

³¹ Adriana J Bergero, *Intersecting Tango: Cultural Geographies of Buenos Aires, 1900-1930* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008); Needell, "Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires: Public Space and Public Consciousness in Fin-De-Siecle Latin America"; Stanley Robert Ross and Thomas Francis McGann, eds., *Buenos Aires, 400 Years* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982); James R. Scobie, *Buenos Aires: Plaza to Suburb, 1870-1910* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974); Walter, *Politics and Urban Growth in Buenos Aires, 1910-1942*; Jason Wilson, *Buenos Aires: A Cultural and Literary History*, Rev. (Oxford, UK: Signal Books, 2007).

³² Guy, *Sex & Danger in Buenos Aires*; Donna J. Guy, *White Slavery and Mothers Alive and Dead: The Troubled Meeting of Sex, Gender, Public Health, and Progress in Latin America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000); Donna J. Guy, "Women's Organizations and Jewish Orphanages in Buenos Aires, 1918-1955," *Jewish History* 18, no. 1: Gender Ethnicity, and Politics: Latin American Jewry Revisited (2004): 75-93; Sandra McGee Deutsch, "Changing the Landscape: The Study of Argentine Jewish Women and New Historical Vistas," *Jewish History* 18, no. 1: Gender Ethnicity, and Politics: Latin American Jewry Revisited (2004): 49-73; Bergero, *Intersecting Tango*.

architectural drawings, including distances between walls, and decorative elements such as table and chair placements.³³ Often the tone of these illustrations was to point out the inadequacies of the building, particularly in terms of available space, compared to buildings in the United States. In an informal brochure to the USYWCA about the building in Buenos Aires, likely from the early 1920's, photographs consistently showed women packed in together in the rooms. In one picture, for example, women in coats and hats huddled together around a table. The caption read: "Education Department: The interest the Argentine has in foreign languages is manifested here. One hundred and thirty-five different pupils are taking English with a lesser number studying German and French. This room measures 10½ by 14¾ feet with no window."³⁴ A 1928 Annual Report for Buenos Aires stated that the USYWCA Secretaries, "[k]nowing from experience in their own Associations of better housing and equipment" wanted "to help the Buenos Aires Association to have the same opportunities for service."³⁵ Emma Chapin pushed for parity between Buenos Aires and the USYWCA in 1928 when she stated that "what we want is a regular first class Association building, well equipped: swimming pool, gymnasium, lunch room, reading room, rest room, class and club rooms, social rooms or foyer on the first floor, and it may seem best to have the boarding home in the same building."³⁶ Chapin also used her knowledge of acceptable buildings in the United States to point out the inadequacies of the Buenos Aires building. She reported in a building questionnaire that "Mrs. Speer reported in New York that the gymnasium (where 266 different pupils came 2 or 3 times a week for classes

³³ Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Community- Buildings, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

³⁴ "The Young Women's Christian Association, Buenos Aires. Argentina," n.d., 12, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Community- Buildings, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

³⁵ Annual report, 1927-1928- "Memoria Annual de la Asociacion Cristiana Femenina" October 1, 1927 to September 30, 1928, 29, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Miscellaneous, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

³⁶ Emma Chapin to Miss Vesey, April 19, 1928, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Staff Reports- Chapin, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

last year) would be considered adequate for a small garage at home.”³⁷ Here, Chapin was a mediator both in the sense that she brought USYWCA concepts of buildings with her, and that she subsequently used these models as leverage to try to push the USYWCA to help Buenos Aires.

USYWCA Secretaries also devoted considerable time and effort to finding what they viewed as suitable buildings, a process made difficult because of the USYWCA’s specific requirements. For example, in 1930, two years after she filled out the questionnaire asking the USYWCA for help, Emma Chapin was still looking for a building. In a letter that year, USWYCA Secretary Sarah Lyon asked Chapin how the “house hunting” was going, and remarked that it “seems to be the favorite outdoor sport for our Associations in many countries.”³⁸ This was an attempt at levity, but Chapin had spent “six long weary months” looking “for a house...until we were nearly blind, certainly until we were discouraged, for we were looking for the impossible. Where in this city were we going to find a gym, etc, etc.?”³⁹ The difficulties of owning property in many countries—from financial concerns, to legal restrictions on women or foreign corporations owning property—often meant that YWCAs abroad rented rather than built their buildings. USYWCA Secretaries therefore tried to find a building that was as close as possible to the YWCA structure that was also owned by a landlord willing to let them make potentially substantial changes to the building. When Chapin wrote to Sarah Lyon in May of 1930, she described the changes required to the building they found.

³⁷ “Building Questionnaire” September 1927, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Staff Correspondence and Reports- Chapin, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

³⁸ Sarah Lyon to Emma Chapin, March 12 1930, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Staff Correspondence and Reports- Chapin, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

³⁹ Emma Chapin to Sarah Lyon, May 7, 1930, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Staff Correspondence and Reports- Chapin, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

While most of the alterations were minor and involved taking down walls, there the “expense and difficulties are in the health education department. We will have to build a gym on the roof.”⁴⁰ YWCAs were often faced with these types of decisions; whether to spend money to make the building conform to their own needs, or to compromise and make the building less up to the USYWCA’s standards.

This search for, and adaptation of, buildings that would parallel those in the United States sometimes caused USYWCA Secretaries to be dramatically out of sync with local situations, which could be very different from those in the United States. USYWCA Secretary Ruth Sheldon wrote as she was getting ready to leave Buenos Aires in 1923 that she feared that when Buenos Aires was “ready for a new building... New York will send down someone to build it who knows all about the very latest construction and design of gymnasiums in the States and who knows nothing about weather conditions and possibilities here. An outdoor gymnasium is the most important part of the new building in my own mind - and a sports field.”⁴¹ Sheldon’s departure was not only potentially damaging to the Buenos Aires YWCA, but a waste of all the things Sheldon had learned on the job. She stated that, “what I don’t know about plumbing and municipal rules here isn’t worth knowing.” The danger of the YWCA’s ignorance, or the waste of Secretaries’ knowledge, was that it was expensive. The YWCA had the opportunity to work out the kinks of water supply problems in their old building, as opposed to the Young Men’s Christian Association, who “have had a dreadful time- and in their new building, too.”⁴² In other words, between the USYWCA’s standards and the local conditions, USYWCA Secretaries

⁴⁰ Emma Chapin to Sarah Lyon, May 7, 1930, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Staff Correspondence and Reports- Chapin, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁴¹ Ruth Sheldon to Miss Irene Sheppard, May 24, 1923, 1-2, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Miscellaneous, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁴² Ruth Sheldon to Miss Irene Sheppard, May 24, 1923, 2, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Miscellaneous, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

asserted that the local conditions took precedence; failure to understand this was a costly mistake. Conversely, when USYWCA Secretaries returned to the United States, this local adaptation learned by necessity was often lost, and as a Secretary fresh from the USYWCA would take her place.

Given the effort it took for USYWCA Secretaries to attempt to hold to the USYWCA's building standards, and potential costs of this stance, it is remarkable that the USYWCA Secretaries continued in their efforts in this direction. That they did so reveals their convictions about the importance of YWCA buildings for the creation of Y-space on a global scale. Because the buildings were composed of the same elements in roughly the same arrangements, once a woman was acclimated to one YWCA building, she would theoretically be comfortable in other YWCAs, regardless of their geographic place. USYWCA Secretaries attempted to calibrate these spaces to Euro-American ideals because they were concerned with two populations: Euro-American women, who were migrating to Buenos Aires as part of a process of transnational capitalist expansion, and "local" Argentine women, who were either moving to a new urban setting, or potentially emigrating abroad. These considerations point to the USYWCA's goal for the buildings: to serve the needs of "new" women, who were young, educated, and newly outside the domestic sphere through their work and lives away from their families.⁴³

YWCA Secretaries consistently emphasized the importance of the Buenos Aires YWCA as a safe place for migrating European women. The 1922 Annual Report stated that although it was "cause for constant regret," given the choice between accommodating permanent residents

⁴³ By virtue of many of these qualities, YWCA leaders also generally envisioned as "new" women as white. There have been recent efforts by scholars to complicate conceptions of "modern" women during this time. See the forthcoming compilation of the Modern Girl Around the World Research Group: Alys Eve Weinbaum, Lynn M. Thomas, Priti Ramamurthy, Uta G. Poiger, Madeleine Yue Dong, and Tani E. Barlow, eds., *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization*, The Modern Girl Around the World Research Group (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

or “transient” women, they chose the latter.⁴⁴ Many of the members of the Association in Buenos Aires were European women who had recently immigrated. For these women, the YWCA building and hostel provided what Buenos Aires YWCA leaders argued was urgently needed and otherwise unavailable—physical safety. As a “North American” member replied in answer to the query of what the YWCA building meant to her, “[t]he boarding department of the YWCA is one of the greatest necessities for all girls coming to Buenos Aires as strangers, alone in a foreign land, with very little knowledge of the language and none of the country.”⁴⁵ The YWCA’s focus on migrating women was partly partially due to the logistical uncertainties of international travel. The 1928 Annual Report revealed this by citing the case of an “Austrian girl” who arrived expecting to meet her fiancé who was not there to meet her ship. Although alone and unable to speak Spanish, she had “a letter of introduction from the YWCA in Milan” and “took a taxi, handed the driver the YWCA address and came straight to us from the boat.” The following day, the YWCA Secretary went with the girl to find out that the fiancé was out of town, and did not know of her arrival. They “found out where her fiancée was and got word to him. He came to see her at the YWCA that same evening and made all arrangements for the girl to stay with us until the wedding which took place a week later.”⁴⁶ The YWCA building in Buenos Aires was one of several YWCAs that had provided physical safety for this woman, who had presumably gone to at least the Milan YWCA, and likely others on her journey from Austria to Buenos Aires.

⁴⁴ “Annual Report, October 1921 to September 1922,” 20, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Miscellaneous, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁴⁵ No author, “A North American,” no date, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- General- Property, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁴⁶ Annual report, 1927-1928- “Memoria Annual de la Asociacion Cristiana Femenina” October 1, 1927 to September 30, 1928, 29-30, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Miscellaneous, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

The YWCA building not only provided temporary safety for these European women, but at times served as a more permanent residence. A 1922 report stated that among the nationalities in the residence, most were Argentine and British, “but German, Belgian, Austrian, Norwegian and Swedish as well as American, Spanish and French have all been welcomed.”⁴⁷ These types of housing demands reveal one of the key functions of the YWCA buildings—to facilitate the resettlement of mobile women, especially European women. Housing was a particularly urgent need for these women because of the population boom in Buenos Aires.⁴⁸ High immigration rates combined with a housing shortage forced many immigrants to live in tenement conditions. Like their counterparts in cities in the United States, the urban poor were generally located near

⁴⁷ No author, account of the “Buenos Aires Association,” 1922, 5, Microfilm Reel 66-South America-Argentina-Buenos Aires-History, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁴⁸ In 1870 Buenos Aires had a population of 180,000; by 1910 it had 1,300,000 people, and by 1936 the city’s population had further swelled to 2,413,829. Scobie, *Buenos Aires*, 11 for the 1870 and 1910 numbers. For the 1936 number, see: “Table 2: The Socioeconomic Growth of Buenos Aires in the Twentieth Century,” Walter, *Politics and Urban Growth in Buenos Aires, 1910-1942*, 71. Both the US and Argentina had large-scale influxes of immigrants from Europe, however, throughout this period European immigrants comprised a larger percentage of the population of Argentina than they did in the US (although of course the total numbers were different because of the population size differences in the two countries). According to the US census, as a percentage of population, “foreign born” accounted for 13-15% of the population from 1860 to 1920, and had decreased to 11.6% in 1930. (“Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850 to 1990” <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0029/twps0029.html>) This compares to Argentina’s percentages of 30% of the population was “foreigners” in 1914, and by 1936 had grown to just over 36%. See: “Table 1: Population of the City of Buenos Aires, Greater Buenos Aires, and the Metropolitan Area: Sex and Nationality (Absolute, Percentage, and Percentage of National Totals): 1914,” in Walter, *Politics and Urban Growth in Buenos Aires, 1910-1942*, 68-69. In terms of the total numbers, in 1914 Argentina had a little over 2.3 million immigrants, whereas the US had over 13 million. (“Table 7. Age and Sex of the Foreign-Born Population: 1870 to 1990”: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0029/tab07.html>) Jose C. Moya has also estimated that the US was still the overwhelming destination for European immigrants (almost 58% of immigrants went to the US, as compared to the next highest of Argentina at 11.6 %). See Moya, *Cousins and Strangers*, 46. In 1914 the population of the Buenos Aires was split evenly between immigrants and Argentines, by 1936 this had shifted slightly, with Argentines comprising almost 64% of the population, and foreigners 36%. This compares to the US were at their height in 1910, foreign-born comprised only 22.9% of urban populations, while the population declined from 7.7% in 1900 in rural areas. For the Argentine statistics, see: “The Socioeconomic Growth of Buenos Aires in the Twentieth Century” “Table 2. Population of the City of Buenos Aires: Sex and Nationality Absolute and Percentage: 1936” in Walter, *Politics and Urban Growth in Buenos Aires, 1910-1942*, 71. For the US statistics, see “Table 18: Nativity of the Population by Urban-Rural Residence and Size of Place: 1870 to 1940 and 1960 to 1990” <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0029/tab18.html> Scobie, p. 11 for the 1870 and 1910 numbers, see: Table 2 “The Socioeconomic Growth of Buenos Aires in the Twentieth Century” in Walter, *Politics and Urban Growth in Buenos Aires, 1910-1942*, 71 for the 1936 number.

the city center, particularly at the turn of the century, and their living conditions tended to be well-documented by the wealthier inhabitants who encountered them on a daily basis.⁴⁹

The immigration rates and housing conditions, combined with a large gender disparity, meant that reformers were particularly concerned with migrating women. Whereas in the U.S. the gender ratios of immigrants were roughly equal, in Argentina foreign-born men outnumbered women by almost two to one.⁵⁰ Reformers, including the YWCA, viewed these living conditions and gender disparities as of particular concern for women who they saw as potential victims of “white slavery.” As Donna Guy explains in *Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires*, after Argentina legalized prostitution in 1875 (bordellos were officially closed in 1936), these groups focused particularly on the nationality of prostitutes—an attention that was aided by sensationalist reports of white slavery in the press.⁵¹ Religion and race both played parts in this characterization, as reports from reform groups identified large proportions of prostitutes, pimps, and madams as Jewish (although these were also based on assumptions that “all Russian and Romanian prostitutes and pimps were Jewish”).⁵² The concept that white slavery was a transnational problem, and that European women were in particular danger, was prevalent despite the fact that by the 1920’s, “most of the foreign-born women arrested for scandalous behavior were Spanish, French, or Italian.”⁵³ In characterizing white slavery as primarily transnational, then, the journalistic accounts and reports “tended to ignore... or at most to

⁴⁹ Moya, *Cousins and Strangers*, 170-171.

⁵⁰ For US statistics, see “Table 7. Age and Sex of the Foreign-Born Population: 1870 to 1990” <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0029/tab07.html>. In 1914, there were 1,473,809 foreign born men in Argentina, as compared to 884,143 foreign born women, a ratio of almost 2 to 1. See: “Table 1: Population of the City of Buenos Aires, Greater Buenos Aires, and the Metropolitan Area: Sex and Nationality (Absolute, Percentage, and Percentage of National Totals): 1914,” Walter, *Politics and Urban Growth in Buenos Aires, 1910-1942*, 68-69.

⁵¹ Guy, *Sex & Danger in Buenos Aires*, 14-5.

⁵² Guy, *Sex & Danger in Buenos Aires*, 19. This sparked groups such as the Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women, (see p. 19-22 in particular).

⁵³ Guy, *Sex & Danger in Buenos Aires*, 118-9.

dismiss” the numbers of native-born pimps, and prostitutes. The Argentine government even stated to the League of Nations that “Argentine women showed ‘a certain inferiority’ that made them less attractive as prostitutes,” despite the fact that local women were still the majority of prostitutes in Buenos Aires.⁵⁴ Although the Buenos Aires YWCA does not seem to have been focused on “white slavery” as a specific issue, they did seem to view European women as potentially in danger. For example, the YWCA had an extensive Traveler’s Aid department, which not only met arriving boats from Europe to direct women to the YWCA building, but also provided quasi-government functions such as helping people with passports.⁵⁵

In addition to facilitating the movement of European women, the Buenos Aires building also served as a place of refuge for some women moving to the city from the surrounding region. Indeed, as Buenos Aires YWCA Secretary Miss Gilles told Mrs. Brown, the YWCA needed “‘a large boarding house’ and a ‘small administration building’ as teachers and students pour into Buenos Aires from the colonies. The demand for a safe and decent place to live is urgent always.”⁵⁶ The Buenos Aires YWCA reported that women were willing to put up with inconveniences in order to stay in the Association: a “girl in from the province, arriving late in the afternoon, when [the] house was absolutely full asked to sleep on a ‘chair’. To be in the

⁵⁴ Guy, *Sex & Danger in Buenos Aires*, 125-6.

⁵⁵ While a 1920 report stated that “40 persons representing 9 nations, have been helped,” by Traveler’s Aid, only seven years later these numbers had increased exponentially. A 1927 report stated that help was “given to 155 different people who needed assistance with passports, cedula, etc.” among whom were people of “Alsatian, German, Argentine, Armenian, Brazilian, French, Greek, English, Italian, Czechoslovakian, North American, Polish, Russian, Syrian and Swiss” nationalities. See: “Travelers Aid” in “Informe Annual” October 1 1919 to September 30 1920, 17, Microfilm Reel 66- Argentina- Buenos Aires- Miscellaneous, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. “Travelers’ Aid” in the Annual report, 1927-1928- “Memoria Annual de la Asociacion Cristiana Femenina” October 1, 1927 to September 30, 1928, 29-30, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Miscellaneous, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass..

⁵⁶ Copy of a letter to Mrs. Wadsworth from Mrs. T. M. Brown- “Extracts from Letters of Visitors to South America “Compiled May 19 1930,” 2-3, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Community- Buildings, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. By colonies, it is unclear where Mrs. Brown meant, but probably she meant former Spanish colonies in Central and South America.

Association meant safety to her.”⁵⁷ Given Secretaries’ attempts to get increased funds from the USYWCA, this story may have been exaggerated. As Guy states, concerns about white slavery as an international problem had decreased by the late 1920’s, and the typical “victim” of seduction had shifted from immigrant women to domestic servants.⁵⁸ The women at the YWCA, by contrast, were generally not women who were going to work in factories or as household workers. Indeed, Gilles pointed to their upper class status when she stated that many of these women were “university and normal school students” who “represent important leadership not only in Buenos Aires but in the provinces from which many of them come.”⁵⁹ For these women arriving from the provinces, as well as for other countries “safety” may have meant more than literal physical safety. It is also likely that it meant social “safety” of Y-space for middle and upper class women who intended to be white-collar workers.

Despite the YWCA building’s status as a safe and respectable place, as had been the case in the United States, USYWCA Secretaries did not intend for their buildings to be domestic spaces. For example, when the Buenos Aires YWCA changed buildings in 1930, the Secretaries moved into apartments, and Emma Chapin wrote to Sarah Lyon that “[s]ome people think I ought not to live alone. Others say, go to it. The porter’s wife will do any work that I want her to. Just how we are going to live without Maria to cook for us, and wait on us is beyond me.” Chapin herself had mixed feelings about her foray into keeping a household. She stated that she had been “most enthusiastic” for several days about the apartment, but that “like the man waiting

⁵⁷ “VIII. Ways in which the Association [improves?] the women of Buenos Aires. “Association Data,” 10-11, Microfilm Reel 69- South America- Property, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁵⁸ Guy, *Sex & Danger in Buenos Aires*, 126.

⁵⁹ “Boarding Home” in “The Young Women’s Christian Association, Buenos Aires, Argentina,” n.d., 8, Microfilm Reel 66 South America- Argentina- Community- Buildings, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. For more on transnational immigration to Buenos Aires and its urbanization, see Moya, *Cousins and Strangers*.

for the marriage ceremony” she had “lost” her “enthusiasm.”⁶⁰ While some YWCA women in some buildings served in more maternalistic roles—such as by being heads of YWCA residences—most USYWCA Secretaries do not seem to have transferred domestic ideals to YWCA buildings and their inhabitants. In other words, these were not missionary wives or women, modeling domesticity for local women.⁶¹

As had been the case in the United States, USYWCA Secretaries envisioned the Buenos Aires building as a “vernacular” place that facilitated women’s involvement in the public sphere. At times, this meant that they actively dismantled domestic structures, such as when the Buenos Aires YWCA moved from Calle San Martin to Calle Piedras in 1920. In this move, the YWCA had to physically transform “an old Argentine private residence into a Young Women’s Christian Association building” which was “no easy task” and included drastic changes such as the “taking down of walls in order to make two small rooms into a gymnasium or a lunch room.”⁶² At the same time, however, Secretaries feared that the buildings would become too institutional, and occasionally remarked upon the difficulties of trying to turn residences into domestic spaces. One YWCA Secretary in Buenos Aires, for example, depicted spring-cleaning in emotional terms, because of its ability to make the YWCA seem homey. Her warm recollections of “sense of tidiness, a desire to see all things bright and shining” that was “mingled with the delicate fragrances of the blossoms scattered about the house” and the “‘homely’ odor of soap-suds, floor wax and furniture polish” invoked a domesticity that was both occasional and temporary—they

⁶⁰ Emma Chapin to Sarah Lyon, May 7, 1930, 2, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Staff Correspondence and Reports- Chapin YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁶¹ Patricia Ruth Hill, *The World Their Household*; Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility*.

⁶² “Informe Annual” October 1 1919 to September 30 1920, 13, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Miscellaneous, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

were “symptoms of the ‘spring-cleaning fever’!”⁶³ That this cleaning was noteworthy demonstrates not only the effort required to make the building domestic, but also that she likely did not normally do such tasks. Rather than being domestic themselves, women residents within Y-space were free from most domestic tasks by relegating these tasks to paid (lower class) women.

As vernacular places, the USYWCA Secretaries intended that the buildings would help move women into the public sphere. Most importantly in Argentina, this meant non-domestic employment. In Buenos Aires, the employment office had been some of the earliest work, and Clarissa Spencer reported that it received “one thousand applications from employers and employees” in 1915, perhaps as a result of the European immigrant clientele.⁶⁴ The Annual Report from 1921-1922 stated that while most women wanted positions as governesses or nurses, “this year it has been difficult to secure such employment.” It was difficult to place these women because many people were cutting back salaries and positions.⁶⁵ However, only a few years later there was evidence of a growing diversity in the types of women’s employment, which may have helped their chances of obtaining wage labor. Some of this was blue-collar. For example, the author of a Building Questionnaire from 1927 stated that the number of factories generally was increasing, and among the types of products were “hats (for men and women); alpargatas (canvas shoes); cigarettes; gloves, kid and cotton; woolen dress goods; blankets; silks; hose, silk and cotton; soaps; perfumes; furniture; biscuits (companies similar to the National Biscuit Co. in the United States); liquors; etc. etc.” However, women were also present in white-collar and

⁶³ “House and Cafeteria Department” in “Buenos Aires Association,” 1922, 5, Microfilm Reel 66-South America- Argentina-Buenos Aires-History, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁶⁴ Clarissa Spencer, “Report of Young Women’s Christian Association, Buenos Aires- South America,” April 1915, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Community- History, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁶⁵ Annual Report, October 1921 to September 1922, 24-25, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Miscellaneous, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

professional occupations, even those in which women were underrepresented in the United States. The author stated that “[i]t is probably safe to say that in Buenos Aires there are many more women pharmacists and dentists than in New York City. Nursing in the past has not ranked as a profession but training schools for nurses are being established which have definite educational requirements thus challenging a higher class of students so that nurses in the culture will be in a position to command the respect of both the medical profession and the general public.”⁶⁶ In Argentina, then, as in the United States, economic opportunities for some women expanded in the interwar era, as certain jobs were increasingly professionalized and others were opened to women.

As had also been the case in the United States, the Buenos Aires YWCA developed professional training programs for women of middle-class backgrounds. In order to meet the job training demands of women transitioning from domestic work (i.e. governesses) to white-collar positions, the YWCA in Buenos Aires allocated significant portions of the YWCA building to educational classes. In these, courses in typewriting and stenography seem to have been generally popular, although relatively few of the students received diplomas from the YWCA or accepted positions. For example, the 1919-1920 Annual Report stated that of the 45 students in typewriting and 49 in stenography—the populations of which did not significantly overlap—only 14 diplomas were granted, and only 7 students accepted positions.⁶⁷ This was despite a collaborative relationship between the YWCA and businesses. For example, in 1922 the Remington Typewriter Co. gave the YWCA a “gold medal... to be award at the end of the year’s

⁶⁶ “Building Questionnaire” September 1927, 11, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Staff Reports- Chapin, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁶⁷ “Educational Department” in “Informe Annual” October 1 1919 to September 30 1920,” 18, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Miscellaneous, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

work to the best typist.”⁶⁸ The reports for the YWCA do not speculate about why so few women who took courses had accepted positions arranged through the YWCA. However, one potential reason for this is that the women enrolled in these courses were adding to existing skill sets to augment their current positions, and so did not need to use the YWCA’s placement services.

The USYWCA Secretaries hoped that the building would be a central place for these working women to spend non-working hours. Similarly to Florence Simms’ assertions for buildings in the United States, Buenos Aires YWCA leaders argued in the 1927 Building Questionnaire that “a building in the right location” would be ideally situated to take advantage of the legally required “two hour noon period.” While “a few factories provide lunch room accommodations” and often girls were able to go home for lunch, a building in the right location would enable the YWCA to utilize “this long noon hour... to reach with activities many girls who otherwise could not be reached at all.”⁶⁹ The author argued that these women “need a social center, a recreational center, and, above all, a center where they can find Christian inspiration. They need educational classes and lectures... a swimming pool and gymnasium, a better developed employment bureau, noon lunch and rest rooms, club activities in the building and in extension work; a boarding home separate from the administration building.”⁷⁰ In addition to these working women, the author argued that building could also serve university

⁶⁸ “Commercial Classes” in “Annual Report, October 1921 to September 1922,” 23, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Miscellaneous, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. The “commercial” classes were not the only ones to enjoy special attention by businesses. In the more “general” education programs also housed in the YWCA building, the 33-person cooking classes were “given gratuitously by the ‘Primitiva’ Gas Company, under the direction of Miss Canning Doherty.” Additionally, Lever Soap sent a Miss Pessina “to give demonstrations in the use of their ‘Jabon Lux’.” See: “Educational Department” in *Annual Report*, 1927-1928- “Memoria Annual de la Asociacion Cristiana Femenina” October 1, 1927 to September 30, 1928, 34-35, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Miscellaneous, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁶⁹ “Building Questionnaire” September 1927, 11, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Staff Correspondence and Reports- Chapin, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁷⁰ “Building Questionnaire” September 1927, 11-12, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Staff Correspondence and Reports- Chapin, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

women, who needed the YWCA because “[t]here is no campus life. The Association has done nothing with student groups as such due to the lack of a Secretary and because of the limited space in the present building. However, of the 690 members reported for July 1st, 230 were either students or teachers.”⁷¹ YWCA leaders envisioned that the building could serve as a gathering point for these women, and provide a safe and respectable place within the public sphere. This was particularly important in Buenos Aires, where women who frequented cafes and restaurants were often viewed by middle- and upper-class women as being of suspect repute.⁷² The building itself, then, served the needs of these groups of women by providing places that were not only a safe and respectable, but also specifically located within the public sphere. Some parts of the building, such as the employment bureau and lunchroom (as well as others like the club and physical fitness facilities), were specifically geared towards working women. However, these were also places that multiple types of women could relatively easily access, whether they were transient or local, married or single, involved in wage work or not, and of any age.

While the USWYCA Secretaries may have envisioned the buildings as replicating the positive and fairly egalitarian spaces of U.S. buildings, the Secretaries also perpetuated many of the divisions that the buildings in the United States contained. For example, the idea of buildings as places of sexual refuge was not without racist or maternalist assumptions, although these tended to come from persons peripherally connected to the YWCA rather than USYWCA Secretaries themselves. For example, J.W. Fleming, of the St. Andrews Scotch Presbyterian Church argued that more needed to be done so that “women of the Latin races” could “start life

⁷¹ “Building Questionnaire” September 1927, 12, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Staff Correspondence and Reports- Chapin, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁷² Guy states that in the early twentieth century, municipal officials particularly targeted waitresses and cafes in their policy to “drive women out of the commercial sector.” Guy, *Sex & Danger in Buenos Aires*, 67.

under good moral conditions.”⁷³ Jennie E. Howard, the Ex-Regent of Normal Schools in Argentina stated the need for YWCA work as necessary because of the social conditions in Argentina and the temperament of Argentine women, although she framed it in language which would have been very familiar to social reform agencies in the United States. She stated that “the young, inexperienced and lonely Argentine girl is surrounded by greater temptations than in those countries where all self-respecting women are respected. Her voluptuous temperament, her affectionate heart, her lonely, isolated life and her lack of intellectual resources cause her to be more peculiarly susceptible to the influences of those human wolves, who on every side, prepare pitfalls for her unwary feet.”⁷⁴ One of the interesting aspects of this argument is that it appears to have been deployed in order to counter what Guy states was the prevailing European assumption of women in Buenos Aires bordellos—that European women were there as victims, and that native-born women were there voluntarily (an assumption applied to non-white women in the United States as well).⁷⁵ The Argentine girl, in Howard’s reasoning, although more susceptible to “temptation” because of her perceived characteristics, was no less a “young, inexperienced and lonely” victim of “human wolves.” Argentine women needed the comfort and safety of the YWCA building, then, not because they were unfamiliar with language or customs, but because they were unfamiliar with cities in general, and Buenos Aires specifically.

Second, as had been the case in the United States, USYWCA Secretaries sought to locate the building in areas that would attract the “right” clientele. An undated report stated that the cafeteria, in which a “noon lunch for business girls is served” was in an undesirable location in comparison to its targeted clientele. The report stated that “not as many girls and women are

⁷³ J. W. Fleming, D.D., St. Andrews Scotch Presbyterian Church, Buenos Aires, in “Why the Young Women’s Christian Association is Needed in South America” *The Association Monthly*, Vol. 5, No. 12, (January, 1912), 468.

⁷⁴ Jennie E. Howard, Ex-Regent of Normal Schools, Argentine Republic, in “Why the Young Women’s Christian Association is Needed in South America” *The Association Monthly*, Vol. 5, No. 12 (January, 1912), 469.

⁷⁵ Guy, *Sex & Danger in Buenos Aires*, 3.

using its facilities as would if it were nearer the business center of the city.”⁷⁶ And in fact, the Buenos Aires YWCA moved several times in an attempt to be more strategically placed. The first of these moves, in 1920, was perhaps the most significant because the YWCA moved from Calle San Martín to 384 Piedras St. Although there is not an address for the location on San Martín, even at its closest point it was slightly over five miles to the coast, and the center of downtown. The building at 284 Piedras Street was substantially closer—less than a mile from the coast, and very near Avenida de Mayo, one of the central streets. As historian Adriana J. Bergero states, by the early 1920’s, this part of the city was undergoing gentrification, and the street, which had been “a stopping place for transient laborers,” often frequented by “black servants” working at local clubs, had changed—in their place were “offices, hotels, and cafés.”⁷⁷ In 1930, the main YWCA moved a few blocks away, to 580 Calle Sarmiento, although they maintained the Piedras building as a hostel.⁷⁸ USYWCA Secretary Emma Chapin, who was the General Secretary for the Buenos Aires YWCA, emphasized the desirability of the new building when she wrote to Sarah Lyon that the “location couldn’t be more central. If I am wrong about thinking that we should be in the center, we can prove it without having bought a lot there. If I am right, well. Only 100 feet from one of the biggest department stores; one and a half blocks, from another, Gath y Chaves.”⁷⁹ With this, the YWCA was situated in the center of the city.

However, as was the case with the United States, this central location deliberately included some and excluded others. Gath y Chaves was not merely one of the biggest department

⁷⁶ “Cafeteria” in “The Young Women’s Christian Association, Buenos Aires, Argentina,” 8, Microfilm Reel 66 South America- Argentina- Community- Buildings, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁷⁷ Bergero, *Intersecting Tango*, 125.

⁷⁸ Emma Chapin to Sarah Lyon, May 7, 1930, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Staff Correspondence Reports- Chapin, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁷⁹ Emma Chapin to Sarah Lyon, May 7, 1930, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Staff Correspondence and Reports- Chapin, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

stores, it was also one of the most exclusive. As Bergero states, the store was “built in the style of Avenida Alvear’s *petits hôtels*” the purpose of which was “to attract customers with purchasing power, as well as the wider population of curious passerby who merely wished to browse.” They might have wished to just look around because the interior “emulated the interiors of the palaces of the elite, with their domes and windows of colored glass, like those in Galeries Lafayette in Paris; their curved stairways in iron and bronze; their chandeliers and frosted lamps; their plush carpets, comfortable armchairs, and cozy corners decorated with little tables and plants.”⁸⁰ The women who patronized the Gath y Chaves, or who walked the exclusive Calle Florida, were a far distance—both literally and figuratively—from the women who worked in the meatpacking factories in the Southern districts of Buenos Aires, or the women who worked in the small independent businesses spread throughout the city.⁸¹ Instead of working with these women, who were predominantly single, and who experienced both dangerous and “patently unequal” working conditions, the Buenos Aires YWCA targeted white collar women who worked in offices and shops in the city center—simply by virtue of being located nearer these places.⁸² The efforts to target specific occupations of women seem to have been successful, and by 1937 the majority of members were “business and professional” women.⁸³

Targeting middle- and upper-class women allowed YWCA Secretaries to seem progressive without being radical. By largely ignoring factory workers, the YWCA in Buenos Aires avoided being connected to the types of political unrest that had convulsed the city in the early twentieth century. As Jose Moya argues in his article on the perceived correlation between

⁸⁰ Bergero, *Intersecting Tango*, 50.

⁸¹ For the exclusive clientele of Calle Florida, see Bergero, *Intersecting Tango*, 22-23.

⁸² Bergero, *Intersecting Tango*, 146.

⁸³ “Membership” in “Annual Report for October 1936- August 1937,” 1, Microfilm Reel 66- south America- Argentina- Community-General Reports, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. Of interest here is the use of the category of “other”; there were 995 “business and professional” members, apparently no “industrial” members, 166 “student” members, 214 “younger girls”; 487 “home women” and 536 “other” members.

Jewish immigrants and anarchists during the early twentieth century, “[f]rom the towns and shtetls of the Pale, emigrants took this militancy to the ghettos of European and American cities” where they founded radical political movements.”⁸⁴ Even the occupations listed in the YWCA’s 1927 survey of occupations—such as the needle trades—tended to be located in small cottage industries where piecemeal work could be done in tenements, rather than in large factories or trades that tended to be more politically radical.⁸⁵ This strategy not only sheltered the YWCA from seeming too leftist, but targeting middle- and upper-class women, who had tended to be more in the domestic sphere than the poor women, lent credence the USYWCA Secretaries’ assertion that they were working to move women into the public sphere.

By ignoring the Eastern European immigrant women who were already working in the public sphere, USYWCA Secretaries and other advocates for women’s participation in the public sphere based their efforts upon the liberation of women from what they envisioned as the bindings of anachronistic Spanish traditions. According to Mrs. Harry E. Ewing’s report in June 1926, Argentinean women were “striving to free themselves from centuries of subjection.” This had been caused by the transference of “Spanish” and “Moorish” traditions that included “the Oriental custom of keeping women secluded and subjected to the male members of her household.... In Buenos Aires up until recently a young girl never went about unaccompanied. If not by some older member of her family, at least by a paid servant. Women were not expected to go out at all, except to church and shopping.” Ewing pointed to a class difference, in that “[i]n higher social circles women have of course attended concerts, the opera, and exchanged visits within the limits of their family group.” Although these included extended kinship networks, it also meant that “one does not need to go outside of one’s own circle for social engagements.

⁸⁴ Moya, “The Positive Side of Stereotypes: Jewish Anarchists in Early-Twentieth-Century Buenos Aires,” 20.

⁸⁵ Walter, *Politics and Urban Growth in Buenos Aires, 1910-1942*, 13.

This explains to a large extent the exclusive spirit so evident in Latin countries.”⁸⁶ The YWCA leaders therefore asserted that the YWCA building, which not only fostered participation in the public sphere, but also was a multi-classed and multi-national setting where women were ostensibly equal, aided the breakdown of this tradition of exclusivity.

Ewing also assumed that traditional Argentinean kinship bonds confined women’s activism to traditional roles. She stated that “[t]he Argentine woman is essentially domestic in her tendencies; she is an excellent mother.” Within these tasks, she was “religious and has played an important part in charitable work throughout the country.” In contrast to this, Ewing stated that the “forward movement among the women of one Latin American country” (Argentina) was evidenced by the fact that “[w]ork for women in Buenos Aires has reached almost a complete development [with] its philanthropic organizations, its active National Council of Women, the Patriotic League of Young Women with its own magazine, the YWCA, the Temperance League, the National Suffrage Association, the scores of new clubs for business women.”⁸⁷ The types of issues these groups focused on were of vital concern to women, but not necessarily centered on issues of the family in care-taking ways, such as with hospitals and orphanages. While Ewing seems to portray these developments as progressive, some of these women’s clubs were politically conservative rather than liberal. For example, the “Patriotic League of Young Women” was likely the Young Women’s Committee of the Argentinean Patriotic League, founded by the Catholic Church as a reaction to efforts to secularize the state in the 1890’s.⁸⁸ In the late 1910s and 1920s, groups such as the Argentinean Patriotic League’s Young Women’s

⁸⁶ “Report of Mrs. Harry E. Ewing” in “Report of Buenos Aires YWCA,” June 1926, 1, Microfilm Reel 66-South America- Argentina- Miscellaneous, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁸⁷ “Report of Mrs. Harry E. Ewing” in “Report of Buenos Aires YWCA,” June 1926, 1, Microfilm Reel 66-South America- Argentina- Miscellaneous, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁸⁸ Bergero, *Intersecting Tango*, 220.

Committee were part of a broader emergence of the political right, in reaction to the political instability sparked by the urban poor and political radicals—in other words, some of the factory women mentioned above.⁸⁹ For example, at Córdoba, members of the League “proclaimed that ‘the moment has arrived for the Argentine woman to incorporate herself into the movement of defense... against the designs of demolition that are fermenting in the nation’s bosom.’”⁹⁰ Here, then, a step into the public sphere was not necessarily a step into the liberal, cosmopolitan, and pro-capitalist space imagined by USYWCA Secretaries.

One of the reasons that Ewing may have missed the conservative nature of these women’s participation in the public sphere was that they were not the groups from which the YWCA drew membership. Because the YWCA expanded through the presence of army, diplomat, and especially corporate wives and daughters, many of the groups that the YWCA in Buenos Aires collaborated with were not necessarily “local” but transnational and non-Catholic. For example, the YWCA worked with local branches of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union and the American Association of University Women. The YWCA’s relationships with these groups worked within the general division of women’s groups in Buenos Aires: benevolent associations that USYWCA Secretaries asserted were predominantly Catholic, and “Clubs open to Women” that were predominantly American and European and presumably non-Catholic.⁹¹

⁸⁹ See: Sandra McGee Deutsch, *Counterrevolution in Argentina, 1900-1932: The Argentine Patriotic League* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986); Sandra McGee Deutsch, *Las Derechas: The Extreme Right in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, 1890-1939* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); Ronald H. Dolkart and Sandra McGee Deutsch, eds., *The Argentine Right: Its History and Intellectual Origins, 1910 to the Present* (Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 1993).

⁹⁰ Sandra McGee Deutsch, *Counterrevolution in Argentina, 1900-1932*, 90.

⁹¹ A listing of the benevolent organizations for the late 1920’s (perhaps 1927?) was composed of: “Consejo Nacional de Mujeres” (National Council of Women); “Sociedad de Beneficiencia de la Capital,” (Catholic) which promoted schools, orphanages and hospitals; “The Woman’s Exchange” for English speaking women; “Sociedad la Misericordia” (Catholic) organization for widows; “Sociedad Madres Argentina,” (Catholic) which provided a school and factory employment for orphans; “Sociedad le Donne Italiane” (Catholic) an Italian welfare organization; “Asilo Naval” (Catholic) for children of the Argentine navy; “Patronato de la Infancia” (Catholic); “Sociedad Protectora de Huerfanos Militares (Catholic) for orphaned children of Argentine army members; “Comision de Senoras de la Euskal Echea” (Catholic) “for the Vasca community”; “Les Dames de la Providence Orphelina

In the context of Buenos Aires in the 1920s and 1930s, these allegiances were not without political consequences. The membership of the Buenos Aires YWCA meant that the YWCA often attempted to be more cosmopolitan than nationalist in their job training and educational classes. For example, the YWCA's courses in English, French, and German would have been in sharp contrast to the activities of the Argentinean Patriotic League, or *Liga*. The *Liga* established what historian Sarah McGee Deutsch terms "peaceful means to 'Argentinize'" immigrants through free schools. In these classes, European immigrants learned "reading, writing, arithmetic, homemaking arts, vocational skills, Argentine history, the catechism, and such 'creole' values as patriotism, love of work, punctuality, and obedience." This had an explicit class-based component, in that these women were attempting to create an efficient factory workforce.⁹² Whereas the USYWCA ran similar types of language and history course in the United States—albeit with English and American history—in an Argentine context these activities likely took on a different cast for USYWCA Secretaries. Such explicit class-based nationalism in Argentina would therefore have run counter to the YWCA's cosmopolitanism, with its heavy emphasis on Euro-American languages and cultural practices.

Francais" (Catholic) for the French community; "Oatronato Espanol Comision de Senoras" (Catholic) for the Spanish community; "Cantinas Maternales" (Catholic) to give food and milk to schoolchildren; "Sociedad 'El Centaro' (Catholic) to give clothing to the poor; "Liga argentina de Damas Catolicas" (Catholic) to take employed girls to the theater for lectures, etc.; "Woman's Institute" a boarding house for business girls; "Liga Patriotica Argentina" which promoted schools in factories for women; "El Hogar de las Escuelas Philanthropicas" which sponsored an orphanage; "San Vincente de Paul" (for members of the Catholic Church) which gave food, clothing and medical help to the needy; "Club de Madres"; the "Ejercito de Salvacion" (Salvation Army); the World Christian Temperance Union; and the British and American Benevolent Society. No Title, No Date, 6-7, Microfilm Reel 69- South America- Property, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection. The same study listed the following clubs: Club Argentino de Mujeres; The Patriotic Society of American Women; The American Women's Club of Belgrano; The Columbia Club; the Contemporary Club; and El Consejo Nacional de Mujeres (National Council for Women). "IV ANSWER" in Building Questionnaire (likely by Emma Chapin) September 1927, 8-9, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Staff Correspondence and Reports- Chapin, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁹² Sandra McGee Deutsch, "The Right under Radicalism, 1916-1930," in *The Argentine Right: Its History and Intellectual Origins, 1910 to the Present*, ed. Ronald H. Dolkart and Sandra McGee Deutsch (Wilmington, Del: SR Books, 1993), 35-63, 44.

As part of a Euro-American basis, the Buenos Aires YWCA deliberately built alliances with Euro-American women. For example, USYWCA Secretaries fostered direct connections between Euro-American elites and businesses, and the Buenos Aires YWCA. The YWCA also developed symbiotic relationships with expatriate women's groups who expected the building to work for them. One example of this was the Buenos Aires YWCA's relationship with the Patriotic Society of American Women, which had a cooperative agreement with the YWCA for gymnasium and swimming pool use. The Patriotic Society women were "the wives of the managers of the most important American firms represented in Argentina."⁹³ These women seem to have been powerful advocates for a building for the Buenos Aires YWCA primarily because they were familiar with the YWCA's U.S. model and had access to funds that would allow its replication abroad. Mrs. Louis Newbery Thomas, the society's Acting President and member of a YWCA gymnasium class, wrote to the USYWCA National Board that the situation in Buenos Aires was both the same and different from that in the United States. Because of the "enervating effects of the climate" there was a particular "need for places where women can go for 'gym' work, swimming or physical training of any kind." The YWCA in Buenos Aires therefore urgently needed "a building such as the YWCA has in cities of the USA." Thomas was sure "there is no city in the world where a YWCA building is more needed or could be better supported."⁹⁴ Despite the fact that Buenos Aires had a more temperate climate than many U.S.

⁹³ Emma Chapin to Mrs. James S. Cushman, April 21, 1927, 1, Microfilm Reel 66 South America- Argentina- Community- Buildings, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. She identified these as "Ford, General Motors, Westinghouse Electric, Firestone Tire and Rubber Co, Armours, etc." (2).

⁹⁴ "Letter from Mrs. Louis Newbery Thomas, Acting President of the Patriotic Society of American Women, Buenos Aires," 3, Microfilm Reel 66 South America- Argentina- Community- Buildings, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. The YWCA also had a relationship with the Women's Institute "which has a boarding home for women" and was "considering the possibility of uniting" with the YWCA because the leadership who had been deeply invested in the organization was aging and "there is no younger generation" to take up leadership roles. Chapin stated that "[t]hey say it will have to disappear, but the Young Women's Christian Association will live, for it is a world wide organization and will continue no matter who

cities, only a U.S.-style YWCA building would meet the needs of American women such as Thomas.

As was the case in the United States, local elites in Buenos Aires also contributed to the building campaigns, and some were members of the YWCA board. For example, Mrs. Robina M. Drysdale, the President of the Buenos Aires YWCA, was likely part of one of the wealthiest families in Buenos Aires.⁹⁵ Mr. and Mrs. Drysdale, who had a fortune based in manufacturing and importing, not only contributed large sums of money to the YWCA relocation in 1935, but Mr. Drysdale also personally guaranteed the YWCA's building loans, and upon his death in 1938, Mrs. Drysdale continued the guarantee for several years.⁹⁶ As was the case in the United States, elite women like Mrs. Drysdale tended to hold the more figurehead position of President, while General Secretaries performed the day-to-day work in the Association Building.⁹⁷ This was a relationship reflected in the physical layout of the YWCA building; the General Secretary had an office, while the President did not. As this demonstrates, the YWCA seems to have

resigns or dies." The Buenos Aires YWCA also had to be cognizant of potential building fund appeals by the American Church (who had "a most energetic pastor" and it was therefore "only a matter of time until the question of a new building will again come up") and the British Society, British Hospital, and YMCA. See: Emma Chapin to Mrs. James S. Cushman, April 21, 1927, 2, Microfilm Reel 66 South America- Argentina- Community- Buildings, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁹⁵ Mrs. Drysdale to Mrs. Wadsworth from Drysdale, March 18th, 1939, Microfilm Reel 67- South America- Argentina- Staff Correspondence and Reports- Hayes, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. Her home address was: Lima 487, Buenos Aires, Argentina. 1936 letter to McFarland from Drysdale is from 669 Calle Venezuela. YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. Richard J. Walter lists the Drysdales in his table, "Table 19: 1918 City Addresses for the Twenty-Five Leading Landowning Families of the Province of Buenos Aires," "The Socioeconomic Growth of Buenos Aires in the Twentieth Century" in Ross and McGann, *Buenos Aires, 400 Years*, 110. The other families primarily have Spanish surnames: Luro; Pereya Iraola; Alzaga Unzué; Anchorena; Pradere; Guerrero; Leloir; Graciarena; Santamarina; Duggan; Pereda; Duhau; Herrera Vegas; Zuberbühler; Martínez de Hoz; Estrugamou; Díaz Vélez; Casares; Atucha; Cobo; Bosch; Drabble; Bunge; Pueyrredón.

⁹⁶ Mrs. Robina M. Drysdale was likely Mr. John Monteith Drysdale; Mr. Drysdale was probably of J. & J. Drysdale & Co, listed under several headings in the Kelly's Directories, Ltd, *Kelly's Directory of Merchants, Manufacturers and Shippers* (London [etc.]: Kelly's Directories Ltd.). For letter of condolence to Mrs. Drysdale on her husband's death: Sarah Lyon to Mrs. Drysdale, November 21, 1938, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Miscellaneous, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁹⁷ For example, Mrs. Drysdale was President of the Association, but the day-to-day decisions tended to be made by a series of American-trained and supported General Secretaries.

welcomed the participation of elite women, although they also tended to physically separate them from the daily functions. The YWCA also utilized elite participation during the opening celebrations, particularly when their attendance would make these events a more noteworthy occasion for the press. For example, a representative of the Mayor of Buenos Aires (the mayor himself had been to the inauguration of the building when it was in a different location), as well as the wives of the Minister of the Navy and the American Ambassador, were among the more than four hundred people who attended the YWCA building inauguration in 1930. The owner of the building, Señora de Zapiola, attended with her daughter, who was identified as “a Marquesa.”⁹⁸

As the composition of these elites reveals, strong expatriate communities and organizations such as the Patriotic Society of American Women added the complication of nationality to class to the USYWCA Secretaries’ efforts to bridge social divides. Because these European and American women constituted a significant portion of the YWCA’s clientele abroad, they often had the social clout to push for buildings and programs that catered to them. While some of these women may have been the working-class and professional workers at whom the job training and employment boards were aimed, many of them were the wives of leaders in transnational corporations. The YWCA relied upon these women as well as upon local elites, such as the Drysdals, for both funding for buildings and logistical support. In fact, many of the Buenos Aires YWCA’s contributions came from U.S.- and European- based organizations, including the Anglo South American Meat Co., Ford Motor Car Co., and Harrods.⁹⁹ These types

⁹⁸ Emma Chapin to Mrs. Cotton, October 23 1930, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Staff Correspondence and Reports- Chapin, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁹⁹ Annual Report, 1919-1920 (“Informe Annual”) Subscriptions and Donations sections (“Suscripciones Anuales” and “Donaciones Anuales”), 38-40, Microfilm Reel 66 – South America- Argentina- Miscellaneous, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

of groups also contributed to specific events having to do with the building, such as the 1919-1920 moving expenses. A list in the Annual Report included numerous U.S. and European corporations that were involved in a wide variety of commercial activities.¹⁰⁰ As several historians have asserted for the Young Men's Christian Association in the United States, corporate leaders who contributed to buildings often expected to have their agendas and interests protected.¹⁰¹

The Buenos Aires YWCA seems to have supported the needs of these Euro-American corporate leaders in several ways, including the job training program. The popularity of English classes and the testing structure not only held to international standards, but were geared towards British corporations. For example, in 1919-1920, there were 29 students in English, the next year the number had increased to 40 students, and by 1927 there were 118 students in six classes (comparatively, the Spanish class had 12, 6 and 9 respectively, and the French class had 3, 3, and 31 respectively).¹⁰² This language preparation bespoke the status of English as the *lingua franca*

¹⁰⁰ Corporations who contributed large amounts for the YWCA's moving expenses were: American Linseed Co.; American Locomotive Sales Corporation; American Woman's Club of Belgrano; Anglo Argentine Iron Co; Banco Anglo Sud Americano; Banco Britanico de la America del Sud; Banco de Londres y Brasil; Banco de Londres y Rio de la Plata; Banco Frances e Italiano para la America del Sud; Banco Holandes; Weir Chadwick & Co; Compania Argentina de Navegacion; F.C. Cook & Co; Davis & Co, Lts; Deloitte, Plender, Griffiths & Co; El Comercio; Fairbanks, Morse & Co; Farran & Zimmerman; Franklin y Herrera; General Electric Co.; Hirschberg & Co.; Kay y Cia; Krabbe, King & Co.; Laycock & Whitehead; Los Fabricantes Unidos Inc.; J. Macadam & Co; Marconi Co.; Molinos Harineros y Elevadores de Granos; J. Murchison & co; National Cash Register Co; National Lead Co.; National Paper & Type Co; Nicholson & Rathbone; Piceardo y Cia; Sanday & Co; Stocks & Stocks; Studebaker Corporation of USA; Swedish Atlantic Trading Co; Thompson Muebles Lta.; Vacuum Oil Co.; Vestey Bros; Waring & Gillow; West India Oil Co; and J.R. Williams & Co. Annual Report, 1919-1920 ("Informe Annual") Subscriptions for Moving Expenses ("Suscripciones Anuales y Donaciones Para Mudanza y Cuentas Corrientes"), 41-48, Microfilm Reel 66 – South America- Argentina- Miscellaneous, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹⁰¹ Paula Lupkin, "Manhood Factories: Architecture, Business, and the Evolving Urban Role of the YMCA, 1865-1925," in *Men and Women Adrift: the YMCA and the YWCA in the City*, ed. Nina Mjagkij and Margaret Spratt (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 40-64; Thomas Winter, "Contested Spaces: The YMCA and Workingmen on the Railroads, 1877-1917," in *Men and Women Adrift: the YMCA and the YWCA in the City*, ed. Nina Mjagkij and Margaret Spratt (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 65-85; Thomas Winter, *Making Men, Making Class: The YMCA and Workingmen, 1877-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

¹⁰² Educational Department" in "Informe Annual" October 1 1919 to September 30 1920," 18, Microfilm Reel 66- Argentina- Buenos Aires- Miscellaneous, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. "General Education" in "Annual Report, October 1921 to September 1922," 20,

of business, a situation that was firm enough that the YWCA didn't conduct examinations in Spanish stenography until 1921. Examinations for the English stenographers were corrected (and certificates issued by) the Pittman Company, in England.¹⁰³ This meant that the women who took stenography classes in Buenos Aires would likely have been certified according to internationally recognized British standards, and would have been able to get jobs in many different geographic locations, including with Anglo-American corporations elsewhere in the world. Job training in these skills that focused on preparing for white-collar jobs in transnational corporations therefore aided women in being mobile not only within their local career track, but within transnational career tracks that also helped to serve the needs of expanding Anglo-American commerce.

USYWCA Secretaries intended that buildings would be, as Inman had articulated, a type of cultural corollary to the United States' increasing economic interests in South America. These would occur through the building itself, which attempted to replicate YWCA buildings in the United States. USYWCA Secretaries envisioned buildings as increasing the number of women who would then become physically mobile through their ability to travel from rural to urban environments and from nation to nation. By being semi-public and semi-private, the YWCA building facilitated women's economic and social lives outside of the domestic sphere. As a safe physical place, located near the center of commerce in Buenos Aires, the building could facilitate the creation of a population of women trained in white-collar business, who had urban

Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Miscellaneous, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass., and Annual Report, 1927-1928- "Memoria Annual de la Asociacion Cristiana Femenina" October 1, 1927 to September 30, 1928, 34-35, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Miscellaneous, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹⁰³ Annual Report, October 1921 to September 1922, 24-25, Microfilm Reel 66- South America- Argentina- Miscellaneous, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

sensibilities and were able to travel internationally relatively easily. By inculcating a sense of individualism and egalitarianism, the YWCA building potentially aided women's mobility across class and national boundaries.

While this fostered economic mobility with some women, just as had been the case with YWCA buildings in the United States, this location tended to exclude women from the poorer or heavily immigrant areas. The types of skills and job training that the YWCA offered were in white-collar jobs for women, such as clerical and secretarial tasks, fields that were just opening up for young white women in the early decades of the twentieth century, not only within the United States, but as the Buenos Aires YWCA's efforts demonstrates, around the world. Combined with training in English and the local languages, the YWCA fairly specifically cultivated a class of professional, white-collar women. This facilitated the women's ability to support themselves individually even as they could find communities of similarly minded women around the world.

Ultimately, what YWCA buildings show is that Y-space was not just a matter of abstract connections; it was realized in physical spaces that gave form to YWCA ideals. Through YWCA buildings, USYWCA Secretaries aimed to create a group of women who were in many ways without geographic location. USYWCA leaders intended their buildings to be universal urban and cosmopolitan *spaces* regardless of their geographic *place*. This meant that urban and cosmopolitan YWCA women would ostensibly be comfortable within any YWCA. The YWCA facilitated the transition of these women from place to place (rural to urban and/or city to city), through the perception of these women that YWCA buildings were generally analogous. In this way, YWCA buildings mimicked sacred spaces; the similar construction and functions of the places within YWCA buildings were intended to allow women to feel comfortable regardless of

their geographic location. In this sense, the YWCA buildings partially alleviated the profound dislocations of modernity, even as they attempted to culturally uproot women from ideologies that were domestic—not only in the sense of households, but also in the sense of the nation. USYWCA Secretaries endeavored to create buildings that would allow women to transplant themselves into cultural contexts that were transnational, rather than strictly national, and were therefore modernity more “at large.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

CHAPTER 4: THE PHILIPPINES—RE-CREATING RECREATION

On January 12, 1935, at four-thirty p.m., five hundred guests began to gather to inaugurate the new Young Women's Christian Association building in Manila. When a YWCA Secretary described the event to the World YWCA, she began setting the scene with the "distinguished guests," who included members of government, the Mayor and his wife, the "Sultan of the Moros," and the wives of the British and Japanese Consuls. Then "[a] bus pulls up and a bevy of Chinese girls tumble out; another one comes rumbling in and the Welfareville girls Orchestra appears and array themselves on the veranda."¹ This socially diverse group gathered outside in the yard until Manila YWCA President Geronima Pecson cut the large ribbon bearing "Y.W.C.A.," an occasion commemorated by press photographers, when the guests spilled into the building.² The author described the procession of people—"the special dignitaries, the Business Girl representatives, students in cap and gown, athletic girls with tennis rackets, basket balls and what not" all eager "to see the new home of their YWCA." They went into the library, "through the gym converted into an auditorium for the afternoon, down the long veranda, throu[gh] the dressing rooms, past the showers to the swimming pool, up the stairs to the dormitory, down the outer stairway to the bowling alley, and on into the garden."³ The author

¹ "Dedication of the New Building of the YWCA of Manila," January 12, 1935, 1, Philippines 01, Folder 2, Records of the World's Young Women's Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

² "Dedication of the Y.W.C.A." *The Philippines Herald*, January 14, 1935, 8.

³ "Dedication of the New Building of the YWCA of Manila," January 12, 1935, 1, Philippines 01, Folder 2, Records of the World's Young Women's Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

asserted that “[o]ne and all were enthusiastic in their praises and appreciation of the delightful affair which had dedicated this new home.”⁴

As was the case with YWCA buildings in some other areas of the world, the building was not new, but instead had been the former site of the Columbia Club, an organization primarily for the use of elite American men. Established by the Episcopal Bishop Brent in 1904 to replicate small town America (in the words of one scholar), the club did not serve alcohol and welcomed enlisted men as well as officers. Women’s access to the club was limited to wives and daughters of these men.⁵ According to the YWCA Secretary who summarized the Columbia Club’s history, the building had been a “gathering place, a club with athletic and social features” for “the young Americans coming out to help develop this new country.”⁶ Only thirty years later, however, there had been a sea-change in the Manila club scene. As other American clubs, such as the Polo Club, the Army and Navy, and Manila Golf Club, became established in Manila, the Columbia Club fell into disuse, and in 1934 the then Episcopal Bishop in Manila, Frank Mosher, offered it to the YWCA.⁷

The Manila YWCA’s assumption of the Columbia Club’s building was potentially radical. With the stroke of Bishop Mosher’s pen, and the snip of Mrs. Pescon’s scissors across the “YWCA” ribbon, the YWCA had re-tasked the *same* facilities that had been specifically constructed for the bodies of young American men who were “coming out to develop this young country,” and applied them to the bodies of a transnational group of women. In the context of Colonial Manila, in which many social clubs were segregated, and in which the body of both

⁴ “Dedication of the New Building of the YWCA of Manila,” January 12, 1935, 3, Philippines 01, Folder 2, Records of the World’s Young Women’s Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

⁵ Lewis E. Gleek, Jr., *The Manila Americans (1901-1964)* (Manila: Carmelo & Bauermann, Inc., 1977), 67.

⁶ “Dedication of the New Building of the YWCA of Manila,” January 12, 1935, 3, Philippines 01, Folder 2, Records of the World’s Young Women’s Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

⁷ “Dedication of the New Building of the YWCA of Manila,” January 12, 1935, 4, Philippines 01, Folder 2. Records of the World’s Young Women’s Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland. For more on Frank Mosher, see: *Soldier and Servant* (Hartford, CT: The Church Missions Publishing Co., 1942)

Americans and Filipinos was the subject of much concern for U.S. officials, this re-appropriation of the equipment and facilities is remarkable.⁸ In some ways, it subverted several hierarchies, as a women's organization that was heavily populated by Filipinas had just physically laid claim to a place that had previously been only open to American men and their wives and sisters. The consequences of this change in population caused the scholar Lewis Gleek to physically erase the Columbia Club from his map of American organizations in the Philippines. In his 1970's encyclopedic account of the U.S. luminaries and groups, while the Columbia Club is listed in his map for "The American's Manila, circa 1912," the premises is entirely gone from the map for 1938 and other buildings appear to have taken its place, as though the building itself was gone.⁹

However, the YWCA's takeover of the Columbia Club was not just a physical transformation of a building. Coming between the passing of the Tydings-McDuffie Act in March 1934, and the establishment of the Philippine Commonwealth in November 1935, this physical takeover of the Columbia Club mirrored a broader political transition. Bishop Mosher's parting request was that the Manila YWCA "make it of real service to the women and girls and the community of Manila." The YWCA Secretary who reported his sentiments stated that Mosher "wanted to feel that those who gave so generously in the past to make the Columbia Club possible might have even more return on their investment in the future." The Secretary saw this as an "added impetus" that the YWCA should "strive to create" both intangible and tangible values; "that the YWCA of Manila may add to the physical, mental, and above all spiritual well-being of women and girls, especially at this time when they enter into the new and broader

⁸ See in particular Warwick Anderson's work on U.S. Health officials pathologizing of the Filipino body, and Vincente Rafael's work on the colonial census. Warwick Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies*; Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History*.

⁹ Gleek, Jr., *The Manila Americans (1901-1964)*. The 1913 map is located on p. 8-9 of the first picture section "1901-1919- The Prevailing Community Mood Was Optimistic." The 1939 map is located on p. 8-9 of the second picture section "1920-1941- The Prevailing Community Mood was Confident."

responsibilities of the Commonwealth of the Philippine Islands.”¹⁰ As the government was politically transitioning from a U.S. colonial government, literally embodied in white American men and women, to Filipinos, it seemed a social changeover was also occurring on the grounds of the Columbia Club.

In some ways, this transition seemed to be the fulfillment of the colonial political tactics that historian Paul Kramer terms “calibrated colonialism.” This policy had originated with the establishment of the “civilian colonial state” just after the turn of the century, at about the time that the Columbia Club was being built. In this, U.S. colonial officials set criteria “by which Filipinos would be recognized as having the capacity to responsibly exercise power in the colonial state.” Calibrated colonialism worked in tandem with an “inclusionary racial formation,” which simultaneously identified the potential of Filipinos even as it lamented the current lack of manifestations of that potential. Together, these rhetorics served as the backbones of the U.S. Colonial State by providing a basis by which “freedom could be both reliably promised and endlessly deferred.”¹¹ The passing of the Tydings-McDuffie Act in 1934 could have been the political fulfillment of this endlessly deferred promise, and Kramer points to Franklin Roosevelt’s comments upon signing the bill as proof that “[f]or Roosevelt, the Filipinos had, at last, proven their capacity.” However, as Kramer states, instead it was “yet another moment in the unfolding of calibrated colonialism.”¹² For him, the stipulations of U.S. governmental supervision within the Tydings-McDuffie Act, and the success of racist rhetoric in Philippine exclusion, bankrupted the notion of U.S. benevolence.

¹⁰ “Dedication of the New Building of the YWCA of Manila,” January 12, 1935, 5, Philippines 01, Folder 2, Records of the World’s Young Women’s Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

¹¹ Kramer, *The Blood of Government*, 191-2.

¹² Kramer, *The Blood of Government*, 424.

The Manila YWCA's activities at this moment of political transition in the public sphere, serve as a window into the ways that calibrated colonialism continued in the social sphere. By looking at one of the Manila YWCA's programs—recreation and physical fitness—we can see that calibrated colonialism was not just a tool of the U.S. colonial government, but was a tactic of control and influence that was also utilized by non-governmental organizations. Employed by USYWCA Secretaries, the “positive health” and recreation programs seemed to fulfill many aspects of Y-space by recognizing the potential of Philippine women to be experts, being non-discriminatory racially, and fostering contact between multiple groups of women. However, USYWCA Secretaries also sought to utilize their assumed superior expertise to retain their informal control over the Manila YWCA. In their support for recreation activities that were racially segregated, the USYWCA Secretaries also seem to have been willing to bolster white supremacy rather than egalitarian fellowship and nationalism. Ultimately, these efforts demonstrate that at the moment that U.S. colonial officials were losing their formal status in the colonial political hierarchy, they utilized the same sorts of calibrated colonialism to try to retain their stature in the informal social hierarchy.

The USYWCA Secretaries attempted to position the Manila WYCA as a Philippine organization that was allied with anti-colonial nationalism. Using the report of activities from 1935 to 1936 as a snapshot, we can get a better sense of the ways this project worked. First, although it received large amounts of money and several personnel from the USYWCA, the Manila YWCA was ostensibly composed primarily of Filipinas. It had 579 voting members at the Manila location (the only location in the Philippines), and three Girl Reserve groups with a total of 76 members. These members were roughly divided between “Business and Professional”

women (334), and “Home Women” (213).¹³ Of these, 68% were Philippine, 27% were American, 4% were European, and 1% were “other Orientals.” They were overwhelmingly Roman Catholic at 80%, with the other 20% being Evangelical, Episcopalian, and .1% Aglipayan (or Philippine Independent Church).¹⁴ The Board was also led by Filipinas. The Mrs. Quezon, wife of the prominent politician Manuel Quezon, was the Honorary President (she remained in this position until at least 1939), and Mrs. Flora A. Ylagan was the President, and Mrs. Orsula U. Clemente was treasurer. There was one American, Mrs. Bayard Stewart, on the board, and one British woman, Mrs. G.S. Brown, who was Secretary.¹⁵ On the Secretarial side, there were only two American YWCA Secretaries, out of a staff of 15. These were Anne Guthrie, who was serving as Advisory Secretary, and Zelma Day, who was as Physical Education Secretary.¹⁶ By 1938, at least according to their report to the USYWCA, the Manila YWCA claimed to be primarily funded by people and organizations in the Philippines; of an

¹³ There were also 32 students, and 10 “Younger Girls” who did not vote. Annual Report to the Foreign Division... for the year June 1, 1935 to June 1, 1936,” Microfilm Reel 65, 1, Philippines- General, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. This was a drastic increase from the numbers reported by the World YWCA only 4 years earlier, when they listed 50 members in the Philippine YWCA. See: World’s YWCA Directory, quoted in Publicity Department and Foreign Division, National Board YWCA, *Foreign Facts*, 4-5.

¹⁴ Annual Report to the Foreign Division... for the year June 1, 1935 to June 1, 1936,” 2, Microfilm Reel 65. Philippines- General, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹⁵ Annual Report to the Foreign Division... for the year June 1, 1935 to June 1, 1936,” 3, Microfilm Reel 65. Philippines- General, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹⁶ The Filipina staff were: Josefa J. Martinez, Executive Secretary; Miss Corazon Juliano, Secretary to the Executive; Mrs. Trinidad A. Albero, Education Secretary; miss filomea Alonso, Girls’ Work Secretary; Miss Evangelina Abellera, Assistant Girls’ Work Secretary; mrs. Aurea del Carmen, Employment Secretary and director of Business Girl’s Center; Mrs. Balbina E. Icasiano, Assistant Physical Director; Miss Carmen Crus, Instructor in Physical Education department; Mrs. Irene U. Castro, Dormitory Dean; Miss Elvira Llanes, Assistant Dormitory Dean; Miss Magdalena Bernardino, Business Secretary; and Miss Filomena Florendo and Miss Rutheba Burgos shared the duty of being Information Clerks. Annual Report to the Foreign Division... for the year June 1, 1935 to June 1, 1936,” 4-4a, Microfilm Reel 65. Philippines- General, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

income of just over 15,000 Philippine pesos, 426 “Nationals” gave 8,165.00 Philippine pesos whereas 317 “Foreigners” gave 3,139 Philippine Pesos.¹⁷

The Manila YWCA may have been primarily supported and populated by Filipinas, however, these women were not the middle- and working-class women whom USWYCA leaders envisioned as the foundation for grass-roots membership. Instead, the Manila YWCA, particularly at the upper levels of the organization cultivated relationships with local elite and professional women, such as Mrs. Quezon. Looking at the Manila newspaper *The Philippine Herald*, shows that the YWCA had connections at these very elite levels of society. For example, the YWCA’s activities often were announced among the “Society” pages of *The Philippine Herald*, alongside events by the Philippine Women’s organizations, University sororities, and exclusive American Clubs. Indeed, looking at the list of attendees for the opening of the YWCA at the former Columbia Club building demonstrates the nature of the Manila YWCA’s connections. The USYWCA Secretary who reported the event to the WYWCA stated that the guests were a cross section of people in Manila.¹⁸ However, it was the elite people on the guest list who had been announced earlier that week in *The Philippine Herald*. An article on the dedication largely consisted of a listing of the members of prominent families and organizations who had accepted invitations to the event, and the “23 Well Known Ladies who were to “Pour Tea.”¹⁹ These guests were colonial elite, both non-Philippine and Philippine. They included the

¹⁷ In addition to these funds given by individuals, 55 business firms contributed 3,928.00 Philippine Pesos. “Annual Report to the Foreign Division... for the year June 1937 to June 1938,” 10, Microfilm Reel 65. Philippines-General, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹⁸ “Dedication of the New Building of the YWCA of Manila,” January 12, 1935, 3, Philippines 01, Folder 2, Records of the World’s Young Women’s Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

¹⁹ The list of “those who have already accepted invitations” included: “President and Mrs. Jorge Bocobo of the State University; Mrs. Pilar Hidalgo-Lim, representing the Confederation of Women’s Clubs [in] the Philippines; Mrs. A.H. Bordner, president of the American Association of University Women; Miss Rosa Militar, president of the Philippine Nurses Association; Mrs. O.M. Shuman, for the Manila Women’s Clubs; Mr. Arthur Fisher for the Manila Rotary Club; Dr. Jose Fabella, Commissioner of public health and welfare; Judge Manuel Camus, president of the National Council of the Y.M.C.A.; Dra. Paz Mendoza-Guazon, president of the Filipino Association of

wives of the British Consul General, the Commissioner of Public Health and Welfare, and a Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. They were also the educational and philanthropic elite, such as the wife of the President of the University of the Philippines, and Mrs. Carson, who was not only the wife of a Pacific Commercial Company executive, but she had also been a leader in the women's club scene.²⁰ However, they were also Filipinas, who were active socially and politically, such as Pacita de los Reyes, who had been Carnival Queen in the late 1920's, and would go on to become a prominent Manila lawyer.²¹ Geronima Tomeldon Pecson, the President of the Manila YWCA who cut the ribbon on the new building, was active in a variety of social organizations in Manila, particularly the women's suffrage movement. Following World War II, she would become the first woman elected to the Philippine Senate.²²

As these women's connections to governmental and non-governmental organizations in Manila reveals, the Manila YWCA also collaborated with many local organizations. The 1935-1936 report lists 25 groups that the Manila YWCA worked with. Some of them were primarily Filipina, such as the Filipino Nurses Association and the Damas Filipinas Settlement House. Others were explicitly American, such as the American Association of University Women. There were also governmental connections, such as with the Bureau of Public Health. For the most part, however, these groups were international organizations, such as the YMCA, the Red Cross, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, National Christian Council, and women's organizations such as the

University Women." Serving tea were: "Mesdames John W. Haussermann, Hilton Carson, Jose Fabella, Thomas Harrington, Chen Mo Hua, Atsushi Kimura, Isaac Barza, William Birt, Jorge Bocobo, Sonia Rifkin, H.B. Pond, Jose Abad Santos, N.Roy James, B. Rodgers, Asuncion Perez, E. J. L. Philipps, D.S. Hibbard, Jose P. Mejencio; Misses Tommy Franks, Maria Martha Albert, Pacita de los Reyes, Louisa Rodulfa and Lourdes Velayo." "Y.W.C.A.'s New Location to be Dedicated This Saturday; Leading Members of Fraternal, Social Welfare Societies Invited; 23 Well Known Ladies to Pour Tea" *The Philippine Herald* January 10, 1935, 8.

²⁰ Gleek, Jr., *The Manila Americans (1901-1964)* 252-254.

²¹ See: Mina Roces, "Is the Suffragist an American colonial construct? Defining 'the Filipino woman' in colonial Philippines," in *Women's Suffrage in Asia: Gender, Nationalism and Democracy*, ed. Louise Edwards and Mina Roces (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 24-58, 44. And "Federacion Internacional de Abogadas" <http://www.fidaphilippines.org/history.shtml> (October 2, 2009).

²² "Geronima T. Pescon," http://www.senate.gov.ph/senators/former_senators/geronima_pecson.htm (October 2, 2009).

Federation of Women's Clubs, Pan Pacific Women's Association, and General Council of Women.²³

Even as USYWCA Secretaries attempted to make the Manila YWCA seem Philippine, the USYWCA leadership perceived USYWCA Secretaries as needing to be physically present in order for a YWCA to exist. While there had been a YWCA-like group in Manila prior to the USYWCA Secretaries arrival, the USYWCA did not consider it a YWCA because it was not headed by an American. A report to the Foreign Division for 1923 noted that Mrs. Felicisima Barza had organized a "time investment club" which met regularly, although without any equipment or physical infrastructure, and it did not use the term "YWCA." The author stated that while Mrs. Barza was being paid (presumably by the USYWCA, since her salary is included in the proposed budget) an "average teachers salary," an extension of the work was impossible until "American staff arrived." The author of the report asserted that their arrival would displace Mrs. Barza from the job she wanted working with University students. However, "if it is handled properly she will readily adjust herself to the position of secretary for the younger girls," while an American became Student Secretary.²⁴ What the author of the report to the USYWCA failed to mention was that Mrs. Barza had attended one of the USYWCA's Summer Training Institutes at the National Training School.²⁵ In this case, for the USYWCA, it was necessary to have a USYWCA Secretary physically present in Manila for work to commence; having a Filipina, even one who had been trained in the United States, was not enough. And once the USYWCA

²³ Annual Report to the Foreign Division... for the year June 1, 1935 to June 1, 1936," 9-9b, Microfilm Reel 65. Philippines- General, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

²⁴ "Latin American budget; Philippine budget for 1924," 2, Microfilm Reel 65, Philippines- Reports, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. The author did not mention that Mrs. Barza had apparently attended a summer session of the National Training School in New York. Regino R. Ylanan and Carmen Wilson Ylanan, *The History and Development of Physical Education and Sports in the Philippines* (Manila: Carmen W. Ylanan, 1965), 26.

²⁵ Regino R. Ylanan and Carmen Wilson Ylanan, *The History and Development of Physical Education and Sports in the Philippines*, 26.

Secretaries arrived, it seems that Mrs. Barza left the YWCA; she does not appear in any of the subsequent reports.

This tension, in which the USYWCA Secretaries attempted to position the Manila YWCA among the Philippine elite, even as the Secretaries guided it from behind the scenes, is most evident in one of their largest programs— fitness and recreation. Physical fitness and health education were a major portion of the Manila YWCA's work. For example, in 1935-1936, the Health Education Committee was one of the largest committees, tied with the Membership committee, which also had twelve members.²⁶ When answering what the “chief program emphases” during that year were, the author listed Health Education first.²⁷ That these programs were a significant portion of the YWCA's work was reflected in fact that 1,754 people utilized the YWCA's facilities. In addition to providing facilities for those users, the Health Education Department had conducted medical examinations for 1,189 women, along with “special services to certain groups” such as “free fluoroscopic examinations for business girls,” swimming lessons to school children, and health talks to “clubs and women's organizations.”²⁸ With the takeover of the Columbia Club building, the YWCA gained a “gymnasium, swimming pool, bowling alleys, tennis courts, and playfield” and was therefore able to develop a broader physical education program geared around these facilities.²⁹

Physical fitness and health wasn't just important to the Manila YWCA; these activities also had a long history in the Philippines, and were particularly associated with the American

²⁶ Annual Report to the Foreign Division... for the year June 1935 to June 1936,” 4, Microfilm Reel 65. Philippines- General, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

²⁷ Annual Report to the Foreign Division... for the year June 1935 to June 1936,” 12, Microfilm Reel 65. Philippines- General, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

²⁸ Annual Report to the Foreign Division... for the year June 1935 to June 1936,” 8, Microfilm Reel 65, Philippines- General, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. It's unclear what they were using the fluoroscopic imaging to look at (since it looks specifically at moving organs). More likely is that they were taking x-rays of women's lungs to look for tuberculosis.

²⁹ Regino R. Ylanan and Carmen Wilson Ylanan, *The History and Development of Physical Education and Sports in the Philippines*, 28.

occupation. As Regino R. Ylanan and Carmen Wilson Ylanan asserted in their history of Philippine sports, “[t]he American period may well be called the ‘Golden Age’ of sports in the Philippines.”³⁰ During this period, the Bureau of Education instituted an “intensive athletic program” and published several handbooks and manuals, the most prominent of which was the 1919 “Physical Education, a Manual for Teachers.” Edited by Frederick O. England, the Playground Director for Manila, the manual covered daily health and sanitary inspections, classroom exercises, lessons in marching, calisthenics, folk dancing, impromptu games, and group athletics.³¹ In addition to Physical Education classes in the schools, the Ylanans point specifically to the work of the YMCA, the YWCA, the University of the Philippines, the Playground movement, and the Philippine Amateur Athletic Federation, as well as clubs geared around specific sports such as baseball, basketball, soccer, swimming, tennis, track and field, and volleyball.³²

For all that sports and recreation programs played a significant role in social and cultural life in the colonial Philippines, these activities and programs have not been the lens through which most scholars have examined efforts to reform the body. For example, Warwick Anderson, who has extensively studied the medical and health programs in the Philippines, focuses specifically on the ways that U.S. colonial officials such as Army and public health doctors, constructed the Filipino body as a carrier of disease, which threatened the bodies of Americans.³³ Vincente Rafael examines the Filipino body in slightly different ways from

³⁰ Regino R. Ylanan and Carmen Wilson Ylanan, *The History and Development of Physical Education and Sports in the Philippines*, 3.

³¹ Regino R. Ylanan and Carmen Wilson Ylanan, *The History and Development of Physical Education and Sports in the Philippines*, 5-6. The Manual was criticized by the Board of Educational Survey because it was largely based on the plan in use in New York state, “which gave a conspicuous part to formal drills” and not enough to “group games.” (6)

³² Regino R. Ylanan and Carmen Wilson Ylanan, *The History and Development of Physical Education and Sports in the Philippines*.

³³ Warwick Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies*.

Anderson. For Rafael, the point of contact was not with scientists, but state officials such as the census workers, and informal agents, such as white American women. The census was an attempt to quantify and police Filipino bodies, which American women also attempted to do in establishing the domestic sphere.³⁴ Because the focus of these works is on the ways that U.S. agents, both informal and formal, pathologized Philippine men's bodies, there are two missing pieces: First, the ways that U.S. agents utilized physical fitness, rather than disease, as a way to institute control over the body; and second, the ways that U.S. agents conceptualized Philippine women's bodies as potential sites of reform.

The Manila YWCA's programs are therefore important because they provide us with a unique window into the rhetorics of control and citizenship aimed at Philippine women. Through these programs, we see that calibrated colonialism worked not just in a formal sphere and during the time period of colonialism. In the Manila YWCA, USYWCA Secretaries would continue to set criteria by which Filipinas would be judged to have the capacity to exercise power. The Secretaries would construct themselves as experts and foster connections with Filipina doctors and other elites, which they utilized as evidence of their racial inclusion—and by implication their anti-colonial stance. At the same time, however, they would utilize the same types of control and pathologizing techniques first developed in the Philippines in order to set themselves up as the sole experts in the Manila YWCA. In the end, they would deny their own racial privilege and utilize places outside the YWCA building to specifically foster nationalism.

When USYWCA Secretary Lois Weir arrived in the Philippines in 1928, it appears that she utilized select parts of the "Positive Health" program being utilized in the United States. In some ways, USWYCA Secretaries' application of these programs to the Philippine context made

³⁴ Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History*, Chapters 1-2.

them even more radical notions than they had been in the United States, because they were attempts to bring parts of the existing colonial power structures and hierarchies into question. First, the USYWCA Secretaries used Filipina doctors for Manila YWCA programs, rather than the white male doctors who, as Warwick Anderson states, were at the top of the colonial medical hierarchy. For example, Lois Weir emphasized that “Dr. Trinidad, the chief of the anti-Tuberculosis Society” allowed her to send women to his office for free x-rays given by a female doctor—Dr. Eva Gonzalez.³⁵ Filipina doctors were also present on the YWCA’s Board of Directors. A chart from the Philippine Student YWCA noted that among the women graduates from the University of Philippines was one from “1911 from the COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS with an A.B. later graduated as the first woman physician from the SCHOOL OF MEDICINE. She is now a member of the Board of Directors of the Manila Young Women’s Christian Association.”³⁶ The author may have felt this emphasis was necessary because, as Catharine Ceniza Choy and Warwick Anderson note, while by the early 1930’s women dominated professional nursing, scientific and medical expertise in the Philippines was still particularly tied to white American male professionals.³⁷ While the records do not reveal if the USYWCA Secretaries utilized Filipina doctors to inspect their own bodies, they at least fostered these women’s ties to the Manila YWCA. This alone could have been revolutionary; physical examinations were required for participation in YWCA activities, and given that the YWCA

³⁵ Lois Weir, “My First five Months of Physical Education in Manila,” March 1929, 9, Microfilm Reel 65-Philippines- Staff Reports- Weir, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

³⁶ “Women Graduate of the University of Philippines holding Titles and Degrees,” Microfilm Reel 65-Philippines- Staff Reports- Weir, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

³⁷ Catherine Ceniza Choy, *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino American History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 49. Warwick Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies*. For American men as experts outside of the medical professions, see: Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

literature did not promote the usage of other doctors or clinics, it is likely that Filipina doctors administered them to some American and European women.

At the same time, however, as was the case in the United States, USYWCA Secretaries did not limit the category of “expert” to Filipina doctors. They also promoted *themselves* as experts through their scientific use of equipment. In a report to the USYWCA, Lois Weir described setting up an examination room with the proper equipment, which was essentially a replication of the one advocated in the *Hand Book* (the only pieces missing from Weir’s room were a set of dynamometers, used to measure muscular strength in the back and legs, hand, chest, and shoulders).³⁸ Utilizing this extensive array of equipment and their special training as Health Education Secretaries, USYWCA Secretaries asserted their own status as professionals.

Second, unlike the involuntary health examinations that male U.S. officials gave to Filipino men, the USYWCA Secretaries asserted that their application of the positive health examinations to Filipinas were welcomed by Philippine women, even those outside the Manila YWCA’s regular activities.³⁹ For example, in an examination process for women at the Philippine Normal School, Weir stated that 143 students showed up to be examined, instead of the 90 who were registered in the two gym classes selected to be inspected.⁴⁰ These numbers seem to reflect the general trend of popularity of the health examinations, although the numbers are likely slightly inflated because the exams were required for women starting physical fitness

³⁸ Lois Weir, “My First five Months of Physical Education in Manila,” March 1929, 8, Microfilm Reel 65-Philippines- Staff Reports- Weir, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

³⁹ Warwick Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies*, particularly Chapters 1 and 2.

⁴⁰ Lois Weir, “My First five Months of Physical Education in Manila,” March 1929, 9, Microfilm Reel 65-Philippines- Staff Reports- Weir, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

education classes after 1933.⁴¹ For example, in 1936 the Manila YWCA gave 976 examinations “for all who wish to participate in sports or gymnastics,” and the next year the number increased 12% to 1, 203.⁴² It is difficult to tell from the existing secondary sources why these women would have been attracted to the Manila YWCA’s health examinations, although these examinations may have been some of the few of their type provided in Manila. Anderson states that in the 1930’s, “the Philippine Health Service concentrated on social welfare, tuberculosis control, mental hygiene, maternal and infant health, and the education of ‘the masses.’” While these “recognized socioeconomic causes of disease,” they largely continued to be focused around illness (rather than health); “[c]ivilized or hygienic behavior, control of bodily functions, [and] limits on social contact” were the determinants of “social citizenship.”⁴³ It is likelier that Filipinas would have had access to the types of examinations in the Manila YWCA if they went to public health nurses. Catherine Choy states that these women focused on “preventative work and ‘positive health’” as public health nurses in the United States did.⁴⁴ However, training programs for these nurses were still being developed in the 1930’s; the first women graduated from the School of Public Health Nursing at the University of the Philippines in 1938.⁴⁵ Therefore, the Manila YWCA’s inspection programs may have been some of the few, if not only, of their kind.

Third, at a moment when many of the social clubs in Manila were informally, if not formally segregated, USYWCA Secretaries utilized the Manila YWCA’s physical fitness programs as evidence that they were fostering group cooperation by being racially egalitarian. A

⁴¹ “Service Program for 1933 and 1934, Young Women’s Christian Association, 852 R. Hidalgo, Manila, Philippine Islands”; “Young Women’s Christian Association of Manila” n.d. (1930-1932), Philippines 02, Folder 5, Records of the World’s Young Women’s Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

⁴² “Facts about the YWCA of Manila” (no date, approximately 1937), Philippines 02, Folder 5, Records of the World’s Young Women’s Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

⁴³ Warwick Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies*, 227-8.

⁴⁴ Choy, *Empire of Care*, 51.

⁴⁵ Choy, *Empire of Care*, 52.

letter from Zelma Day to Elizabeth Boies Cotton states that Chinese girls and boys used the YWCA building. The YWCA was “very popular with the Chinese these days, as 70 young lads and lasses from St. Stephen’s Chinese School (under the Episcopal Mission)” which was “on the other side of the city... came to swim in our pool... twice a week.”⁴⁶ The fact that these Chinese children utilized the same facilities is significant because many clubs founded by U.S. expatriates excluded both Filipinos and Chinese people from membership, although there were exceptions, such as the Wack-Wack golf club.⁴⁷ In fact, the Young Men’s Christian Association maintained three separate buildings- the American-European, the City and the Chinese YMCA.

However, while the USYWCA Secretaries perceived themselves to be racially inclusive, YWCA programs tended to cross only some racial lines, while others held firm. For example, USYWCA Secretary Lois Weir reported her satisfaction at a program for nurses at St. Luke’s Hospital, particularly “seeing a little Siamese nurse afraid to hold a ball at first, or a Chinese girl ashamed to try to run, or a Filipino girl in the intermediate class shy of entering the games with upper class girls all romp and laugh and stand up for their rights.”⁴⁸ While Weir marked what she perceived as the positive effects that sports had on these women, it was no coincidence that all of the groups she listed were Asian. This points to the fact that while the buildings were not officially segregated, it is likely that programs tended to be racially divided along white and Asian lines; the cross-racial contact was not between members of the group, but between the white teacher and the Asian students.

⁴⁶ Zelma Day to Elizabeth Bois Cotton, December 30, 1936, 2-3, Microfilm Reel 65- Philippines- Staff Reports- Day, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁴⁷ For the Chinese in the Philippines, see: Chinben See, “Chinese Clanship in the Philippine Setting,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 12, no. 1 (March 1981): 224-247; Andrew R. Wilson, *Ambition and Identity: Chinese Merchant Elites in Colonial Manila, 1880-1916* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004). For the Club Scene in Manila, see Kramer, *The Blood of Government*, 175-6, and Gleek, Jr., *The Manila Americans (1901-1964)*, 63-73.

⁴⁸ Lois Weir, “My First Five Months in the Philippines,” March 1929, 4, Microfilm Reel 65- Philippines- Staff Reports- Weir, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

The one place where physical fitness programs seemed to have crossed racial lines was the Señora's Gym Class, which USYWCA Secretaries utilized as the lynchpin for their assertions of the progressive qualities of their work. In 1936, USYWCA Secretary Zelma Day specifically characterized this group as "a very cosmopolitan one."⁴⁹ A newsletter described the group and their activities and the positive effects of exercising together upon both individual bodies, and group solidarity. The class, composed of a group of forty "tired mothers," "dignified wives of important officials," and "timid" home women, "gym and swim and play ball and altogether have such a good time that we are sure there is not a gayer, noisier or friendlier place in Manila." The author continued by asserting that while the "exercise... undoubtedly makes one feel better, less worried and more cheerful... it is also as one member said, the 'companerismo'- the friendliness, which we hope is the 'Y-spirit' that they are all catching."⁵⁰ For the USYWCA Secretaries, here was the realization of the potential of Y-space, as these women worked together at a sport, they learned the "companerismo" of being with each other. However, this group differed from the USYWCA's targets for physical fitness programs in the United States. These were married, elite women, some of whom had children, and not young, single, factory women who were worn down by repetitive factory work.

That the USYWCA Secretaries perceived their greatest success of creating Y-space was with these elite women highlights the fact that USYWCA Secretaries' attempts to transplant the "positive health" program from the United States were heavily based on class assumptions. Unlike the programs in the United States, the Manila YWCA's physical fitness programs were not geared towards blue collar factory workers who were worn out by the literal machines of

⁴⁹ Zelma Day to Miss Margaret Brown Moore, January 15, 1936, 1-2, Microfilm Reel 65- Philippines- Staff Reports- Zelma Day, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁵⁰ "Question Mark" Newsletter, October 1935, 2, Philippines 02, Folder 5, Records of the World's Young Women's Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

industry. In fact, the Manila YWCA did not run any programs, recreation or otherwise, for “industrial” women prior to World War II. As a “Summary of Social Work” from 1937 stated, the Health Education Department had “plans for starting an inter-factory volley-ball league” which would be “a beginning for Industrial work, making a contact with workers in various industries and at the same time being wholesome recreation for the women and girls themselves, as volley-ball is extremely popular here in Manila.”⁵¹ Instead of running physical fitness programs for these women, who potentially would have been “trapped on the treadmill of civilization” by the machine of global capital like their counterparts in the United States, the Manila YWCA generally ran activities that were designed to connect women more closely to the machine. As a 1934 report for the Manila YWCA stated, the Educational Department was running an “experiment” in literacy classes among fifty-seven “illiterate industrial women.”⁵² By limiting their efforts to these kinds of activities, USWYCA Secretaries effectively excluded them from the YWCA’s attempts to create Y-space.⁵³

The Manila YWCA also essentially excluded poor women from their health education programs. While they did run health and wellness programs, and nutrition and baby wellness courses in the poor sections of Manila—at Tondo and Paco—these were much smaller and more limited than their programs for middle class and elite women.⁵⁴ As the programs at Tondo show,

⁵¹ Anne Guthrie, “Summary of Social Work of the Y.W.C.A. of Manila” September 17, 1937, 1, Philippines 02, Folder 3, Records of the World’s Young Women’s Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

⁵² Annual Report to the Foreign Division... for the year June 1933 to June 1934,” 7-7b, Microfilm Reel 65. Philippines- General, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁵³ Glenn Anthony May, “The Business of Education in the Colonial Philippines, 1909-1930,” in *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State*, ed. Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 151- 162. For industry in Manila, see: Melinda Tria Kerkvliet, *Manila Workers' Unions, 1900-1950* (Quezon City, Philippines: New Day Publishers, 1992).

⁵⁴ For general reviews of philanthropic organizations in Manila, see: Agapita Murillo, “Public Welfare Services in the Philippines, 1898-1941,” *The Social Science Review* 181, no. 2 (June 1944): 189-204; Jose Rene C. Gayo, “Shaping the Filipino Nation: The Role of Civil Society,” in *Mixed Blessing: The Impact of the American Colonial Experience on Politics and Society in the Philippines*, ed. Hazel M. McFerson (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2002), 145-158. For the US Settlement house movement, see: Rivka Shpak Lissak, *Pluralism & Progressives: Hull House and the New Immigrants, 1890-1919* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Karger, *The Sentinels of*

these programs were closer to settlement house work in the United States, rather than the typical Y-space. In these programs, USYWCA Secretaries connected health to other aspects of what they viewed as being integral to their efforts to teach citizenship, such as literacy. USYWCA Advisory Secretary Anne Guthrie stated in one 1935 report that workers at health clinics “found themselves continually handicapped by being able to teach only through demonstration and lectures” because the women were largely illiterate. The Manila YWCA therefore arranged for a law student, Miss Fadaco, to teach literacy classes. When the twenty-one women were ready for graduation, the YWCA decorated the patio and put on a ceremony: “[t]he usual program of speeches and congratulations, all very simple, all of course in the Tagalog dialect; music by the Welfareville band.”⁵⁵ Guthrie asserted that the literacy program had “proved that something could be done that many thought was hardly worth the trying.” However, Guthrie stated that the “task is too great for the Y.W.C.A. alone” and the Federation of Women’s Clubs had “decided upon a campaign against illiteracy for their special piece of social service work.” This work “fits well into their chief work of helping to make intelligent women citizens for the new Commonwealth.”⁵⁶ Of interest here was that the Manila YWCA was supporting citizenship programs similar to those run by settlement houses in the United States. Framed fairly specifically around literacy programs in the vernacular language, the Manila YWCA was attempting to foster Philippine citizenship, not Y-space. Although there was an anti-imperial dimension to these programs, they were hierarchical, un-cosmopolitan, and inherently domestic

Order; Lasch-Quinn, *Black Neighbors*; Luker, “Missions, Institutional Churches, and Settlement Houses.” The spread of these types of institutions abroad is just beginning to be explored by scholars. See Manako Ogawa, ““Hull-House” in Downtown Tokyo: The Transplantation of a Settlement House from the United States into Japan and the North American Missionary Women, 1919-1945,” *Journal of World History* 15, no. 3 (September 2004): 359-387.

⁵⁵ Anne Guthrie, “We Had Been in Darkness- and Light Came” September 1935, 1, Philippines 02, Folder 5, Records of the World’s Young Women’s Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

⁵⁶ Anne Guthrie, “We Had Been in Darkness- and Light Came” September 1935, 2, Philippines 02, Folder 5, Records of the World’s Young Women’s Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

efforts, in which women would learn to read in order to be better mother- and caretaker-citizens.⁵⁷

This class difference between the targeted populations reveals the assumptions that underlay the USYWCA Secretaries' efforts to create Y-space, particularly around civilization and citizenship. While one of the primary purposes of positive health in the United States had been to ameliorate the negative physical effects of factory work in working-class women, the USYWCA Secretaries virtually ignored this population in the Philippines. The implication of this exclusion from the community-building and social skills exercises in the Manila YWCA's physical education classes, for which literacy classes were substituted, was that these women were not eligible to be included in Y-space. They were not like the others who had shown up to the inauguration of the new facilities at the Columbia Club; it was the elite women who would be "enter[ing] into the new and broader responsibilities of the Commonwealth of the Philippine Islands," not the illiterate factory workers or poor women in Tondo.⁵⁸

In their efforts to create Y-space, USYWCA Secretaries failed to recognize that, like the programs in the United States, the Manila YWCA programs were not fully egalitarian, and that in the Philippines these inequalities had colonialist dimensions. First, when USYWCA Secretaries began their "positive health" programs in the Manila YWCA, they do not seem to

⁵⁷ For example, in the cooking class, Miss Abdon was "helping them" to utilize the food allowances that they were given by the Center to make "well-balanced food, for as little expenditure as possible." The author or the report said that it was "a joy" to "see the faces of the women as they watch 19 centavos worth of this and that turn into 50 tasty well browned croquettes." In the "Child Training for Mothers" class, the author related that "[t]he mothers are so interested that they linger after the class and follow the teacher down the street to ask what she would do when small Maria or Juan does so and so." The author concluded that "[p]erhaps there will be a few less delinquent children to be cared for in the future if this class can continue to be effective." Question Mark newsletter, March 6, [1936], 2, and Anne Guthrie, "What Shall we Eat and Wear in Tondo and Singalong?" September 1935, Philippines 02, Folder 5, Records of the World's Young Women's Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

⁵⁸ "Dedication of the New Building of the YWCA of Manila," January 12, 1935, 5, Philippines 01, Folder 2, Records of the World's Young Women's Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

have been aware that ideas of bodily control had long and brutal histories in the Philippines. As Warwick Anderson has asserted, these types of health programs had begun as disease eradication campaigns and efforts to quantify, pathologize and police Filipino bodies, spearheaded by military and colonial government officials. While, as William Howard Taft stated, initially these efforts were aimed at “mak[ing] the region ‘habitable for white people,’” by the 1910’s this had begun to shift and officials were “engaged in the work of developing the tropical races into a strength of body and freedom from disease.” Indeed, had Taft not specified “the tropical races,” his words could have easily been found in the *Hand Book for Positive Health* just over fifteen years later.⁵⁹ The trans-Pacific crossing of these ideas made logical sense; as Anderson states, colonial health officials were often re-posted to the public and private sectors in American cities.⁶⁰ However, there was also a more direct connection between the U.S. military and the YMCA and USYWCA during World War I, when the U.S. government tasked the YWCA to run programs for U.S. soldiers and nurses. Given the close ties between the USYWCA and the American military during the war, it is likely that these ideas had come via that route.

USYWCA Secretaries not only utilized the rhetorics of health reform that had originated in the Philippines and been circulated in a militarized context, but USYWCA Secretaries used the colonial educational system to transmit those ideas. At times, school officials seemed eager to aid the Manila YWCA’s efforts. For example, Mr. Gilmore, an official at the Philippine Normal School, arranged to have Weir give physical examinations to teaching students at the Normal School, and teach a course in physical education. He asserted that this was an ideal transmission point for her physical fitness training because teaching students stayed in Manila

⁵⁹ Warwick Anderson, “Pacific Crossings: Imperial Logics in United States’ Public Health Programs,” in *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State*, ed. Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 277- 287.

⁶⁰ Warwick Anderson, “Pacific Crossing.”

for two years and then went out into the provinces, where they were under Normal School supervision for another two years. The implication was that with Normal School official support, there were at least four years per teacher in which Weir could be assured that her advice would be followed. Not long after her meeting with Mr. Gilmore, Weir was “hoping to have some of my advanced nurses take routine examination[s] for posture etc. to incorporate in their health examination[s] in case some of them get provincial appointments” with the Philippine Health Service and the Bureau of Education, which was instituting plans to put “a school nurse in each province to examine all the children.”⁶¹ With these collaborations with the colonial educational leadership, the YWCA gained an external infrastructure which it could utilize to disseminate information. It was essentially overlaying “positive health” onto the colonial educational system.

The positive health examinations, and their spread through a colonial infrastructure, made the YWCA’s efforts a reverberation of the types of colonial health and population studies projects developed by the U.S. government thirty years earlier.⁶² The YWCA echoed this work in two interrelated processes. First, USYWCA Secretaries characterized bodies as being in less than perfect health. This was a less overtly negative version of the types of projects that Warwick Anderson describes, in which native bodies were always characterized as inferior and diseased. For example, USYWCA Secretary Lois Weir contended that YWCA intervention in the Philippines was required because x-rays in physical exams showed “a most urgent need of corrective gymnastics. Every day calisthenics [sic], even 40 minutes a day is not sufficient in itself to eliminate these defects, and might possibly exaggerate them. 47% of 143 have the same

⁶¹ Lois Weir, “My First five Months of Physical Education in Manila,” March 1929, 8, Microfilm Reel 65-Philippines- Staff Reports- Weir, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁶² Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History*; Warwick Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies*.

defect [which] though slight it is sufficiently alarming that it should exist.”⁶³ Health examinations given at a “Health Day” at summer camp were equally worrisome to Weir. She reported that she “[g]ave Good Posture Stars which only five out of forty-three won.”⁶⁴ This reveals a colonialist mentality, in that Filipina bodies needed the outside intervention of USYWCA Secretaries, including specific programs that were scientifically designed. It was therefore the USYWCA Secretaries who structured calibrated colonialism, because Secretaries determined how unacceptable Filipina bodies were, and the path they could take to become acceptable. They also held out the delayed promise that one day the Filipinas would be physically fit.

Second, USYWCA Secretaries intended that women would internalize both the standards of perfection in positive health, and ultimately the self-monitoring. The scale of standards the USYWCA utilized was important because ideal of perfection in positive health was both raced and classed. For example, the health charts that Weir used in the Philippines were likely based on those created from the ideal body charts modeled from Harvard and Radcliffe students (of the type that were exhibited at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair).⁶⁵ This meant in places like the Philippines, these standards became particularly imperial because “normal” was not only class- and race-based, but national. Because the goal of positive health was to encourage women to have the health examinations and be prescribed corrective activities, and then have them self-monitor and keep track of their own progress, in the Philippines it was in essence the kind of

⁶³ Lois Weir, “My First five Months of Physical Education in Manila,” March 1929, 8-9, Microfilm Reel 65- Philippines- Staff Reports- Weir, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. Unfortunately, the tabulated report of findings that Weir included with the letter is not in the microfilm, so I am unable to tell what she is specifically referencing.

⁶⁴ Lois Weir, “Camp Wonderland,” April 3 (no year, probably 1929 or 1930), Microfilm Reel 65- Philippines- Staff Reports- Weir YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁶⁵ Heather Munro Prescott, “Using the Student Body: College and University Students as Research Subjects in the United States during the Twentieth Century,” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 57, no. 1 (January 2002): 3-38; Robert W. Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

self-colonization that Vincente Rafael describes as benevolent assimilation.⁶⁶ Rafael asserts that in the transitional to self-rule, “the ‘self’ that rules itself can only emerge by way of an intimate relationship with a colonial master who sets the standards and practices of discipline to mold the conduct of the colonial subject. The culmination of colonial rule, self-government, can thus be achieved only when the subject has learned to colonize itself.”⁶⁷ Therefore, by making the success of the positive health contingent upon women themselves, the YWCA was attempting to get women to internalize the raced and classed standards of perfection, and to consistently mark their own failure to live up to those standards.

In this, the USYWCA Secretaries attempted to keep the role of experts to themselves, at least within the Manila YWCA. Although USYWCA Secretaries fostered connections with educational and medical doctors, USYWCA Secretaries utilized their status as Americans and their American training to assert that only an American was best equipped to be physical education secretary. For example, even as late as 1934, the USYWCA Secretaries were just beginning to think of training a Philippine YWCA Secretary to become Health Education Secretary.⁶⁸ The extent to which they were willing to promote their own perceived national superiority over the skills of Filipinas is demonstrated by Mrs. Balbina E. Icasiano. Icasiano had an extensive list of credentials. She had been a member of the Philippine Olympic volleyball team in the far Eastern Games in 1930, as well as President of both the Health Education club and the Women’s Club at the University of the Philippines. At the Manila YWCA, she organized

⁶⁶ Bureau Social Education, Young Women's Christian Association of the U.S.A, “Chapter II. The Individual and the Community,” 4.

⁶⁷ Vicente L. Rafael, “White Love: Surveillance and Nationalist Resistance in the U.S. Colonization of the Philippines,” in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, ed. Donald E. Pease and Amy Kaplan (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 185-218, 186.

⁶⁸ Mary Graham Babcock stated that was needed was to train “someone to become a leader of leaders. Members of the department with strong physique and striking aptitude are given opportunities to direct certain work and to do special study.” Mary Graham Babcock, “Taking Stock in the Manila YWCA,” February 1934, quoted in the Foreign Division, National Board USYWCA, “Foreign Mail” series, Philippines 02, Folder 5, Records of the World’s Young Women’s Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

and coached the volleyball team, and was a member of the YWCA's Health Education Committee, as well as being the Assistant Physical Director. Her native language was Tagalog, and she also spoke Visayan, Spanish, and English fluently, and could understand French. She had a Bachelor of Science in Education from the University of the Philippines, and had studied "Gymnastics and dancing" at the Conservatory of Music and "Coaching in basketball and tennis" at the University of the Philippines.⁶⁹ However, even with these high levels of education and experience, the USYWCA Secretaries deemed it necessary to send Icasiano to the United States to have training and experience in the American YWCA. In the eyes of the USYWCA Secretaries, these experiences would give Icasiano "modern" skills.⁷⁰ In the end, the USYWCA Secretaries' gatekeeping gave way to more pragmatic concerns and perhaps a recognition of Icasiano's skills; while Mrs. Icasiano was unable to make the trip to the United States due to insufficient financial resources, the 1938-1939 Annual Report lists her as Director of Health and Recreation.⁷¹

Even as they were racial gatekeepers when it came to their own status as experts, USYWCA Secretaries often seemed unaware of both their own racial privilege, particularly when dealing with the elite Filipinas with whom they aspired to create Y-space. For example, in January 1936, USYWCA Secretary Zelma Day wrote to Margaret Brown Moore, at the USYWCA headquarters in New York about an incident that had occurred on the volleyball court in the Manila YWCA. The Señora's Gym Class, which had previously been highlighted in the

⁶⁹ Icasiano (Balbina E. Icasiano) Application to the YWCA USA "Scholarship Training" Microfilm Reel 65- Philippines- Staff Reports- Day, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁷⁰ For example, part of the reason Lois Weir had found the Philippine Athletic Federation, "a very *SPLENDID* organization" was because it was headed by Dr. Ylanan, a man she characterized as "of most modern educational ideas- a graduate of the Y.M.C.A. Physical education School in Springfield." Lois Weir, "My First five Months of Physical Education in Manila," March 1929, 2, Microfilm Reel 65- Philippines- Staff Reports- Weir, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁷¹ "Annual Report, 1938-1939," 5, Microfilm Reel 65- Philippines- Staff Reports- General, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

Manila YWCA newsletter as a site of “companerismo” had experienced a sudden meltdown.⁷² Day stated that “[t]hree American women” had joined this group, which although it had been “a very cosmopolitan one... at present is made up of Filipina, Spanish and Mestiza women.” In the course of a game “[o]ne of the Americans showed very poor spirit when a misunderstanding over volley ball rules occurred. Our Filipina coach [who was likely Icasiano] courteously explained the point in question but the American’s attitude was one of great disdain.” At that point “[t]he Filipinas, quick to resent condescension, indignantly declared they would not play again with people who were not ‘ladies.’ Some diplomatic maneuvering was necessary to persuade several of the prominent members to return to class and to be generous enough in their point of view to overlook the incident.” These efforts were evidently successful, as “[t]he next day the Filipina woman who felt the greatest personal insult was elected captain of one team and reluctantly accepted. Shortly after, she was busy teaching one of the Americans a new point in volley ball technique and showing remarkable patience and graciousness of spirit.” Day asserted that this was “a real victory for her too!”⁷³ For Day, the incident could have been the fulfillment of the promise of calibrated colonialism; it turned the notion that values of fair play and meritocracy would be transmitted by the “Americans” to colonial peoples on its head. It was the Filipinas who showed better sportsmanship, and who stood up for the rights of the group, against the American women who attempted to utilize their perceived status of racial privilege to their own advantage. This was the source of the “real victory” for the Filipina woman, at least for Day.

The incident in the Señora’s Gym Class was reflective of the broader social contests that were taking place outside of the Manila YWCA. The timing of the incident was particularly

⁷² “Question Mark” Newsletter, October 1935, 2, Philippines 02, Folder 5, Records of the World’s Young Women’s Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

⁷³ Zelma Day to Miss Margaret Brown Moore, January 15, 1936, 1-2, Microfilm Reel 65- Philippines- Staff Reports- Zelma Day, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

important, because it likely occurred very shortly after the Philippines became a Commonwealth in November 1935. In the context of a Philippine state that had just emerged from almost forty years of U.S. colonialism, race and nationality likely informed the responses of both the American women in the class and Filipinas. Looking at newspapers such as the *Philippines Herald*, which traced the arrival of various officials, the establishment of the Commonwealth, and the departure of U.S. colonial officials throughout November of that year, one can imagine that the Americans may have looked upon the events with anxiety and uncertainty. First, the *Herald* reported the arrival of the U.S. Commission and other various officials throughout the weeks leading up to the inauguration. On November 8th, much of the front page was taken up by the photographs and speeches of the Congressional party which had arrived that morning.⁷⁴ By November 11th, the “U.S. Asiatic fleet” had arrived, followed the next day by the Japanese Air Mission.⁷⁵ The articles, editorials, and political cartoons in the *Herald* reveal a mixture of concern that the American members of the Manila YWCA likely shared. These materials discussed the prospect of violence during the transfer, the possibility of instability of finance and trade, the threat of military action from abroad, and defensiveness over American conduct. For example, on November 9th, editorial headlines asserted “They are With U.S.” (which expressed concern about the economy) and “American Rule Defended.”⁷⁶ And then it came time for the inauguration and transfer of power. On November 15th, the bold headline on the front of the newspaper read “COMMONWEALTH BEGINS.” The November 14th issue had included a special Inauguration supplement, outlining the schedule of events in great detail. Many of the advertisements contained “congratulations” from corporations, and the occasional more nationalist message, such as the full page ad by Esco Shoe Emporium. Headlining with

⁷⁴ *The Philippines Herald*, November 8, 1935, 1.

⁷⁵ *The Philippines Herald*, November 11, 1935, 16, and *The Philippines Herald*, November 12, 1935, 1.

⁷⁶ *The Philippines Herald*, November 9, 1935, 3.

“Footwear for Future Philippine standing Army Assured” the entire bottom portion of the page had a large “ESCO,” underneath which read “Made by Filipinos for Filipinos!”⁷⁷ On the 18th, the front page of *The Herald* read “Cabinet Men, Justices Appointed,” and an adjacent article described the replacement of the Philippine Supreme Court and the Cabinet under the headline “Americans Out; Quezon Regrets Fact.”⁷⁸ After the establishment of the Commonwealth, *The Herald* then reported the departures of the various U.S. officials in detail. On November 20th, it was the Vice President taking his leave of President Quezon, and the imminent departure of the former Vice-Governor Hayden and his family.⁷⁹ The front page of the November 21st issue ran pictures of Frank Murphy, former American High Commissioner, flying to Baguio, where he was establishing residence.⁸⁰ On page three of that same day were pictures of the Congressional party setting sail for the U.S., and pictures of John Garner, the U.S. Vice President, with President Quezon, under the headline, “Farewell, John.”⁸¹ Following this trajectory through the editions of *The Herald* gives a sense of the radical political, economic, and social changes that were occurring almost on a daily basis. While many in the Philippines found reason to rejoice in these developments, one can also imagine that for the U.S. women it may have also seemed like the world they had known was slowly coming apart.

In addition to a general sense of anxiety, USYWCA Secretaries themselves voiced concerns about the future. For example, Anne Guthrie wrote of the events covered in *The Herald* in a circular letter she sent out to friends at the New Year. After narrating the inauguration events and the arrival of the China Clipper, which cut travel from San Francisco to Manila to just under

⁷⁷ *The Philippines Herald*, November 14 and 15, 1935. Esco advertisement November 15, 1935, 5.

⁷⁸ *The Philippines Herald*, November 18, 1935, 1.

⁷⁹ “So Long, Mr. President,” *The Philippines Herald*, November 20, 1935, 1. “Haydens Leave Philippines Soon,” *The Philippines Herald*, November 20, 1935, 15.

⁸⁰ “Murphy Flies to Baguio Residence” *The Philippines Herald*, November 21, 1935, 1.

⁸¹ “Congressional Party Sails for Home” and “Farewell John” *The Philippines Herald*, November 21, 1935, 3.

sixty hours, Guthrie turned to her assessment of these events for the future of the Philippines, particularly in terms of the potential for war, which was already on the rise with Japan's invasion of Manchuria and farther afield with the Abyssinian Crisis. With an eye towards these events, President Quezon had asked for a "large appropriation" for defense which "seems an unfortunate beginning...[t]o some of the more thoughtful."⁸² At the same time, Guthrie acknowledged that it would be "natural... for Japan to look on the Philippines with a covetous eye" and she cited an article that was "being much discussed... that if the United States turns a deaf ear to the future of the Philippines," then the Commonwealth would turn to others, such as Great Britain, for "some kind of relationship." Guthrie also raised the possibility, that given the choice between "Japanese domination" and "possibly a continuance of the Commonwealth" the Philippines would choose the latter. She had her doubts about this from the U.S. side, however, stating "[n]o one behind the scenes thinks it was only a generous gesture which made us give them the Independence that had so long been wanted. It was undoubtedly considered more advantageous to us to let them go than to hold on." Citing trade, she said that it was essentially a situation where the "sugar interest, the A.F. of L. and the farm and dairy people" did not want the competition, while some manufacturers wanted the Philippine markets.⁸³ Guthrie concluded her political discussion with the statement that the "Commonwealth is only a month old. What the coming months and years will bring forth no one knows. But there is no doubt but that this is an interesting part of the world to be in and to watch, in the days ahead."⁸⁴ Guthrie would not have long to watch the events unfold, as five years later Japan would invade the Philippines.

⁸² Anne Guthrie to "Dear Friends Everywhere" December 12, 1935, 3, Philippines 02, Folder 5, Records of the World's Young Women's Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

⁸³ Anne Guthrie to "Dear Friends Everywhere" December 12, 1935, 4-5, Philippines 02, Folder 5, Records of the World's Young Women's Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

⁸⁴ Anne Guthrie to "Dear Friends Everywhere" December 12, 1935, 5, Philippines 02, Folder 5, Records of the World's Young Women's Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

It is possible that some of the American members of the Señora's Gym Class looked at the transitions that were occurring in the government and worried about their immediate social position, and some of them may have echoed felt Guthrie's sense of uncertainty about the future. Some of the Americans likely came from the ranks of the U.S. Colonial administration alluded to in pages of *the Herald*, or were with the commercial interests Guthrie spoke of, both of which were facing an uncertain future. These women may have looked at the establishment of the Commonwealth, and the surge of Filipino nationalism that accompanied it, and felt their own position in the racial hierarchy threatened. Given that Zelma Day related the events in the Señora's Gym Class as an anomaly, and given that they occurred at the time of the inauguration or shortly thereafter, the American women's attempts to assert their perceived racial place as above the Filipinas of any class were likely reflective of this uncertainty. In the face of a literal decline in their political, social, and commercial influence, which were not only publicly chronicled but also celebrated, these American women may have looked for more other ways to assert their perceived status.

However, when the Americans in the class tried to throw their racial and national weight around, they failed to realize that this was unlikely to work. Given that the group was composed of "Señoras," a term that has age, class, and marital connotations, it is likely that many of the women were elites who had grown up under the U.S. colonial government. These women were familiar with the structures and hierarchies of colonialism, and were likely very cognizant of its reliance upon their participation. And at a moment (and perhaps especially at such a moment) when the elite in Manila were taking formal control of the government, they were unlikely to stand passively by and let the Americans act with impunity in a social context. And as their

voting with their feet demonstrated, they did not hesitate to use their participation as a bargaining tool to resist hierarchies that they felt insulted them.

What the incident also reveals, however, is that these women may have not felt that the YWCA was as neutral as the USYWCA Secretaries would have liked to believe. Given that Day had said that the Americans had recently joined, and that the group was others comprised of “Filipina, Spanish and Mestiza” women, that these American women decided to be aggressive indicates they may have thought that the USYWCA Secretaries would back them up. And given the Filipina reaction was to walk out of the class, they may not have felt that their concerns would have been addressed by other avenues, such as speaking to the General Secretary. In other words, the incident seems to reveal that both the American women and the Filipinas thought the YWCA would back the Americans.

While the USYWCA Secretaries may have seen themselves as neutral in areas like the Señora’s Gym Class (even if the participants were more suspicious of such claims), in spaces outside of the Manila YWCA building they were overt in their efforts to build communities based around specific nationalities. This can be seen in the case of the YWCA’s summer camps. In these, girls did not learn to be compatriots with girls from other nations in co-operative and transnational settings that lived up to Y-space ideals. Rather, the YWCA camps in the Philippines seem to have been something of an exercise in nationalism, primarily because the YWCA ran two different camps in 1930’s: a camp for Philippine women, and Yosemite Camp, for white American girls.⁸⁵ In the Manila YWCA’s reports to the USYWCA about camp activities, the Secretaries were consistently careful to clarify that the Yosemite Camp was “not a

⁸⁵ In 1929 there was a Girl Reserve camp “Camp Sherwood” at Caridad, Cavite that had 22 girls, but this seems to have dropped by the wayside, or was absorbed into the Yosemite camp. “Annual Report of Foreign Centers to Foreign Division of the National Board for the year 1929,” 2, Microfilm Reel 65- Philippines- General, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

YWCA camp.” Instead, it was “administered by a committee of American mothers for American girls.” The Manila YWCA merely “furnished a camp director and assisted in securing camp counselors.”⁸⁶

Well aware of Yosemite Camp’s exclusionary nature, YWCA Secretaries claimed to be constantly on the look-out for a suitable YWCA camp for Filipinas. According to the “Question Mark” newsletter, throughout the 1930’s, the Manila YWCA had been looking for land, “to be located near enough Manila, to be reached in a short time, yet far enough away for one to feel that the city was left behind.” Their goal was that “[i]t would be a place where a tired girl could take a day or two away from her job to find rest at a minimum cost, thus helping to prevent a breakdown in health which might mean not only loss of job but doctor’s bills, sanitarium fees and innumerable expenses as well.” In 1936, Mrs. Kalaw, wife of the Philippine historian and nationalist Teodoro Kalaw, gave the YWCA a hectare on her “hacienda near Novaliches.” The YWCA hoped to build nipa houses to be “scattered here and there among the trees” and a “nipa roofed” recreation and dining hall, as well as a swimming pool.⁸⁷ Two years later, on March 28, 1938, the camp for Business and Professional women was dedicated. Emphasizing the theme of friendship, Mrs. Flora Ylagan, the President of the Manila YWCA dedicated the camp to “the promotion of health, recreation, and fellowship.”⁸⁸ As we will see, however, the USYWCA Secretaries’ distinctions between the camp that was specifically a YWCA endeavor, and the

⁸⁶ Annual Report to the Foreign Division... for the year June 1937 to June 1938,” Microfilm Reel 65, Philippines- General, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. 6. The same statement is in the report for 1936 to 1937 (p. 6) and in 1935 to 1936, albeit with a slight change of wording- the YWCA “furnished camp director and recreation leader.” (6) The 1934-1935 report simply stated “Yosemite Camp is not a Y.W.C.A. Camp. Association furnishes leadership” (6) The 1933- 1934 report stated “The Yosemite Camp is not a Y.W.C.A. camp. It is managed by an Association of American mothers with Y.W.C.A. Board & Staff furnishing the leadership.” (6) The 1932-33 report merely noted that “Miss Graham was loaned as program director to Yosemite Camp for American girls.” (6)

⁸⁷ “Question Mark” newsletter, September 18, 1936, 1, Philippines 02, Folder 5, Records of the World’s Young Women’s Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

⁸⁸ “Camp Dedication” Philippines 02, Folder 5, Records of the World’s Young Women’s Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

camp that they ran for the American girls at Yosemite tended to be empty; the YWCA ran both of the camps. And while the YWCA may not have owned the land that Yosemite sat upon, it technically did at Mrs. Kalaw's estate. In sum, the YWCA was complicit in the very divergent goals of both.

The locations and lengths of time of each of the camps reveals most starkly their very different communities and purposes, and the degree to which USYWCA Secretaries were willing to sacrifice idealized Y-space in order to bolster racial and national differences. The YWCA camps generally lasted one to two weeks, and were attended by about fifty women per year.⁸⁹ Prior to Mrs. Kalaw's offer of land, they were located on the land of a sugar estate—Calamba Sugar Estate, controlled by Canlubang Sugar Central.⁹⁰ In the Philippines, sugar production was divided into several levels, from tenant farming to large conglomerates that were owned by families or corporations, and cooperative sugar mills, called *centrals*. There were racial politics in this split: Americans generally ran the Centrals, while Filipino, Spanish, and Chinese families owned the land.⁹¹ Calamba was a rare exception to this; it had been purchased in 1912 by an

⁸⁹ According to the Annual reports, in 1930 the camp was one week, located at Calamba Sugar Estate, and had 45 girls (1930 report, p.2). In 1931, the camp was two weeks at was located at Canlubang, although the number of participants was not listed (1931-1932 report, p. 3). In 1932, this had changed to "Camp Adventure" and was back at the Calamba Sugar Estate for a two week session involving 18 women. (1932-1933 report, p. 6). In 1933, "Camp Olympus" took place at Canlubang, and was ten days long, involving 33 women. (1933-1934, p. 6). The 1934 report had a "Holiday Camp" again at Canlubang, for a duration of ten days, and involved 46 for the camp season and 4 for the weekend. (1934-1935, p. 6). The next year the attendance had expanded significantly, the "Vacation Camp" at Canlubang was ten days, and involved 78 women. (1935-1936, p. 6). In 1936, the YWCA camp at Canlubang lasted two weeks, and was back down to 49 women. (1936-1937, p. 6.) In 1937, it was back in Canlubang again, and under the same name. At two weeks again, the camp had 65 attendees. (1937-1938, p.6) Microfilm Reel 65- Philippines-General, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁹⁰ The sugar trade was one of the major issues in the independence movement because of the trade and tariff relationships between the Philippines and the United States. See: Theodore Friend, "The Philippine Sugar Industry and the Politics of Independence, 1929-1935," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 22, no. 2 (February 1963): 179-192; Gail M. Hollander, *Raising Cane in the 'Glades: The Global Sugar Trade and the Transformation of Florida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008). For more on the internal political dynamics, see: John T. Sidel, "Philippine Politics in Town, District, and Province: Bossism in Cavite and Cebu," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 56, no. 4 (November 1997): 947-966.

⁹¹ Bill Albert and Adrián Graves, *The World Sugar Economy in War and Depression, 1914-40* (New York: Routledge, 1988) 178-179. See also: Friend, "The Philippine Sugar Industry and the Politics of Independence, 1929-1935."

American consortium, from land friars in Calamba and Laguna.⁹² Located in the countryside, Calamba was far from the major destinations for American tourists. Novaliches, where Mrs. Kalaw's land was, was more centrally located just outside of Manila (today it composes the northern part of Quezon City).

In contrast to these locations, Yosemite Camp took place in Baguio, and lasted almost twice as long as the YWCA camps: from two to four weeks.⁹³ Baguio was an American "hill" station where, as Warwick Anderson states, "senior colonial administrators might renew their strength and vigor through a combination of rest and exercise and so harmonize their jangling nerves." It "came to represent above all a deliverance from colonial responsibility."⁹⁴ For the USYWCA Secretaries, Baguio generally, and the Yosemite camp specifically, became a place not to escape colonial responsibility and rest the body, but a location to learn how to take up responsibility through physical discipline. For example, a 1937 "Question Mark" newsletter related that the major activity at the Yosemite Camp was a production of a *Midsummer Night's Dream*. The author joked that "[i]f I hadn't seen it myself no one could have made me believe that Mrs. Eloise Hirt could turn husky campers into fairies and young girls into experienced actors in three weeks of time!"⁹⁵ These "husky campers" and "young girls" were not the physically worn out and mentally damaged men in Anderson's argument, but physically and psychically healthy women who were potentially culturally damaged. Their bodies would be

⁹² John A. Larkin, *Sugar and the Origins of Modern Philippine Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 159.

⁹³ In 1930, this was two weeks. (1930 report, p.2). There are no lengths of time in the 1931 report. In 1932, the camp was four weeks (1932-1933 report, p. 6). In 1933, it was two weeks and had 45 attendees. (1933-1934, p. 6). The 1934 report stated that the camps was three weeks long, and had 60 campers. (1934-1935, p. 6). The next year, this had increased to 64 attendees. (1935-1936, p. 6). In 1936, the camp had lengthened to four weeks, and had 40 campers. (1936-1937, p. 6.) In 1937, it was four weeks, and had 57 campers. (1937-1938, p.6) Microfilm Reel 65-Philippines- General, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁹⁴ Warwick Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies*, 145-6.

⁹⁵ "Question Mark" newsletter, date-stamped August 1937, 2, Philippines 02, Folder 5, Records of the World's Young Women's Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

remade not through rest and exercise, but through the literal enactment of the European cultural canon.

As revealing as the separate locations of the camps were, the camps as nationalist projects is most evident in a 1935 letter to Margaret Brown Moore from Anne Guthrie. Guthrie described the Yosemite Camp as “the only place in the Islands for [American and European] families to send their girls.” The camp was valuable for missionary and commercial families “in remote parts of the islands where they do not have any other American children of their own age to play with.” Guthrie asserted that “[o]ne girl of 14 fairly shouted with joy, to have a group she could be a part of. Another youngster of 10 was almost the entire time learning how to get along with other children of her own kind.”⁹⁶ Rather than a cosmopolitan camp population, which fostered opportunities for girls from various nations to meet and get to know each other, Yosemite camp was a way for American and European girls to bond with other white Americans and Europeans—“their own kind.” Rather than the promotion of a Y-space idea, then, in which girls learned to be cultural cosmopolitans, USYWCA Secretaries seem to have done the opposite. They seem to have perceived that the American and European girl’s cultural identity was so fragile that it had to be bolstered in order to survive, at the cost of Y-space.

Among the cultural norms that needed support was self-sufficiency and independence. Guthrie claimed that these skills were threatened not by the proximity of parents, as was the case in the United States, but indigenous domestic workers. In this flipping of the real hierarchies, so that U.S. independence was threatened by Filipinas, Guthrie asserted that the camp was “a chance for the youngsters to learn something of independence, for most of them have ahmas to look after them until they are no longer children, and they become dependent upon them to do

⁹⁶ Anne Guthrie to Margaret Moore, May 19, 1935, 1, Microfilm Reel 65- Philippines- Staff Reports- Guthrie, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

many things for them that American children at home do for themselves.” Guthrie also argued that the self-sufficiency fostered at camp was a counter to the deleterious effects of colonial class and racial trends. She stated that it was “an interesting opportunity for the American girls to learn to do things for themselves, in a land where they have really too much done for them by the many ‘house boys’ who are so easily available at low cost.”⁹⁷ In order to learn their national identity as independent and productive Americans, girls had to develop individuality and self-sufficiency away from both their households and their colonial setting. Coming at the moment of the Commonwealth, this replication of a U.S. camp took on a new political urgency. Only after they had acquired these skills at Yosemite would the girls not be dependent, as colonial peoples were still thought to be.

In contrast to the need for American girls to learn independence, Guthrie explained that Filipinas needed camp to learn domestic skills. In these, they would learn to cooperate with each other as a group, rather than the independence Guthrie asserted American girls needed to learn. Guthrie explained that “it is in some ways easier to blend them into a unit than the American girls, because Filipinos have the Spanish custom of doing things as a family more than Americans do. So the older look after the younger and think nothing of it. While in the American camp the girls rather disliked having to play ‘ahma’ to the younger ones!”⁹⁸ This reinforcement of women’s domestic roles seems to be a striking counter to the independence Guthrie had asserted was necessary for the American girls. It also reveals Guthrie’s own sense of the inherent domesticity of Philippine women; for her, American girls disliked taking care of younger girls

⁹⁷ Anne Guthrie to Margaret Moore, May 19, 1935, 1, Microfilm Reel 65- Philippines- Staff Reports- Guthrie, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. As Ann Laura Stoler illustrates, Europeans often expressed these types of concerns about the influence of indigenous domestic workers. See: Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

⁹⁸ Anne Guthrie to Margaret Moore, May 19, 1935, 2, Microfilm Reel 65- Philippines- Staff Reports- Guthrie, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

because they were independent, while the Filipinas fell more naturally into the role because they had stronger familial traditions. In addition, in Guthrie's argument, the American girls were once again being damaged by their colonial setting because their dislike of taking care of younger group members was based on their perception of it as a servant role, rather than the more caretaking group role the Guthrie seems to have imagined.

At the same time that USYWCA Secretaries eschewed camps as a locus of international fellowship and cosmopolitanism within the Philippines, they were using Filipinas as a way to foster these qualities at camps within the United States. The Question Mark asserted that at the USYWCA's camp Asilomar, California, Filomena Alonso had "talked about the Philippine Islands and taught the girls Filipino songs and dances. Her mestiza costume never failed to fascinate them. Every time she wore it, she caused much comment and investigation."⁹⁹ With this, Alonso specifically, and the Philippines more generally, were reduced to innocuous costume and cultural performance, at the very moment that the Philippines was becoming a Commonwealth and as racism against Filipinos was heating up in the U.S., particularly in places like California.¹⁰⁰ The "Question Mark" newsletter further reported that Alonso had been very popular at the Los Angeles YWCA, where she particularly impressed a girl who "became so much interested in what Miss Alonso told them about the Philippine Island that she now wants to find a Filipino girl with whom she may correspond and so widen her circle of friendship."¹⁰¹ Within the U.S. context, it seems that USYWCA Secretaries were willing to foster the types of international bonds that the segregated camps in the Philippines were designed to prevent. It

⁹⁹ "Question Mark" newsletter, October 1935, 2, Philippines 02, Folder 5, Records of the World's Young Women's Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

¹⁰⁰ See: Kramer, *The Blood of Government*.

¹⁰¹ "Question Mark" newsletter, October 1935, 2, Philippines 02, Folder 5, Records of the World's Young Women's Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

seems that in a U.S. context, the USYWCA Secretaries perceived Alonzo as something of an exotic anomaly, who had no realistic chance of upsetting hierarchies within the United States.

The characterization of camps and the women who attended them was also not limited to the Philippines. Filomena Alonso seems to have found the U.S. camp restrictive and regimented, an opinion that the “Question Mark” characterized in national terms. While Alonso was enjoying her experience at camp in the United States, the “Question Mark” stated that she disliked “ ‘keeping schedule’ ... she says she feels as tho [sic] she were in a cage with no freedom.” Rather than taking these concerns seriously, the “Question Mark” ridiculed them. “Those of you who have sampled American ways can perhaps appreciate her feelings! The poor ‘QUESTION MARK’ knows how he would feel if he had to appear on schedule, he is such a temperamental fellow he can only get into action when the spirit, not the clock, moves him!”¹⁰² In this, “keeping schedule” was the “American” way, and by contrast Alonso, and by implication Filipinos more generally, were more “temperamental” and undisciplined, only going “into action when the spirit” moved them, rather than when the clock said they should act. As Alonso’s comment reveals, Filipinas who might have been attracted by the promise of independence in Y-space could have been disappointed by the lack of freedom and being forced to conform to a system that seemed to value them solely as living folk culture.

While the USYWCA Secretaries may have intended to build, and thought that they were building, Y-space, many aspects of their program were both founded upon and reinforced already existing structures of colonialism in the Philippines. In the context of the beginning of the Commonwealth, when social and racial hierarchies were in flux, the Manila YWCA’s

¹⁰² “Question Mark” newsletter, October 1935, 2, Philippines 02, Folder 5, Records of the World’s Young Women’s Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

recreation programs show that the contests between what the USYWCA Secretaries *envisioned* and what they *did* were being worked out in very real ways. While the USYWCA Secretaries may have envisioned the Manila YWCA's programs as feminist, racially inclusive, and egalitarian, and cosmopolitan, the reality was that they were founded on technologies of surveillance, often exclusive, and advanced racial exclusion and nationalism rather than cosmopolitanism.

However, to say that this was merely a failure of understanding with the USYWCA Secretaries and leave it at that would be to miss the impact of these struggles, both on the ways that USYWCA Secretaries attempted to construct Y-space, and the ways that the constructions served the needs of the YWCA Secretaries and others. This process reveals that while the USYWCA Secretaries promoted and supported some of the Philippine aspects of the Manila YWCA, they were also simultaneously fostering the internalization of colonial mechanisms and structures.

At the end of November 1935, shortly after the Commonwealth was inaugurated, the YWCA participated in a Girl's Week celebration put on by the Women's Clubs, where the Girl Reserves section won the "most artistic group" for their poster in the opening parade. The poster consisted of "a Blue Triangle framing the globe of the world against which was silhouetted a typical Filipino girl in a white middie and blue tie. Underneath was the inscription- 'YOUTH- THE WORLD'S FUTURE.'" The Manila YWCA's sleight of hand was revealed by "Question Mark" newsletter. It revealed that a poster had been sent from the USYWCA headquarters in New York, which USYWCA Secretaries described as "charming" and wanted to put it in their section of the opening parade. However, "the girl was a typical Anglo Saxon, golden haired and blue eyed, and wore a nice warm knitted sweater with a yellow tie. She did not belong in the

Philippines.” Mrs. Josefa Martinez, the Manila YWCA General Secretary, took the poster to the University of the Philippines Art Department and “twenty-four hours later the poster returned to us, golden hair turned to black, blue eyes to brown, fair skin to olive.” This, declared the author, was “the achievement of modern science;” although she hoped “the original artist will not mind our plagiarism” because “she helped win the prize!”¹⁰³ The Question Mark newsletter portrayed this as a matter of joke and play. The YWCA had won the prize through a delightful slight of hand, in which an American girl was transformed into a Philippine girl.

However, this incident also reveals profound power dynamics at work, and the same types were also evident in the recreation and physical fitness programs. First, the author of the “Question Mark” newsletter seemed to view the transformation from Anglo-Saxon to Philippine as a relatively simple matter of re-coloring. This deliberately simplistic view was echoed throughout the Manila YWCA’s recreation programs, as USYWCA Secretaries such as Lois Weir attempted to apply parts of the positive health program to the bodies of Filipinas. At the same time, the USYWCA Secretaries’ persistence in seeing these programs only as liberatory and not as colonial, even in the face of programs such as the camps, suited their purposes because it obscured the racial and colonial origins of these programs. In other words, in their minds, the things that they were doing, such as merely changing the skin and hair color of the girl in the poster, were innocuous.

In the process of erasing U.S. colonial power, what USYWCA Secretaries did was to serve cultural and social needs of the colonial state, just as the Tydings-McDuffie Act and the transfer to the Commonwealth served in many ways to obscure the ongoing control of the U.S. government. By taking these programs, which purported to be value-free and universal, but

¹⁰³ “Question Mark” newsletter, November 30, 1935, 2, Philippines 02, Folder 5, Records of the World’s Young Women’s Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

which were deeply colonial, and giving them a “local” look—literally in the case of the poster—the USYWCA Secretaries helped to perpetuate colonial inequalities.

CHAPTER 5: NIGERIA — CELESTINE SMITH'S LETTERS FROM AFRICA

On February 14, 1935, Celestine Smith, an African-American USYWCA Secretary, penned a letter to Miss Sarah Lyon and Mrs. Elizabeth Cotton, her supervisors in the USYWCA. In it, she enclosed two monthly reports of the YWCA in Lagos, Nigeria, and related some of the issues facing Nigerian women and girls including unemployment, dependence upon men, lack of basic infrastructure such as transportation and water, and the need for education in areas such as nutrition. Included in this letter was Smith's assessment of both her and the YWCA's role in helping Nigerian society. What Smith proposed to do in Africa was to create Y-space, much like the USYWCA Secretaries had attempted to do in other areas of the world. Her identification of the main areas of problems in Nigeria: education, unemployment, religion, health, and the "clash of the old and new in African life" sounded very much like the issues USYWCA Secretaries identified elsewhere.¹

Smith was confident in her assessment because her experience running the Lagos Association alone had demonstrated her potential for bringing change in Africa.² It revealed that God had "given to me some little power to make order out of what seemed to me and others to be chaos, disorder & smoldering ill-will." She was optimistic about the potential power of Africans for political and social change. She stated that "[t]he most encouraging thing about the social, economic, and political aspects of life here is that one is not forced to live on the periphery of them, unlike the situation for Negroes at home- if these Africans choose to cry out their voices

¹ Celestine Smith "General Report on Prospects for Y.W.C.A. Work on the West coast of Africa," 3, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

² The two British Secretaries who had been in Nigeria had unexpectedly returned to Britain shortly after Smith's arrival.

can be made to be heard by those in control of the government through their representatives and leaders.”³ In addressing the needs of African women, Smith asserted that the YWCA should build “a strong Christian ongoing fellowship of African women,” establish groups for school girls; train women for jobs traditionally held by men, foster a “church universal,” and critically examine both the “new” and the “old” elements in society.⁴ She stated that the YWCA was important not for its activities, but “the thing for which it stands- it must be a compass, an indication of the direction the people must travel if they would reach the Kingdom.”⁵ She proposed to expand this out from Lagos, and into other areas of Nigeria. While the “African, West Indian Negro, white government and white Missions” in Lagos thought that Smith should return there to work, Smith stated that she felt “that the time has come when I should be more or less unhampered and free to conduct some piece of Christian work as I would deem it proper and right and educationally sound, and Christian to do.”⁶ She stated that she “must return to Africa as soon as I can earn enough money at home or as soon as some group can afford to support the kind of work I would like to undertake.”⁷ In other words, she intended to undertake this with or without the YWCA.

Of all of the ideas contained in this letter, what the USYWCA focused on was the idea that Smith would potentially return to Africa without the YWCA. This caused what Smith characterized as “strong reactions” as several colleagues wrote to her urging her not to consider

³ Celestine Smith to Miss [Sarah] Lyon and Mrs. [Elizabeth Boies] Cotton, February 14, 1935, 3-4, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁴ Celestine Smith “General Report on Prospects for Y.W.C.A. Work on the West coast of Africa,” 4, 6, 7, 9, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁵ Celestine Smith to Miss [Sarah] Lyon and Mrs. [Elizabeth Boies] Cotton, February 14, 1935, 4, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁶ Celestine Smith to Miss [Sarah] Lyon and Mrs. [Elizabeth Boies] Cotton, February 14, 1935, 5, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁷ Celestine Smith to Miss [Sarah] Lyon and Mrs. [Elizabeth Boies] Cotton, February 14, 1935, 4, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

returning to Nigeria independently. In her response to these letters she stated that there had been a mistake in understanding. Smith reassured YWCA Secretary Helen Morton that “[t]here is nothing wrong with the Y.W.C.A. as an organization working in Nigeria and though I would like to be able to adapt the work to the needs of the people in any community, I am not feeling that the Y.W.C.A. as an organization is a handicap rather than a help to the people here.”⁸

This incident was more than just a miscommunication, however. It illustrates a fundamental disconnect between Smith and the USYWCA. Smith seems to have been proceeding under the impression that the USYWCA was supportive of extending their role in Nigeria. However, her fellow YWCA Secretaries’ responses to Smith potentially returning to Nigeria without the YWCA reveal that the National Board had no intention of continuing a USYWCA presence in Nigeria after Smith left. For example, USYWCA Student Secretary Winnifred Wygal wrote to caution Smith against returning to Africa without the USYWCA. Each point that she used to refute Smith’s plan—that Smith should work with the YWCA National Student Council for at least two years; lack of funding in the United States; the logistical difficulties of being “a freelance worker in Africa”—revealed her assumption that the USYWCA would not be continuing to work in Nigeria.⁹ USYWCA National Student Council Executive Secretary Helen Morton echoed Wygal when she wrote to Smith a few weeks later. Morton stated that “[t]he general consensus of opinion seems to be as follows. If you are as enthusiastic as we judge you are from your letters about carrying on an independent piece of work in Nigeria, have you fully faced the difficulties involved?” In addition to not being able to

⁸ Celestine Smith to Miss [Helen] Morton, May 3, 1935, Microfilm Reel 48- Africa- West Africa Young Women’s Christian Association Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton Mass.

⁹ In the one more hopeful section, Wygal stated that perhaps Smith could work with the YWCA in Lagos. She wrote that “if the YWCA should invite you to stay now for a period of two years on this new budget you speak of, why don’t you stay?... At the end of two years, you could figure out a job here at home or a more permanent situation in Africa.” Winnifred Wygal to Celestine Smith, March 21, 1935, 2, Microfilm Reel 48- Africa- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

“count on the sympathetic and practical cooperation of the British Government and others upon whom you were depending for continuing advice and support,” Morton asserted that it was unlikely that the USYWCA or the British YWCA could provide financing. Finally, she emphasized the need for “immediate attention” with the “southern situation” in the United States; she stated that “your leadership will mean everything to us in keeping the gains which have already been made.”¹⁰ For Wygal and Morton, Smith’s participation in the USYWCA was too important to lose, and her presence in Africa as an independent agent was too potentially radical for them to encourage.

This disconnect reveals one of the essential weaknesses of the USYWCA’s work: that although they espoused the race-blind meritocracy of Y-space, YWCA work often excluded non-white women, and especially African-American women, both in rhetoric and in practice. The British YWCA Secretaries’ racism, both in London and in Nigeria, worked to maintain racial and physical segregation, and much of the YWCA’s work in Nigeria remained based upon a colonial British YWCA model that was largely missionary and focused on re-creating models of Western domesticity. While the British YWCA was interested in utilizing African-American YWCA Secretaries to expand the YWCA in Nigeria, the USYWCA refused to send any women either before or after Smith. Firmly wedded to a model of Y-space that espoused values of grass-roots driven meritocracy, extending work into Nigeria seemed to threaten to reveal the ways that these ideals were a veneer for the USYWCA’s own traditions of segregation and racism within the United States. For Smith’s part, while her status as an African-American made her distinct from the British colonial structure, her efforts and rhetoric reflect the impact of race upon Y-space. In the end, the USYWCA’s contemplation of the British YWCA’s proposals for work in Nigeria,

¹⁰ Helen Morton to Celestine Smith, April 4 1935, 1-2, Microfilm Reel 48- Africa- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

Smith's experiences, and her attempts to get the USYWCA to extend Y-space in Nigeria, were all rooted in race, rather than blind to it.

By the time of Smith's arrival in the 1930's, Nigeria had been a British colony for over thirty years, and Lagos itself for at least seventy years.¹¹ Unlike India, or South Africa, however, it did not have a large white British population. The economy was primarily regional and agricultural; although there were tin mines in the north, the extraction of natural resources was a relatively small part of the economy compared to after the discovery of oil in the 1950's.¹² Because of its location on the West coast of Africa, Nigeria had a long history of economic contact with the Atlantic world, most notably through slave trading, which involved both massive migrations of people within Africa and in the Atlantic world.¹³ In particular, Lagos had become a "center of international trade and a colonial capital" not only through these commercial activities, but due to rapid population growth as people from the interior both fled wars and

¹¹ Lagos had been annexed in 1861 as a Crown Colony, which meant that its residents had the same rights as British citizens. Much of the rest of Nigeria was included in the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria, established in 1900. This was combined with the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria in 1914, and the British "implemented a full system of administration and law." Marjorie Keniston McIntosh, *Yoruba Women, Work, and Social Change* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 5.

¹² This is not to say that there were not extractive industries in Nigeria, such as tin mines in the north and small holder production of goods such as palm oil, cocoa, nuts, cotton, and cloth manufacturing. See: Anne Phillips, *The Enigma of Colonialism: British Policy in West Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); McIntosh, *Yoruba Women, Work, and Social Change*; Judith Byfield, "Innovation and Conflict: Cloth Dyers and the Interwar Depression in Abeokuta, Nigeria," *The Journal of African History* 38, no. 1 (1997): 77-99. The US was more heavily economically involved in South Africa. See: Charles H. Feinstein, *An Economic History of South Africa: Conquest, Discrimination, and Development* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); William H. Worger, "Convict Labour, Industrialists, and the State in the U.S. South and South Africa, 1870-1930," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 30, no. 1 (March 2004): 63-86.

¹³ There has been a turn in recent years towards re-conceptualizing the Atlantic world as a space, with peripheries located on several different continents, rather than the flow of people unidirectionally. For the most part, these studies are limited to the eighteenth century, although there are some that are focused on later time periods. See: Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Buford Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

sought economic opportunity.¹⁴ This meant that by the late eighteenth century, Nigeria had a small group of wealthy, Christian elite who had a degree of authority in colonial governance.¹⁵

This group of elites, whom E. A. Ayandele derisively called “Deluded Hybrids” helped missionaries introduce Christianity, capitalism, and European notions of civilization to power in Nigeria.¹⁶ When British officials instituted a system of indirect rule, these elites were well-placed to take advantage of the British changes in Nigerian society such as the institution of courts and laws, expansion of goods and trade, and the growth of Christianity.¹⁷ In this process of British colonization, some of Ayandele’s hybrids became anti-imperialist nationalists, while others became “collaborators” with the British state.¹⁸ While it is understandable that Ayandele may have seen these distinctions relatively clearly in the mid-1970’s, subsequent works have complicated our understanding of the ways that local peoples worked with, against, and through British colonial structures. However, the presence of this Westernized elite makes Nigeria different from many other parts of Africa, particularly in the case of missionary studies. A number of missionaries in the nineteenth century were West African returnees, and British missionary groups drew several religious leaders from African Christians.¹⁹ For example, the

¹⁴ Kristin Mann, *Marrying Well: Marriage, Status, and Social Change Among the Educated Elite in Colonial Lagos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 17.

¹⁵ Nwando Achebe, *Farmers, Traders, Warriors, and Kings: Female Power and Authority in Northern Igboland, 1900-1960* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005); Emmanuel Ayankanmi Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842-1914; a Political and Social Analysis* (New York: Humanities Press, 1967); Gloria Chuku, *Igbo Women and Economic Transformation in Southeastern Nigeria, 1900-1960* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Lisa A. Lindsay, *Working with Gender: Wage Labor and Social Change in Southwestern Nigeria* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003); J. D. Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003); J. D. Y. Peel and Toyin Falola, eds., *Christianity and Social Change in Africa: Essays in Honor of J.D.Y. Peel* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2005); Philip S. Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects: An African Intelligentsia and Atlantic Ideas* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000).

¹⁶ Emmanuel Ayankanmi Ayandele, *The Educated Elite in the Nigerian Society: University Lecture* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Ibadan University Press, 1974), Chapter 2 “Deluded Hybrids.”

¹⁷ McIntosh, *Yoruba Women, Work, and Social Change*, 5. See also: Mann, *Marrying Well*.

¹⁸ Ayandele, *The Educated Elite in the Nigerian Society*, Chapter 2 “Collaborators.”

¹⁹ For Africa in general, see: Sylvia M. Jacobs, ed., *Black Americans and the Missionary Movement in Africa* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982); David Killingray, “The Black Atlantic Missionary Movement and Africa, 1780s-1920s,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 33, no. 1 (February 2003): 3-31; K. J. King, “The American Negro as Missionary to East Africa: A Critical Aspect of African Evangelism,” *African Historical Studies* 3, no. 1 (1970): 5-

Church Missionary Society appointed a Yoruba minister, Samuel Ajayi Crowther, as the Bishop of Western Equatorial Africa in 1864.²⁰ Over time, however, white British racism increased, and historian Marjorie Keniston McIntosh states that by the 1930's, "[f]ew British people were now prepared to accept even highly educated, Christian Yoruba men and women as their peers, and segregation in housing and social activities was far more rigid."²¹

The imposition of British imperialism had mixed results for Nigerian women. Women were relatively powerful in Nigerian society. As McIntosh states, "[t]he Yoruba, who compose one of the largest and most influential groups in Nigeria, are noted for the economic activity, confidence, and authority of their women."²² According to McIntosh, while the imposition of English colonialism meant a decline in some areas of women's lives, such as land ownership and leadership positions (which were generally allocated to men by the British), women also benefitted from western educational institutions and protectionist marriage and property legislation.²³ These developments were likely instrumental in the development of the YWCA in Nigeria as distinct from other areas of Africa, in that women had access to the types of institutions in which the YWCA thrived, mainly Christian women's schools. A report of "General Impressions" to the YWCA noted that "[w]ith the exception of Freetown and Lagos

22; Sylvia M. Jacobs, "African-American women missionaries and European imperialism in Southern Africa, 1880-1920," *Women's Studies International Forum* 13, no. 4 (1990): 381-394.

²⁰ According to Eugene Stock's history of the Church Missionary Society, Crowther was ordained in 1843, and returned the following year to Sierra Leone, where he preached to "an immense congregation." A few days later, Crowther "conducted another service" in Yoruba, which Stock asserts "was the first Christian service ever held in Africa in the Yoruba tongue." See Eugene Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society, Its Environment, Its Men and Its Work*, 3 vols. (London: Church Missionary Society, 1899), 457-8.

²¹ McIntosh, *Yoruba Women, Work, and Social Change*, 21-22.

²² McIntosh, *Yoruba Women, Work, and Social Change*, 3.

²³ McIntosh, *Yoruba Women, Work, and Social Change*, see particularly the Introduction, 3-26.

where missionary schools for girls have been long at work, girls' schools are of very recent growth and only a very small percentage of the pupils in the mixed schools are girls.”²⁴

As was the case with early YWCAs around the world, the YWCA first gained a foothold in these girls' schools and churches, and missionary women began YWCAs on a very informal basis in several locations, including Lagos and Onitsha. By the 1920's, these were both run by Nigerian women: Mrs. Obasa, in charge of Lagos, and Mrs. Ame, in charge of Onitsha.²⁵ The YWCA in Onitsha was supervised by Church Missionary Society (CMS) missionaries, which is unsurprising given the intense missionary presence there, and the work was much more reflective of their interests than the YWCAs.²⁶ In a letter to World YWCA Secretary Margaret Brown Moore, Archdeacon Basden explained the work occurring in 1929. While there had been a “European lady in charge” for a number of years, the vacancy created by her withdrawal had not been filled by a European, and the work was currently led by Ame. It generally consisted of a hostel for 80 girls, and Basden stated that “I doubt if it can be really styled Y.W.C.A. It is rather a Training Home for girls who are preparing for marriage. Their fiancés send them to Mrs. Ame for training in domestic and other virtues.”²⁷

²⁴ “General Impressions” (no author, no date), Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

²⁵ The documentary record is unclear about whether these women were Secretaries. Mrs. Ame was an “Honorary Secretary” in charge of the YWCA Hostel in Onitsha, while a more “regular Secretary” position seems to have rotated between “Miss Hill of Iyi Enu C.M.S. [Christian Missionary Society] Hospital” and Elizabeth Wilkinson. See: Elizabeth Wilkinson to Miss O.M. Cockin, World's YWCA, July 24, 1928, Nigeria 01, Folder 3, Records of the World's Young Women's Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland. It seems likely that Mrs. Obasa was the “daughter of a large-scale Sierra Leonean businessman, Richard Blaize, who came to Lagos in 1862 and became printer to the government. Like her mother, Mrs. Obasa had completed her education in England. In 1908 she married the founder of the first Nigerian political party, the People's Union, created to fight water taxes.” Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women: A Modern History*, Rev. ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), footnote 11, 256.

²⁶ Miss Bean (United Council for missionary Education) to Margaret Brown Moore, March 11, 1929, Nigeria 01, Folder 3, Records of the World's Young Women's Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

²⁷ Archdeacon Basden to [Margaret Brown] Moore, April 26, 1929, 1, Nigeria 01, Folder 3, Records of the World's Young Women's Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

More in line with USYWCA notions of Y-space would have been Obasa's YWCA in Lagos. In a summary of the Lagos YWCA, Smith stated that the Lagos Association had been established with the aim "to promote growth in Christian character and service through physical, social, mental and spiritual development. Bodies were to be strengthened by physical training, games, health lectures and discussions. Minds were to be broadened by educational classes, discussion groups, handicrafts and travel. The spiritual life was to be deepened by Bible study, prayer, service and fellowship."²⁸ Each of these aims were in line with the USYWCA's ideals of Y-space, and echoed the development of women's Christian characters through working on their bodies, minds, and spirits.

In doing this work, Lagos local elites, who tended to be educated, wealthy, and well-traveled, were key to the YWCA's success, and women like Mrs. Obasa would have been the types of idealized woman that USYWCA Secretaries attempted utilize Y-space to create. Obasa, or Charlotte Olajumoke Obasa, was born in 1873 into an elite Nigerian family, Obasa was the eldest daughter of R. B. Blaize, a philanthropist and newspaper owner, and Emily Cole, whose family were prominent Sierra Leonian repatriates, and who herself had gone to school in England and France.²⁹ Obasa had been educated at prestigious schools in Nigeria (St. Paul's School in Breadfruit, and then the Female Institution—later the Anglican Girl's Seminary—

²⁸ Celestine Smith "The Call of West Africa to the Y.W.C.A." n.d., 2, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

²⁹ Although the YWCA Secretaries only refer to her by her married name, Smith noted the death of Mrs. Gibson, (Ethel Gibson was Mrs. Charlotte Olajumoke Obasa's sister) and wrote that "[o]ur heart-felt sympathy goes out to Mrs. Obasa and the rest of her family." Celestine Smith, "'Report of the Work of the Lagos Branch of the YWCA from April 1st to May 13, 1935,'" 1, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, Young Women's Christian Association Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton Mass. See also: G.O. Olusanya, "Charlotte Olajumoke Obasa," in *Nigerian Women in Historical Perspective*, ed. Bolanle Awe (Lagos and Ibadan, Nigeria: Sankore Publishers and Bookcraft Ltd., 1992), 105-120, 108. Olusanya, "Charlotte Olajumoke Obasa", 107; Cheryl Jeffries Johnson, "Nigerian Women and British Colonialism: The Yoruba Example with Selected Biographies" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Northwestern University, 1978), 99.

which was the best girl's school in Lagos), and she had traveled extensively in Europe.³⁰ In 1901, she married Dr. Orishadipe Obasa, an Assistant Colonial Surgeon. Obasa was very involved in a variety of social welfare work, including sanitary reform, the Lagos Ladies' League (whose aim was to combat infant mortality), and transportation (including running a financially unprofitable bus service that was aimed at helping workers). Her very active participation in St. Paul's Church and women's rights likely extended naturally into her involvement with the YWCA in Lagos.³¹

While Obasa was a passionate advocate for Nigerian women's rights, and should have been in line with many of the YWCA's ideals, racism by the World YWCA, and the British YWCA Secretaries limited her efforts to extend Nigerian women's opportunities. For example, in 1927 and 1928, she corresponded with Secretaries in the World YWCA about the possibilities of Nigerian women training to be nurses and midwives in England (where the World YWCA was located). Initially, the tone of World YWCA Secretary Gladys Bretherton's letters was relatively hopeful. In writing to the Secretary of the Gloucestershire Training school of Domestic Subjects in 1927, Bretherton asked if they were "prepared to receive students from West Africa... [a]s there is likely to be an increasing number of these girls coming to this country for training, we are anxious to get them in touch with the best possible centers where they will be sympathetically received."³² Over time, however, the correspondence reveals that although the

³⁰ She returned to Nigeria when her mother unexpectedly died, and took up caring for her younger brothers and sisters. Olusanya, "Charlotte Olajumoke Obasa," 108.

³¹ For example, she "led a delegation to... the Lagos Town Council to protest the order for rent payment" for women's stalls. Olusanya, "Charlotte Olajumoke Obasa" 115. Olusanya asserts that Obasa was what she calls a "Cultural Nationalist," through her dress, and through her advocacy of the use of Yoruba in church (and her protest when this was not followed, particularly with funeral services for Sir Kitoyi Ajasa). 116-7.

³² Bretherton to "The Secretary" August 29, 1927, Nigeria 01, Folder 3, Records of the World's Young Women's Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland. While there is no reference to it in the YWCA records, it is interesting to note that this correspondence occurred shortly after Nigeria was very prominently featured in the British Empire Exhibition of 1924-1925. In that instance, as would happen with Obasa, racism quickly curtailed the potential of Nigerians to participate in the metropolitan British public sphere. See Daniel Mark Stephen, "'The

World YWCA was sympathetic to Mrs. Obasa's requests, they were either unwilling or unable to do more than inquire with other institutions. By January 1928, they were clear in their assertions that the training Obasa proposed would not occur in the metropole. Moore wrote to Obasa that through their inquiries they had learned that "there is a strong feeling against the advisability of bringing over students from distant countries for training. The change of environment is so great that it makes it very difficult for them to readjust themselves afterwards." Moore suggested that Obasa contact the CMS missionaries in Lagos so that she could work out her plans in Lagos.³³

A few months later, Mr. Hooper, the Africa Secretary at the Church Missionary Society, wrote to Moore that the CMS felt that it was "very desirable that an effort should be made to train girls in Nigeria, and... it would be well if Mrs. Obasa would use her zeal in trying to forward schemes towards this end."³⁴ Moore replied that the World YWCA had "written very strongly to Mrs. Obasa ourselves along the same line [of discouraging her efforts] and... you may be assured that our influence will always be on the side of discouraging student from coming to England under the circumstances."³⁵ It would be very interesting to know Obasa's reaction to these letters, which in essence disparaged her own experience as a woman who had studied in Europe briefly and was a member of the Nigerian elite. Unfortunately, all that the written record reveals is that the letter was effective in silencing her; in Brown's April 24, letter, she noted that the British YWCA had not heard from Obasa again.³⁶

White Man's Grave": British West Africa and the British Empire Exhibition of 1924-1925," *The Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 1 (January 2009): 102-128.

³³ Margaret Brown Moore to Mrs. Obasa, January 26, 1928, Nigeria 01, Folder 3, Records of the World's Young Women's Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

³⁴ Mr. Hooper to Margaret Brown Moore April 11, 1928., Nigeria 01, Folder 3, Records of the World's Young Women's Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

³⁵ Margaret Brown Moore to Mr. Hooper April 24, 1928, Nigeria 01, Folder 3, Records of the World's Young Women's Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

³⁶ Margaret Brown Moore to Mr. Hooper, April 24, 1928, Nigeria 01, Folder 3, Records of the World's Young Women's Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland. She does seem to have mounted a campaign to get the colonial government to hire women. Johnson explains that "In light of the fact that other British companies

One of the reasons the World YWCA Secretaries may have been hesitant to endorse Mrs. Obasa's plan was that it involved not only bringing Nigerian women to the metropole, but also training them for professional careers, rather than domestic skills. In contrast to the CMS and World YWCA's reaction to Obasa's plan was Archdeacon Basden's reaction to Ame's work. Basden asserted that if a YWCA Secretary did come out to Onitsha, it would be incumbent upon her to fit into the existing work and movement; "she must move 'softly, softly' for the first year or two, at least, and win the confidence of Mrs. Ame and her supporters.... Much tact and patience is needed in dealing with situations like this and Mrs. Ame has all the rights on her side and we should all support her. She has stood by magnificently, and spent her little fortune on the work of her heart, and we all admire her immensely."³⁷ Although sometimes a thorn in the side of CMS, Basden was influential in Nigeria, and his backing, and the fact that Ame's work fell in line with the types of domestic education offered for women by many missions, would likely have been powerful incentives for a status quo that was relatively conservative in comparison with YWCA programs elsewhere.³⁸

As the examples of Obasa and Ame show, in dealing with these women, the World YWCA Secretaries reduced them to their race as Black Africans, a category the Secretaries seem to have viewed as mutually exclusive with being either elite or progressive. This may have made

employed women in the civil service Obasa questioned why they were not so employed in Nigeria. Women did not want to take the jobs of their menfolk, she explained, but surely some men could be deployed to other jobs while women were hired in the clerical service- a suggestion which would have amounted to a horizontal and numerical increase in Africanization." Cheryl Jeffries Johnson, "Nigerian Women and British Colonialism: The Yoruba Example with Selected Biographies" 108-109; 112-113.

³⁷ Archdeacon Basden to [Margaret Brown] Moore, April 26, 1926, 2, Nigeria 01, Folder 3, Records of the World's Young Women's Christian Association, Geneva, Switzerland.

³⁸ For more on Basden, see: Dmitri van den Bersselaar, "Missionary Knowledge and the State in Colonial Nigeria: On How G. T. Basden Became an Expert," *History in Africa* 33 (2006): 433-450. This may also have been because the Christian church occupied a much more tenuous position in Eastern Nigeria than elsewhere, and this likely changed the power dynamics. See: Misty L. Bastian, "Young Converts: Christian Missions, Gender and Youth in Onitsha, Nigeria 1880-1929," *Anthropological Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (July 2000): 145-158; Caroline Ifeka-Moller, "White Power: Social-Structural Factors in Conversion to Christianity, Eastern Nigeria, 1921-1966," *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines* 8, no. 1 (1974): 55-72.

these types of professional nursing training in the metropole an unacceptable crossing of colonial racial boundaries to these Secretaries, whereas domestic training (as was the case with poor women in other areas) was likely geared to train African women to care for British women's households, as well as their own.³⁹ Indeed, the British YWCA Secretary who was most interested in Nigeria, Cecil Heath, proposed plans of this type of work. Heath's plan included a general "building up of a moral code" and "sanitation, hygiene, child welfare, [and] domestic training" so that girls could have "training to fit them for their duties as wives and mothers."⁴⁰ With these aims, Heath was fairly far out of sync with the USYWCA's ideals of Y-space, which tended to de-emphasize domesticity.

Heath presented her plan to the British, World, and USYWCA's, who generally seem to have been hesitant to pick it up. For the USYWCA, Heath proposed they send money initially, followed by African-American Secretaries. In an early letter to Sarah Lyon, Heath advocated having Jamaican and African-American YWCA members financially support a Secretary in Nigeria.⁴¹ While she intended that the African-American YWCA would eventually support at least one secretary "from among their own people," she recognized that there were limits to this idea, both in terms of the U.S. economy, and the racism of British colonialism in Nigeria.

³⁹ This was certainly the case within the United States, in social movements where the rhetoric Settlement Houses used was that immigrant and poor women were being trained to keep their own houses, even while it was likely that these women would be limited to employment in middle- and upper-class households. See Sarah Deutsch, *Women and the City*. In an Imperial context, the gender dynamics of this changed as men tended to be domestic workers. See: Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History*.

⁴⁰ "Where the Young Women's Christian Association Might Help; Being extracts from the Report Presented to the Executive Committee of the World's YWCA at its meeting in Geneva, February 17th to 20th 1931," 3, Microfilm Reel 48- Africa- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁴¹ Heath had been in the YWCA in Jamaica previous to her survey, so she already had connections to the YWCA there. "Excerpts from Minutes of African Committee," 1, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass., Microfilm Reel 48- Africa- West Africa.

However, she stated that she intended to “pave the way” for the appointment of “American or West India coloured secretaries.”⁴²

It is impossible to know what Heath’s feelings and motivations were, as they are not part of the documentary record. On one hand, by targeting African-American YWCA members as well as American philanthropic organizations, such as the Stokes Phelps Foundation, she seemed to want to foster connections between Africa, the Caribbean, Europe, and the United States.⁴³ This multidirectional community would have been in line with the types of social and political movements occurring at the time, as the Atlantic was physically and metaphorically bridged by a variety of different groups and individuals.⁴⁴ However, these were generally African diasporic movements, largely aimed at anti-colonial critiques.⁴⁵ Heath’s race, along with her relatively conservative goals, would likely have been out of step with significant numbers of African, Afro-Caribbean and African-American women who had both transatlantic and more local role models

⁴² The major challenges she saw were isolation and housing; initial Secretaries would have to be housed in the European quarter, and Heath expressed concern that “one coloured American would be lonely unless she were willing to make real friends with the educated Africans and they with her.” Cecil Heath to Sarah Lyon, August 24, 1931, 1, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass., Microfilm Reel 48- Africa- West Africa. The major challenges she saw were isolation and housing; initial Secretaries would have to be housed in the European quarter, and Heath expressed concern that “one coloured American would be lonely unless she were willing to make real friends with the educated Africans and they with her.”

⁴³ See Cecil Heath to Sarah Lyon, August 24, 1931, 2, Microfilm Reel 48- Africa- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. Indeed, Philip Zachernuk asserts that several Nigerian intellectuals sought the help of the Stokes Phelps organization. See Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*, 144.

⁴⁴ For missionaries, see: Walter L. Williams, *Black Americans and the Evangelization of Africa, 1877-1900* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982); Jacobs, *Black Americans and the Missionary Movement in Africa*; Killingray, “The Black Atlantic Missionary Movement and Africa, 1780s-1920s”; Sandy Dwayne Martin, *Black Baptists and African Missions: The Origins of a Movement, 1880-1915* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1989). For political and social movements, see: Kevin Kelly Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); James Hunter Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Plummer, *Rising Wind Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960*; Rief, “Thinking Locally, Acting Globally”; Ula Y. Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey*; Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, Andrea Benton Rushing, and Sharon Harley, eds., *Women in Africa and the African Diaspora* (Washington: Howard University Press, 1987).

⁴⁵ See “Special Issue on the Diaspora,” *African Studies Review* 43, no. 1 (April 2000). For a good historiographic essay on diaspora from an Africanist perspective, see: Patrick Manning, “Review: Africa and the African Diaspora: New Directions of Study,” *The Journal of African History* 44, no. 3 (2003): 487-506. For an Americanist perspective, see: Robin D. G. Kelley, ““But a Local Phase of a World Problem”: Black History’s Global Vision, 1883-1950,” *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (December 1999): 1045-1077.

who were politically active—women such as Amy Jacques Garvey, Mary Church Terrell, and Ida B. Wells-Barnett.

What Heath also did not seem to realize was that appealing to the USYWCA National Board to get funding from African-American members was unlikely to succeed. First, as their stance on race within the United States indicated, the USYWCA's conception of Y-space as race-blind meant that they were not likely to encourage the building of racial coalitions across any distance, much less one that was based on diasporas. Second, they were suspicious of Heath's assessment, given her status as a white British woman. The USYWCA National Board portrayed their actions in dismissing the British YWCA's plans for Nigeria as being based in anti-colonial critiques which posited their notion of race-blind Y-space against what they construed as British racism. A committee to "study the West Africa project" had been rejecting British and World YWCA plans for several years, based on these types of objections. For example, Sarah Lyon wrote to World YWCA Secretary Anna Rice that the work described by Heath was "in an exceedingly primitive stage and sounds more like a neighborhood settlement house in a rural slum section than our usual YWCA work."⁴⁶ It didn't help that it was a British colony; the committee frankly expressed a "[l]ack of confidence in the British approach to Africa."⁴⁷ Indeed, Lyon had written to Rice wondering if the time was right to solicit "the Colored constituency for their own foreign work, and if so, whether they would want to apply it to a British enterprise."⁴⁸ Nor was the USYWCA particularly enthusiastic about Heath's plans for the future. The committee stated that "[a]s described by Miss Heath, one gets a definite

⁴⁶ Sarah Lyon to Anna V. Rice, February 19, 1932, 1, Microfilm Reel 48- Africa- West Africa, Young Women's Christian Association Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton Mass.

⁴⁷ Confidential report of the first meeting of the committee appointed to study the West Africa project, April 11, 1932," 2, Microfilm Reel 48- Africa- West Africa, Young Women's Christian Association Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton Mass.

⁴⁸ Sarah Lyon to Anna V. Rice, February 10, 1932, 1, Microfilm Reel 48- Africa- West Africa, Young Women's Christian Association Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton Mass.

picture of a piece of work initiated and carried on by the people of one country for those who are less privileged in another country. There is little suggestion of its being a cooperative enterprise.”⁴⁹ They were also hesitant about the validity of Heath’s report itself. In a later meeting, they stated the need for “a native African woman [to] make a study to supplement Miss Heath’s study. As a committee we believe it necessary to get the African point of view as well as the foreign point of view, on the needs, problems, issues of especial concern to West African Women.”⁵⁰ For the USYWCA, Heath’s status as a white British woman placed her firmly in the category of colonial oppressor, and her information and plans were inherently suspect as attempts at paternalism—at least until the conditions could be corroborated by a report from an African woman.

Each of the concerns voiced by the USYWCA National Board contrasted the USYWCA’s conception of race-blind Y-space to the work of the British in Africa—and even by extension the work of British YWCA Secretaries—which was inherently racially suspect. By contrast, then, the USYWCA National Board saw Y-space as race-blind in very specific ways. Geared toward middle-class and elite women of the same race, rather than poor women of a different race (which fit neatly with rationales for the “branch” system), in idealized Y-space, USYWCA leaders collaborated equally with subaltern women rather than being benevolent benefactors. These assertions allowed the USYWCA to ostensibly deny that race played any part in Y-space; in their multi-racial and cosmopolitan ideal, race was simply one of many categories, and therefore had very little impact. However, as this demonstrates, race was very much a part of

⁴⁹ “Confidential report of the first meeting of the committee appointed to study the West Africa project, April 11, 1932,” 2, Microfilm Reel 48- Africa- West Africa, Young Women’s Christian Association Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton Mass.

⁵⁰ “Confidential Report of May 25th meeting of the committee appointed to study the West African Project,” 1, Microfilm Reel 48- Africa- West Africa, Young Women’s Christian Association Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton Mass.

the USYWCA's deliberations, and would continue to be so as Smith made her arguments for creating Y-space in Nigeria.

In a letter of appreciation of Celestine Smith, two Nigerian YWCA members, Funde Ademy Jones and Priscilla Hall, stated that Smith had brought two things which she “proclaims as comprising our salvation- education, and the Power of Jesus Christ.”⁵¹ That America, and African-Americans in particular, should spread the institutions of education and Christianity would have been familiar tropes to both Nigerians and African-Americans. African-American churches and missionary organizations had been sending missionaries to Africa for more than a hundred years by the time Jones and Hall penned their appreciation of Smith.⁵² Yet, as historians of these efforts assert, African-Americans often struggled with their advocacy of an American culture and “civilization” that repressed—sometimes violently—and denigrated them.⁵³ In Africa, this tension was particularly stark because of the connections between Christian missions and colonialism. While missions were most heavily concentrated on South Africa, they also had a strong presence on the West coast; Northern Africa was predominantly Muslim.⁵⁴ These divisions were reflected within Nigeria itself, which had a variety of denominational missions along the coast and in sections of Southern Nigeria, while the North and East (Calabas, Owerri, and Onitsha provinces in the East, and the Jos plateau in the North), tended to be

⁵¹ Funde Ademy Jones and Priscilla Hall to Ladies and Gentleman, July 1935, 1, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁵² See Jacobs, *Black Americans and the Missionary Movement in Africa*, particularly the introduction, Sylvia M. Jacobs, “The Historical Role of Afro-Americans in American Missionary Efforts in Africa,” and Donald F. Roth, “The ‘Black Man’s Burden’: The Racial Background of Afro-American Missionaries in Africa.”

⁵³ Jacobs, “African-American women missionaries and European imperialism in Southern Africa, 1880-1920”; Jacobs, *Black Americans and the Missionary Movement in Africa*; Killingray, “The Black Atlantic Missionary Movement and Africa, 1780s-1920s”; King, “The American Negro as Missionary to East Africa”; Martin, *Black Baptists and African Missions*; Williams, *Black Americans and the Evangelization of Africa, 1877-1900*; James T. Campbell, *Songs of Zion the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

⁵⁴ Williams, *Black Americans and the Evangelization of Africa, 1877-1900*. This is visually illustrated in the map at the beginning of the book, xviii.

Muslim.⁵⁵ Within Nigeria, these religious differences were echoed by the locations of colonial power, which also tended to be concentrated along the coast generally, and in Lagos specifically.

Some African-American leaders reconciled the tensions between Christianity and colonialism by espousing the theory of “providential design,” in which it was the duty of African-Americans, as Westerners, to spread Christianity and western culture in Africa. These rhetorics were used at “Congresses on Africa” which took place at the World’s Fair in Chicago in 1893, and at Gammon Theological Seminary in Atlanta in 1895.⁵⁶ For example, in his address to the Atlanta Congress, M.C.B. Mason stated that “the obligation, my brethren, for African evangelization is nevertheless upon us—the obligation by racial affinity, by providential preparation, by special adaptation, by divine command, is upon us.”⁵⁷ For Mason, then, double-consciousness made African-Americans uniquely situated to bring Christianity and Western modernity, to Africa.

Jones and Hall’s assertion that Smith brought education would also have been a familiar, an echo of the ties between African-Americans and educational institutions in Africa. As the history of Nnamdi Azikiwe illustrates, African-Americans and their educational institutions had a significant impact upon the Nigerian intelligentsia by the 1930’s. Azikiwe went to the Wesleyan Boys School in Lagos, where he was influenced by a speech given by Dr. James E.K. Aggrey, who was both a promoter of the Tuskegee educational model, and the sole African on the Phelps-Stokes Commission, which made two surveys on Academia along the Gold Coast in

⁵⁵ For more information on missions in Nigeria, see: Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*; Peel and Falola, *Christianity and Social Change in Africa*; Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842-1914; a Political and Social Analysis*; Ifeka-Moller, “White Power: Social-Structural Factors in Conversion to Christianity, Eastern Nigeria, 1921-1966”; Bastian, “Young Converts”. Recent studies have examined the gendered dynamics of these changes. See: Mann, *Marrying Well*, and McIntosh, *Yoruba Women, Work, and Social Change*.

⁵⁶ Williams, *Black Americans and the Evangelization of Africa, 1877-1900*; Paul W. Harris, “Racial Identity and the Civilizing Mission: Double-Consciousness at the 1895 Congress on Africa,” *Religion and American Culture* 18, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 145-176.

⁵⁷ Quoted in: Paul W. Harris, “Racial Identity and the Civilizing Mission,” 145.

the 1920's.⁵⁸ With financial help from Phelps-Stokes, Azikiwe enrolled at Howard University, and then transferred to Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, where he earned Bachelor's and Master's degrees. After failed applications to work at existing colleges in Nigeria, and to gather funds in the United States for a college in Nigeria, Azikiwe returned to Nigeria in 1937 and started his own newspaper, the *West African Pilot* and wrote *Renascent Africa*. *Renascent Africa* was something of a call to arms for education of African youth.⁵⁹ Historian Philip S. Zachernuk cites Akinola Lasekan's political cartoon of the book, in which "[i]t is the revolt of youth against injustice of the old which enables Old Age to realize that it needs a new set of values."⁶⁰ This sentiment was in keeping with the work of Mr. Eyo Ita, who founded the Nigerian Youth Movement league in Calabar, and whom Zachernuk characterizes as "the American-educated 'spiritual father' and prominent pamphleteer of the youth era."⁶¹ Ita had received a Master's degree in Education from Columbia in 1933, and Smith had met him while he was in the United States.⁶² He and Smith remained in contact while she was in Nigeria—he even loaned the YWCA a secondhand typewriter.⁶³ While she was there he was also elected to the Legislative Council and was "privileged to write the resolutions on educational policy for the country to be presented to the Legislative Council."⁶⁴ By the time of Smith's arrival in mid-1930's, the youth movement that these leaders advocated was beginning to blossom, and Zachernuk states that "youth organizations swept through West Africa after the appearance of the Lagos Youth

⁵⁸ See Henk J. van Rinsum, "'Wipe the Blackboard Clean': Academization and Christianization-Siblings in Africa?," *African Studies Review* 45, no. 2 (September 2002): 27-48.

⁵⁹ Thomas C. Howard, "Black American Missionary Influence on the Origins of University Education in West Africa," in *Black Americans and the Missionary Movement in Africa*, ed. Sylvia M. Jacobs (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), 95-130; Nnamdi Azikiwe, *Renascent Africa* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969).

⁶⁰ Quoted in: Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*, 110.

⁶¹ Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*, 110.

⁶² Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*, 85.

⁶³ Celestine Smith to Sarah Lyon and Elizabeth Boies Cotton, February 14, 1935, 1, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁶⁴ Celestine Smith to Sarah Lyon and Elizabeth Boies Cotton, February 14, 1935, 4, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

Movement in 1934.”⁶⁵ Combined with this youth movement was a growing nationalist movement, spurred on by British imperial policies which took a heavy toll on the Nigerian economy.⁶⁶

When Smith arrived in Nigeria, she entered these religious, educational, and economic contexts, and attempted to create what she saw as Y-space. What her experiences and writings ultimately show is the depth to which the USYWCA's view of Y-space as race-blind was a fiction. Race was a factor at every step, from Smith's journey to Nigeria, to her proposals for YWCA work there, to the reaction of the USYWCA to those proposals, to her return to the United States. And as her writings show, what it meant to be *both* American *and* of African descent shifted as she crossed geographic borders. In the various geographies, race continued to play a complex role, as Smith attempted to create Y-space within the intrainperial context of USYWCA and British YWCA activities in Nigeria. In her writings to the USYWCA, Smith employed a strategy that was similar to other African-American leaders in the USYWCA, by emphasizing the USYWCA's own discourses of egalitarian Christianity to establish a racially egalitarian Y-space. Within Nigeria itself, Smith sought to decouple Christianity from imperialism. While she advocated the Christianization of Nigeria, it was through a broad Christian fellowship, rather than a formal church. For her, this and the economic development of Nigeria should be rooted in the interests of the Nigerians, and she ended up making an oblique critique of the British colonial policies in Nigeria. In the end, however, Y-space was not undermined locally, but by the transnational relationships between the YWCAs, and the USYWCA's refusal to send any other Secretaries to Nigeria after Smith's return.

⁶⁵ Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*, 107.

⁶⁶ Moses Ochonu, "Conjoined to Empire: The Great Depression and Nigeria," *African Economic History* 34 (2006): 103-145.

As historians of race and nationality have demonstrated, Smith's personal history and experiences abroad demonstrate the complex ways in which race and nationality were both flexible and recoded depending upon context.⁶⁷ Like other African-American YWCA Secretaries, Smith was part of the African-American upper-middle class. The daughter of Jewish and African-American parents, she grew up in Macon, Georgia, and earned her Bachelor's degree at the prestigious Talladega College.⁶⁸ Before leaving for Nigeria, Smith completed the work for her Master's degree at Teacher's College, Columbia University. After graduation, she worked as a teacher for the American Missionary Association's Burrell Normal School in Florence, Alabama before becoming the Executive Secretary at the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA in Little Rock, Arkansas and then in the Southwest for the National Student Division of the YWCA.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ See for example: Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," *Signs* 17, no. 2 (Winter 1992): 251-274; Kevin Kelly Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue*. In a colonial Central American and Caribbean context, there are several sets of works that seek to unpack the relationships between nationality, empire, and race more fully. For example with the British empire, see: Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1968); Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects*. For the United States, see: Jason Parker, *Brother's Keeper*; Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America* (London: Verso, 1998). See also Vera M. Kutzinski, *Sugar's Secrets: Race and the Erotics of Cuban Nationalism* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993).

⁶⁸ Foreign Division, "The Foreign Division of the National Board of the Y.W.C.A. is asking Miss Celestine Smith, secretary for Colored Women's Work of the National Student Council, who is planning a trip to Nigeria, West Africa, to make a study of conditions among Negro women in Nigeria," June 29, 1934, Microfilm Reel 48-West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. Talladega College seems to have been encouraging to African-American women entering missionary service. As Sylvia M. Jacobs notes in her discussion of African-American women's involvement in Presbyterian missions in the Congo, several had attended Talladega. Of the nine African-American missionaries who went between 1890 and 1941, four were women, three of whom were Talladega alumna. Jacobs, "African-American women missionaries and European imperialism in Southern Africa, 1880-1920."

⁶⁹ Foreign Division, "The Foreign Division of the National Board of the Y.W.C.A. is asking Miss Celestine Smith, secretary for Colored Women's Work of the National Student Council, who is planning a trip to Nigeria, West Africa, to make a study of conditions among Negro women in Nigeria," June 29, 1934, Microfilm Reel 48-West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

Also like many of the other African-American USYWCA Secretaries, Smith sought to construct Y-space as racially egalitarian.⁷⁰ While in the United States, she expressed concern with efforts to segregate any group. For example, before she went to Nigeria she was warned by British YWCA Secretaries that she was likely to be excluded by both Africans and Europeans in Nigeria. The situation in Lagos was therefore “bound to involve a certain strain, and probably pain” as she encountered people who were not part of the YWCA. Smith received these warnings while she was in the process of relocating a Student YWCA conference after white delegates were excluded from the dining room and student dormitories at an African-American College. She therefore framed her response to the British YWCA Secretaries’ concerns in both a domestic U.S. and transnational racial context. She stated that coming at that moment, the warnings “from England and West Africa made me reflect upon the fact that in the United States, in England, on the European continent, in West Africa and everywhere in our world today, life for some of us ‘is bound to involve a certain strain,’ and most assuredly much, much, pain.”⁷¹ Here, Smith had not only attempted to combat exclusion, even though it was an inverse to the racism aimed against African-Americans that normally occurred in places that hosted YWCA conferences (the Student Section generally attempted to hold conferences in the North for that reason), she connected it to discrimination transnationally.

If Smith had to struggle to create a race-blind Y-space within the United States, she seems to have found the racial context of Europe, which she visited on the way to Nigeria, different in fundamental ways. On one hand, she viewed the World YWCA Council meeting as the at least a partial creation of race-blind Y-space. Populated by YWCA Secretaries around the world, including African-Americans, it “gives one renewed faith in the power of the religion of

⁷⁰ See Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-46*.

⁷¹ Celestine Smith to Miss Brown, May 11, 1934, 1, Microfilm Reel 48- Africa- West Africa, Young Women’s Christian Association Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton Mass.

Jesus to transcend differences of background and unite people of all races and nations and economic classes in friendship as they undertake the common task of building the Kingdom of God.”⁷² However, while in Europe Smith also encountered structures of difference based on both race and colonialism. For example, in London she visited Kingsley Hall where children “stared, climbed upon the car in which [she] arrived and followed [her] asking questions.” The staff explained that the children had mistaken her as a “disciple of Gandhi” based on her skin color; Smith wrote that was “what a dark skin has come to mean to some of them.”⁷³ While Smith felt that her skin color made her remarkable in a European context, she asserted that it did not carry the same types of negative social connotations that it did in the United States. In a letter to the USYWCA, she wrote that this “curiosity of white children in England and on the continent, which is aroused at the appearance of a dark-skinned person is by no means an unpleasant thing. As a rule they have been taught no hatreds, prejudices, and fears and one feels that it is something new, rare, and uncommon that has attracted their attention.”⁷⁴ Whereas being a person of color in the United States often meant discrimination, in England it was a marker of colonialism—and in the case of Smith’s experience at Kingsley, a marker of anti-colonial celebrity.

If Smith had felt her status as an *African-American* in Europe, in Africa, she seems to have felt her status as an *African-American*. For example, at Accra, she watched as “black men, clothed partially in outworn rags... tugged at General Motors cargo, boxes marked Chevrolet.” Smith stated that these sights “tugged at my heartstrings” because at night “as 21 paddle boats

⁷² Celestine Smith to “YWCA Friends” September 28, 1934, 2, Microfilm Reel 48- Africa- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. For example, Smith related that she had tea with “Gertrude Gamlin of Tuskegee and Fisk” and ran into “Dorothy Rock (University of Minnesota) whom I had met at a Geneva Conference and Ellen Gammack whom I had first met at a Hollister Conference.” (2)

⁷³ Celestine Smith, “Letters from Africa,” *Woman’s Press*, May 1935, 220.

⁷⁴ Celestine Smith to “YWCA Friends,” September 28, 1934, 2-3, Microfilm Reel 48- Africa- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

stood silent around our ship bearing shivering men who either folded their arms or drew damp cloths across their black, half naked bodies, I could not help wondering what and how much a day's labor had really brought them.”⁷⁵ These feelings of difference and dislocation due to her nationality seem to have come to a head when she reached Lagos. In a letter to Sarah Lyon, Smith stated that she was “seized” by a “rather fearful and anxious sense of anticipation” as the harbor pilots drew her boat closer to a shore. She could “see nothing that looked like a city” and was afraid that Lagos might be like other African ports, which had been “rather unattractive.” She wrote that she began to ask herself if she could live in Lagos, if she would like the people, find fellowship, and if she would like the climate. And then “suddenly the ship[']s band struck up some stately German tune and there came into full view the waterfront street of Lagos in all its tropical beauty. Residences, Government house, mission schools, business houses all along the Marina for many blocks. It was like Daytona Beach or some other show place of Florida.” Smith said that her “heart sent up a prayer of thanksgiving ... that beauty existed somewhere in this African town and that my eyes could come and behold it from time to time.”⁷⁶ In essence, Smith took comfort in the ways Lagos was similar to Europe and America. These moments show the complex relationships of race, nationality, class, and gender, which shifted according to the local context; at times a transnational context seems to have made Smith more comfortable, while at others she found solace in comparisons to the familiar.

The complex entanglements of race, class, and nationality continued throughout Smith's stay in Nigeria. She arrived in Lagos on September 29, 1934, and although there were two British YWCA Secretaries, Barbara Bentall and Miss Turnbull-Smith, less than three months

⁷⁵ Celestine Smith to “YWCA Friends,” September 28, 1934, 3, Microfilm Reel 48- Africa- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁷⁶ Celestine Smith to Sarah Lyon, October 5, 1934, 1-3, Microfilm Reel 48- Africa- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

after Smith's arrival they had both left (the former on furlough and the latter permanently after being ill).⁷⁷ Smith was therefore left as the sole YWCA Secretary in charge of the Lagos Association, a position which she seems to have reveled in. She wrote to Sarah Lyon and Elizabeth Boies Cotton that "God has been more than gracious to me in making possible this experience in running this association all alone."⁷⁸ Smith may have been so comfortable in the Lagos YWCA because many aspects of the work were very similar to YWCAs elsewhere, such as the population of girls staying in the hostel, who were primarily students at Queens College, the Methodist Girl's High Schools and the C.M.S. Girl's school—elite women's schools. The programming for these girls also followed that of other locations, such as a fellowship group for "handicraft, recreation and some talks and discussions relating to character building."⁷⁹

However, even if the programs in Nigeria were similar to those in other areas of the world, Smith's racial and national status as an African-American placed her in a relatively unique position in Nigeria. This was not necessarily a negative position, as she seems to have been able to situate herself between the Nigerians and white colonial officials. Smith wrote to Bentall that "[e]verybody from the head Gov't officials (Whiteleys, The Director of Edu. especially) and the leading church people down to the smallest Junior Club member seems to be ready and willing to help the work."⁸⁰ Smith's skin color seems to have given her a point of commonality with Nigerians, and made her distinctive from white Americans in Nigeria. For example, in a letter to Elizabeth Boies Cotton, Smith recounted a trip to the American Southern

⁷⁷ "Arrival of Celestine Smith in Lagos, Nigeria," 1, Microfilm Reel 48- Africa- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁷⁸ Celestine Smith to Sarah Lyon and Elizabeth Boies Cotton, February 14, 1935, 5, Microfilm Reel 48- Africa- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁷⁹ Celestine Smith, "Report of the work of the Lagos Branch of the Y.W.C.A. for December 1934" January 7, 1935, 2, Microfilm Reel 48- Africa- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁸⁰ Celestine Smith to Barbara Bentall, May 2, 1935, 2, Microfilm Reel 48- Africa- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

Baptist School at Abeokuta, where “the girls were simply amazed to discover that all people in the USA were not white and that a black lady would speak a language not their own.”⁸¹ As this case illustrates, while the lines that connected race to nationality were malleable, they were nevertheless always present.

Smith’s status as an African-American also placed her outside of the British colonial racial structure. Despite general trends in which British colonial officials viewed African-Americans with increasing suspicion for potential Garveyite political leanings—which frequently meant that African-Americans were not given visas to enter African colonies—both British colonial officials and British YWCA Secretaries seem to have viewed Smith’s status as an American as an asset.⁸² Barbara Bentall wrote to Lyon that Smith was “received very warmly by the European[s];” indeed the Director of Medical and Sanitary Service in Lagos stated that Smith was an “American negress of... a good type.”⁸³ Dorothy Brown, of the British YWCA reported in October 1936 that although there had been a consensus that “secretaries with a British background (from Great Britain or the British West Indies) would be more readily accepted by government authorities.” However, “American Negroes, with the same idealism and

⁸¹ Celestine Smith to Mrs. Cotton, March 15, 1935, 3, Microfilm Reel 48- Africa- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁸² Official concern about Garveyites was particularly an issue in South Africa. See: Robert Trent Vinson, ““Sea Kaffirs”: “American Negroes” and the Gospel of Garveyism in Early Twentieth-Century Cape Town,” *The Journal of African History* 47, no. 02 (2006): 281-303; Amanda D. Kemp and Robert Trent Vinson, ““Poking Holes in the Sky”: Professor James Thaele, American Negroes, and Modernity in 1920s Segregationist South Africa,” *African Studies Review* 43, no. 1 (April 2000): 141-159. For British West Africa, see: R. L. Okonkwo, “The Garvey Movement in British West Africa,” *The Journal of African History* 21, no. 1 (1980): 105-117. However, African-Americans in other social movements also were caught up in the official backlash. For African-American missionaries, see Killingray, “The Black Atlantic Missionary Movement and Africa, 1780s-1920s.” There has also been a lot of scholarship on Max Yergan, a prominent Young Men’s Christian Association worker, who had difficulties entering South Africa. Given his later ties to communism and radical Christianity, much of the scholarship has focused on whether he was tending towards these political leanings in the 1920’s. See David H. Anthony, *Max Yergan: Race Man, Internationalist, Cold Warrior* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), and Barbara Bush, *Imperialism, Race, and Resistance: Africa and Britain, 1919-1945* (New York: Routledge, 1999), particularly 159-161.

⁸³ Barbara Bentall to Miss Lyon, December 31, 1934, 2, and [illeg] Johnson, Director of Medical and Sanitary Service, Headquarters, Medical Department, Lagos, Nigeria, to Miss Lyon, April 12, 1935, Microfilm Reel 48- Africa- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

a Christian conviction as Miss Smith, are capable of making a still greater contribution to the work, if they are prepared to face the difficult social position” in Nigeria.⁸⁴ For Brown, then, African-American Secretaries could provide a unique opportunity for the YWCA to expand in Nigeria, *because* of their race. This was not a race-blind Y-space, but one that sought to utilize race—and African-American’s racial double consciousness specifically—to advance the British YWCA’s ends in Nigeria.⁸⁵

Smith’s status as an African-American also informed the ways that she attempted to create Y-space. At the center of her proposals to both the British and US YWCA’s was the expansion of both Christianity and education. Smith seems to have felt that Christianity would expand in Africa, particularly vis a vis Islam, more through the actions of Christians than the conversion of others. In a 1937 report on “Prospects for YWCA Work on the West Coast of Africa,” in a subsection entitled “The Problem of Religion,” Smith stated that Islam had “not in the past encouraged the enlightenment and advancement of its women and girls.” She did acknowledge, though, that “at present new attitudes are being taken by the intelligent Moslem group in regard to the education of their girls.”⁸⁶ And, as historian Marjorie Keniston McIntosh asserts, there were some increases in educational opportunities for Muslim women during the interwar period, although such gains were slow until after World War II.⁸⁷ However, Smith also didn’t seem to notice or be particularly concerned with marking distinctions between Christian and Muslim Nigerian women. For example, she noted in the post-script to a letter that, “[o]ne of

⁸⁴ Dorothy Brown, “West Africa: Suggestions re Future Policy” October 1936, 2, Microfilm Reel 48- Africa-West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁸⁵ W.E.B. DuBois stated in *Souls of Black Folk* that African-Americans had a “twoness, -- an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.” W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Reprinted from Blue Heron edition. (New York: Bantam Classic, 1989), 3.

⁸⁶ Celestine Smith, “General Prospects for Y.W.C.A. Work on the West Coast of Africa,” 3.

⁸⁷ McIntosh, *Yoruba Women, Work, and Social Change*, 73.

the things I wanted so much to do in the association work here was to touch the Moslem element in the community.” However, “[i]t was a great surprise to me to-day to learn that the assistant secretary of our Monday club of Girls who have recently left school is a Moslem as well as one other member. Both of these Moslem girls were to be among the 5 girls who are to help me with club work on Wednesdays for the younger children.”⁸⁸ For Smith, the girl’s religion seems to have been less remarkable than their actions and involvement with the YWCA.

Indeed, Smith seems to have been more concerned with solidifying the Christian community in Nigeria than with the conversion of Muslims. In the “Problem of Religion” section of her report, after stating that Nigeria was a primarily Muslim country, she asserted that the question “which [therefore] needs to be answered... both in the thinking and in the actions of Christians” was “[w]hat is our unique heritage as Christians?” The answer utilized similar rhetoric to that she had used with the British and US YWCA Secretaries; that Christianity should not be contained in a specific denomination, but rather the promise of community and societal improvement within a “church universal.”⁸⁹ Quoting extensively from an article in the *Student World* (published by the World Student Christian Federation), Smith defined this as a “doctrine of community” in which people were in fellowship with God and worked for social change. In this, “Christian worship is only real as it impels to action.”⁹⁰ This was a direct attack on denominational mission work, which Smith characterized as “too often... encumbered with the task of keeping itself going as an institution.”⁹¹ While this type of rhetoric would have fit in well

⁸⁸ Celestine Smith to Sarah Lyon and Elizabeth Boies Cotton, February 14, 1935, 6, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁸⁹ Celestine Smith, “General Report on Prospects for Y.W.C.A. Work on the West Coast of Africa,” 7.

⁹⁰ J.H. Oldham, “The Christian World Community,” *Student World*, no. 4 (1935): 378-382. Quoted in: Celestine Smith, “General Report on Prospects for Y.W.C.A. Work on the West Coast of Africa,” 7.

⁹¹ Celestine Smith, “General Report on Prospects for Y.W.C.A. Work on the West Coast of Africa,” 7.

with the USYWCA's ecumenical stance, and Social Gospel leanings, it was also a statement meant to distinguish Y-space from that of denominational Christian missions.

Smith would continue to focus her rhetoric on Christian behavior at the behavior of British and USYWCA Secretaries, rather than the Nigerians. For example, in her correspondence with the British and USWYCA, Smith framed the YWCA's role in Nigeria largely in terms of what it should stand *for* rather than what it should *do*. This contextualized the YWCA's efforts in terms of universal ideology that was inclusive of Nigerian women, rather than giving the USYWCA the option of rejecting plans because of specific conditions in Nigeria (as they had before). She stated that what the YWCA "stands for in every community will always mean more in the long run than any programme activities which it might provide." It should be "a light of encouragement to girls" which had opportunities for education, employment, and fellowship.⁹² With this emphasis, Smith asserted that the YWCA in Nigeria would serve to break down "[g]eographic barriers and barriers of tribe, country race, denomination, religion, economic position, culture, class, and barriers between men and women."⁹³ Fellowship, like in other areas of the world, would therefore serve to break down divisions between women.

Smith asserted that this Christian fellowship was only possible if Y-space was based on Christian behavior, most particularly integration and equality. Her emphasis on these ideological aspects of Y-space meant that she issued specific warnings to the British and US YWCA Secretaries. First, she reminded them that Y-space had to be integrated. In a letter to Bentall, Smith stated that "there is no other way which is Christian to run a hostel save on the basis of absolute equality as far as race is concerned." She continued that "this cannot happen unless those in charge believe beyond a shadow of a doubt that all men are brothers- that differences in

⁹² Celestine Smith, "The Young Women's Christian Association and Education in Nigeria," 2-3.

⁹³ Celestine Smith, "The Young Women's Christian Association and Education in Nigeria," 2-3.

colours of skins are only skin-deep differences.”⁹⁴ She contrasted these ideals in her writings to the USYWCA. She stated that her “American experiences” made her feel that “no Association at all between blacks and whites in organizations bearing the name ‘Christian’ is today better than attempts at Christian association where walls of partition must stand and where mutuality and untrammelled fellowship and good will do not and cannot exist.”⁹⁵

Second, Smith asserted that the British and US YWCA Secretaries had to be willing to work with the Nigerians and give them responsibility. She stated in a report that in order for Nigerians to have “confidence” in “themselves and in those who come in from the western world,” the YWCA must maintain “the Christian democratic spirit of humility.” British and USYWCA Secretaries “must still be teachable. They must be patient enough to work with and not for others.”⁹⁶ An example of this was Smith’s critique of Barbara Bentall to the USYWCA. She stated that Bentall was “essentially a pioneer worker” and although “bubbling with energy” and “freedom and daring on race she is, however, a true daughter of Britain with all the assets and liabilities this implies.” Smith continued by asserting that she felt “very strongly” that work in Lagos had to move “out of the pioneer stage where everything is done for the people. Responsibility must be laid on the shoulders of the women, especially the African ones.”⁹⁷

Smith also contrasted this British example to the USYWCA’s work. At times this was a positive comparison, such as when she asserted that “as much care must be taken in West Africa as has been taken in the United States to assure the existence of a nucleus of intelligent and

⁹⁴ Celestine Smith to Barbara Bentall, May 2, 1935, 6, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁹⁵ Celestine Smith, “General Report on Prospects for Y.W.C.A. Work on the West Coast of Africa,” 10, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁹⁶ Celestine Smith, “The Young Women’s Christian Association and Education in Nigeria,” 3, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁹⁷ Celestine Smith, quoted in “Arrival of Celestine Smith in Lagos, Nigeria,” 1, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

dependable local (national) leadership before any Y.W.C.A. work is started.” A key part of this was being “doubly sure of black-white relationships in establishing local Christian fellowships of African and European (or American) women in African communities.”⁹⁸ However, at times she used the United States as a negative comparison point. For example, in a general report Smith emphasized the importance of the numerical significance of indigenous people in Nigeria. The fact that West Africans could not be “ignored as are the black minorities in the United States and other countries” led to a “sense of unity in community life in West Africa... in contrast to the dire isolation of racial and class groups in America.” Because she saw the primary divisions in Nigeria as class rather than race based, Smith stated that she was “inclined to say that in spite of tremendous and pressing problems perhaps the West Coast of Africa... is the most hopeful spot on the globe today for people of African descent.”⁹⁹ It was hopeful, however, because it did not yet have the racism and class divisions that were firmly established in the United States—divisions that continually undermined any aspirations of creating a race-blind Y-space.

Smith’s articulations of Y-space therefore had some similarities to the ways that African-American women had sought to gain greater egalitarianism in the YWCA in the United States. As Robertson states in her introduction to *Christian Sisterhood*, white women universalized “the power of Christian womanhood to correct racial wrongs.” This was an “ideology [that] resonated with many black women, who also spoke of the duty of women to promote social righteousness.” Despite this common basis, however, Robertson’s book traces the constant divisions between black and white YWCA members. These struggles, in which “Black women in the YWCA used the language of Christianity in their efforts to persuade, cajole, and even shame their white

⁹⁸ Celestine Smith “General Report on Prospects for Y.W.C.A. Work on the West Coast of Africa,” 10, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁹⁹ Celestine Smith, “The Call of West Africa to the YWCA” December 1935, 2, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

sisters into extending the full blessings of fellowship and citizenship to all,” were ones that Celestine Smith had learned well, and utilized in her efforts to deploy a racially egalitarian Y-space in Nigeria.¹⁰⁰

Indeed, in writing to some white YWCA workers, Smith asserted that adherence to Christian values was more important than being of the same race as the other members. Smith stated as much in a letter to Mrs. Watt, the wife of a Minister who had started a YWCA in Calabar. Watt stated that she was particularly concerned about the “moral conditions” which were “rather appalling,” and might lead a young woman, who “in all sincerity” became a full member of the YWCA, to “fail morally later.” Watt asserted that on one hand the woman “obviously cannot be allowed the full privileges of membership” yet “as a Christian body” the YWCA could not “turn her out.”¹⁰¹ In her reply, Smith emphasized an adherence to Christianity, as she asserted that she saw “no better way than to follow Jesus here... I think we will find that his way is not the way of laying down lots of rules or making generalizations about such things... [but instead] dealing with each life situation as it arises.”¹⁰² After Smith returned, Watt wrote what Smith termed a “profound letter (of supplication)” that Smith return. In reply, Smith attempted to reassure Watt to “not be anxious about Africa; her need is daily being laid before God by many of us” and he was “already answering” through the efforts of Bentall and the British overseas committee who “all have their shoulders to the wheel.” After advising Watt to keep faith and to restore herself in England, Smith ended the letter by stating that she knew “of

¹⁰⁰ Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-46*, 2.

¹⁰¹ Mrs. Watt to Celestine Smith, June 27, 1935, 2, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹⁰² Celestine Smith to Mrs. Watt, June 30, 1935, 1, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

the agony one experiences when Africa lies heavy on one's heart and one must separate from her for a season. You sense in an unusual way (for a white person) the needs of our black people.”¹⁰³

As much as her emphasis upon Christian behavior may have been a tactic in dealing with the British and U.S. YWCA leaders (as Robertson asserts was the case for African-American women in the U.S.), reading Smith's correspondence and reports, one gets the sense that this was not just rhetoric. For example, at many points she wrote of the impact of Christianity in her behavior. For example, she ended the letter recounting her arrival in Africa with a quote from Albert Schweitzer, a German-French missionary in Gabon.¹⁰⁴ In the quote, Schweitzer asserts that Jesus “speaks to us the same word: ‘Follow thou me!; and sets us to the tasks which he has to fulfill for our time. He commands. And to those who obey him, whether they be wise or simple, he will reveal himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in his fellowship, and as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience who he is.” Smith concluded the letter by stating that “it seems to me that the call is being made to us of the Student Christian Movement today and we must answer it lest our God continue to suffer unduly in the miseries of his children.”¹⁰⁵ She also seems to have scrutinized her own adherence to lived Christianity on a more daily basis. In writing to Bentall about running the Lagos YWCA hostel, Smith stated that “the only real threats of punishment I have made while here were those of saying- ‘If we cannot all live here together as Christians, we don't have to stay. If this is God's work, it will go on without any one of us- myself included.’ These words which they know I mean have been sufficient at all times so far to bring people to their right

¹⁰³ Celestine Smith to Mrs. Watt, October 23, 1936, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹⁰⁴ For a recent examination of Schweitzer that focuses on biography, see: Nina Berman, *Impossible Missions? German Economic, Military, and Humanitarian Efforts in Africa* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

¹⁰⁵ Celestine Smith to “YWCA Friends,” September 28, 1934, 3, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

minds and attitudes.”¹⁰⁶ Like it was for the YWCA generally, then (and as Chapter 1 described), Christianity was a lived set of these “right minds and attitudes” that Smith felt included everyone within Y-space, herself included.

While Smith emphasized the need for Y-space to be based in Christian behavior—particularly on the part of the British and U.S. YWCA Secretaries—her writings also reveal that Y-space was not merely to be based in conversion or the types of domestic science programs that were the hallmarks of missionary “women’s work for women.”¹⁰⁷ Smith asserted that in order for the YWCA to expand in Nigeria it had to truly be race blind, and offer the same types of programs as it did elsewhere in the world, including training for wage labor. This meant that Smith’s plans ran counter to the types of work that focused on domesticity—which were those offered by Missionaries and proposed by British YWCA Secretaries. For example, in a draft of a 1935 statement to the Carnegie Corporation, British YWCA Secretary Dorothy Brown asserted that “the character of the people depends on the character of the home: and the promotion of strong Christian womanhood in Africa is therefore essential.” While Brown’s proposed lines of work included things that would have been outside of the traditional missionary work for women—such as including joint reading groups for men and women, and “intellectual interests”—the general idea was still very domestically focused.¹⁰⁸ Smith herself would attempt to counter British YWCA Secretary Barbara Bentall’s suggested program of training in laundry

¹⁰⁶ Celestine Smith to Barbara Bentall, May 2, 1935, 5, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹⁰⁷ For Africa, see Nancy Rose Hunt, Tessie P Liu, and Jean H Quataert, eds., *Gendered Colonialisms in African History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997); for US missionary women and domesticity generally, see: Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility*; Dana Lee Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1996); Patricia Ruth Hill, *The World Their Household*.

¹⁰⁸ D.C.B. [Dorothy Brown], “Draft of statement prepared by British Overseas Committee as an appeal to the Carnegie Corporation, sent with a covering letter to Dr. Keppel via Dr. Oldham,” August 1935, 1. Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

work, confectionary, flowers, jams and preserves, and sewing.¹⁰⁹ In a letter to Bentall, Smith stated that she did not think that Bentall's "co-worker should be first and foremost a dressmaker and domestic science teacher. (No one here will freeze if she never wears a dress.)" Instead, Smith advised finding "the most intelligent, Christian YWCA secretary or social worker that you can find." In addition to being Christian, "she should know history and much about educational methods for group work," in addition to "psychology and understand human behavior to such a degree that she does not find the actions and attitudes of the African people due to their color."¹¹⁰ She stated that the YWCA should build "a strong Christian ongoing fellowship of African women" in addition to fostering groups for school girls; the training of women for jobs traditionally held by men, fostering a "church universal," and a critical examination of both the "new" and the "old" elements in society.¹¹¹

That Smith advocated these types of general community building efforts, rather than domestic training, does not mean that she was immune to the demands of the women in Lagos, who seem to have attempted to bridge the gap between domesticity and wage earning. In the above letter, Smith stated that although she "seem[ed] thoroughly to condemn" Bentall's "domestic science-dressmaker staff person" the community demanded someone who "can do something tangible with the hand- and do it well." She confided that the "community actually forces the YWCA to produce something it can see and handle and use and eat. It has forced me-

¹⁰⁹ Barbara Bentall to Ruth Woodsmall, July 26, 1938, 2, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. In other documents the British YWCA did assert that Smith herself should do leadership training. For example, Dorothy Brown stated in her "West Africa: Suggestions re Future Policy" that Smith's work would primarily be to "discover and train African leadership, both volunteer and professional, and to build up responsible local Committees, which it is hoped will be largely African in character." Dorothy Brown, "West Africa," 1, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹¹⁰ Celestine Smith to Barbara Bentall, May 2, 1935, 2, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹¹¹ Celestine Smith "General Report on Prospects for Y.W.C.A. Work on the West Coast of Africa," 4, 6, 7, 9, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

even me into activities of mending, patching and darning, covering lampshades, turning over and making new collars for men's shirts, making cakes for the Bishop's tea parties, and making dresses for African babies." ¹¹² These were activities that Smith seems to have felt were outside of her work as the YWCA Secretary in charge of Lagos—and indeed, they would have been outside of the prevue of most, if not all, of the other USYWCA Secretaries abroad. While they were not as explicitly focused on wage-earning, as was the general tendency with the USYWCA's programs abroad, they were also not strictly bound to a segregated domestic sphere. Instead, this was a transition of domestic tasks, which could be done in individual homes, for wages. That Smith seems to have understood these needs of African women in Lagos, and pressed Bentall to pay attention to them, may have been one of the reasons for her apparent success in Lagos—she was proposing the cultivation of skills which women could use to earn money.

In the context of the Great Depression, which was very severe in Nigeria due to British colonial policies, it is unsurprising that Smith identified in Nigeria were the same as those USYWCA Secretaries asserted that that women's financial dependence upon men in Nigeria was a particular problem. She stated that the "recognized jobs for women" were conservative domestic tasks: "childbearing and housekeeping and trading and midwifery, some teaching and sewing and nursing" although the women "at the top of the economic scale have large farms." Gender and colonialism were factors in these issues, however, as it was the men who were "cooks, the 'housemaids,' the 'washerwomen,' the stenographers, fishers, school teachers, tailors (who also do mending, patching, and darning), and nurses in the hospitals." ¹¹³ This "dependence

¹¹² Celestine Smith to Barbara Bentall, May 2, 1935, 4, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹¹³ Celestine Smith to Miss Lyon and Mrs. Cotton, February 14, 1935, 1, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

of every unmarried girl” upon the men was “rather bad in its effects” because it led to a lack of responsibility. However, Smith also acknowledged that until men had alternative careers such as factory work—which was almost nonexistent in colonial Nigeria—to advocate that women take over men’s jobs was to push men into “idleness and unemployment.”¹¹⁴ For Smith, then, the primarily agricultural and small-scale production in the Nigerian colonial economy would have to change before women could be fully responsible for themselves financially.

In essence, this was a critique of colonialism. While Smith did not directly lay blame upon the Nigerian colonial government, by focusing on the economic issues of unemployment and the economy, she struck at the core weak spots in the government’s economic and social policies. As Historian Moses Ochonu asserts, during the Depression the British government essentially used “self-interested, self-cushioning recovery strategies” in which they attempted to utilize Nigeria to generate cash for the metropole.¹¹⁵ Officials emphasized a policy of “Empire solidarity,” through protective tariffs that were intended to utilize the import and exporting aspects of the colonial economic relationships to the advantage of the metropole. In other words, British officials wanted to not only decrease competition for Nigerian raw materials such as tin, which was heavily imported by the U.S., but also decrease the competition faced by British-made manufactured goods within Nigerian markets. However, this policy did not work, and as the Depression worsened globally, the Nigerian economy collapsed. Nigerians responded to the decline of tin and cotton prices by growing food crops which they could sell or trade locally, which further undermined the colonial government’s ability to generate cash through taxes. This led to drastic layoffs from civil service jobs—perhaps forty percent of the colonial service.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Celestine Smith to Miss Lyon and Mrs. Cotton, February 14, 1935, 2, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹¹⁵ Ochonu, “Conjoined to Empire: The Great Depression and Nigeria,” 104.

¹¹⁶ Ochonu, “Conjoined to Empire: The Great Depression and Nigeria,” 113.

By 1935, while Smith was in Nigeria, a government census of Lagos city estimated that there were “about 3,000 men aged between 18 and 50” who were recently unemployed.¹¹⁷ These economic hardships led to political instability as “[l]etters and articles in the Nigerian press” asserted that “what little recovery had been recorded had been achieved on the backs of Nigerian peasants and workers.”¹¹⁸ With this broader context, then, Smith’s critiques about the economic situation in Nigeria and the need for economic development, were critiques of the impact of British colonialism upon the economic and social structures within Nigeria. The problem, in Smith’s view, was less the individual and cultural causes that the British colonial government was espousing, but colonialism itself.¹¹⁹ In order to progress, Nigeria would have to come out of the colonial economic ties that were crippling its development—it would have to build factories of its own.

Within this program of cultural and economic transformation, Smith could have logically positioned herself with the types of rhetoric that asserted that as Americans of African descent, African-Americans had a “special role” to play in “uplifting” Africa. Indeed, these types of tropes were all around her. For example, in their appreciation of Smith, Jones and Hall emphasized Smith’s status as an African-American, and stated that “against the greatest odds” African-Americans had “reached where they are to-day. They have education of the best within their reach- free schools and colleges, and apparently all one needs there is the will to learn, and the desire to achieve.” They continued that “[w]e long for the day when we shall have such opportunities.”¹²⁰ Barbara Bentall, the British YWCA Secretary in Nigeria, seemed to echo Jones and Hall in a 1938 letter to World YWCA Secretary Elizabeth Woodsmall. Bentall stated

¹¹⁷ Ochon, “Conjoined to Empire: The Great Depression and Nigeria,” 113.

¹¹⁸ Ochon, “Conjoined to Empire: The Great Depression and Nigeria,” 119- 120.

¹¹⁹ Ochon, “Conjoined to Empire: The Great Depression and Nigeria,” 131- 134.

¹²⁰ Funde Ademy Jones and Priscilla Hall to Ladies and Gentleman, July 1935, 1, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

that “there is a real contribution to be made to the West African women at the present time by the ‘right kind’ of American Negro.” Bentall went on to assert that if African-American YWCA Secretaries were willing to endure the social seclusion of Nigeria (where they would be isolated from being neither African enough fit into the ‘native’ population, nor western enough to fit into the “European population”), “they will be able to do far more good than it is possible for any European to do.” ¹²¹ Here, as elsewhere, Bentall envisioned a program focused largely around domestic tasks—laundry work, catering, flower arranging, dressmaking, and child care. ¹²² It is striking that while these women seem to endorse the same process—that African-Americans had a role to play in Nigeria—it had radically different outcomes. Jones and Hall saw the benefits of African-American education, while Bentall was still largely advocating a training program in which the “right kind” of African-American Secretary would essentially teach domestic work.

For the most part, Smith herself seems to have eschewed a special role for African-Americans. For example, in a ten page document that Smith wrote in 1937, on “Prospects for YWCA Work on the West Coast of Africa,” she did not stress that African-American Secretaries had special claims or affinities to work in Africa. ¹²³ However, she did occasionally make these types of assertions in private. For example, in a letter to Miss Lyon and Mrs. Cotton, Smith stated that “[i]n many ways West Africans stand today just where the American Negro stood at the time of the Emancipation... With all the experiences of the Washington and Dubois schools of thought behind us, we should save West Africa from the pitfalls into which the American Negro has fallen if we can stay close enough to the true God.” While this statement could easily

¹²¹ Unsigned [but from Barbara Bentall’s address in Britain] to Miss Woodsmall, July 26, 1938, 1, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹²² Unsigned [but from Barbara Bentall’s address in Britain] to Miss Woodsmall, July 26, 1938, 2, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹²³ Celestine Smith “General Report on Prospects for Y.W.C.A. Work on the West Coast of Africa,” Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

have been in support of “uplift” rhetorics, it seems that for Smith it was primarily education and Christianity—she continued with an anecdote about lack of educational opportunities for women and the prevalence of polygamy.¹²⁴

In a later report, she was more pointed in her distinctions between diasporic populations, and the benefits and drawback of being an African-American in Nigeria. She asserted that while it was “true that many felt that the African people accepted me as they accept almost no Europeans and as they accept few West Indian Negroes [sic]” this was due “partly to personality type and partly to the difference in background out of which Negroes from the United States and those from the British West Indies come.” Smith stated that African-Americans, “if intelligent, liberally educated and an enlightened committed Christian” were “particularly equipped... to tackle the West African situation.” Because of the racism within the United States, Smith asserted that African-Americans were “comparatively speaking not so blindly patriotic and worshipers of national traditions and customs (which have often worked against rather than for their own security.” They were also “schooled in looking at each practice to determine its effects upon all people, especially the lowest man down.” Smith also asserted that “[o]n the other hand there has been a precious little in our national heritage to engrain in us a racial group or as a class a superiority complex.”¹²⁵ In Smith’s view then, while African-Americans were well-situated to help Nigeria—and beyond that, to create Y-space—it was not necessarily because they were agents of benevolent “uplift,” but rather because they felt the solidarity of oppression.

¹²⁴ Celestine Smith to Miss Lyon and Mrs. Cotton, December 14, 1934, 5, Microfilm Reel 48- Africa- West Africa, Young Women’s Christian Association Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton Mass.

¹²⁵ Celestine Smith, “General Report on Prospects for YWCA Work,” 9.

For its part, the USYWCA seems to have viewed Smith's trip as an interesting yet temporary venture, which would not be repeated. In addition to being generally discouraging about the prospects of USYWCA work in Nigeria, the USYWCA seems to have been hesitant about fostering ties between the Nigerian YWCA (and Smith) and women within the United States while Smith was abroad as well as after she returned home. For example, Smith's activities and the YWCA in Nigeria received very little press space in the pages of *The Woman's Press*, even compared to those as similar stages in other parts of the world. For example, the editors condensed Smith's many letters and reports into two pages in *The Woman's Press*. The introduction to the article portrayed Smith's experience as an unforeseen anomaly. The editor stated that Smith had been "granted leave from the staff of the National Student Council for nine months' study of the needs of women and girls in Nigeria." Without referring to any of the plans already put forth by the British or World YWCA, the editor continued by stating that "[h]ow truly a pioneering venture this was to be on the part of the first American Negro to enroll for foreign service was little dreamed as plans were made."¹²⁶ There was no mention of the British or World YWCA's proposals to continue to have African-American Secretaries stationed in Nigeria.

Upon Smith's return, the Foreign Division also more or less silenced her. A report stated that both she and the Foreign Division were "besieged with requests for her as a speaker in local Associations" yet the Foreign Division does not seem to have been willing to work very much with the Student Division (whom Smith technically worked for) to get her released from her duties. Instead, the report stated that these speaking requests placed an unfair burden upon her;

¹²⁶ Smith, "Letters from Africa," 220.

she had “a very responsible post, already more than one person should carry.”¹²⁷ Other than a few brief articles in non-YWCA periodicals (such as in the *Chicago Defender* and the *Pittsburgh Courier*, which incorrectly identified Smith as having gone to Ethiopia), Smith’s specific speaking engagements seem to have gone undocumented.¹²⁸

The USYWCA also countered the British YWCA’s enthusiasm about the possibility of having Smith or another African-American USYWCA Secretary permanently stationed in Nigeria. The British Overseas Committee stated that they felt “very strongly the need to continue this experiment, which has been so successful, of having Negro and European secretaries working side by side in Lagos.” And they again “felt that such a policy might be of particular interest to the membership of the Colored associations in the United States.”¹²⁹ However, the USYWCA Foreign Division raised red flags with these proposals. They stated that “[w]hile this brief demonstration of a trained Negro secretary working in Nigeria has proved of unique value” the committee pointed out the “dangers involved- political, organizational and racial.” They stated “should we not learn from the situations in Egypt and South Africa.” By this it unclear whether they meant to caution against following in British imperial footsteps generally, or the nature of YWCA work in Egypt and South Africa, which were somewhat contentious.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Administrative Committee of the Foreign Division, “Report of Resolutions” October 15, 1935, 1, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹²⁸ “ ‘Y’ Secretary Says Education is Big Need of Ethiopia,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 14, 1935; “ ‘Y’ Official Visits Langston Campus,” *Chicago Defender (National Edition)*, November 2, 1935; “Students Hear of Problems Facing Africa” *Chicago Defender (National Edition)*, November 9, 1935.

¹²⁹ Quoted in “Arrival of Celestine Smith in Lagos, Nigeria,” 3, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. The committee did not state specifically why they felt Smith’s visit had been so successful. Presumably they received copies of the official letters that were also sent to the USYWCA, and Bentall was likely as generous in her praise of Smith to the British YWCA as she was to the USYWCA.

¹³⁰ Meeting minutes from Foreign Division, April 3, 1935, quoted in “Arrival of Celestine Smith in Lagos, Nigeria,” 3, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

With these actions by the USYWCA, that, more or less, was that. There is no evidence in the World or U.S. YWCA records that Celestine Smith returned to Africa again. In a 1936 letter to Bentall, Smith stated that she could not return at that time. She asserted that “[t]he work to be done in West Africa is indeed difficult. To it I must decide to give the rest of my life if I am to return.”¹³¹ And in the end, it seems that this was not the path that she chose. A summary of meeting minutes from the Foreign Division noted at their meeting on February 15, 1938 that although an offer to return had been extended to her by the British YWCA—the USYWCA still apparently had no interest in sending her—she had “felt compelled to refuse the appointment” and the World and British YWCA had asked that the USYWCA “recruit a substitute.”¹³² However, Smith did continue to be active in the USYWCA, particularly on African-American women’s rights. For example, at the 1936 USYWCA convention, she continued to campaign against segregation. When a committee changed the wording of a National Board proposal that “nationality and race” be “recognized as a basis for grouping in those communities where conditions and numbers warrant it,” Smith spoke out.¹³³ She asserted that this often meant work “for” and not “with” African-American women. She stated that African-American women “aren’t a service group over here on this side any more. We are a group of women who want to work side by side with a group that can work side by side with us.”¹³⁴

Smith’s trip, and the USYWCA’s stance on Nigeria, show not only the racial limits, but also class and national limits of Y-space. Whereas in the Philippines USYWCA Secretaries were

¹³¹ Celestine Smith to Barbara Bentall, September 19, 1936, 1, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹³² “Excerpts from Minutes of African Committee” February 15, 1938, 2, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹³³ Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-46*, 148.

¹³⁴ USYWCA, *Proceedings of the Fourteenth National Convention, 1936*, 123-124. Quoted in: Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-46*, 149.

willing to compromise the egalitarian ideals of Y-space in order to uphold colonialism and its racist power hierarchies, in Nigeria the USYWCA was unwilling to do so. Instead, they used distaste for what they saw as racially biased British colonialism—personified in Heath’s survey—in order to stress the unsuitability of Nigeria as a locus for USYWCA efforts. And when Smith utilized the YWCA’s ideal of Christian fellowship in order to push for the USYWCA’s greater involvement in Nigeria, it essentially fell upon deaf ears. For Smith herself, while race was an ever-present factor, its meanings and encodings shifted, and her writings demonstrate her struggles to navigate (and loosen) the connections that tied Euro-American to Christian and western modernity.

The failure to create Y-space in Nigeria was therefore reveals the gap between the ideology of a race-blind Y-space, based in egalitarianism, driven from the grass-roots, and advanced through merit, with the reality of the USYWCA’s lack of commitment to African programming that could potentially undercut U.S. segregation. This split meant that attempting to create Y-space in Nigeria became something of a Scylla and Charybdis for the USYWCA. On one hand, by the 1930’s, in the light of anti-colonial movements and its own internal critiques of segregation domestically, it would have been very difficult for the USYWCA to justify sending a white Secretary to Nigeria. Within Nigeria, the USYWCA’s usual tactic of working closely with government infrastructure would likely tie the Secretary too closely with British colonial racism. What Smith proposed, that the USYWCA should “cooperate with, influence and work through public and private institutions and agencies already established and responsible for meeting certain community needs,” as it did in other areas, was therefore likely too closely connected with the infrastructures of British imperialism for the USYWCA.¹³⁵ And, sending another

¹³⁵ Celestine Smith “General Report on Prospects for Y.W.C.A. Work on the West Coast of Africa,” 4, Microfilm Reel 48- West Africa, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College,

African-American Secretary was an untenable option for the USYWCA National Board. As Derricotte's death and the commission to India revealed, cracks were already beginning to show between the USYWCA's practice of segregation and its self-conception as creating egalitarian, grass-roots, and merit-based Y-space. In the end, the USYWCA could not see a way to navigate these issues, and rather than risk tending toward either, they simply chose not to try to create Y-space in Nigeria.

Northampton, Mass. It is unclear why Smith might have been willing to cooperate with public institutions, by which she presumably meant the Nigerian colonial government—although they had been welcoming enough to her while she was in Nigeria. She may have had Nigerian groups in mind, such as Ita's Nigerian Youth Movement, or one of the co-ed groups for young people in Lagos, or the women's groups Marjorie McIntosh describes in *Yoruba Women, Work, and Social Change*.

CONCLUSION

USYWCA Secretaries aspired to create the type of space that Derricotte described at Mysore in 1928, in which women could cross the “differences and difficulties... the entanglements of international attitudes and policies...the bitterness and prejudice and hatred” that existed between countries, in order to be “friends working, thinking, playing, living together in the finest sort of fellowship.”¹ This was a space that would ideally gather together colonizer and colonized, white women and women of color, and “East” and “West,” bridging not only national divides, but racial, ethnic, and class barriers as well. USYWCA Secretaries envisioned this as a supposedly politically and socially neutral space, which would exist without reference to geography—a placeless space that could be constituted anywhere in the world.

However, USYWCA Secretaries also envisioned that Y-space would not be a passive space, but rather a transformative space that would create women who held the ideals of Y-space. At the core of this process was USYWCA Secretaries’ fostering of two ideas: the importance of the individual, and the need for tolerance and understanding of world events and cultures. By recognizing the value of the individual, USYWCA Secretaries envisioned that women would develop morally through a lived Christianity, be part of the wage-earning public sphere and be engaged in urban life, be physically self sufficient and able to be part of a larger group, and see women for their merit rather than their inherited characteristics such as race.

¹ Although Derricotte concluded by stating that this was the “dream of the World Student Christian Federation ‘That All May Be One’” (which was their motto), the same held true of the USYWCA, which was deeply intertwined with the WSCF. “Written by Juliette Derricotte after attending a World’s Student Christian Federation meeting in India and read at the memorial service held for her on November 12, 1931, 600 Lexington Avenue, New York” quoted in: National Student Council, Young Women’s Christian Associations of the United States of America, “A Pilgrimage of Friendship from the United States to India in 1935,” 3, Microfilm Reel 134- Student-Interracial- Negro Delegation to India, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

Within this space, all women could ideally be equal, judged not for their race, class, or national background, but upon their own merits.

Second, USYWCA Secretaries intended to foster a cosmopolitanism, wherein women were not only participants in a local cultural context, but a global one. By participating in “global” events, women would let go of racial and national prejudices and limitations. Within this cosmopolitanism, women would simultaneously be not only individuals who were improving themselves religiously, economically, and physically, but also part of a global fellowship of women. Politically neutral and cosmopolitan, women within Y-space would appreciate and easily work with others from diverse races, classes, and nations, who were all ostensibly equal with themselves. This fellowship would ideally originate at the grassroots level, and be voluntary, inclusive of all women, and democratic. In sum, USYWCA Secretaries envisioned Y-space—and the women who inhabited it—as devoid of conflicts.

In short, these women would take on the characteristics that many USYWCA Secretaries seem to have envisioned themselves as embodying—simply by being progressive American women. As Sarah Lyon’s “fellow conquistadores,” they viewed Y-space as fundamentally different from the formal and informal imperialism of the European past. For USYWCA Secretaries, the exceptionalism of Y-space seems to have been almost *de facto* because Y-space emerged from the liberal and progressive qualities of U.S. society and culture. This meant that the object of transforming women into women like the USYWCA Secretaries themselves was positive, rather than a type of imperial U.S. “civilizing mission.” It also meant that despite the difficulties of creating Y-space, USYWCA Secretaries seem to have been convinced of the validity of their attempts—even when things appeared to be going badly, USWYCA Secretaries tended to put a positive face on things. We see this in moments when they engaged in a type of

cheerleading to each other. For example, it is in Zelma Day's usage of an exclamation point in her description of the Señora's volleyball class, where the eruption of race, class, and imperial divisions could be overcome. For Day, the understanding of a Filipina and her willingness to overlook an attempt by U.S. women to assert racial privilege could be "a real victory for her too!"² In short, USYWCA Secretaries remained optimistic, even in the face of resistance or behavior that was counter to their belief in the positive values of Y-space. This extended to the USYWCA Secretaries' belief in the exceptionality of the U.S., and that they should go forward with spreading U.S. values, regardless of geographic context. It was also this faith in the qualities embodied in Y-space which often blinded USWYCA Secretaries to the imperial rhetorics that buttressed it.

As each of the chapters shows, Y-space was rarely, if ever, created. On one hand, there is some the evidence that the USYWCA Secretaries, such as Derricotte, seem to have felt that Y-space had been created, and that there was the presence of a truly cosmopolitan and supra-national fellowship. However, because their clients' voices are not part of the USYWCA's evidentiary record, there is no way of verifying the USYWCA Secretaries' assertions or perceptions. What is evident is that the spaces that USYWCA Secretaries did create often ended up not just supporting but also creating racial, class, and national hierarchies. While Derricotte, and the USYWCA Secretaries who preceded and followed her, may have envisioned a fellowship that was non-imperial, crossing national, racial, and class lines, this ideal was difficult to achieve.

² Zelma Day to Miss Margaret Brown Moore, January 15, 1936, 1-2, Microfilm Reel 65- Philippines- Staff Reports- Zelma Day, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

USYWCA Secretaries had difficulty implementing Y-space, even within the United States. USYWCA Secretaries tended to construct Y-space so that it met the needs of women like them, while the needs of non-white and poor women came second. This meant that while USYWCA Secretaries espoused egalitarianism, and emphasized the inclusive nature of Y-space—through Ecumenicalism, broad access to buildings, community-building recreation, and a theoretically desegregated organization—this ideal often went unrealized. While this gap was evident in terms of class, seen for example in the location of buildings away from poor areas, the de facto racial segregation of YWCA's meant that the disparity between rhetoric and practice was most glaring in terms of race.

As this relatively homogenous group of USYWCA Secretaries spread out across the world, they seem to have been determined to establish the idealized Y-space that had in practice eluded them at home. While they confronted a variety of political, economic, social, and racial contexts in each of the locations abroad, they responded by attempting to gather women most like themselves. In India, the YWCA operated in a formal British colonial context where there was a significant population of powerful British women. In Argentina, USYWCA Secretaries encountered a rapidly urbanizing city, which was undergoing both a population boom from Europe, and industrial expansion fueled primarily by British capital. The Buenos Aires YWCA drew its membership from the British and American mercantile elite, and white-collar European immigrant women. In the Philippines, USYWCA Secretaries were present at a moment of political and economic transition, as the Philippines went from being a U.S. territory to a Commonwealth. Membership there was primarily composed of the Philippine colonial elite and American women who had connections to the government and commerce. In Nigeria, a British

colony with very little settlement by white British women, the YWCA was populated by the Nigerian elite, and women who were in mission schools.

In each of these places, USYWCA Secretaries attempted to create their idealized version of Y-space that would both hold to their vision and be relevant to the local context. In each of the cases, however, rather than being successfully created, Y-space tended to bolster the existing imperial hierarchies. In India, USWYCA Secretaries attempted to utilize conceptions of the U.S. Social Gospel in order to position the YWCA among the existing missionary and British colonial networks. By appearing ecumenical and broadly Christian, the India YWCA seemed to unify, rather than to compete with, the existing denominational missions. Through the Social Gospel emphasis on a “lived” Christianity, in which individual characteristics were more important than formal church membership, USYWCA Secretaries attempted to build coalitions with non-Christian women. In these efforts, USYWCA Secretaries went so far as to privately extol the virtues of some Muslim and Hindu women nationalists, and nationalist figures such as Gandhi and Tagore. However, the YWCA in India remained dominated by British women, and the networks—both logistical and social—of the British Empire. This meant that the YWCA in India never fully escaped its local roots in the British YWCA. Hence, although the USYWCA Secretaries seemed to have been open to cultivating relationships with elite non-Christian women, these were often attempts to foster a cultural conversion, with the end goal being the creation of Christian Indian women who embodied USYWCA ideals, and who would take part in Indian nationalism.

In Argentina, YWCA buildings largely served the needs of Euro-American women, who were traveling transnationally. USYWCA Secretaries envisioned buildings as universal, and in many ways placeless, and intended that buildings would acculturate women into a cosmopolitan

metropolitan sensibility, which could transfer anywhere. In Buenos Aires, an emerging city that had a large transnational population, this meant that the building itself provided accommodation that was physically and socially safe for Euro-American women. It also facilitated women's movement into the public sphere, through allocation of places within the building for cafeterias and educational facilities. While buildings therefore served to help women travel into non-“domestic” places (in terms of the public sphere, cities, and transnationally), the cosmopolitan sensibility they sought to foster was based on an U.S. model. Rather than serving the needs of working-class Argentine women, the YWCA building facilitated the building of a community of European and American transnational, professional, cosmopolitan women, who could more easily live anywhere and work for transnational corporations. Therefore, the YWCA's building and activities in Buenos Aires ultimately supported the growth of U.S. and British capitalism because it fostered the development of an English-speaking transnationally acculturated clerical workforce.

The USYWCA entered a different political context in the Philippines, which had been a U.S. territory since 1899, and was in the process of transitioning to a Commonwealth when the USYWCA Secretaries arrived in the early 1930's. In this site, the USYWCA Secretaries focused on fostering ideals of self-reliance, individualism, competition, and co-operation, via recreation programs and camps. USYWCA Secretaries saw themselves as offering a space where women could develop their own physical strength for their own purposes. Within the Philippine YWCA, Filipina doctors and elite volleyball players found some professional validation and recognition in programs that promised eventual parity with USYWCA Secretaries. However, the USYWCA Secretaries' egalitarian rhetoric was deeply undercut by American colonial prejudices, which held that not all bodies were created equal. This was seen in physical fitness classes such as the

Senora's Volleyball Class, and especially in the camps, which promoted a system of racial segregation

In Nigeria, the USYWCA established a presence that was both faint and temporary. Here the USYWCA's efforts were hampered by its own prejudice and the racial context of this British colony, in which the YWCA would have to work primarily with elite Nigerian women, rather than white colonial women who had dominated the India YWCA. This was too great of a contrast for USYWCA Secretaries to accept, particularly given the domestic USYWCA's segregation. Rather than accept that Y-space was neither a true meritocracy nor race-blind, the USYWCA based their critiques on the racism of British colonialism. In contrast to the USYWCA National Board's efforts to limit the USYWCA's role in Nigeria, Celestine Smith accepted the British YWCA's offer to spend a few months in Nigeria, where she attempted to deploy Y-space. There, she worked with the Christian elite women, who would have been the typical targets for YWCA work, and who seem to have rejected the blatantly imperialist model of the British YWCA. She also pushed for the USYWCA to begin work in Nigeria in ways that would fulfill the racial egalitarianism of Y-space. However, the USYWCA Secretaries in the National Board were unable to let go of their own local racial assumptions to uphold these ideals of Y-space in a British imperial context, and the USYWCA did not become involved in Nigeria. Nigeria ultimately shows that while USYWCA Secretaries espoused egalitarian rhetoric, it was unwilling to extend this across racial lines. At the same time, the USYWCA National Board attempted to maintain the exceptionalism of Y-space as non-imperial, by blaming British colonialism and the lack of development among Nigerian women.

While the USYWCA Secretaries may have thought that Y-space was exceptional in each of these places, it was not in fact atypical. Y-space, with its emphasis on fellowship,

individualism, and cosmopolitanism, shared roots with the attempts at formal and informal cultural change espoused by missionaries as well as European and American imperialists. For example, the USYWCA's conception of fellowship, based in a voluntary membership which espoused equality and inclusiveness, had been present in Protestant missionary efforts. In this, individuals entered a type of compact directly with God, and became equal believers in equal standing with other members. However, this fellowship was not merely a matter of faith. As Jean and John Comaroff have asserted, both Christianity and the missionaries themselves were carriers for cultural norms.³

Concurrent to the idea of fellowship was individuality, which not only governed a person's relationship with God, but was a key foundation of the British and U.S. "civilizing missions." These efforts were multi-pronged, including the imposition of modernity and the "protection" of individuals from traditions and persons that officials viewed as harmful to individuals—such as those who practiced *sati* in the case of the British, and some groups of Filipinos, in the case of the U.S.⁴ In Y-space, the concern for individuals threaded throughout the YWCA's work, from the individual basis of faith, to economic self-sufficiency, to concern for women's bodies for their own usage and purposes. However, like fellowship, individuality also extended beyond a recognition of women's importance as people. YWCA programs consistently posited the backwardness of women who were part of groups, whether they were religious (as was the case in India), domestically focused kinship groups (as in Argentina),

³ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*.

⁴ For Europe, see: Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects*; Cooper and Stoler, *Tensions of Empire*; Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*; Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity*; Mani, *Contentious Traditions: the Debate on Sati in Colonial India*; Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). For the United States, see in particular: Pease and Kaplan, *Cultures of United States Imperialism*; Adas, "Contested Hegemony"; Michael Adas, "From Settler Colony to Global Hegemon: Integrating the Exceptionalist Narrative of the American Experience into World History," *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 5 (December 2001): 1692-1720; Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*; Newman, *White Women's Rights*; Antoinette M. Burton, ed., *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and Through the Nation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

national groups (as in the Philippines), or racial groups (as in Nigeria). For the USYWCA Secretaries, only the YWCA, with its rational voluntary fellowship of equals, was modern.

Within this fellowship of individuals, cosmopolitanism played an important role because it ostensibly leveled the playing field between various cultures, and provided a basis whereby women from different groups could meet and appreciate aspects of others. As the YWCA's celebration of "World Fellowship Week," the numerous cultural events such as the "Pow Wow" tea in Buenos Aires, and personnel exchange programs such as Filomena Alonso's experience at a California camp, were designed by USYWCA leaders to foster women's sense of the YWCA as a global movement. As the scholarship on cosmopolitanism reveals, however, cultural encounters do not always give rise to international appreciation, and instead often involve the creation of cultural hierarchies or stereotypes.⁵

The ways that USYWCA Secretaries interwove of the ideas of fellowship, individuality, and cosmopolitanism together further strengthened the imperial power dynamics that Y-space tended to foster. First, by being ostensibly race-blind, USYWCA Secretaries utilized the erasure of racial status as permanent disability, instead perceived inferiority could be overcome with enough "tutelage" from USYWCA Secretaries. Their rhetoric therefore echoed that of Lord Macaulay's "little brown Englishmen," and helped support the "calibrated colonialism" of the U.S. in the Philippines. Second, USYWCA Secretaries fostered an ostensible cosmopolitan appreciation and knowledge of other cultures, even as such knowledge categorized, ranked, and stereotyped subaltern peoples.⁶ One example of this is when the USYWCA Secretaries' extolled

⁵ Newman, *White Women's Rights*; Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000); Hoganson, *Consumers' Imperium*.

⁶ Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*, 18. For an evaluation of Mehta in the context of other British historians, see: Andrew Sartori, "Review: The British Empire and Its Liberal Mission," *The Journal of Modern History* 78, no. 3 (September 1, 2006): 623-642.

the virtues of certain Hindu and Muslim women in India, even as they marked the majority as bound by anachronistic traditions. In other words, cultural differences tended to be acceptable only when superficial; the types of folk clothing women covered their brown skin with was acceptable only as long as the women themselves shared the same viewpoints and sensibilities as the USYWCA Secretaries.

Even as the USYWCA adopted much of the rhetoric of the civilizing mission, they attempted to mark a distinction between “Western” and “U.S.” This was foundational to USYWCA Secretaries’ perception that Y-space was not colonial. As Michael Adas asserts, the sense of the U.S. as exceptional and preeminent have been among the hallmarks of both U.S. identity and U.S. expansion.⁷ One obvious example of this was Sarah Lyon’s assertion to her “fellow conquistadores” that Secretaries were building a fundamentally different type of empire from those of Europe. USYWCA Secretaries saw Y-space as the fulfillment of the Progressive Era United States, in which the United States was not only the pinnacle of modernity, but by ostensibly fostering liberal principles, it was anti-colonial. USYWCA Secretaries therefore structure Y-space *itself* to bolster their claims to the denial of empire. These denials of empire have carried over to the scholarship on U.S. involvement in the world, and uncritical observers have seen U.S. national power in the same ways that Secretaries saw Y-space. These scholars and historians couch U.S. intervention in terms such as “soft power,” “empire by invitation,” and “liberal imperialism.”⁸ In these arguments, because the U.S. agents worked with local allies, did

⁷ Adas, “From Settler Colony to Global Hegemon: Integrating the Exceptionalist Narrative of the American Experience into World History.”

⁸ See: Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe Since 1945*; Nye, *Soft Power*; Joseph S. Nye, “The Velvet Hegemon,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 136 (June 2003): 74-75; Fredrik Logevall, “Politics and Foreign Relations,” *The Journal of American History* 95, no. 4 (March 2009). Interestingly, the term “benevolent imperialism” or “benevolent assimilation” has more often served as a tool to reveal or critique U.S. imperialism, particularly the claims of exceptionalism. See Stuart Creighton Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation* for U.S. intervention in the Philippines. For an interesting perspective on the U.S. as imperial in a current context, see Bryan Mabee,

not use overt military force, or seek to establish a formal colony, the U.S. has been at least a different kind of empire, and at most, not imperial at all—particularly prior to the Cold War.

However, as the previous chapters demonstrate, the notion that efforts of cultural transformation were somehow benign or apolitical—in other words, to assert that Y-space was successfully created—are incorrect. Rather than working for the liberal emancipation of women, which USYWCA Secretaries *saw* themselves as enacting, through their efforts to establish Y-space, the YWCA's programs often worked to extend U.S. culture and influence in several ways. First, the global scale of USYWCA Secretaries' attempts to create Y-space reveals the extent of borderlessness to which U.S. imperialism aspired.⁹ USYWCA Secretaries sought to enact imperialist cultural change not only in the United States and in formal colonies such as the Philippines, but in areas and regions that widely ranged in political, economic, and social contexts. India had long been a British colony, and had a strong nationalist movement during the time period of the USYWCA's activity. Argentina had been independent from Spanish rule for almost a hundred years, and yet was strongly tied to Europe, not only through a large population of recent immigrants, but economically through extensive trade with England. The Philippines in 1935 was on the verge of transitioning from complete U.S. governance to a Commonwealth status. Nigeria was a formal British Protectorate, with a relatively small nationalist movement prior to World War II. With the exception of the Philippines, these locations are not those that historians generally think of when discussing U.S. imperialism. What the global scale of the USYWCA's efforts reveal, therefore, is the presence of a borderless cultural empire, rather than one rooted in the geography of the nation, the colony, or the limited "sphere of influence."

"Discourses of Empire: The US 'Empire', Globalisation and International Relations," *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 8 (2004): 1359-1378.

⁹ Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 16.

USYWCA Secretaries aspired to enact cultural change that would work above the boundaries of commerce, the nation, or a religious affiliation. Because Y-space was neither formally governmental nor explicitly commercial, USYWCA Secretaries were not bound by the types of geographic, military, or commercial limitations that scholars have traditionally used when describing U.S. imperialism.¹⁰

Second, within this borderless world, USYWCA Secretaries sought to not only *find* but also sought to *create* their own reflection—women who also tended to possess more or less the same characteristics of being white, middle class, college educated, relatively young, and single.¹¹ As the chapters demonstrate, in some locations this was an easier task than in others. In India, the YWCA was predominantly populated by the British women in the colonial infrastructure and missions, who, although of the same race, were upper class and married. USYWCA Secretaries therefore sought out younger women who were single and professionals. These women tended to be Anglo-Indian (mixed race) or Indian Christians, statuses that were more compatible with the USYWCA's general anti-imperial stance. In Argentina, the women were the transient European women, who were single and in need of further educational training so that they could increase white-collar job skills. In the Philippines, although the YWCA worked with Filipinas, they often privileged the needs of white American girls, and USYWCA Secretaries themselves. In Nigeria, Celestine Smith tended to interact with women like Mrs. Obasa—the college educated Nigerian elite and intelligentsia. In each of these cases, these women were likely to be part of the ruling classes, because they were generally familiar with Euro-American culture and customs, either because they were originally from these regions, or

¹⁰ For the extensive historiography on the U.S. as a governmental, military, or commercial empire, see the introduction. Emily S. Rosenberg stands as a contrast to this scholarship. See Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream*; Rosenberg, *Financial Missionaries to the World*.

¹¹ Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*, 16.

because they were “local” women who had gone to school or traveled in Europe or America. The YWCA’s activities therefore tended to support a global elite.

However, USYWCA Secretaries did not merely support these women by providing safe and culturally familiar places for them to gather. Instead, USYWCA Secretaries intended that all women who came into contact with the YWCA would absorb U.S. culture, which could be very similar to those the women were used to, or very different. For example, for the women who were Euro-American, such as the U.S. girls in the Philippine camp or the Patriotic Society women in the Buenos Aires YWCA building, the YWCA could serve as a cultural bolster in the face of local conditions that the USYWCA felt threatened U.S. women. For the Hindu and Muslim women in India, the Filipinas, or the Nigerian women, the cultural space of Y-space was likely to be fairly different not only because it was “Western” but because it was from the United States. For USYWCA Secretaries, the end goal of Y-space was that both of these groups of women would be created or re-created in the USYWCA Secretaries’ own image. They would manifest lived Christianity, and be ecumenical rather than tied to a specific ideology. They would be geographically mobile, comfortable in a variety of locations as well as urban contexts and the public sphere. They would be physically self-sufficient, and self-monitoring. Finally, they would be open to fellowship with women of other races, and stand on equal footing with them.

This meant that Y-space was in essence, to use Jean and John Comaroff’s term, an attempt at U.S. “colonization of consciousness.” These efforts to institute cultures of Western modernity and European capitalism “had, and continues to have, enormous historical force- a force at once ideological and economic, semantic and social.”¹² As the British missionaries had done with the Tswana people in the Comaroff’s study, so too did the USYWCA Secretaries

¹² Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 4.

attempt to reform the “habits of the people,” a project that involved engaging women in ways that the USWYCA Secretaries themselves controlled, and in which interactions they were able to institute “the hegemonic forms, the taken-for-granted tropes, of the colonizing culture.”¹³ These tropes are evident in the Secretaries’ attempts to convert Indian women to Christianity and marking a difference between Christian and non-Christian women; in their efforts to replicate USYWCA buildings in Argentina, with their class assumptions; in trying to maintain divisions based on race and nationality in the Philippines; and in privileging their own racial stereotypes about Nigerian women and protecting their racial status as white women within the United States. In cultivating ties to elite and Euro-American women, the USYWCA Secretaries helped to support racial hierarchies that were deeply rooted in imperialism. In other words, while the USYWCA Secretaries may have envisioned themselves as creating a fellowship that fulfilled the World YWCA motto of being “Not By Might, Nor By Power, But by Spirit,” that fellowship and perpetuated both might and power, even as it denied the use of both.

¹³ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 199.

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