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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON
FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS AND SOCIAL
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School of Humanities

Eve in the Renegade City: Elite Jewish
Women's Philanthropy in Chicago,
1890–1900
by
Hannah Mary Farmer

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
September 2012

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON
ABSTRACT
FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES
Doctor of Philosophy
EVE IN THE RENEGADE CITY: JEWISH WOMEN'S
PHILANTHROPY IN CHICAGO, 1890–1900
by Hannah Mary Farmer

This thesis examines the philanthropic organisations and projects with which elite Jewish women in Chicago were concerned during the years 1890–1900. It concentrates on the *National Council of Jewish Women*, which was founded by a group of Chicago women in 1893 after the Jewish Women's Congress at the World's Columbian Exposition. The NCJW was this community's highest-profile philanthropic organisation, bringing them local, national and international attention.

The 1890s were a turbulent decade—politically, socially and economically. Against this backdrop, Chicago's philanthropists were pioneers of the Progressive Movement. The NCJW showed early interest in Progressivism, but came from a Jewish community with set notions of appropriate roles for women. The NCJW's leaders encouraged philanthropic innovation, but presented themselves very traditionally, as 'model' American women. Previous scholarship has emphasised the conservative character of the NCJW, suggesting that it was only different from contemporaries by having a Jewish membership. This thesis will show that this was not the case.

Beginning with an introduction to Chicago and Chicago's Jewish community, this thesis contextualises these women's philanthropic work. It then moves on to examine—in greater detail than can be found in existing scholarship—the foundation and early years of the NCJW. Its final two chapters address the other philanthropic organisations and projects with which elite Jewish women were associated, within and outside of the Jewish community, showing that they were intimately involved in Progressive philanthropy.

The philanthropic activities of this group show them to have been far more radically-minded than has generally been thought. Their work with the NCJW brought them influence and acclaim which has been forgotten. This thesis seeks to provide a deeper understanding of this group and their work, placing them within the context of the time and place in which they lived.

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Author's Declaration

I, Hannah Mary Farmer, declare that the thesis entitled "Eve in the Renegade City: Jewish Women's Philanthropy in Chicago, 18900–1900" and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- none of this work has been published before submission

Signed

Date

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1

Introduction

On almost every occasion when scholars of American-Jewish history have discussed the *National Council of Jewish Women*, an assumption appears to have been made that the form they took at their height in the mid-twentieth century was somehow inevitable. Hannah Solomon, the organisation's first president, is recalled as an old lady comfortably remembering her earlier years; the image of her that remains on the organisation's website today is of her in her eighties. But when she—and a small group of other Chicago women—began their work, they were young women. Hannah Solomon in her youth was funny, fearless, and not always kind. She was a woman who, on visiting Taft's White House, made a somewhat undiplomatic joke about the President's size in a travel diary written for her family's amusement.¹ It is this side of her that is missing when we imagine her, our view largely shaped by

¹Hannah G Solomon Collection, American Jewish Archive, Cincinnati, Box 1, Folder 12

the memorial literature that the *NCJW* produced about her after her death, and from her own autobiography, written in the early 1940s and not published until after her death.

The same can be said of her co-founders and of the ambitions they had for the organisation they started. Scholars, when recalling the many successes of the *NCJW*, seem to have been at pains to point out that “they were not feminists in the current sense of the word.”² The founders are dismissed as simply “middle-class clubwomen.”³ Others have been a little more generous, admitting that the *NCJW*’s founders presented their “philosophy and accomplishments in terms that clearly conveyed their commitment to women’s rights”, but limit that by noting that the organisation “was located firmly within a centrist politics common to women of their class and political viewpoint.”⁴ In short, much of the literature has viewed the *NCJW* as a rather conservative organisation, distinct from other organisations for middle-class clubwomen in existence for twenty years or more by the 1890s only because of their Jewish membership. The *NCJW*, they seem to say, was only Jewish in name, and innovative only by the accident of being the first to have an opportunity to build a network of Jewish women. Its aim was to teach its members to fit in when starting a new life in America, and through their philanthropic work to teach new immigrants from Eastern Europe to fit in too. The first book on American Jewish women’s history was unequivocal on this point, even titling the section on German-Jewish women “Assimilation Was Their Goal.”⁵ Even the most recent work on the topic, while noting that the *NCJW* provided women with a “distinctive voice which could not be

²Charlotte Baum, Paula Hyman, and Sonya Michel. *The Jewish Woman in America*. New York: Plume, 1975, pp.47–8.

³Schuly Rubin Schwartz. *The Rabbi’s Wife: The Rebbetzin in American Jewish Life*. New York: New York University Press, 2006, p.20.

⁴Mary McCune. *The Whole Wide World, Without Limits: International Relief, Gender Politician and American Jewish Women, 1893-1930*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2005, p.19–20.

⁵Baum, Hyman, and Michel, *The Jewish Woman in America*, op. cit., p.17.

ignored", unequivocally labels the organisation "not feminist."⁶

Nevertheless, the way in which she and her contemporaries described themselves and their work suggests that their aims, and their perception of themselves, was rather different. In her opening address to the 1893 Jewish Women's Congress, Solomon proudly proclaimed that "living as we do, in this renegade city, belonging to radical congregations, thoroughly in sympathy with all endeavours to break down barriers," her ambitions tended towards the transformative. "Perhaps... we may overcome some of the inherited prejudices, unfavourable to us, and if we cannot gain sympathy, we may at least command respect."⁷ Whatever the limits of the realities of building a national organisation for Jewish women would demand, the organisation that Solomon and her co-founders imagined was serious in its intentions to improve the status of Jewish women, inside their community and within American society at large.

Speaking later the same morning, Henrietta Frank (Solomon's older sister) spoke about the challenges they faced as 'modern women'.

The woman of our day, like Eve, the All-Mother, stretches out her hand for the fruit of the tree of knowledge, that she may know good from evil; though she lose the paradise of ignorance, she may gain the field of honest endeavor. The serpent appears to her, not as Satan, the tempter, but rather as the companion of Minerva, symbol of wisdom and eternity.⁸

Comparing themselves to the first biblical woman—Eve—the Chicago women who founded the NCJW reformulated the story to their own ends, giving Eve the choice that they saw for themselves: stay in

⁶Tobias Brinkmann. *Sundays At Sinai: A Jewish Congregation in Chicago*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012, p.201.

⁷Hannah G. Solomon. "Address". In: *Papers of the Jewish Women's Congress, 1893*. The Jewish Publication Society, 1894, pp.10–12, p.12.

⁸Henriette Greenebaum Frank. "Jewish Women of Modern Days". In: *Papers of the Jewish Women's Congress, 1893*. The Jewish Publication Society, 1894, pp.43–51, p.43.

the home where tradition kept them safe from the turbulence of the *fin-de-siècle*, or choose to go out into their communities and educate themselves about the ways in which they could most effectively help those they saw in need.

The women of the NCJW would not always be successful, indeed they would not always speak with one voice, or even agree on the most basic of issues of policy, but for the women of Chicago's established Jewish community, who took the largest share in shaping the NCJW, the mission was clear. They were from the 'Renegade City' whose social innovators were beginning the drive into the Progressive Era. Their social status has allowed a number of them membership in some of the city's elite women's organisations, but they would take the knowledge they had gained there and share it with other Jewish women who had not had those opportunities. They would even do so in cities where progressivism had not yet taken hold. They would modernise themselves, something their membership of Radical Reform synagogues demanded, and show that Jewish women could stand alongside their non-Jewish associates to meet all the expectations placed upon American women of their day. They used their organisation to carefully choreograph a performance of womanhood acceptable for the cultural demands of Judaism and the American context, navigating pressures from both inside their community and outside it, hoping that acting as if they had status and respect, it would become a reality.

The *National Council of Jewish Women* became a key institution in the lives of many American Jewish women. Its reach was felt far beyond its membership. As the only organisation the American government allowed onto Ellis Island to assist single female immigrants in the first years of the twentieth century, it would not be an exaggeration to say that it was a point of contact for millions of women. It also played a role in developing access to contraception for many Jewish women in the 1920s and 1930s, with a number of Sections (as the organisation's local groups were known) operating women's health clinics in their communities. These issues are now beginning to be

explored, but there is still much about the NCJW which can be explored. In particular, the very early years of the organisation are not well understood. The main source for the study of this period has been Hannah Solomon's autobiography. Although it provides a fascinating overview of Solomon's life and experiences, as a source it has a number of major limitations. It was written in the 1940s, when Solomon was in her eighties; it was only published posthumously, and therefore questions might be asked about the ways in which her manuscript was edited after her death. Most obviously, by the time it was written, the NCJW was a successful organisation, and therefore the picture painted of the organisation's first decade is coloured by hindsight. Solomon's narrative, one which is not presented chronologically, but instead is partially organised thematically, describes what could be thought of as the high points of that period. It is written with the foreknowledge that the NCJW would succeed, something not at all clear at the time. It also plays an active role in creating a mythology for the foundation of the organisation. Schuly Rubin Schwartz has shown how *Hadassah* "engaged in... 'myth-worship' " of their founder Henrietta Szold, and in much the same way, the NCJW created a narrative for its own foundation and early years within Solomon's lifetime, and celebrated her seventieth and eightieth birthdays in the same way it celebrated the anniversaries of the organisation's foundation, tying Solomon and the NCJW together inextricably.⁹ As part of the canon of the NCJW's myth-worship of Solomon, her autobiography must necessarily be understood as one part of this story, alongside a number of other sources.

However, not all of the limits placed on the way in which the NCJW could represent itself were internally determined. Though the late nineteenth century was an era of profound social change, and was a point at which the opportunities for women expanded vastly, there were still great number of limits on the behaviour of women. It was accepted

⁹Schuly Rubin Schwartz. "Henrietta Szold: The Making of an Icon". In: *New Essays in American Jewish History*. Ed. by Jonathan D. Sarna. Ktav Publishing House, 2010, pp.455-466, p.458.

that women were beginning to move outside the home and make a place in public life, but there were rigid limits on the way this could be discussed; activities within the community which were tacitly accepted became unacceptable if public attention became too great. This was especially true within the established Jewish community, which at the time was not especially large. A degree of communal unity could be ensured by allowing more conservative members of the community to turn a blind eye to what they might otherwise have seen as intolerable behaviour.

While these sources have undoubtedly limited the way in which the *NCJW* has been understood, other factors must also be considered, chief among them a historiographical bias towards the majority of the Jewish community in this period: the new Eastern European Jewish immigrants. As the much larger group, it is not surprising that they have had more attention. As many of the scholars of Jewish history who have studied this period are the children and grandchildren of these immigrants, the historiography has been coloured in other ways. To some extent, the history of the *NCJW* has been written by those they set out to help. The first scholars to study American Jewish Women's History suggested that "East European Jewish women—energetic, pragmatic, and often financially astute—created quite a different impression from their German Jewish counterparts," explicitly presented as none of these things.¹⁰

Any serious examination of this group must not shy away from the times when the attitudes of the women of the *NCJW* were unkind at best, and actively prejudiced at worst. However, as discussed in the first chapter, the relationship between these two groups was characterised by a great deal of miscommunication. Often the attempts of the established Jewish community to Americanise the new immigrants were interpreted—at the time, and by later scholars—as proof that the Established Jewish community was indifferent to Judaism, lacking in religious sincerity and had a profound distaste for the new immigrants.

¹⁰Baum, Hyman, and Michel, *The Jewish Woman in America*, op. cit., p.55–6.

To an extent this might be true, but it has led to a specific framework of perception in which the actions of the NCJW have been placed. The possibility that these women were true activists has been dismissed without a clear understanding of the work they undertook.

This thesis looks at the years 1890 to 1900. This covers the creation of the Jewish Women's Congress, from which the National Council of Jewish Women grew, to the organisation's second triennial, held in 1900. By this time, it had established itself as a robust organisation and gained the features which would carry it into the twentieth century in more or less the form it has today. However, those early years are far more turbulent than the existing literature suggests; the organisation's final form was not an inevitability, but rather a product of specific events. By examining this period in detail, gaps in the narrative can be filled in and the circumstances which shaped it can be better understood. It is hoped, therefore, that it will be possible to reconsider actions which have seemed to others to demonstrate a lack of care for Jewish religiosity, or an exclusionary attitude, or a wish to limit the meaning of Judaism.

Before any analysis can begin there are a number of key terms which must be defined. Chief amongst them, of course, is philanthropy itself. Although a general understanding of the term is assumed by many scholars who have written on the subject, the term has a range of meanings that in fact differ substantially, and has changed meanings over time. This is further complicated by the fact that the term charity is often used alongside philanthropy, sometimes as a synonym, and sometimes with a subtly different meaning. This thesis will use the definition of philanthropy put forth in the edited collection, *Charity, Philanthropy and Civility in American History* which provides perhaps the most complete discussion of the role that philanthropy has played in American life. They define philanthropy as the means by which an individual or group works to impose their vision 'of the good life' (religiously motivated or not) on those around them.¹¹ This broad

¹¹Lawrence J Freidman and Mark D McGarvie, eds. *Charity, Philanthropy and Civility*

definition allows comparisons to be made across time and space, and allows a far greater range of groups and projects to be considered.

Another key idea within this thesis is that of the 'Established Jewish Community'. This label for the group in Chicago from which the founders of the *National Council of Jewish Women* came is perhaps not the one most frequently used. Often it is labeled as the German-Jewish community, or the Reform Jewish community. Prior to the 1880s, they perhaps could just have been described simply as the Chicago Jewish Community, but as the wave of new Eastern European Jewish immigrants arrived, a new way of describing the community was needed, something which proved as problematic at the time as it has to later historians. The overarching narrative that has been applied to the migration of Jews to the United States has been one of waves. The five-volume collection *The Jewish People in America*, published with the American Jewish Historical Society in 1992, provides a classic example of this view. In its second volume, *A Time for Gathering*, Hasia Diner deals with the years 1820 to 1880, classically understood to be the era of German-Jewish migration, by many scholars. Diner succeeds in problematising the idea of a strictly German Jewish period by looking at the areas from which migrants actually came, both in a geographical sense and in terms of their cultural origins. She even goes on to suggest that the term German Jews should be dropped altogether.¹² Tobias Brinkmann has looked at the issues with specific reference to Chicago, showing that the term 'German Jew' was in popular use in the period rather than 'American Jew'. He points out that the term 'German Jew' was rarely used prior to mass migration from Eastern Europe, and therefore must be understood within the context of anxiety over identity. Brinkmann suggests that by 1881 the German language had lost its importance; certainly the community took many pains to publicly associate themselves with the English language.¹³ Hannah Solomon

in American History. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p.10.

¹²Hasia R Diner. *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1993, p.30.

¹³Tobias Brinkmann. "Ethnic Difference and Civic Unity: A Comparason of Jewish

was very clear on the subject, writing in her autobiography that the change occurred after Jewish children began to be sent to Illinois Public Schools, where a switch had recently been made to teaching in English only.

When the children of the Jewish pioneers started to attend public schools, English soon replaced German in the homes, and, some time later, in the Synagogue as well, to the point where the third generation scarcely realised that German had ever been used in religious services.¹⁴

Additionally, while those Jews who had migrated to the United States in the mid-century had largely been German-speaking, a significant proportion of the new immigrants were coming from the same countries, the two groups being separated much more by class and the rural/urban divide than they were by a truly physical distance. The idea of an 'Established Jewish Community' will be used in this thesis, in recognition of the problematic nature of a strict separation between an earlier German migration and a later Eastern-European migration. Whatever their origins, their community had really been created in Chicago, but to label them the American-Jewish community is equally problematic as it implies that the other parts of the Chicago-Jewish community were not American.

The final idea which must be explained at the outset is that of performativity. Whilst the literature on this subject has often assumed that the public presentation of an organisation largely matched its aims and ideals, scholars such as Judith Butler and Homi Bhabha and their work on performativity allow a more nuanced analysis. Butler's groundbreaking work in the last twenty years has led to a much broader understanding of the performative nature of gender identity; that is

Communal Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century German and U.S. Cities". In: *Philanthropy, Patronage and Civil Society: Experiences from Germany, Great Britain and North America*. Ed. by Thomas Adam. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004, pp. 179–197, p.195.

¹⁴Hannah G. Solomon. *The Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*. New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1946, p.30.

to say, a culturally-determined expectation of what it means to be a woman or a man is what determines the way in which people perform gender.¹⁵ Homi Bhabha has explored the ways in which this is also true of cultural identity, particularly the ways in which people create hybrid identities, combining two or more cultures.¹⁶ Key to understanding the women of Chicago's Established Jewish Community is understanding the ways in which they performed their identity and negotiated the various aspects of their hybrid identities, as women, as Jews and as Americans.

Historiographically, there are a number of influences on this thesis. While it is centred on the history of American Jewry, it seeks to do away with some of the strict separation which has sometimes characterised work on the *National Council of Jewish Women*. The established Jewish community did not live in isolation, and the historiographical influences on this work should reflect the diversity of influences on this group. By seeking to reflect the inter-disciplinary crossroads of American Jewish History, Women's History, the history of Philanthropy and particularly the intellectual history of Progressivism, it becomes easier to understand the ways in which the *National Council of Jewish Women* and the women who created the organisation were a product of their age. It also seeks to combine an understanding of the very local, by examining the ways in which the city of Chicago—with its distinctive culture—played a role in shaping these women's lives and opinions, and the international, by looking at the intellectual connections between the United States and Europe (particularly London) and the way in which these connections shaped this group of women's attitudes to philanthropy. Previous studies, particularly Brinkman's work, have largely looked at the connections between this community and Germany; whilst it has certainly been shown that the relationship between Chicago's Established Jewish Community and the Reform Jewish community in Germany was important, this thesis shows that

¹⁵Judith Butler. *Gender Trouble*. London: Routledge, 1990.

¹⁶Homi Bhabha. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.

personal and intellectual connections to London's Jewish elite were profoundly significant to this group's attitude towards philanthropy.¹⁷

While any thesis is shaped by its historiographical positioning, it is inevitably also affected by other factors. The sources available are key to the story which can be told. At the outset of this project, it was intended to be based largely on personal papers and on the records of the Chicago Section of the *National Council of Jewish Women*. However, only three months into the project, the Chicago Jewish Archive based at Spertus College in Chicago closed its doors due to financial pressures. While this undoubtedly shifted the focus of the project, it also opened up the possibility of using a wealth of new sources which have presented new avenues of analysis and provided unexpected insight into the relationships between public and private understandings of philanthropy.

The 1890s were, above all, a period of transition. This is reflected in this thesis. It was period of profound anxiety about identity, not just for the Established Jewish Community, but also for wider American society. As the Gilded Age gave way to the Progressive Era, and as immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe began in earnest, the question of who could and who could not become an American was debated and redefined; and as roles in the public sphere for women expanded, ideas of masculinity and femininity were also called into question. It is no accident that it was in the 1890s that eugenics and other racial theories were popularised. It is against the background of this turbulence that the first years of the *National Council of Jewish Women* must be understood. Whilst so much of the previous literature on the subject has treated questions of aims, ideals and actions as settled, this thesis will show that the *National Council of Jewish Women* was a product of its time, and through the 1890s it participated in these debates, before finding itself—by the early twentieth century—in a form which later generations would embrace.

¹⁷Brinkmann, *Sundays At Sinai: A Jewish Congregation in Chicago*, op. cit.

2

Chicago: the Context

2.1 Chicago and its Culture

For Chicagoans of the 1890s, their city was an image of the future. It was *the* modern city, built out of a swampy lake shore. Less than sixty years earlier, it had been only a collection of wooden cabins; twenty years earlier it had burned to the ground. Chicago seemed to be an embodiment of the possibilities of the age; it seemed to represent all of the promise of the new American century. Conversely, as a teeming industrial metropolis which—along with the rest of the United States—was plunged in and out of recession throughout the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s, it was the site of profound poverty and deprivation, with crowded, unsanitary housing, notorious government corruption and slums from which there was little hope of escape.

The Jewish community grew along with the city, and provides, in many ways, a microcosm of the issues the whole city faced. The first

Jewish residents of the city arrived in the 1830s. As the city grew, so did the Jewish community, through both immigration from German-speaking Western Europe and internal migration from the East Coast and rural Midwest. By the 1890s though, the flow of Jewish migration from Yiddish-speaking Eastern Europe had begun, and for the first time the city's Jewish community was faced with Jews who spoke a different language, and from whom they were profoundly culturally different.

The experiences of city life and the particularities of Chicago life were key not only in the ways in which Chicagoans performed philanthropy, but also to the city's collective decision to place emphasis on philanthropy. Whilst it is unarguably true that the performance of philanthropy was a cultural imperative throughout the nineteenth century, Chicago's centrality to the early stages of the Progressive Movement speaks to the ways in which Chicago's philanthropists sought innovative ways to improve their city. The *NCJW*, though it has not often been considered as such, deserves mention amongst these innovators. A detailed examination of its foundation and early years supports this. But, of course, if the argument is to be made that the specific conditions which lead to the *NCJW*'s foundation—in its particular form—was unique to this point in history, and this particular city, then the time and place must be considered.

2.2 Space and Time

2.2.1 Space and Philanthropy

The 1890s were a period of massive economic, social and military upheaval in Chicago, but also in the United States more generally. The highs of the World's Columbian Exposition were matched by the lows of economic and industrial unrest, such as the Pullman Strike and ensuing riot. In a period before the creation of a federal welfare system, private philanthropy was key to Chicago's ability to grow and

to respond to crises. While the mores of the post-reconstruction 'Gilded Age' allowed that philanthropy could be practiced from within the protected confines of an elite network of "centrally located institutions," new conventions stressed the importance of personal interaction with the poor in their own neighbourhoods.¹⁸ However, scholarship has often paid little attention to the idea of space when studying those changing mores. But in fact, the spatial aspects of these mores are key to successfully understanding them. Shirley Ardener has pointed out that

Structural relationships, such as in hierarchies or other ranking patterns are frequently, but not necessarily, realised on 'the ground' by the placing of individuals in space. In many situations we find (real or metaphysical) spaces within spaces.¹⁹

The complex web of social hierarchies—based on race, class, gender, level of integration and countless other factors—in which these philanthropists operated, when mapped onto the city of Chicago as it grew and changed, can illuminate the way these women were able to "codify and confront the worlds [they] create[ed]."²⁰

These maps are not simple, and must not represent only the physical spaces that these women inhabited but also take into account imaginary spaces that shaped these women's world. Through them we can chart people's self-perception and perception of the city, as well as the boundaries they attempted to impose on the city's other residents. Examining the ways in which these women confronted the city, moved through the city and attempted to shape the city in their preferred image can illuminate the cultural differences between groups.

¹⁸Kathleen D McCarthy. *Noblesse Oblige: Charity and Cultural Philanthropy in Chicago 1849-1929*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982, p.99.

¹⁹S Ardener, ed. *Women and Space: Ground Rules and Social Maps*. Providence, RI: Berg, 1993, p.3.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p.1.

But this generation's experience of the city/space was not a product simply of changing cultural practice but of its particular place on the road to modernity. Indeed, the story of western urbanisation is well-explored. As the city grew, however, its use of space changed. Rather than confining the poor to the margins, with the wealthy occupying streets radiating out from the centre like the "spokes of a great half-wheel", as had been the case before the destruction of 1871's Great Fire, now the slums occupied bands through which the wealthy had to pass when travelling from their homes to the commercial and social centres.²¹ Choices about mobility in the city were also based on gender. While men from all levels of society were able to move through the city as part of their expected economic activities, women were often confined to spaces closer to home. Wealthier women, in fact, were even more spatially confined as there was no economic necessity for them to leave the home, or come into contact with different areas of the city. Philanthropic activity provided a way for Chicago's elite women to be a part of their city in a far more active way. It enabled a self-fulfilling prophecy: the more women were able to leave their immediate environment to help those in need, the more they came into contact with people in need, and therefore they were able to move into new spaces providing more assistance. Philanthropy opened up the city for many women.

From the 1870s, then, it could be argued that inner-city slums could be included on the social maps experienced by the wealthy. In reality, particularly for women who travelled largely in cabs and privately-owned carriages, this was a space which was ignored as much as possible and kept strictly behind carriage doors. By the end of the century, as public transport improved and became a more respectable option for women, the journey through the slums began to include interaction with these neighbourhoods and the people who lived there. Conversely, women who lived in slum neighbourhoods

²¹Thomas Lee Philpott. *The Slum and The Ghetto: Immigrants, Blacks and Reformers in Chicago, 1880-1930*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1991, pp.6, 10, 16.

but worked in wealthier neighbourhoods or Chicago's central business district might share the same spaces as their employer, but experience those spaces very differently. Melissa Gilbert has suggested that rather than simply mapping the mobility of women in the city, the power structures associated with that mobility must be equally understood. The wealthy were given choices about when and where they wanted to travel whereas the poor's decisions were governed by economic necessity.²²

2.2.2 The Development of the City

The natural environment from which Chicago grew is key to understanding its character and cultures. William Cronon's *Nature's Metropolis* was the first work to look in detail at the ways in which the physical features of the Midwestern landscape influenced Chicago's development, and its relationship with the rest of the continent. Later scholarship, particularly Marco d'Eramo's *The Pig and the Skyscraper*, developed these themes and added insight into the ways that the natural environment in which Chicago was placed is key to understanding its character and cultures.

Perched on the edge of Lake Michigan, a body of water so vast that it might more accurately be seen as an inland sea, it radiates in a semicircle from the downtown centre. The urban sprawl bleeds into suburb after suburb, covering 16 counties and spilling into three states, whose easy annexation was helped by the flat prairie. Though the twentieth century hastened this process, it was one that was already well underway by 1890. Chicago grew exponentially both in population and physical size—hardly slowed by the destruction of the 1871 fire—to become “one of the five great metropolises of the globe.”²³ But

²²Melissa Gilbert. ““Race”, Space and Power: The Survival Strategies of Working Poor Women”. In: *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88.4 (1998), pp. 595–621, p.598.

²³Philpott, *The Slum and The Ghetto: Immigrants, Blacks and Reformers in Chicago, 1880-1930*, op. cit., p.5.

despite its key position as a mid-continental hub for the transport of people and goods it should not be forgotten that the landscape can be remarkably harsh: hot and humid in summer, frozen in winter, with snow exacerbated by the lake and by winds so strong they provided the place with an enduring nickname. Even its original site, a swamp on the lake-shore, had to be tamed before the city could take root. This was a place built, not in its place, but in spite of it. This spirit of a city taking on nature and winning seems to loom large in Chicago's self-image; perhaps even more at the end of the nineteenth century, when only 20 years after the place must have seemed all but dead, it beat out New York and Washington DC to hold the World's Columbian Exposition.²⁴

The city's shape in the landscape, the suburbs growing denser into the city proper, represents the imposition of three dimensions on a flat landscape; its skyscrapers provide the 'up' that nature missed. Its a common anecdote that from the top of the Willis Tower (which will always be the Sears Tower to locals) you can see all the way to Indiana. From these man-made vantage points, Chicago seems entirely foreign to its surroundings; to one side, the lake, to the other, in the distance, rural Illinois becomes the agricultural heartland, far removed from the industrial cosmopolitanism of the city. To the north, the expensive lake shore suburbs of Evanston and Wilmette, to the south the former industrial heartland of Gary, Indiana, now left to ruin by the changing Midwestern economy.

2.2.3 Imagined Spaces

Some spaces, though, existed only in the imaginations of those in the city, though their existence is reflected in much of the late-nineteenth century literature on the subject. One of the most famous social mapping projects of the time was the *Hull-House Maps and Papers*, the

²⁴Gilbert, "'Race', Space and Power: The Survival Strategies of Working Poor Women", op. cit., p.2.

published version of which includes sections on each ethnic district as if they were separate entities, though the maps adjacent to them show that most blocks in the area mapped were thoroughly mixed.²⁵ This was, in fact, the case all over the city. Though some neighbourhoods gained a reputation as 'Little Italy' or 'The Ghetto', no neighbourhood had an overall majority of any ethnicity. The identity of the viewer, however, imposed a specific identity on their own home which could contrast with that of their neighbour. While the Jewish residents of the Nineteenth Ward would see 'The Ghetto', marked by Kosher butchers and the Synagogue, their Italian neighbours would see 'Little Italy', marked by Italian shops and restaurants and Catholic churches. These spaces could exist on top of each other, marked by the perceptions of the viewer. They could also be marked by time, with a meeting hall taking on a different identity depending on which group was using it at the time. The one exception to this, even in the 1890s, was the small number of Black enclaves on the South Side. Though they were, as yet, a tiny minority (the Great Migration being thirty years in the future) they were the only group truly trapped in ethnically exclusive neighbourhoods.²⁶ This should not be taken to mean that new immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe were not victims of racial prejudice, nor that in this period Jews, Poles or Italians were considered truly 'white'. But race existed on a continuum according to theories of the day, and while some groups occupied a liminal space, taking on a 'white' identity in the twentieth century, Black Americans were absolutely the 'other'.²⁷

²⁵Agnes Sinclair Holbrook. "Map Notes and Comments". In: *Hull House Maps and Papers, 1895*. Ed. by Rima L. Schultz. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007, pp.53–62, p.59.

²⁶Philpott, *The Slum and The Ghetto: Immigrants, Blacks and Reformers in Chicago, 1880-1930*, op. cit., p.117–8.

²⁷Eric L. Goldstein. *The Price of Whiteness*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006, pp.12–6.

2.2.4 Chicago's Relationship with the Rest of the United States

Chicago's position within the United States changed with its rapid ascendancy; by the end of the nineteenth century its size and economic importance gave it a power which only the most enthusiastic of the boosters from the 1840s would have dared to imagine. But the city of Chicago, and its place in the United States cannot simply be measured in the flow of goods and people in and out of the city. Within the mental world of its citizens, another Chicago was defined, bound not by geographical or political limits, but rather as an imagined community to which its residents belonged. This is clearly reminiscent of Benedict Anderson's analysis of the nation state:

It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.²⁸

This conception of Chicago becomes increasingly salient in light of D'Eramo's suggestion that the relationships between nineteenth century American cities might be analogous to the relationships between ancient European city-states—with all the competition, aggrandisement, and creation of mythology that this suggests.²⁹ This city mythology laid out Chicago's unstoppable ascendancy, its place as America's 'Second City', and its new triumph in being awarded the Columbian Exposition—held to mark the 400th anniversary of Columbus's arrival in the Americas—which marked the 1890s as Chicago's coming of age. Chicago's ascendance was not just imagined by many rural Midwesterners who migrated to the city in the 1890s "spurred by the idea that a better life was only a train ride away, small town and rural Midwest-

²⁸Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1991, pp.6–7.

²⁹Marco d'Eramo. *The Pig and The Skyscraper - Chicago: A History of Our Future*. London: Verso, 2002, pp.144–5.

erners left their homes for Chicago, where their dreaming became an indelible part of the city and region's identity."³⁰

In order to imagine their own city's role in the United States, Chicago's residents placed their home into a context created by comparison to other cities. In the mid-century, these comparisons were made largely with Chicago's Midwestern neighbours; then the city's competitor for the position of dominant power in the region was St. Louis, with whom Chicago developed a longstanding rivalry.³¹ St. Louis was a city with a far longer history than Chicago's; founded as a French Colonial holding, it became a Spanish settlement then transferred back to French hands in 1800 before finally—after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803—becoming an American city. Its wealth was built through its role as a major port on the Mississippi river, giving the agriculture of the Midwest access to the cities of the South.³² Throughout the middle years of the nineteenth century, the boosters of both St. Louis and Chicago tried to convince eastern speculators of the superior potential of their respective cities, with the press enthusiastically participating in such smear tactics against their rival, something that Chicago newspapers also engaged with while dealing with Milwaukee, Detroit, Cincinnati, and most of its other Midwestern rivals.

For all the claims of the various natural advantages of each city, there were two key factors which cemented Chicago's ascendancy. First was the importance of the railways. St. Louis began to fall from its status as the Midwest's most important trade centre in the 1850s when, unlike Chicago, it was not included on the Rock Island Railroad's westward run. Secondly, the particular state politics of Illinois and Missouri

³⁰Timothy B. Spears. *Chicago Dreaming: Midwesterners and the City, 1871-1919*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992, p.23.

³¹The rivalry between Chicago and St. Louis, and in particular the way in which that rivalry was chronicled and perpetuated by the press in both cities, is extensively examined in Chapter 3 of Richard Junger's *Becoming the Second City: Chicago's Mass News Media, 1833-1898*.

³²Sandra Rubinstein Peterson. "'One Heart, Many Souls': The National Council of Jewish Women and Identity Formation in St. Louis, 1919-1950". PhD thesis. University of Missouri - Columbia, 2008, p.19.

were key. St. Louis was largely settled by migrants from the Northeast, but it found its economic growth strangled by state politicians who looked largely to Kentucky, South Carolina and Tennessee as examples. These southern states were slave-owning agrarian economies that were stagnating throughout the Antebellum period because of a disinclination to modernise and industrialise in contrast to their northern neighbours. Chicago's development was largely financed by those in the Northeast. The Illinois state government—although largely based in the Southern-leaning south of the state—were far more inclined to create infrastructure than their neighbours in Missouri, paying for such projects as the Illinois-Michigan Canal, which provided a key trade route from the Great Lakes to the Mississippi.³³

The Civil War, though not actively fought in either state, was also of profound influence. Although both Missouri and Illinois remained in the Union, in Missouri that status was essentially only nominal, with the state supplying arms, soldiers and supplies to both sides. Though it was not subject to armed occupation in the Postbellum period as the Confederate states were, Missouri did face a more painful Reconstruction than Illinois, and with its river trade heading into the economically barren South, the dominance it had held over Chicago was no longer obvious.³⁴

For a moment in 1871, as Chicago burned, St. Louis had a chance to once again gain the upper hand in the ongoing rivalry. But even the loss of eight square kilometres in the centre of Chicago, costing the city around a third of its wealth, seemed to barely slow the city's ascendancy. The reconstruction of Chicago became the United States' largest ever philanthropic campaign to date, as many insurance companies were bankrupted and so unable to pay claims given the scale of destruction. The city was quickly rebuilt with money from the East Coast, solidifying

³³Richard Junger. *Becoming the Second City: Chicago's Mass News Media 1833-1898*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010, p.81–3.

³⁴For discussion of Missouri in the Civil War see Nichols, Bruce, *Guerrilla Warfare in Civil War Missouri, Volume 2, 1863* and Siddali, Silvana R., *Missouri's War: The Civil War in Documents*

the relationship between Chicago and cities like Boston, Philadelphia and New York.³⁵

The idea of Chicago as the 'Second City' is, by now, a point of pride. The name is referenced in a number of organisations connected with the city, from sports blogs to the iconic comedy troupe. But at the end of the nineteenth century, with the city's growth in size, population and economic importance, it appeared that Chicago really could wrest New York from its spot as the most culturally and economically significant American city. It seems clear with a century's hindsight that this was never really a possibility, but for *fin de siècle* Chicagoans, a key part of imagining their home as the city of the future was the contrast with New York. This was, of course, in part driven by the great newspapers of each city, with both popular and highbrow titles becoming involved. This was particularly evident in the run-up to the selection of the host city for the quadricentennial of Columbus' 'discovery' of the Americas.³⁶ But New York was also an imagined entity, of more use as a yardstick against which Chicago could measure its progress than as a real place.

In the spring of 1900, the *Chicago Tribune* published a six part exposé, over subsequent Sundays, on the dire situation to be found in the New York slums. The series was written by Jacob A. Riis, who had already found fame as the author of 'How the Other Half Lives', the 1890 work of photojournalism which for the first time used the new technologies of flash photography to capture the conditions in New York's slums and sweatshops. Riis' work here served a dual purpose; the first article makes clear the intention of holding the situation in New York as a warning for other cities, but its publication was timed to coincide with the Illinois gubernatorial elections. Riis and the *Chicago Tribune's* editorial staff seem to imply that though Chicago's situation was infinitely better than that of New York, the Illinois electorate should be mindful, as the spectre of corrupt politicians could lead Chicago

³⁵McCarthy, *Noblesse Oblige: Charity and Cultural Philanthropy in Chicago 1849-1929*, op. cit., p.64-72.

³⁶A detailed chronicle of those discussions can be found in Junger's *Becoming the Second City* and in Weimann's *The Fair Women*.

towards the kind of degradation at this point suffered only in New York.³⁷

The slums of both cities were of course sites of horrific poverty, and there was no evidence that one was measurably worse than the other. What makes this series notable is the way in which it casts New York as warning for the future. This allowed the *Tribune* to cast Chicago as the up-and-coming metropolis, able to move into the future and avoid the mistakes of the past, while only occasionally mentioning New York at all, so ingrained were comparisons with New York in the minds of Chicagoans. This detachment lasted until the fourth part of the series, when the pretence was finally removed, and Riis published 'A Pre-Election Sermon for Chicago,' which described the conditions in Chicago's 19th and 16th Wards, the two poorest in the city. Here Riis makes a reversal of the conceit of his earlier articles, and points out the ways in which the conditions of Chicago's slums could be improved by following New York's example.³⁸ This was, however, only one of the six articles and by the next week the focus shifted back to New York. The final two articles return to the issues upon which the Illinois gubernatorial race was being fought, but they were once again framed as a discussion of the problems New York was facing.³⁹

This series of articles neither tells the reader much about what life was like on a day-to day basis in the slums of New York at the end of the nineteenth century, nor can it accurately show whether life was better in Chicago. In fact, these articles were glorified stump speeches for that year's Gubernatorial elections. However, they are key in understanding the way in which Chicago saw New York at the time. It is obvious that the *Tribune's* intention was to discuss the social issues which were of concern to the city's voters. But by presenting them through the lens of 'potential problems'—those problems which other cities faced, they retained their ability to present Chicago as the city of the future.

³⁷*Chicago Tribune*, March 11, 1900, p.37

³⁸*Chicago Tribune* April 1, 1900, p.37

³⁹*Chicago Tribune* April 8, 1900, p.57–8

New York is little more than a convenience for many of these articles. The *Tribune* simply confirmed the prejudices Chicagoans already held, depicting New York as the dark counterpart to Chicago's potential light.

2.2.5 The Midwest's Hub

A discussion of transport, and one that concentrates on the role of the railways, may seem a counterintuitive place to begin an examination of Chicago, but even in 1900 the vast majority of the city's inhabitants were migrants. Some belonged to the millions of European immigrants flooding into the United States in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries and some were internal migrants from the east coast or from the southern Illinois agricultural hinterland; but almost all would have arrived in the city in the same way: on the train. By the 1890s, the days of wagons on the prairie had come to a close, and whilst the lake still provided transport for some goods, the railways were Chicago's connection to the rest of the world. In 1893, during the World's Columbian Exposition, approximately one tenth of the United States' population visited Chicago, almost all arriving at one of the railway stations at the centre of the city. Indeed the experience was such a common one that it became standard in Chicago fiction of the 1890s. In his 1898 book *The Gospel of Freedom*, Robert Herrick suggested:

The complex quality of this wonderful city is best seen as the stranger shoots across the prairie in a railroad train, penetrating layer after layer of the folds. First in the great distance, rises a pall of dull smoke, shifting lethargically up and down the scene, as the lake wind or the land wind pulls and tugs at its mephitic dead body. Then the railroad, describing irregular curves, crosses lines of streets built up on embankments with oily ditches below, and intersected by cross streets that disappear into the marsh. . . At regular intervals lamp posts set high up on mounds indicate where

the city will place some day a solid level for actual, busy life.⁴⁰

Herrick goes on to describe the passage of the train through the edges of the city, on into its centre, coming to rest at one of the great terminus stations. His description is remarkably evocative of the transition of country to city but also shows how the railways created the potential for more city, both as transport for the constant flow of immigrants and as axes upon which development could be pinned. The Illinois Central Railroad even produced guidebooks in the 1860s about the land alongside their railway tracks, describing their best agricultural use in the hope that migrants would chose to settle there.⁴¹

Though the railways were undoubtedly linked to the experience of arrival in Chicago in the literary culture of the time, they also played an important role in the creation of the United States as a complete nation earlier in the century. The earliest railways were local projects, but between the Civil War and the end of the century, a project of standardisation was initiated. In the decade to 1890 the length of railway tracks in the United States doubled, creating, for the first time, a real national transport network.⁴² This network, and its system of hubs where one could change trains, defined the way in which nineteenth-century Americans experienced their country. The routes taken by the railways became the routes by which Americans saw their country; guidebooks were centred around the different railway routes by which an area could be seen. An 1891 edition of a guidebook for the western United States begins by explaining the options available:

From [Omaha, Kansas City or St Joseph] the journey to Denver can be taken by way of first class transportation lines provided with all the modern conveniences and luxuries.

⁴⁰Robert Herrick. *The Gospel of Freedom*. London: Macmillan, 1898, p.102–3.

⁴¹Guide to the Illinois Central Railroad Lands, 1868, <<http://www.archive.org/stream/guidetoillinoiscooill>>

⁴²Barbara Young Wilke. *Recasting American Liberty: Gender, Race, Law and the Railroad Revolution, 1856-1920*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p.14–15.

From Omaha one has choice of the Burlington route and the Union Pacific, and from Kansas City one can travel by either of the above lines with an additional choice—between the Missouri Pacific, the Rock Island, or the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe railroads. With Chicago... as the initial point one can go direct by any of the trunk lines to the Missouri River and continue his journey to Denver over his choice among the routes mentioned above.⁴³

‘Traveller’ and ‘railway passenger’ had become almost synonymous. By describing the routes taken by the various train lines—which by this point traversed the country—the experience of travelling around the country could be described with far more uniformity that had existed before, or indeed since. In this age before the car gave travellers real choice about the routes they could take when travelling, or the ability to make detours to places of specific interest to them, travel was a far more collective experience and gave Americans a far more uniform sense of their country.

The railways were key in the nineteenth century, not just in Chicago but nationally, as a definer of not only space but also of time. Indeed, it was the railways, as the first way the whole nation was truly connected, which demanded that time become universal throughout the country. Originally the United States formed a single timezone, but the sheer scale of the country made that unworkable. In 1889, the four timezones of the continental United States—with much the same boundaries as they have today—were imposed on the railway network, and named ‘Railroad Time.’⁴⁴ The railways also defined the temporal relationships between places in a much more practical way. By the 1890s the speed of trains was such that the time it took to travel places was no longer defined by the distance between two points, but by the available travel

⁴³Stanley Wood. *Over the Range to the Golden Gate: A complete tourist's guide to Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Nevada, California, Oregon, Puget Sound, and the great North-West*. Chicago: R. R. Donnelley and Sons, 1891, p.9.

⁴⁴Wilke, *Recasting American Liberty: Gender, Race, Law and the Railroad Revolution, 1856-1920*, op. cit., p.15.

options, creating the modern city in a much more recognisable form, with suburbia—dormitory towns where white collar workers lived, and from which they travelled into the city each day—emerging in familiar form.⁴⁵

In Chicago, the railways also had particular significance to the city's industrial and social life. The Pullman Factory, where sleeper cars which would be used all over the world were manufactured, was located just south of the city. A model town, named Pullman, was built to house the factory's workers, in the hopes that controlling their living environment would render them more sober and industrious. This project was not a success and later in the decade was the site of riots, but early in the decade it was hailed as the solution to slum neighbourhoods. Regular trains and trollies connected the Exposition fairground and Pullman, with tours sometimes conducted by George Pullman himself.⁴⁶ To the social and political elites of Chicago, the railways—or railway money, at least—would change the face of the city, and eliminate the deprived areas in which most Chicagoans lived.

It was the rail network, and the choice to make Chicago the major hub in the Midwest, which ensured that it became the region's main city. Chicago's nineteenth-century 'boosters' believed it was a confluence of natural factors: climate, soil, a 'natural harbour' or other natural features which lead to "key locations that nature had designed for urban greatness."⁴⁷ But those so-called natural features had to be transformed by European settlers in order to make them usable, and key amongst this stands the railway. Without the year-round transportation capabilities the railways brought, replacing roads so marshy as to be impassable at some times of the year, and providing more predictability than lake transport (which was dependent on weather conditions), the city's other advantages were marginal at best. Once the railways

⁴⁵Ibid., p.26.

⁴⁶James Gilbert. *Perfect Cities: Chicago's Utopias of 1893*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991, pp.135–6.

⁴⁷William Cronon. *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. New York: W.W.Norton, 1991, p.35.

arrived, though, Chicago became central to the Midwest's economic success, a hub for agricultural trade with links around North America and to Europe.⁴⁸ But with the railway's massive expansion in the 1880s and rapid acceptance as a clear signal of American modernity, their supremacy seemed predestined. Frederick Jackson—whose Frontier Thesis explanation of the development of the United States would be a foundation of American historical scholarship into the second half of the twentieth century—argued that although Chicago was shaped by the railways, this was simply an evolution of the American West, part of Chicago's natural advantage. It was not an accident that Jackson first explained his ideas in a speech made at the Columbian Exposition.⁴⁹

2.2.6 Transport in the City

While Chicago's relationship to the railways has been the subject of significant scholarly interest, the role of public transportation remains largely ignored.⁵⁰ Where public transport has been discussed it focuses on the first decades of the twentieth century, though Chicago had an extensive system of streetcars from 1890. The first parts of Chicago's elevated rapid transit system—known locally as the 'L' or 'El'—was opened in 1892, and had expanded to almost its modern size by the beginning of the twentieth century.⁵¹ The 'L' was one of the ubiquitous experiences of the Columbian Exposition, and yet is one which has been rarely examined. While the railroad would become one of the most common themes explored not only by scholars of Chicago's history but also by novelists of the period, the 'L' does not appear with the same frequency, for all that it is now frequently used to signify a Chicago

⁴⁸Harold, John, *Farming and Railroad Interests in America*, London:Cassell, Petter, Galpin &Co, 1880, pp.12, 45

⁴⁹Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*, op. cit., p.31.

⁵⁰S. Smith Carl. *Chicago and the American Literary Imagination, 1880-1920*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984, p.103.

⁵¹Brian J. Cudahy. *Destination Loop: The Story of Rapid Transit Railroading In and Around Chicago*. Lexington, MA: The Stephen Greene Press, 1982, p.7.

setting in film and television.⁵² The city's public transport system has marked the city so thoroughly that the city's central shopping district is named for the tracks which circle it, first for streetcars and now for the 'L': 'The Loop.'

Almost all visitors to Chicago in the 1890s would have arrived at one of Chicago's railway terminals, located at the city's centre. According to Gilbert, whose book *Perfect Cities* begins with a discussion of the ways in which people arrived in Chicago in 1893, guidebooks of the period provided extensive advice to the traveler on everything from station porters to cabs and hotels. Yet Gilbert makes no mention at all of the journey once in the city, as if once arrived in the city the experience of travel was no longer significant.⁵³ The 1893 Columbian Exposition was held at Jackson Park, far to the south of the city's commercial centre, necessitating cheap, convenient and accessible transport between the two districts. The *Chicago and South Side Rapid Transit Railroad Company* had begun operating a 3.6 mile service from Congress Street to 39th Street a year earlier, and the line was extended to the fairgrounds in time for the Exposition to open and twenty-six additional steam locomotives were brought into service.⁵⁴ There was an elevated railway system inside the Fair too; only four cars long, it was more of an attraction than a serious system of transportation, but it has the distinction of being the world's first electrified rapid-transit service.⁵⁵ By 1897, the entirety of Chicago's elevated railway system was electrified, and though there have been improvement projects in the years since, riding the 'L' around the centre of Chicago today remains one of the few experiences that can still be shared with the Chicagoans of a hundred years ago.⁵⁶

According to Carl S. Smith, the 1880s and 1890s were the point at which Chicago as a city became lodged in the American consciousness.

⁵²Smith, *Chicago and the American Literary Imagination, 1880-1920*, op. cit., p.103.

⁵³Gilbert, *Perfect Cities: Chicago's Utopias of 1893*, op. cit., p.63.

⁵⁴Cudahy, *Destination Loop: The Story of Rapid Transit Railroading In and Around Chicago*, op. cit., p.11-2.

⁵⁵Ibid., p.25.

⁵⁶Smith, *Chicago and the American Literary Imagination, 1880-1920*, op. cit., p.103.

It was certainly the point at which Chicago began to be represented in American literature. One of the tropes commonly observed in the Chicago literary scene of the 1890s was an almost voyeuristic way of looking at the world:

In a city without natural elevations, the train (especially the el) and the taller building are the only commonly accessible places from which to enjoy a comprehensive view of Chicago. . . The elevated train moves close enough to the buildings it passes for one to see architectural detail and glimpses of office and domestic life that the walker on the street rarely notices. . . In no other way can one see so much of Chicago so quickly and so well.⁵⁷

The window as a way to see the world and be seen is an ongoing theme in Chicago literature of this period, and scholars have particularly noted its use in one of the most famous Chicago novels of the 1890s, Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*.⁵⁸ The descriptions found in Chicago's newspapers as the first elevated railways opened confirm that this voyeuristic streak; the ability to peek into the homes and workplaces of Chicagoans had not gone unnoticed. Indeed, unlike the elevated railways in New York, which were the only other ones in operation at this early date, Chicago's 'L' did not run above roads, but took advantage of the alleys behind properties allowing the passenger to see "bits of domestic life usually hidden from passing crowds. . . [as] servant girls and chambermaids left their work to watch from back porches the fast-flying trains as they went by."⁵⁹ Not only did these new trains afford their passengers the opportunity to assuage their nosiness, they allowed their passengers to see parts of the city they might otherwise avoid.

⁵⁷Ibid., p.107.

⁵⁸Bill Brown. "The Matter of Dreiser's Modernity". In: *The Cambridge Companion to Theodore Dreiser*. Ed. by Leonard Cassuto and Clare Virginia Eby. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp.83-99, p.87.

⁵⁹Cudahy, *Destination Loop: The Story of Rapid Transit Railroad In and Around Chicago*, op. cit., p.11.

The journey between Chicago's centre and the Jackson Park site of the Fair, now Hyde Park—and oasis of affluence home to the University of Chicago—required the traveller then, as it does now, to cross through some of the most deprived areas of the city. Largely still in operation as the south section of the CTA's Green Line, the tracks crossed some of the poorest neighbourhoods in the city, skirting the edge of what Philpott calls the 'Inner Belt' of poor immigrant communities butting up against the west side of South State Street.⁶⁰ Travelling this corridor, the levels of poverty would have been obvious, and indeed the squalor in the alleys of the South Side gained a degree of notoriety through the works of reformers, such as those in Hull-House who noted that: "Rear tenements and alleys form the core of the district and it is there that the densest crowds and the most wretched and destitute congregate".⁶¹ It therefore seems that more than maids on back porches could have been seen by those looking out of the window of the train.

The South Side was not, however, simply home to some of the city's poorest communities but was also the site of some of Chicago's heaviest industrial use, including the stockyards. These were vast slaughterhouses on an industrial scale, and still growing in the 1890s; they would not reach their peak size or output until the end of the First World War. Between 1865, when they opened, and 1910, they grew to cover almost a square mile in the middle of the city.⁶² Though in the 1890s, the 'L' did not travel directly past the yards, those passing through the South Side would not have been able to ignore them. A slaughterhouse complex that was capable of holding over ten thousand animals at a time was an assault on the senses; both noise and smell were apparent to travellers on the South Side 'Alley 'L', who could not avoid being brought into contact with parts of the city they would otherwise not consider experiencing.

⁶⁰Philpott, *The Slum and The Ghetto: Immigrants, Blacks and Reformers in Chicago, 1880-1930*, op. cit., p.28.

⁶¹Holbrook, "Map Notes and Comments", op. cit., p.54.

⁶²d'Eramo, *The Pig and The Skyscraper - Chicago: A History of Our Future*, op. cit., p.29.

2.3 Chicago and the Press

The city can be isolating. Though its sheer size and density of population ensure that one can never be alone, its scale is beyond that which can rely solely on traditional models of community cohesion based on ideas of personal connection. Past a certain size, and lacking a unifying social or religious structure, information can no longer be reliably disseminated as it once was: via the pulpit or the back fence. By the end of the nineteenth century, this was a problem that had been recognised, and which had led to the creation of new methods of mass communication. As the city had grown in size, technology had also advanced, and thanks to the rotating cylinder press and the linotype machine, journalism offered a solution in the form of the Metropolitan Press.⁶³ Referring not just to a newspaper within a city, the 'Metropolitan Press' instead represented a particular point in the development of urban communication; the city had grown beyond the size where information could reliably spread by word of mouth, but technologies such as the telephone were not yet widely available. As noted by Robert Park in 1940, the Metropolitan Press took over the role which had previously been played by personal observation.⁶⁴

The Metropolitan Press represented an affordable method of communication with the masses and was not restricted to serious journalism. Its methods of representing information were not limited to the words on the page; technological advances had allowed the reproduction of line drawings and photographs to improve markedly, meaning that the press became accessible to all of the city's residents, whether they spoke English or not.

But the Metropolitan Press was more than the technological advances that allowed it to exist. In the case of Chicago, the city's diverse newspapers became key, not only as organs for the dissemination of

⁶³Gunther Barth. *City People: The Rise of Modern City Culture in Nineteenth Century America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980, p.91.

⁶⁴Junger, *Becoming the Second City: Chicago's Mass News Media 1833-1898*, op. cit., p.ix.

information, but as sites of cultural negotiation, providing a space where the fast pace of social change could be charted and interpreted to an audience eager to understand their situation. Rather than simply see the Metropolitan Press as a label for a specific type of newspaper, it might be more useful to define it as a publication that played a specific role in a community, either on a city-wide level or within a particular ethnic group. The Metropolitan Press was a particular method of communication, but also a site of debate. It was a place where a community, defined along geographical or ethnic lines, and often along both, could assess its place and its relationship to other communities.

The press' importance to Chicago's citizens can be seen in the sheer numbers in which newspapers were read. In 1890 there were 26 daily newspapers in Chicago, and many more that published weekly or semi-weekly. The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey (conducted in 1936 as a project of the Works Progress Administration of Illinois) translated into English articles dating from the 1890s from newspapers that published in at least fifteen other languages.⁶⁵ The sheer number of newspapers—some dailies, but most published weekly—demonstrates not only the different groups migrating to the city, but also the desire to communicate within those groups beyond the bounds of a single neighbourhood, or social circle.⁶⁶ The readership of these newspapers varied, and for most no official figures are available, but some were hugely popular. The German-language newspapers were by far the most successful even in the 1890s when the city's German population was well-established, and had largely ceased to conduct business in German. Still, huge numbers of people read these newspapers: *Staats-Zeitung* had a daily circulation of over 23,000 and *Abendpost* and *Freie Presse* each had a daily circulation of over 30,000.⁶⁷ These newspapers

⁶⁵Those languages included Bohemian, Chinese, Danish, Dutch, German, Greek, Italian, Yiddish, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Swedish and Welsh.

⁶⁶*Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey* Digitised Collections of the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign(1936)

⁶⁷It should be noted that the German-language newspapers, particularly the *Staats-Zeitung*, had a significant Jewish readership and in the 1890s continued to cover

continued to be successful into the twentieth century, and continued to be published in German. However, in some cases, they began to advertise themselves in English, showing how a now bi-lingual community used the Metropolitan Press to maintain a link to their mother-tongue.⁶⁸ The English language newspapers were, though, by far the market leaders: seven had a daily circulation of over 35,000, three of over 75,000, lead by the *Daily News* which prided itself on noting that it not only printed, but sold, almost 230,000 newspapers on a daily basis (albeit spread between morning and evening editions).⁶⁹ Between them, they began to address what Richard Hofstadter called “the ambitious task of creating a mental world for the uprooted farmers and villagers who were coming to live in the city”.⁷⁰

The Metropolitan Press created new boundaries for Chicago. Although by the end of the 1880s, Chicago’s limits were largely set in their contemporary positions and new suburbs were incorporating as separate towns rather than joining the metropolis, these suburbanites still felt they had a claim on the city and a Chicago identity. Newspapers such as the *Chicago Post* were created specifically to target the suburbanite, combining the news from the small towns with a sense of the metropolitan identity.⁷¹ This was key to the creation of a ‘Chicagoland’ which, though it bled into sixteen counties in three states, retained a sense of communal identity.

The press was not only instrumental in creating a sense of the scope of Chicago; it also played a much more direct role in the formation of

events within the Jewish community. However, in comparison with the English-language press, they were not market leaders and though there continued to be a link, Brinkmann has argued that the German language became largely insignificant after 1881. See Brinkmann, *Ethnic Difference and Civic Unity*(2004) .

⁶⁸*Chicago Jewish Community Blue Book*. Chicago: Sentinal Publishing Company, 1918, p.34.

⁶⁹John Edward Erickson. “Newspapers and Social Values: Chicago Journalism, 1890-1900”. PhD thesis. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1973, p.133.

⁷⁰Richard Hofstadter. *The Age of Reform: from Bryan to FDR*. New York: Vintage Books, 1955, p.188.

⁷¹Erickson, “Newspapers and Social Values: Chicago Journalism, 1890-1900”, op. cit., p.173.

particular identities and in the negotiation of the ways these identities could co-exist. In the same way it created a sense of *what* Chicago was, the Metropolitan Press was deeply concerned with *who* a Chicagoan was. People and events were interpreted through the press; Ben Hecht, a Chicago journalist, recalled in his autobiography how he had “a love affair with the faces of the city... When [he] tired of telling their fortunes, [he] would suddenly become their historian.”⁷² Journalism became as much about the people who lived in the city, as about the city itself and the political and economic events which drove it.

Although in the preceding decades, the press had been partisan, with a relatively clear split between Democrat and Republican newspapers, by the 1890s this distinction was beginning to disintegrate. The Progressive Era was marked less by a sense of strict political affiliation and more by a sense of local interest. This was propagated by the press, who largely gained quasi-independent status from the dominant political parties and endorsed candidates based on what would, in their opinion, be best for the city.⁷³ This change ushered in a journalistic style that was more inclined than it had been to see itself as an arbiter of civic identity. Hofstadter explains that as the wages and status of the newspaper reporter rose throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the profession attracted those with literary and idealistic aspirations who brought with them “a sense of public responsibility.”⁷⁴

This idealism, and an element of kinship with the Progressive movement, sited the Chicago press centrally in the debate about what it meant to be a modern metropolitan citizen and who, indeed, could become one. But there was also a deeper loyalty, to Chicago herself. Though Chicago’s newspapers were produced primarily for a local audience, they were circulated far more widely, just as the newspapers from other cities circulated in Chicago. This ‘Chicago Patriotism’ became a key feature of the city’s press culture in the 1890s and played a role in

⁷²Ben Hecht. *Gaily, Gaily*. New York: Signet, 1963, p.174–5.

⁷³Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: from Bryan to FDR*, op. cit., p.189.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, p.191.

persuading Chicagoans to place such an emphasis on philanthropy.⁷⁵

As it maintained such a clear market leadership for the entire decade, the *Daily News* was key to the transformation of Chicago journalism, especially when it is considered that it was founded in 1881, while many of its competitors were thirty or forty years older.⁷⁶ Its readership spanned class and ethnicity. One of the innovations which brought it this great success was that it was the first newspaper in Chicago which made significant attempts to attract female readers. The *Daily News's* publisher, Victor Freemont Lawson, was one of the first "to be fully cognisant of the important buying power wielded by women, and much of his effort was always directed towards getting the *Daily News* into their hands."⁷⁷ Although Lawson himself was deeply religious, his papers were intended to be secular and non-partisan, allowing him to capitalise on the maximum number of potential readers, something his competitors would emulate.⁷⁸

Though there was a decline in the official political affiliation of newspapers at the *fin-de-siècle*, many of the newspapers were still understood with regards to their traditional affiliation. The *Chicago Tribune* maintained a nominally Republican affiliation, while the *Evening Post* was loosely Democratic.⁷⁹ The *Evening Post*, however was largely concerned with the suburbs, and this left the city without an officially Democratic newspaper.⁸⁰

The *Inter-Ocean* retained a strongly Republican identity throughout the early part of the 1890s. With its motto "Republican in Everything, Independent in Nothing", it was one of the most politically steadfast

⁷⁵Junger, *Becoming the Second City: Chicago's Mass News Media 1833-1898*, op. cit., p.136.

⁷⁶Robert Lloyd Tree. "Victor Freemont Lawson and His Newspapers, 1890-1900: A Study of the Chicago Daily News and the Chicago Record". PhD thesis. Northwestern University, 1959, p.35.

⁷⁷Ibid., p.15.

⁷⁸Ibid., p.55.

⁷⁹Erickson, "Newspapers and Social Values: Chicago Journalism, 1890-1900", op. cit., p.136.

⁸⁰Tree, "Victor Freemont Lawson and His Newspapers, 1890-1900: A Study of the Chicago Daily News and the Chicago Record", op. cit., p38.

of the Chicago newspapers.⁸¹ However, even it was swept up by what Erickson terms the “new partisanship”, which emphasised municipal values and a rhetoric centred on being a good citizen of either Chicago or America and, by 1899, only the *Chicago Tribune* retained its political affiliation.⁸²

The *Chicago Tribune* remained something of an anachronism. While it was concerned with increasing its readership, it does not seem to have made a particularly significant attempt to follow the example of the *Daily News* and its rather sensationalistic journalism. It retained a more serious and studious tone. Edited for most of the 1890s by Joseph Medhill, the *Tribune* had been linked to Lincoln, and continued to trade on that affiliation. By the end of the century this attitude manifested itself in several ways, though not always in political support for Republican politicians : they used ‘Democratic political affiliation’ as a euphemism for poor moral character, the newspaper was infused with a sense of aggressive nationalism which included a growing support for isolationism, and they were far more concerned with the question of immigrants than any other newspaper.⁸³ In this way it is perhaps the most representative newspaper of Chicago’s established middle and upper classes.

2.4 Chicago as ‘the Ideal City’ or ‘Hell on Earth’?

Beginning his sociological analysis of Chicago, Marco D’Eramo reflects on the surprise the modern visitor to the city expresses on arrival.

You expect the city of Al Capone—but what you find are pleasant boulevards coursing up and down between the neoclassical buildings of the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition. The novels you read in school described Chicago’s

⁸¹Ibid., p.37.

⁸²Erickson, “Newspapers and Social Values: Chicago Journalism, 1890-1900”, op. cit., p217.8.

⁸³Ibid., p.42,168 & 238.

slaughterhouses; instead you see awe-inspiring skyscrapers. The city centre unfolds, an architectural miracle... You were thinking of a land-locked city plumped down in the American heartland, but instead you find yourself in a maritime metropolis.⁸⁴

In the twentieth and even into the twenty-first century, Chicago's fame could more easily be described as notoriety: its gangsters in the era of Prohibition; its politicians now, with the two last Governors of Illinois both jailed on corruption charges. That notoriety, though, is somehow part of the city's charm, and has been since the city's foundation.

2.4.1 Tourism and Chicago

Though travel had been a common enough experience for many Americans, for those other than the very wealthy, it had largely been a means to visit relatives or conduct business. The 1890s saw the expansion of tourism as a leisure activity for the middle classes. Indeed, one of the signifiers of this transformation was the creation of the 'Traveller's Cheque' in 1891. Earlier tourists had mainly been the wealthy wanting to find new and exciting experiences. These new middle class 'adventurers' were able to take advantage of packages organised to allow them to travel in luxury and stay in equally luxurious hotels, venturing out on specific tours of the city laid out in the new travel books.⁸⁵ Chicago's role here was not simply as destination; as home to the Pullman company, whose railway carriages became the watchword for luxurious travel worldwide, they also played an active role in the creation of that travel experience.

Unsurprisingly, the travel books of the era are un-complicatedly full of praise for the city of Chicago.

Chicago is one of the wonders of modern times. Her progress amazes mankind. There is not on record an achieve-

⁸⁴d'Eramo, *The Pig and The Skyscraper - Chicago: A History of Our Future*, op. cit., p.5.

⁸⁵Gilbert, *Perfect Cities: Chicago's Utopias of 1893*, op. cit., p.21.

ment of human intellect, skill and industry that will bear comparison with the transformation of a dismal swamp, in the midst of a trackless desert, within the span of a human life, into one of the mightiest and grandest cities on the globe.⁸⁶

Flinn's guide to the city, first published in 1891, was re-released in an expanded and updated edition in 1893 for the influx of visitors expected for the Columbian Exposition. However, it is not a travel guide in a recognisable form, with listings for shops, restaurants and tourist attractions; it instead devotes large swathes of its early pages to population statistics, details of municipal government (including the annual salaries for each position) and even has eight pages on the public school system. It did not, however, dwell on the problems Chicagoans faced, devoting only one paragraph to the issue of poverty, and rather generously described the city's notoriously unfriendly climate as "healthful and beautiful."⁸⁷ It seems then, that this book, which later does in a more comprehensive way detail attractions a visitor might wish to see, and includes an abbreviated guide to the Columbian Exposition, serves not only as a directory for those visiting the city, but also might in some way serve as a guide to the economic opportunities which could be found in Chicago. While the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries might more commonly be remembered as a period of mass migration from Eastern and Southern Europe, the role of internal migration in the growth of cities like Chicago should not be forgotten, and in some small way, tourism could have served as an audition for those considering making the move west.

⁸⁶John J. Flinn. *Chicago, the marvelous city of the West : a history, an encyclopedia, and a guide*. Chicago: Flinn and Sheppard, 1893, p.17.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, p.29–115.

2.4.2 Chicago's Attractions

The greatest tourist attraction of the decade was undoubtedly the Columbian Exposition, even though it was open for a mere six months and burned to the ground soon after it closed. However, there were other attractions which those visiting the city were directed to as evidence of Chicago's ascendancy to thriving metropolis, not simply a glorified trading post on the margins of acceptability. Indeed, many of those attractions remain central to the tourist experience today.

D'Eramo points to the unexpectedness of the modern Chicago skyline, which though not as widely recognisable as its counterpart in New York, contains a number of architecturally innovative towers. The architecture of Chicago was just as surprising to the late nineteenth century visitor. With almost the entirety of the central business district destroyed in 1871, new building codes were put in place requiring all new buildings to be brick-built. Though this meant that only the richest could afford to rebuild, it also led to the architects of the Chicago School creating a new space in the centre of the city, where buildings were built higher than anywhere else to create the maximum available space on a small plot. This boom grew through the 1880s and reached its peak in the first three years of the 1890s, when the total construction volume reached \$63 million—far above the previous record of \$47 million, set in 1872, as the city rushed to rebuild as fast as possible.⁸⁸ It was not only the design of the buildings which received attention; in one tourist guide, specific attention is paid to the materials used to build, with the virtues of "Joliet limestone, milky white at first, after exposure a rich, soft cream color, is the deep, rich brown of a sandstone from Lake Superior, or the close-grained dark gray of the Buena Vista quarries," extolled amongst others.⁸⁹

Different guide books directed their readers to different attractions

⁸⁸Robert Brueggemann. *The architects and the city: Holabird & Roche of Chicago, 1880-1918*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997, p.37.

⁸⁹*The Artistic guide to Chicago and the World's Columbian Exposition*. Chicago: The Columbian Art Company, 1892, p.76.

depending on their particular editorial concerns. *Picturesque Chicago and Guide to the Worlds' Columbian Exposition* which was issued by the *Religious Herald* directed its readers not only to more conventional attractions such as the theatres, art collections and the opera house, but also to the "Baptist Missionary Training School" and the "Temperance Temple".⁹⁰ Indeed this desire to include less 'frivolous' attractions on a tour of Chicago was not an impulse limited to the religiously minded; the Hull-House Settlement House, one of the city's hubs of progressive activism was considered to be a popular attraction by the middle of the decade.⁹¹ Other philanthropic and charitable institutions or projects encouraged tourism in a much more active way. Pullman, the model town built by George Pullman to house his factory workers, included a large and luxurious hotel solely for the use of tourists, and not open to the town's residents.⁹²

As Chicago's ambitions to become a cultural centre grew, so did the city's range of elite entertainments. The Art Institute found a permanent home (which it still occupies) in the building built to hold the Columbian Exposition's various Congresses, the Chicago Auditorium (which now belongs to Roosevelt University) was completed in 1889 and the city's first permanent public library building was completed in 1897 (now home to the Chicago Cultural Centre). However, guide books from the era suggest that neither cultural attractions, nor the religious or philanthropic attractions, were the sole interest of those visiting; amongst the sites of greatest interest were those of the more practical or industrial sort. Indeed, in the Yiddish language guide published for Jewish visitors to the Exposition, the exhibitions of Jewish religious life and art were ignored (save for one exception), with visitors instead pointed towards the latest machinery or products.⁹³ In other

⁹⁰*Picturesque Chicago and guide to the World's fair*. Chicago: D. S. Moseley, 1893, p.v-vi.

⁹¹McCarthy, *Noblesse Oblige: Charity and Cultural Philanthropy in Chicago 1849-1929*, op. cit., p.109.

⁹²Gilbert, *Perfect Cities: Chicago's Utopias of 1893*, op. cit., p.135.

⁹³Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett. "A Place in the World: Jews and the Holy Land at

guide books, attractions such as grain elevators, the stockyards and the Pullman factory sit listed alongside the Water Tower and the University of Chicago.⁹⁴ For visitors though, it was not the elite institutions which were the most awe-inspiring. Cultural attractions of this sort could be found in almost any city of size at the end of the nineteenth century, and certainly in the great metropolitan centres of the American east and west coasts, such as New York, Boston and San Francisco. What marked Chicago out as different was its industrial innovations—its signs of modernity—and it was these innovations that tourists flocked to see, in the hope that they were seeing the future of America.

2.4.3 If Christ Came to Chicago

Not all who visited Chicago in the 1890s were there to see its positive attractions. In fact, one of the most influential books published in that decade was W. T. Stead's *If Christ Came to Chicago*. It deconstructed the ways in which corruption—and what Stead saw as a lack of concern by the rich for fellow Chicagoans—were trapping many of the city's citizens in poverty. Stead was unflinching, detailing the way in which he saw the city's civic structure as broken: from the lack of support for the homeless to the rampant corruption in municipal government, from the problems of alcohol abuse through to the ubiquity of saloons and brothels in some neighbourhoods. His at-times-scathing analysis is neatly summed up in the quotation from which he draws the title for one of his chapters:

'Lead us not into temptation' is not a prayer which is regarded with much respect in the city administration of Chicago.⁹⁵

World's Fairs". In: *Encounters with the "Holy Land": Place, Past and Future in American Jewish Culture*. Ed. by J Shandler and B Wenger. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1998, pp. 60–82, p.66.

⁹⁴*Picturesque Chicago and guide to the World's fair*, op. cit., p.v-vii.

⁹⁵William T. Stead. *If Christ Came to Chicago*. Chicago: Laird and Lee, 1894, p.349.

As the title suggests, Stead's book is explicitly Christian. His analysis starts from what he sees as the central tenet of a healthy society:

when the conditions of our fellow citizens is recognised as the test of the measure of our faith in Christ, the religious aspect of civic politics acquires a new and supreme importance. For the improvement of the lot of the least of these, Christ's brethren, the assistance of the municipal authority is indispensable. The law must be invoked, if only as the schoolmaster, to bring men to Christ.⁹⁶

Here Stead articulates perfectly the idea of the 'social gospel' which gained prominence in this period, and which motivated many within the burgeoning progressive movement. Stead makes no attempt to push his readers towards one particular established Church; he picks at what he sees as the strengths and weaknesses of each, instead suggesting that a 'Church of Chicago' should be formed, by which the city could best be taken care of. Surprisingly for the period, at one point he praises the Mormon church for its ability to use a religious structure to organise social structures, particularly the ability to find employment of some kind for all its members—though he stresses that he finds many of the faith's practices repugnant.⁹⁷

It is not only Stead's remarkably detailed exploration of the corruption and criminal enterprises found in Chicago which is of interest.⁹⁸ Stead also, in almost as much detail, described the ways in which the city could be, and was being improved. This section is unexpectedly radical for its time. One of his key suggestions was that women gain the vote. In his exploration of what he hoped Chicago's twentieth century could be, he suggested the first female mayor of Chicago could gain office in 1900 and that eventually the majority of the city's police

⁹⁶Ibid., p.16.

⁹⁷Ibid., p.437.

⁹⁸The level of detail Stead provided, particularly in his examination of the problem of prostitution in the city, which contains the results of quantitative research he conducted on the subject, provides an underused source to examine the subject.

force should be female. He also suggested that the city should provide universal healthcare for its citizens.⁹⁹ But at the same time, the book is very much a product of its time, and particularly of Stead's imperialist attitudes, suggesting that "the English speaking race, in America and elsewhere, is one of God's chief agents for executing coming improvements in the lot of mankind."¹⁰⁰ His conviction remains that English-speaking Christians retain a special place in the order of things, being in some essential way more able to effect change. The rhetoric he used focuses more on the ability of what he terms the 'English-speaking race' to improve themselves, than on any analysis of other groups, but his attitudes are unmistakably rooted in some theory of racial hierarchy.

Stead's work was massively influential. When he died on the Titanic in 1912, the *Chicago Tribune* included him on the list of the disaster's most famous victims when they published an extra late edition.¹⁰¹ Prior to the publication of *If Christ Came To Chicago*, Stead announced his findings at a mass meeting at which a temporary organisation was created, later to become the Civic Federation.¹⁰² Outside of that organisation, Stead and his work proved to be important to others in the city, with Jane Addams crediting his influence for leading her to do her most serious research into economics.¹⁰³ Stead was key in making public and impossible to ignore the debates about how best to address the problems of poverty in Chicago, and in creating the atmosphere in which Progressivism flourished.

⁹⁹Stead, *If Christ Came to Chicago*, op. cit., pp.433–440.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, p.342.

¹⁰¹*Chicago Tribune* April 15, 1912, p.1

¹⁰²The Civic Foundation, and the roles elite Jewish women played in the organisation will be discussed in Chapter Five.

¹⁰³Jane Addams. *Twenty Years at Hull-House*. New York: Macmillan, 1912, p.160–61.

2.5 Chicago and the Progressives

If the argument is to be made that the National Council of Jewish Women could neither have been formed in the way that it was in any other city than Chicago, nor at any other time than the 1890s, then one group more than any other must be considered central to this event. Chicago in the 1890s was, more than any other city, the birthplace of the Progressive Movement. It was the city's female philanthropists who popularised the idea that in order for society to really be changed and for opportunity to be open to all, then social action should be carefully and 'scientifically' researched, and constantly monitored to ensure that it was actually effective. Neither of those principles were new; however, what Chicago saw in the 1890s were the steps that would take philanthropy, which had been to an extent a leisure activity for the wealthy, and transform it into the professions of social work and public administration.¹⁰⁴ In fact, Chicago was so key to this development that particularly when it came to women's involvement in the top levels of Progressive activism a staggering number of the most influential figures had a link to Chicago, either to Hull-House or to the University of Chicago, and "even at the turn of the century there were hints of the intellectual vigour that would lead to the dominance of the 'Chicago School' " of sociology and social policy.¹⁰⁵

There is no single easy definition of Progressivism. Indeed, Maureen A Flanagan argues that it never had a single definition, which is why the historiography of the Progressive Era is often confusing. Instead of a cohesive movement, she argues that Progressivism was an umbrella term under which a number of movements seeking to redefine American governance away from the *laissez-faire* attitudes of previous generations, seeking change in terms of economic and social policy.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴Camilla Stivers. *Bureau Men, Settlement Women: Constructing Public Administration in the Progressive Era*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000, p.5.

¹⁰⁵Ellen Fitzpatrick. *Endless Crusade : Women Social Scientists and Progressive Reform*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, p.xiv.

¹⁰⁶Maureen A. Flanagan. *American Reformed: Progressives and Progressivisms 1890s-*

In this way, the often-muddled picture of the growth of progressive activism in Chicago becomes clearer, allowing the Progressive apparatus to include not only the Settlement Houses but also the women's clubs founded in the 1870s and 1880s. While they had been founded largely as mutual improvement societies for their members, in the 1890s this grew into the mutual study of 'scientific philanthropy' and then philanthropic action and social campaigning.¹⁰⁷

Jane Addams, of course, stands at the centre of the growth of the Progressive movement in Chicago. As co-founder of the Hull-House Settlement House, and perhaps the most famous of Chicago's Progressive Activists in the 1890s.¹⁰⁸ She was not alone, though; in fact, she was building on a tradition of women's philanthropy and activism which were nurtured in the 1860s, when the U.S. Sanitary Commission was active (though its name suggests otherwise, the Sanitary Commission was not a governmental organisation, but a network of voluntary organisations aiding Union soldiers throughout the American Civil War). Although many of those at the head of Sanitary Commission branches were men, it was the first experience of organised social action for many women in America's northern states, and profoundly formative in many of the women who would push for the acceptability of female access into social and political action.¹⁰⁹

Many of the critiques made of women's activism at the end of the nineteenth century have centred on the issue of control, suggesting that reformers' activities, particularly middle-class reformers, were largely centred on imposing their own ideas on those they helped. While this is of course a critique that cannot be ignored, Eileen Boris has suggested that a more nuanced view has emerged:

1920s. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, p.vi-vii.

¹⁰⁷Nancy S. Dye. "Introduction". In: *Gender, Class, Race and Reform in the Progressive Era*. Ed. by Nancy S. Dye and Noralee Frankel. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1991, pp. 1-9, p.1-2.

¹⁰⁸Addams and Hull-House, and Jewish women's involvement in Hull-House are more fully discussed in Chapter Six.

¹⁰⁹Judith Ann Giesberg. *Civil War Sisterhood: The U.S. Sanitary Commission and Women's Politics in Transition*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 2000, p.8.

A new generation of scholarship presents a more complex picture, allowing a reinterpretation of social control as an interactive process in which ‘clients’ are anything but passive: they demand divorces, mothers’ pensions and an end to child abuse. While some of this literature romanticises the nurturing and communal ethos of reformers, it nonetheless views the social programs and legal decisions of the period as complex and contradictory, a product of the struggle between classes, genders, and racial and ethnic groups.¹¹⁰

This more-nuanced analysis becomes particularly important when understanding the role played by Jewish women in Chicago’s Progressive movement, or indeed the participation of any minority group. The scholarship of Progressivism has had difficulty with these tensions but they were an every-day reality for many within the Progressive Movement, whose own identities were not simple. Competing notions of class, gender, and ethnic or religious identity necessarily led to a web of connected priorities both within the Progressive movement and within members of that movement.¹¹¹ Any group in which women played a leading role was faced with the problem of these competing priorities, particularly if those women came from minority groups. In the case of organisations of elite Jews in Chicago, these competing priorities speak to the multi-faceted nature of identity—these women were at once Americans, Jews, middle- or upper-class, and all of these facets of their identities brought their own demands which needed accommodation when priorities were being determined. Additionally, the line between those who were helped by Progressive Reformers and those who were the helpers was not always so simple. Anecdotal evidence of this is found in the story of Hilda Saat Polacheck who attended classes

¹¹⁰Eileen Boris. “Reconstructing the ‘Family’: Women, Progressive Reform and the Problem of Social Control”. In: *Gender, Class, Race and Reform in the Progressive Era*. Ed. by Nancy S. Dye and Noralee Frankel. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1991, pp.71–86, p.74.

¹¹¹A brief examination of these issues can be found in *Bureau Men, Settlement Women*, although the role of minority groups is not fully considered in that work.

at Hull-House as a child, and then taught English there as an adult demonstrate.¹¹²

By accepting the multi-faceted nature of women's involvement in progressive activism in Chicago in the 1890s, two assumptions can be tackled. The first is that women's involvement in Progressivism amounted to "social maternalism of middle-class women."¹¹³ In fact, Progressivism attracted reformers from all backgrounds, including many new immigrants.¹¹⁴ The second, which will be explored more broadly in the next chapter, is the assumption that there was an easy divide to be made between Progressive 'New Women' and old-fashioned 'Club Women.' There were many faces to Progressivism in Chicago, and such was its ascendancy in the 1890s, that unlikely activists found themselves heavily involved in what amounted to political activism, albeit of the quietist sort.

2.6 Chicago's Jews

2.6.1 The History of the Community

The history of Jews in Chicago is far from a unique story. As was the case in many of the new cities in the mid-west, Jewish pedlars were among the names recorded in the city's early records and a small number of Central European Jews settled permanently in the area early on. The numbers of Jews in the city remained in the tens of thousands until migration from Eastern Europe at the end of the nineteenth century swelled Chicago's population into the millions, giving it had the third largest Jewish population of any city in the world.¹¹⁵ Unsurprisingly, as the numbers of new Jewish immigrants

¹¹²Hilda Satt Polacheck. *I Came a Stranger: The Story of a Hull-House Girl*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989, p.96.

¹¹³Daniel T. Rodgers. *Atlantic crossings: social politics in a progressive age*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998, p.2.

¹¹⁴Dye, "Introduction", op. cit., pp.2-9.

¹¹⁵Irving Cutler. *The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2009, p.xv.

dwarfed the existing population, when Chicago's Jewish culture is considered, it is this second Eastern European group which is largely considered. Indeed, the subtitle of Irving Cutler's *The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb* confirms that this Eastern European experience is considered to be the normative Jewish experience. Only one or two scholars buck this trend, particularly Tobias Brinkmann, whose *Von der Gemeinde zur "Community": Jüdische Einwanderer in Chicago 1840–1900* was the first complete examination of this community.¹¹⁶ Brinkmann has also written several English-language articles which deal with ideas of identity within the Chicago Jewish community, particularly 'Jews, Germans, or Americans? German Jewish Immigrants in the Nineteenth Century United States,' which draws its examples largely from Chicago.¹¹⁷ Most recently, Brinkmann's book *Sundays at Sinai: A Jewish Community in Chicago* considers the role played by that synagogue in the city's history. However, while his work has, more than any other, advanced scholarly understanding of this community, it has never centred on the role women played in it.¹¹⁸ The established Jewish community is mentioned in other books on the history of Chicago, however, the examination of this community tends to be more brief than that of the late-nineteenth century's new immigrants, and the literature on Chicago expresses many of the same assumptions about the Established Community which appear throughout the literature on American Jewry.

The first records of Jewish settlers making their homes in Chicago date from 1841, eight years after the incorporation of the city of Chicago.¹¹⁹ Hannah Solomon's father, Michael Greenebaum, arrived in Chicago in 1847, still very early on in the city's history. These early

¹¹⁶Tobias Brinkmann. *Von der Gemeinde zur "Community": Jüdische Einwanderer in Chicago 1840–1900*. Osnabrück: Universitätsverlag Rasch, 2002.

¹¹⁷Tobias Brinkmann. "Jews, Germans, or Americans? German Jewish Immigrants in the Nineteenth Century United States". In: *The Heimat Abroad: The Boundaries of Germanness*. Ed. by Krista O'Donnell, Renate Bridenthal, and Nancy Reagin. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005, pp. 111–140.

¹¹⁸Idem, *Sundays At Sinai: A Jewish Congregation in Chicago*, op. cit.

¹¹⁹Cutler, *The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb*, op. cit., p.7.

immigrants to the city followed a pattern often repeated, with large extended families joining successful immigrants in America; this was certainly true in the case of the Greenebaum family, with Hannah Solomon recalling in her autobiography; "How well I remember our grandparents when, in later years, they lived on Hubbard Street. Their children had all married and Greenebaums occupied nearly the entire block of green-shuttered frame houses with surrounding gardens."¹²⁰ Brinkmann has argued that this pattern of chain migration has often been ignored by scholars of American-Jewish history who have more often assumed that European oppression was the strongest motivator for migration.¹²¹ Many of the early Jewish immigrants to Chicago ran retail enterprises of some kind, with more than ten Jewish owned shops in the centre of Chicago by the end of the 1840s. With the Jewish community so small, but with such a prominent place in the economic life of the new city, this community was generally well integrated with the city's non-Jewish majority. Henry Horner, another early immigrant to the city, and the owner of a large wholesale grocers, was one of the founders of the Chicago Board of Trade.¹²²

There were enough Jewish residents in the area for a *Minyan* by 1845, but only just. As Cutler recounts, perhaps apocryphally, there were at first only ten Jewish men, so each time one left the room, services were suspended. Whatever the truth of this tale, there were certainly enough that a burial society was organised that year, and in the next a small plot of land was purchased to serve as the city's first Jewish cemetery. The first Jewish congregation was organised in 1847, with a Jewish population numbering somewhere around 100, in a city of 17,000 people.¹²³

As the city of Chicago grew, the Jewish population grew with it. By the end of the 1850s, two congregations, each with a Synagogue, had been created. The first, Kehilath Anshf Ma'arabh, with its members

¹²⁰Solomon, *The Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*, op. cit., p.10.

¹²¹Brinkmann, *Sundays At Sinai: A Jewish Congregation in Chicago*, op. cit., p.13.

¹²²Cutler, *The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb*, op. cit., p.8.

¹²³*Ibid.*, p.9–10.

largely from the the southern part of what is now Germany, used the *Minhag Ashkenaz*, and the second, Kehilath B'nai Shalom, its members largely from Posen, conducted its services using the *Minhag Polin*.¹²⁴ While this fact immediately casts doubt on the rather simplified model of a German Jewish migration mid-century segueing into an Eastern European migration at the end of the nineteenth century, it is interesting to note that in discussing the group of 20 Jewish men who formed Kehilath B'nai Shalom, Cutler places "Polish" in inverted commas, something which he never does again despite the vast changes in the national divisions in central and eastern Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century.¹²⁵ Indeed, as others have explicitly stated, the Polish Prussian Jews who founded B'nai Shalom were not made welcome by the German Jews at Anshf Ma'arabh.¹²⁶ However, whatever differences did exist between the two congregations, they both conducted their services in German, unlike the Yiddish-speakers Eastern European Jews who would found their first Synagogue, B'nai Jacob, in 1861.¹²⁷

It is undoubtable that there were divisions between the mainly German-speaking Jewish elites in Chicago and the Yiddish-speakers, however, these differences can most accurately be understood in terms of class, religious practice and culture, not necessarily in terms of geographical origin. There were also significant schisms within the German-speaking community which given the paucity of scholarly literature on the subject, is not always remembered. Perhaps the most famous articulation of the relationship between the two communities is taken from Bernard Horwich's autobiography:

The relationship between the Russian and Polish Jews and the German Jews was anything but amicable. The latter group, with their background of German culture, speak-

¹²⁴Felsenthal, B. *A Contribution to the Inner History of American Judaism*, Chicago Sinai Congregation Collection, American Jewish Archive, Box 3, Folder 9

¹²⁵Cutler, *The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb*, op. cit., p.13.

¹²⁶Kerry M. Olitzky. *The American Synagogue: A Historical Dictionary and Sourcebook*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996, p.124.

¹²⁷Cutler, *The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb*, op. cit., p.24.

ing the German language, engaged in more worldly and sophisticated business enterprises, and practicing Reformed Judaism, were looked upon as Germans rather than as Jews. The Russian and Polish Jews maintained that the reformed religious ideas of the German Jews made them really 'substitute' or 'second-hand' Jews, and that their Rabbis were almost like Christian ministers. Some even asserted that they regarded the Christian ministers more highly than the Reformed Rabbis, since the former were believers and preached their religion truthfully and faithfully, while the latter tried to deny their Judaism, so as to ingratiate themselves with the non-Jews. The Russian and Polish Jews, having come from countries where oppression took the place of education, were considered by the German Jews and people in general to be unlearned and 'half-civilized.' Very few of them could read or write English, and since there was as yet no Yiddish paper here, they received their information from their children of school age, who could understand a little of what was in the newspapers. The majority knew only what little Hebrew they had learned in their 'cheders,' and for the most part were religious fanatics. Most of them had beards and wore ill-fitting garments, spoke only Yiddish, and made their living as peddlers or petty traders. They were accordingly looked upon as undesirable immigrants by many.

The attitude of the German Jews towards their Russian and Polish brothers was one of superiority and unpleasant pity. They tolerated them only because they were Jews, and one would often hear the German Jews bewailing their fate—that they, Americanized businessmen, had to be classed in the same category with the poor, ignorant, ragged Jewish peddlers on the other side of the river, on Canal Street. Although I myself was one of these 'Jewish peddlers', I

could hardly blame them.¹²⁸

However, Horwich's portrait of two communities who fundamentally misunderstood each other, each of whom looked down upon the other to some extent, has frequently been edited. Cutler removed the references critical to the Orthodox community.¹²⁹ It is this edited version which other scholars have referred to, rather than Horwich's book itself, adopting Cutler's one-sided reading of the relationship between Established Jews and new immigrants.¹³⁰ Though the Established Jewish community undoubtedly was moved to work with new immigrants out of a desire not to be stained with the antisemitic rhetoric aimed at newer arrivals, the enmity ran in both directions. There are also a number of people who were able to maintain relationships within both communities, with Horwich himself one of the prime examples, as a Russian born-Jew who, after becoming a successful businessman, established himself as a popular communal leader in both communities.¹³¹ Though these examples of crossover are by no means common, their example remains important. If Cutler's suggestion that "Eastern European Jews were not welcomed" in the institutions created by the established Jewish community is taken at face value, then any examples of the established community reaching out to new immigrants must be taken as being at best half-hearted, or at worst, completely insincere.¹³² Instead, a more nuanced view of the evidence would suggest that in fact, other than a stated religious affiliation to Judaism, these two groups had little in common and therefore little reason to mix on a social level. This continued into the twentieth century, even as the new immigrants transformed themselves into a settled community and attained a degree of wealth and success, showing that the divisions ran

¹²⁸Bernard Horwich. *My First 80 Years*. Chicago: Argus Books, 1939, p.131-2.

¹²⁹Cutler, *The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb*, op. cit., p.94-5.

¹³⁰Hasia R Diner and Beryl Lieff Benderly. *Her Works Praise Her: A History of Jewish Women in America from Colonial Times to the Present*. New York: Basic Books, 2002, p.230-1.

¹³¹*Chicago Jewish Community Blue Book*, op. cit., p.116.

¹³²Cutler, *The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb*, op. cit., p.95.

deeper than issues of superficial prejudice based on ability to speak English, or the way in which they dressed.¹³³

Through the second half of the nineteenth century, the city of Chicago grew almost exponentially. The fire of 1871 hit the city's Jewish community hard, unsurprisingly given the numbers of Jews who lived and worked in the city's central business district, which was almost entirely destroyed. Many of the city's synagogues were also destroyed, including that of B'nai Shalom. Although Anshf Ma'arabh survived the 1871 fire, it was destroyed three years later in another fire, which razed a Jewish neighbourhood in the south of the city. It was then that many Jews moved across the Chicago River and settled around the Canal Street area of the Near West Side.¹³⁴

From its beginnings, Chicago's Jewish community, despite their divides, funded a number of communal institutions. Chief among these was the Michael Reese Hospital, founded with a donation to the United Hebrew Charities in 1879. The hospital, named after one of Chicago's prominent Jewish businessmen, opened in 1881 and remained a flagship project of the city's Jewish community into the twentieth century.¹³⁵ In the 1890s, a new rash of communal institutions, including an orphanage, the Jewish Training School, and home for the aged, as well as more progressive institutions such as the Maxwell Street Settlement House. However, it seems that little organisation for these was underway prior to the late 1880s. Many of the other Jewish institutions in the city were in the form of cultural or social societies. Hannah Solomon, recorded in her autobiography her membership in several during her youth, including the Zion Literary Society, and the Apollo Choral Society, which appear to have had a largely Jewish membership but no specifically Jewish mission.¹³⁶ The B'nai B'rith also had a strong

¹³³Horwich, *My First 80 Years*, op. cit., p.150–51.

¹³⁴Walter Roth. *Looking Backwards: True Stories from Chicago's Jewish Past*. Chicago: Academy Chicago, 2002, p.4.

¹³⁵*Chicago Jewish Community Blue Book*, op. cit., p.31.

¹³⁶Solomon, *The Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*, op. cit., p.38–9.

presence in the city, with the first lodge being organised in 1857.¹³⁷ There was also a fraternal organisation named the 'Independent Order of Somech Noflim', which seem to have been based on a number of Eastern European welfare organisations.¹³⁸

There were other groups which did not have a solid foothold in Chicago until the twentieth century. Although the *Knights of Zion*, founded in 1895, were the first Zionist organisation in the United States, they resisted joining with larger Zionist organisations, largely due to their geographical separation from these groups who were based on the East Coast until 1912, and partially in resistance to the idea of New York as the centre of the Zionist movement. Some *Knights of Zion* chapters retained their independence as late as 1918.¹³⁹ Antipathy to Zionism marked one of the only instances where the Yiddish-speaking Orthodox Rabbis and the highly acculturated established Jewish communities agreed with each other, although a number of highly-placed Jews in the city did adopt the Zionist cause in the 1890s, particularly Bernard Horwich, and Rabbi Bernhard Felsenthal, a rare example of a Reform-oriented rabbi advocating Zionism. There also seems to have been little specifically Jewish involvement in the leadership of the labour movement in Chicago in the nineteenth century. Chicago was, and still is, a union town in a way that many of its east coast rivals were not. Later scholars have looked at the Jewish connections to the early socialist and anarchist movements in Chicago, in particular the Hay-market Bombing, and have indeed found them. However, to an extent these connections have been made retrospectively, and largely due to the twentieth century associations made between Jews and anarchism. In the 1880s, it was Chicago's German community who headed the anarchist movement. Though one or two may have had Jewish backgrounds, this was not the primary way they identified themselves.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷Cornelia Wilhelm. *The Independent Orders of B'nai B'rith and True Sisters: Pioneers of a New Jewish Identity 1843-1914*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2011, p.62.

¹³⁸Horwich, *My First 80 Years*, op. cit., p.147.

¹³⁹Cutler, *The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb*, op. cit., p.114.

¹⁴⁰Walter Roth. *Avengers and Defenders: Glimpses of Chicago's Jewish Past*. Chicago:

One of the only points at which the labour movement was explicitly identified with the Jews in Chicago is found in a quote from a speech made on 'German Catholic Day', 1887, where the speaker called on the attendants to "block the activities of the now-existing labour societies in which the followers of Marx and other Jewish defenders of social economy are the leaders."¹⁴¹ Of course this would change in the first years of the twentieth century, but the growth of socialism in Chicago did not follow the same pattern found in New York, a pattern which, due to its status as home to the largest single population of American Jews, is frequently seen as the normative experience.¹⁴²

2.6.2 The Importance of Radical Reform

It was not until the early twentieth century that the formalisation of denominational divisions led to the labelling of the three main Jewish religious groups in the United States: Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform. The distinctions between religious practice amongst different sectors of the Jewish community were, though, already obvious by the mid-nineteenth century. The established Jewish community in America in the 1890s had largely been formed from the German-speaking migrants of the mid-century, and thus was composed largely of those who had come from a community which had embraced *Haskalah*, the Jewish enlightenment. Reform Judaism was first coherently articulated in Germany, but it had also taken root amongst many elite British Jews, and the American Jewish community were in contact with, and influenced by, both of these groups. A distinctly American Reform movement was fully realised at the end of the nineteenth century, when the American Jewish community began to place emphasis on homegrown Jewish identity in order to combat accusations that they were not loyal Ameri-

Academy Chicago, 2008, p.5.

¹⁴¹Eric L. Hirsch. *Urban Revolt: Ethnic Politics in the Nineteenth Century Chicago Labor Movement*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990, p.157–8.

¹⁴²Will Herberg. "The Jewish Labor Movement in the United States". In: *The American Jewish Yearbook* 53 (1952), pp. 3–76, p.4–15.

cans.¹⁴³ American Reform Judaism was not a homogeneous movement, though, and a consensus as to how reforms should be carried out in practice, or even what exactly needed to be reformed, did not exist. The Philadelphia Conference of 1869 had provided a consensus at the time, but in the twenty years subsequent to that, new areas of tension had appeared and the profile of the American Jewish community had become far more diverse as migration from Eastern Europe increased. Though the 1885 Pittsburgh Platform would remain a key articulation of Reform Judaism into the twentieth century, many areas of conflict remained. Organisations such as the *Central Conference of American Rabbis* provided spaces where discussions of some of these issues could take place, and new institutions such as Cincinnati's Hebrew Union College would provide the first American-educated Rabbis. While new institutions confirmed a commitment to a truly 'American' Judaism, the form that this Judaism would take had not been fixed. For many of the Established Jewish community, there was broad agreement that Judaism should shed what were seen as 'superstitions' and 'dogma', which belonged to another age. Using the Protestant churches as inspiration, reformers sought to transform Judaism into a modern confessional faith. However, many saw this effort at modernisation as a mask for abandoning Judaism. Even some of those who advocated a degree of reform saw the more radical edge of the movement as secularisation by another name. The reform movement did not exist in isolation, though, and the debates that were occurring were a Jewish expression of broader debate about the Americanisation and modernisation of religion.¹⁴⁴

Chicago, as it grew, found that like the American Jewish community as a whole, its expansion led to more debates as to how Judaism should be practiced. Reform, in a recognisable form, arrived in Chicago with the foundation of Temple Sinai by a group of German immigrants.

¹⁴³Alan Silverstein. *Alternatives to Assimilation: The Response of American Judaism to American Culture*. Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1994, p.59.

¹⁴⁴Martin E. Marty. *Modern American Religion, Vol. 1: The Irony of it All, 1893-1919*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997, p.77.

Sinai Congregation would become one of the most radical temples in the country, but despite its position on the fringes of American Reform it was highly influential in Chicago and well known throughout the American Jewish community. Temple Sinai was able to build its reputation by appointing a series of charismatic and strong-willed Rabbis. Its first Rabbi, and the man who remained its spiritual inspiration for many years, was Bernerd Felsenthal, a German-born and-trained Rabbi who always preached in German. Although Felsenthal was only Rabbi of Temple Sinai for three years, declining re-election in order to take the reins at the newly-formed Temple Zion on Chicago's West Side, he cast a long shadow. As author of a number of internationally influential Reform tracts, he continued to play a role in the development of the American Reform movement. Rabbi Emil Hirsch is remembered as Chicago's most influential Jewish reformer. After becoming Rabbi at Temple Sinai, Hirsch turned it into the single largest Jewish congregation in the city, spiritual home to almost all of the city's richest and most influential Jews. He also held national influence amongst Reform Jews as a leading member of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), founded in 1889. His connections to leading Reformers in Germany and America was also important; his father was a revered German Reform Rabbi and his role at Sinai was cemented by his status as David Einhorn's son-in-law and the brother-in-law of Kaufmann Kohler.¹⁴⁵ His influence in Chicago extended beyond the Jewish community as he became involved with a number of secular community organisations. He secured his position in 1893, when he was not only an organiser of the Jewish Congress at the World's Parliament of Religions but was also nominated as a Jewish representative to the main Congress, where he stood amongst religious leaders from all over the world. Into the twentieth century, his influence over the city's philanthropic community expanded as he became close friends with, and advisor to, Julius Rosenwald, head of Sears-Roebuck, and perhaps the

¹⁴⁵Brinkmann, *Sundays At Sinai: A Jewish Congregation in Chicago*, op. cit., p.115.

most famous Jewish philanthropist in Chicago's history.¹⁴⁶

Hirsch's brand of Reform Judaism was particularly radical but because of his congregation's level of wealth and influence, this radical edge became tempered. Though Hirsch was not the first to suggest Sunday services at Temple Sinai, something that a predecessor had suggested in the 1860s, it was Hirsch who finally instituted them and who used his platform outside Chicago to advocate their wider adoption.¹⁴⁷ Though this was not Hirsch's only innovation, it was the point at which many others in the Reform community felt that Hirsch had gone too far. Sunday services became a dividing line between Chicago and much of the rest of the Reform community, though this censure did little to dissuade Hirsch; as Editor of Chicago's English-language Jewish weekly newspaper, *Reform Advocate*, he continued to lobby for the radical reform of American Judaism.

Temple Sinai did not, as Hirsch had passionately hoped, become the trailblazer for the widespread adoption of Sunday services but other areas of innovation were more widely accepted, including the expansion of roles for women in the synagogue. Hirsch used both the pulpit and his newspaper to discuss women's wider participation in Judaism. However, like other religious leaders of his time, he felt that it was up to male communal leaders to decide the acceptable boundaries within which women's religious participation could occur.

2.6.3 Jewish Women's Communal Life

As will be discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters, Jewish women had already taken steps to move into the public sphere prior to the foundation of the National Council of Jewish Women. The first Jewish women's organisation in the United States is generally recognised to have been the *Female Hebrew Benevolent Society*, founded

¹⁴⁶Ibid., p.5.

¹⁴⁷Cutler, *The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb*, op. cit., p.25.

in Philadelphia by Rebecca Gratz in the 1840s.¹⁴⁸ Chicago's Jewish women, coming from a small community, were not immediately able to create their own charitable institutions separate from supporting the male-run charities, or informally participating in Synagogue-led charitable work. Women participated in many of the post-bellum Jewish fund-raising efforts, including the foundation of the Michael Rees Hospital and the fund-raising efforts after the 1871 fire. The sewing circle, created to make items for the poor by Sarah Greenebaum—Hannah Solomon's mother—in 1883, marked the start of organised Jewish women's philanthropy in Chicago.¹⁴⁹ However, few women took leadership roles, even after Greenebaum's efforts, and there was little that connected Jewish women from different social circles in Chicago, let alone any kind of organisation on a state-wide or national level.

The lack of organisation in Chicago was not an unusual case. Across the United States, there were a number of small Jewish women's communal organisations, often sewing circles or sabbath schools, but though the projects followed similar patterns and indeed were often mirrors of the women's philanthropic organisations in the non-Jewish community, little communication and no coordination between communities existed.¹⁵⁰ There was some degree of regional variation, particularly between major metropolitan communities and those in small towns, where the numbers of Jewish women were so small that they far more commonly joined non-Jewish organisations. There were also a new wave of organisations created within the Eastern European migrant communities, which again varied significantly from those created by the Established Jewish community. However, these groups would really come to prominence through the 1890s and into the early twentieth century.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸Diner and Benderly, *Her Works Praise Her: A History of Jewish Women in America from Colonial Times to the Present*, op. cit., p.110.

¹⁴⁹Solomon, *The Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*, op. cit., p.44.

¹⁵⁰Karla Goldman. *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery: Finding a Place for Women in American Judaism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000, p.175–92.

¹⁵¹*Ibid.*, p.202.

Prior to the 1890s, there was no reliable network of American Jewish women of any religious faction. Indeed by the end of the 1880s, the first national Jewish networks of any sort were still in their infancy. The reform-minded women of Chicago were not, though, the first to recognise a need for a way of organising Jewish women across the country, nor were they the first to see that technologies which eased travel and communication across such a large country would make such an organisation possible. The closest that any earlier organisation came to creating a national network of Jewish women was the *United Order of True Sisters*, the women's Auxiliary of the *B'nai B'rith*. Though the True Sisters did create an extensive network, and were remarkably influential in some cities in the development of a sense of American Jewish identity, they remained a selective organisation to which one had to be nominated, which limited their reach in a way later organisations would not be.¹⁵² In Chicago, the Johanna Lodge of the True Sisters did have significant influence. Though Hannah Solomon was not an active member, her father—Henry Greenebaum—was instrumental in helping the True Sisters gain a foothold in the city, and almost all the female members of her family were members, as was one of her closest friends, Lizzie T. Barbe.¹⁵³ The extent to which Solomon participated in the work of the Johanna Lodge is unclear, but it was an example to her that it was possible to create and maintain a network of Jewish women.¹⁵⁴ Whatever the influence of this 'pioneer organisation' on Hannah Solomon's thinking, she felt it lacked a real religious basis and was an organisation of Jewish women, not a Jewish women's organisation.¹⁵⁵

Though Philanthropy was not the sole pillar of Jewish women's

¹⁵²Wilhelm, *The Independent Orders of B'nai B'rith and True Sisters: Pioneers of a New Jewish Identity 1843-1914*, op. cit., p.6–10.

¹⁵³Fabric of My Life Chapter Draft, Hannah G Solomon Family Collection, American Jewish Archive, Cincinnati, Box3, Folder 6

¹⁵⁴Wilhelm, *The Independent Orders of B'nai B'rith and True Sisters: Pioneers of a New Jewish Identity 1843-1914*, op. cit., p.210.

¹⁵⁵Fabric of My Life Notes, Hannah G Solomon Family Collection, American Jewish Archive, Cincinnati, Box 3, Folder 2

communal life prior to the foundation of the National Council of Jewish Women, indeed would not be the sole aim of the NCJW, it was an important facet of acceptable women's public life. Philanthropy was a tried and tested route into the public sphere for American women, and the status-conscious Established Jewish Community saw it as not only an approved pass-time for women but also an occupation expected of a respectable American woman. Jewish women involved in philanthropy in the post-bellum period would have almost never come into contact with those they were assisting, preferring to work in support of centralised institutions like schools and hospitals. In fact, the roles open to Jewish women appear to have been even more limited than those open to Catholic or Protestant women who, unlike Jewish women, had a long history of women living a life of public service by joining religious orders and becoming nuns. While Jewish women's participation in philanthropy was deemed a necessary activity, the balancing act between that work and family life was far more delicate than for their non-Jewish counterparts. Devoting oneself to philanthropy was acceptable as long as it did not prevent a woman from marrying or indeed, once married, from neglecting their responsibilities at home.¹⁵⁶

2.7 The Challenge of Chicago Identity

Chicago, although a relatively new city, existed in almost its modern form by the 1890s. Its citizens had formed a strong sense of city culture, in which a sense of the city's space and its character proved important. With Jewish settlers arriving in the city soon after its foundation, and playing prominent roles in its commercial life, the city's Established Jewish Community participated in this determination of what it meant to be from Chicago. This sense of the city's self, though, was threatened in the 1890s as the flow of new immigrants from Eastern and Southern

¹⁵⁶Goldman, *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery: Finding a Place for Women in American Judaism*, op. cit., p.177.

Europe increased massively. For the Established Jewish Community, these fears were multiplied as the numbers of new Jewish immigrants dwarfed their own community. The relationship between the new immigrants and the Established Jewish Community was not always an easy one, but it was perhaps not characterised by a mutual antipathy caused by the established community's prejudices and overbearing behaviour to the degree that some scholars have suggested.

This situation was not unique to Chicago and the fraught relationship between Established Jewish Community and the new immigrants was a pattern followed in almost every city in North America with an existing Jewish community of any size. The reaction of Chicago's Jewish community, however, must be contextualised by the way in which Progressive philanthropic ideas were gaining traction in the city during the same period. It was becoming clear that this new way of thinking about the relationship between the wealthy and the poor was forcing a redefinition of acceptable Chicago citizenship. Whilst the wealthy had always been expected to participate in Philanthropy, the expected form of their contributions was changing. The Established Jewish Community, as subsequent chapters will show were active participants in the reexamination and reaffirmation of what it meant to be a Chicagoan in the 1890s: embracing the possibilities of modernity, and using science and technology to improve society.

3

Creating the NCJW

3.1 The World's Columbian Exposition

At nine thirty in the morning on Tuesday September 7th, 1893 Sadie American got up to speak in front of a crowded room. The Jewish Women's Congress, organised as part of the World's Parliament of Religions at the World's Columbian Exposition had been a resounding success, with all sessions having to be moved to larger rooms to contain the number who wished to attend. Indeed the previous evening the program had been repeated, in order to meet demand.¹⁵⁷ American's was the only paper to be read that morning; it was the climax of the conference. Praising the papers which had preceded her, American introduced her own task, that of summarising the work that was being conducted by Jewish women, gathered through a survey sent to as

¹⁵⁷Solomon, *The Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*, op. cit., p.87.

many Jewish communities throughout the world as the organisers could gain access to. Although American made clear that the request for information did not meet with 'frequent or full response', she praised those from whom the organisers had heard.¹⁵⁸ The information sought, she said, had one object:

to ascertain the nature, field, purpose and success of associated work among Jewish women; not merely to present such a record, but to make it serve as a lesson to teach by the past how to guide the future, to teach what has been accomplished, and what calls for attention, to teach us what paths to avoid and which to follow, to teach us wherein we are able and wherein we lack.

To classify the work is not difficult. In the one great field of Philanthropy was it all embraced.¹⁵⁹

American ended her lengthy speech with an impassioned plea for the foundation of a 'lasting monument' to the success of the Congress; a national organisation for Jewish women in the United States.¹⁶⁰ That organisation would be the National Council of Jewish Women, and American would be its first Corresponding Secretary. This moment, not simply American's speech, but the whole of the Jewish Women's Congress is considered a defining one in American Jewish women's history. It was not strictly a moment though, but rather a period of transition, which contained its own struggle that cannot be removed from the story.

The World's Columbian Exposition was considered the point at which Chicago 'arrived'. It was—and remains—so important that it is represented on the city's flag by the third of the four stars. The effort to organise the Exposition was not a smooth process, but ultimately

¹⁵⁸Sadie American. "Organization". In: *Papers of the Jewish Women's Congress, 1893*. The National Council of Jewish Women. 1893, pp. 218 –262, p.218.

¹⁵⁹*Ibid.*, p.219.

¹⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p.248.

it is remembered as a success, with over 21 million visitors in its six month existence.¹⁶¹ In 1889, the United States Congress announced that a World's Fair would be held to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the arrival of Columbus in the Americas, Chicago was barely considered a plausible candidate; indeed New York and Washington DC were considered the prohibitive frontrunners for the honour.¹⁶² When Chicago emerged as the winning candidate, it was not because Congress had been convinced of the potential of the city as a cultural centre, on a par with the much longer established East Coast metropolises, but because the city's financiers were able to raise a staggering amount of money in a short period of time. They proved they had the resources to host the fair, not that they were the right city to hold it.¹⁶³ An Act of Congress was passed which created a number of specifications for the Chicago Exposition, and a national board was set up to head the planning process. However, given that only a small number of the board were in Chicago, it largely fell to the local financiers to shape the event.

By the 1890s the pattern for international expositions had largely been set. Following the example set by London's Great Exhibition in 1851, they were an opportunity not only to demonstrate industrial and scientific innovation, but also intended to promote cultural understanding and celebrate modernity in all its forms. They promoted nationalistic ideals and enforced ideas of gender through their portrayal of modern life.¹⁶⁴ They were also supposed to provide an introduction to high culture for those who would never otherwise have access to it;

¹⁶¹R. Reid Badger. *The Great American Fair: The World's Columbian Exposition and American Culture*. Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1979, p.131.

¹⁶²Jeanne Madeline Weimann. *The Fair Women*. Chicago: Academy Chicago, 1981, p.22.

¹⁶³Badger, *The Great American Fair: The World's Columbian Exposition and American Culture*, op. cit., p.52.

¹⁶⁴T. J. Boisseau and Abigail M. Markwyn. "World's Fairs in Feminist Historical Perspective". In: *Gendering the Fair: Histories of Women and Gender at World's Fairs*. Ed. by T. J. Boisseau and Abigail M. Markwyn. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010, pp.1-18, p.2-5.

one of the grandest buildings at the Chicago Exposition was the Fine Arts Palace, where paintings and sculptures from all over the world were displayed to an audience who had largely never even seen pictures of them.¹⁶⁵ The major buildings were built in a classical style and painted to look like marble; they were so distinctive that the fairground was named 'The White City'. Chicago's exposition was innovative in a number of ways, particularly in the addition of the Midway, a commercial annex to the fair. It was there that in the name of 'cultural understanding' so-called villages were set up to represent other countries—some European, a large number from the Middle-East and North Africa, and the 'Dahomi Village' representing sub-saharan Africa. Though they were described as educational, they were functionally little more than entertainment, providing titillation to the visitors, but this was popular, and the money made on the Midway offset losses made elsewhere and turned the Columbian Exposition into a financial success.¹⁶⁶ The Fair displayed the priorities and outlook of the city elites who created it. It would balance 'High Culture' in the White City, with popular culture and commerce on the Midway. With the committee in charge of the Exposition being largely composed of local businessmen with interests in commerce and transport, their acknowledgement of the financial opportunities posed by the Fair are unsurprising.¹⁶⁷

A number of fringe events accompanied the Exposition, official and unofficial. Some, like 'Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show' saw the numbers of visitors expected in the city as a financial opportunity; others, like the various congresses, were organised to facilitate international discussions on a range of topics from religion to philanthropic and social work to women's rights. The official congresses were held in a specially built building away from the rest of the fair in the centre of the city, now

¹⁶⁵John J. Flinn. *Official Guide to the World's Columbian Exposition*. Chicago: The Columbian Guide Company, 1893, p.61.

¹⁶⁶Badger, *The Great American Fair: The World's Columbian Exposition and American Culture*, op. cit., p.131.

¹⁶⁷Gilbert, *Perfect Cities: Chicago's Utopias of 1893*, op. cit., p.84.

home to the Chicago Art Institute.¹⁶⁸

The fair was open for six months, beginning in May and ending in October before Chicago's harsh winter set in. Discussions were ongoing as to what could be done with the site and buildings afterwards, but plans became moot when, on July 5th, 1894, amidst clashes between federal troops and striking railway workers, a fire was set, and almost the entire complex burned to the ground.¹⁶⁹ Only one building survived: the Fine Art Palace, which had been extensively fireproofed to satisfy the owners of the many works of art housed there for the exposition's duration. But even after the buildings which had made up the White City had gone, its influence was still felt, with many of the city's arts and cultural institutions dating to the first half of the 1890s as part of a citywide project of institutional expansion accompanying the exposition.

The exploration of religion and articulation of ideas of religious toleration were not new to Chicago's exposition. Both the promotion of a sense of "brotherhood amongst mankind" and the promotion of a sense of philanthropic duty amongst visitors to the expositions had been named amongst the most important objects of international expositions since the 1851 Great Exhibition, held in London.¹⁷⁰ James Gilbert has suggested that in Chicago the fairground itself was a key space in which brotherhood, not just between those of different races, but also of different classes, could be fostered. It represented a rare social space where the elites actively encouraged the poor to attend, particularly poor children. Hull-House raised over \$300 specifically so that children from the 19th Ward could attend the Fair for free.¹⁷¹ Gilbert asks:

¹⁶⁸Weimann, *The Fair Women*, op. cit., p.530.

¹⁶⁹Badger, *The Great American Fair: The World's Columbian Exposition and American Culture*, op. cit., p.130.

¹⁷⁰P Greenhalgh. *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988, p.17.

¹⁷¹University of Illinois Special Collections, Hull House Acct, Oct 1st 1891-1893, Hull-House Collection, Box 16, Folder 138

How in the new urban environment could middle class and elite Chicagoans comprehend the kaleidoscopic changes in behaviour and culture which coloured everything they saw around them? As the visible clutch of tradition was replaced by the invisible hand of the marketplace, how could elite and middle-class Americans—all believers in morality, traditions and propriety—control this environment, yet find space to participate in what was so obviously new and exciting?¹⁷²

The Fair provided one such site where the middle-class and elite Chicagoans could experience the growing diversity in the city in a controllable environment, but it also, particularly for women, emphasised the responsibility of the middle-class and elites, towards those in need. Half of the first floor at the Columbian Exposition's Women's building was given over to exhibits related to "reform work and charity organisations," a space measuring eighty by two hundred feet.¹⁷³

That Chicago's elite Jews would participate in the Columbian Exposition in some way was never in doubt. That its elite women would participate did not seem a stretch. The form that participation took was shocking to those in Chicago and beyond. This chapter will take a broadly chronological view of the lead up to the Jewish Women's Congress, looking at its place within the World's Columbian Exposition and the World's Parliament of Religions. It will address the way in which the Congress was organised, the debates over what form women's contributions to the Exposition should take, and the more focused debates as to the role Jewish women's involvement should take. It will provide an analysis of the papers delivered and the press reaction to them, both from inside and outside the Jewish community. It will also look at the other ways in which Jews were involved in the World's Columbian Exposition and the impact of those portrayals on the Jewish Women's Congress.

¹⁷²Gilbert, *Perfect Cities: Chicago's Utopias of 1893*, op. cit., p.3.

¹⁷³Flinn, *Official Guide to the World's Columbian Exposition*, op. cit., p.108.

3.2 Planning the Jewish Women's Congress

3.2.1 The Received Version of Events

The source most commonly looked at by scholars discussing the foundation of the *National Council of Jewish Women* is Hannah Solomon's autobiography *Fabric of my Life*. Her account is the most complete, and as she was originally asked to organise the contribution of Jewish Women, it provides the only account of the early stages of the project. Solomon's account begins with an explanation that it was her membership in the Chicago Women's Club, an elite group of which she and her sister had been the first Jewish members, that led to her being asked to take on this responsibility.¹⁷⁴

Two of the [Chicago Women's Club's] members, Mrs Potter Palmer and Mrs Charles Henrotin, were made chairman and vice-chairman of the Board of Lady Managers, which included representatives from every state in the country, and under their supervision women's participation was to be organized and established. A special building for women's exhibits was planned, and an auxiliary to arrange for women's congresses was formed. In addition, the Chicago Women's Club was appointed to act as official hostesses at receptions in honor of the many distinguished guests who would participate in the congresses. . .

I was honored, by those who were planning the women's congresses by being made representative of the Jewish women, and was further authorized to call Jewish women together under what division or divisions I thought best. Since I believed then, as I do now, that when we use the word "Jewish" it must have a purely religious connotation, I felt that our place should be with the Parliament of Religions which

¹⁷⁴A fuller discussion of the Chicago Women's Club, and Hannah Solomon's role in it, can be found in Chapter Five.

was to be one of the great features of the World's Fair year. A women's board was organized to aid in furthering the Parliament, and I was made chairman for Jewish women's participation.¹⁷⁵

This account, which remains central to the received story of the *National Council of Jewish Women*, goes on to look in greater detail at the specific process by which this 'authorisation' to gather Jewish women, became a full scale Jewish Women's Congress. Although she first became involved in the preparations for the Columbian Exposition in 1890, it was in 1891 that Solomon's work began in earnest. On discovering that there was no national institutional mechanism by which Jewish women in the United States—let alone those further afield—could be contacted, she wrote to the Rabbis of the country's larger Jewish communities and asked for their assistance in making contact with what Solomon called "America's outstanding Jewish women." After a year of "planning, conferring and incessant letter writing," Solomon records that she felt confident that they could present "a Jewish Women's Congress worthy of stirring the Parliament of Religions."¹⁷⁶ It was at this point in the process that Solomon claims the idea to form a permanent organisation of Jewish women through the congress came to her.

The timeline presented by Solomon is somewhat confusing. She indicates that she presented a finished set of plans to the Women's Committee, then goes back to look at the stages she went to in order to formulate those plans. Centrally to this, she points out that "invaluable and sage council was given me by my constant advisors, Dr Emil G Hirsch and Mrs Charles Henrotin."¹⁷⁷ She also notes that she formed a committee from among the women of Chicago's Jewish community, as well as notable Jewish women from across the United States. In addition to her plans for a separate congress, Solomon requested two

¹⁷⁵Solomon, *The Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*, op. cit., p.80.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., p.81.

¹⁷⁷Ibid., p.82.

spots in the program of the General World's Parliament of Religions, for contributions from Jewish women; Henrietta Szold, who would later found *Hadassah*, giving a paper titled "What Judaism Has Done for Women" and Josephine Lazarus, sister of the poet Emma, on "The Outlook for Judaism."

Separate to both the general World's Parliament of Religions and the Jewish Women's Congress was the Jewish Congress, organised by some of the most prominent men of Chicago's Jewish community. One of the most frequently repeated anecdotes about Solomon's preparations for the Exposition records what happened when she was invited to discuss how the Jewish men and women of Chicago could work together, rather than producing competing events:

When the Jewish men of Chicago gathered to make plans for their congress, I was invited to attend the meeting. After some preliminary business, the chairman turned to me, asking, 'Mrs Solomon, will you Jewish women cooperate with us in our sessions?'

'Well,' I replied, 'our plans are already far advanced, and assignments have been given our representatives in the general Parliament. We will, however, be very glad to join with you if you will accord us active participation in your program.'

The program committee then retired to deliberate, and when they returned, lo and behold! not a single woman's name appeared in their recommendations!

'Mr Chairman,' I enquired, 'just where on your program are the women to be placed?'

'Well,' hemmed and hawed the chairman, 'the program seems complete just as it stands.'

'Very well,' I replied, 'under these circumstances, we do not care to cooperate with you, and I request that the fact of our

presence be expunged from the records.¹⁷⁸

This account remains part of the mythology that defines the present day NCJW, with Solomon's defiance and determination to find a meaningful role for American Jewish women at the Columbian Exposition key to the NCJW's understanding of its history.

After Solomon's apparent disagreement with the male-led Jewish Congress committee, Solomon continued to plan her own event. She travelled west in the early months of 1893 to meet in person those with whom she had been corresponding, and to attempt to increase national interest in the Jewish Women's Congress. As part of this trip she secured Carrie Shevelson Benjamin of Denver, Colorado to speak on Jewish women's philanthropy. Solomon provides no details about this trip, but notes that she returned to Chicago at the end of May, a month after the Exposition had opened. Her only comment about that summer, was that she became increasingly aware of the Congress's "great value and historical potentialities," as the first time a national gathering of Jewish women had been attempted.¹⁷⁹

In the absence of other easily accessible sources from this period, it is this account alone which has largely supplied the account of the preparations for the Jewish Women's Congress. Indeed it is the only one presented in 'Gone to Another Meeting,' Faith Rogow's history of the *National Council of Jewish Women*.¹⁸⁰ However, as with any memoir, the account Solomon gave expresses as much about the way that, fifty years later, she, and those who edited the book after her death, wished the founding of the organisation to be remembered. Schuly Rubin Schwartz's essay 'Henrietta Szold: The Making of an Icon' details the way in which *Hadassah*, particularly in the 15 years after her death attempted to shape and control the way in which Szold was remembered.¹⁸¹ The same can be said of the NCJW's role in creating Solomon's

¹⁷⁸Ibid., p.82-3.

¹⁷⁹Ibid., p.83-4.

¹⁸⁰Faith Rogow. *Gone to Another Meeting: The National Council of Jewish Women, 1893-1993*. Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1993, p.9-11.

¹⁸¹Schwartz, "Henrietta Szold: The Making of an Icon", op. cit.

legacy. Indeed, as Solomon lived into her eighties, she was actively involved in the shaping and reshaping of the memory of the foundation of the NCJW, and therefore the unquestioned use of her memoir as its sole record has provided a distorted picture in several key areas. This is symptomatic of the ways in which the story of the NCJW and Jewish women's history has been isolated from its context. Solomon did not create her Congress in isolation, but rather as part of a much larger women's contribution, under the direction of the Women's Auxiliary.

3.2.2 The Auxiliary and the Isabellas

Solomon only mentions the Women's Auxiliary briefly. Her description paints it as a largely peaceable group, and the development of Women's contributions to the Exposition is presented as uncomplicated. In turn, this suggests that Solomon, and the committee she established under the Auxiliary's mandate felt largely un-pressured by that committee. Though she mentions Ellen Henrotin as an 'advisor' she does not mention any influence by Bertha Palmer, the Auxiliary's president. However, the Women's Auxiliary was in fact the site of a substantial battle between two elements of Chicago's female elite: the first, represented by Henrotin and Palmer, were largely the wives and daughters of some of Chicago's most influential businessmen. Their opponents, a more self-consciously feminist group calling themselves the Isabellas (short for the 'Queen Isabella Association') were a national group that had been founded in 1889 in order to lobby for greater women's involvement in the Exposition, wherever it was held. In particular the Isabellas wanted the Exposition to laud the achievements of Queen Isabella of Castile, who as Columbus's patron, they felt should be equally credited with Columbus's achievements.¹⁸²

As early as 1890 the Queen Isabella Association, and their aim of promoting the contributions of Isabella of Castile to "the discovery of the New World," were a subject of public interest. The *Chicago Tribune*

¹⁸²Chicago Historical Society, Queen Isabella Association Collection, Box 1, Folder 1

published a one column article on the subject on March 3rd, 1890, only a week after the congressional ballot which had finally awarded Chicago the Exposition, on February 24th 1890.¹⁸³ The *Tribune* article posited that the Isabella Association was formed almost simultaneously in New York, Washington, St Louis and Chicago, all cities which put themselves forward as prospective sites for the Exposition. The Chicago group, directed by Dr. Julia Holmes Smith, Eliza Allen Starr, Catherine V. Waite, Corrine S Brown and Dr Frances Dickinson, became the *de facto* national leaders after the US Congress's decision. In the article, two major aims of the Association were put forward: first, that a statue of Queen Isabella should be created and displayed at the Fair, and secondly that the Fair should include a pavilion for the use of women.¹⁸⁴ They were not, however, the sole group to advocate the inclusion of women in the Fair. Congressman William McKendree Springer, of Illinois, added an amendment to the bill confirming the Exposition would be held in Chicago. The Springer Amendment confirmed that women were to play a significant role in the planning and execution of the Exposition.¹⁸⁵ This amendment was passed by Congress, and was added to the final bill which was passed in April 1890. A separate amendment which would have ensured the creation of a statue of Isabella failed, although it should not be suggested that this failure was entirely due to the subject of the statue, as a similar amendment calling for the creation of a statue of Columbus also failed. It should also not be suggested that the failure entirely negated the possibility of a statue, merely that the statue was not required to be a part of the Exposition.¹⁸⁶ In this way, while women's participation in the Exposition was secured, the form that their participation would take was still to be determined.

A brief examination of the women at the helm of the Isabella Association goes some way towards explaining the Association's priorities.

¹⁸³Weimann, *The Fair Women*, op. cit., p.32.

¹⁸⁴*Chicago Tribune* March 3, 1890, p.2

¹⁸⁵Fair Bill, Quoted in Weimann, (1981) p.33

¹⁸⁶Weimann, *The Fair Women*, op. cit., p.32-3.

It was largely composed of professional women: Dr. Frances Dickinson was an ophthalmologist, Catherine Waite a lawyer, and the organisation's first president, Julia H Smith was a medical doctor. Many were also committed suffragists; indeed Dickinson was Susan B Anthony's cousin.¹⁸⁷ Eliza Allen Starr was a well known Roman Catholic author and the aunt of Ellen Gates Starr, the co-founder of Hull-House, where Eliza lived at the time the Isabella Association was organised.¹⁸⁸ Unlike the rest of the committee, Corrine Brown was not a professional, rather she was the wife of prominent banker. She was, though, active in the labor movement.¹⁸⁹ The Isabellas were a self-consciously feminist group of women, though exactly what they meant by feminism is not clear.

The group's use of Isabella of Castile is also significant. The *Chicago Tribune* pointed out that they were not the first to suggest her use in the four hundredth anniversary celebrations, instead crediting the idea to a speech made by an Iowan Judge in 1885. However, Judge FW Brannon's use of Isabella was not as a figure behind which feminists could rally, instead he used her as a model for less progressive womanhood.

All contemporary writers agree in pronouncing [her] one of the loveliest of her sex, a woman whose character was adorned with the loftiest and most attractive of female virtues and graces, and the gentleness of whose nature was such that the humblest of subjects could approach her without fear and speak to her without restraint.¹⁹⁰

In fact the selection by this group of Isabella of Castile, rather than guided by a particular wish to celebrate Isabella for any of her own works, was an adoption of the best known woman in the story of Columbus's discovery of the Americas by those wishing to raise the profile of women at the fair.

¹⁸⁷Ibid., p.28–9.

¹⁸⁸University of Illinois Special Collections, Historical Encyclopedia of Chicago Women Project Records, Box 57, Folder 406

¹⁸⁹Weimann, *The Fair Women*, op. cit., p.29.

¹⁹⁰*Chicago Tribune* March 3rd, 1890, p.2

The Catholic influence on the Isabellas is also significant. One of the earliest projects produced under the auspices of the organisation was a book on the life of Isabella of Castile, written by Eliza Allen Starr. Reviewed in the *Chicago Tribune* on March 8th, 1890, it was likely a personal project of Starr's which she then brought under the banner of the Queen Isabella Association, in order to bring their organisation publicity. The book presented "a narrative full of picturesqueness, giving the events of Isabella's personal life with the tender enthusiasm of a sympathising sister-woman and co-religionist."¹⁹¹ However, as the *Tribune's* review pointed out, Isabella made a problematic heroine for women in several ways, particularly given the Spanish Inquisition's role in the execution of those accused of heresy, and the expulsion of Jews from the Iberian peninsula in 1492, the same year as Columbus's voyage which the celebrations were to memorialise. The use of Isabella placed this organisation at odds with Chicago's Jewish community from the outset. Emil Hirsch delivered a lecture in which he came out against the lauding of Isabella at the Exposition, after which the Directors of the Association challenged him to a public debate on the subject.¹⁹² Though the Isabella Association's President, Julia Holmes Smith, stated that "she would not attempt to defend Isabella in everything," by dint of their name, and their aim to build a statue of Isabella, those who felt that they could in no way be represented by Isabella were *de facto* excluded from the organisation.¹⁹³

From an early stage, the self-conscious feminism of some within the Isabellas was visible. After having declared that their aims were a statue and a women's building, one of the first projects proposed was a conference of women physicians. Only two weeks after the first mention of the Isabellas in the *Chicago Tribune*, a small paragraph informs the reader that "women physicians have organised...as the Medical Department of the Queen Isabella Association."¹⁹⁴ Again, this

¹⁹¹*Chicago Tribune* March 8th 1890, p.13

¹⁹²*Chicago Tribune* March 3, 1890, p.2

¹⁹³*Chicago Tribune*, March 12, 1890 p.6

¹⁹⁴*Chicago Tribune* March 17 1890, p.3

was before the congressional bill confirming Chicago's hosting the Fair, which would also contain amendments outlining what women's role in the organisation of the Fair would be. A day after the announcement of the Physicians conference the Isabellas were forced to confirm that they did not represent the entirety of women's involvement in the Exposition; rather a separate group, the Women's Auxiliary also had been formed. The Isabellas explained the difference between the two groups in this way:

The [Queen Isabella Association] is opposed to a separate exhibit of woman's work. It proposes to emphasise the equality of women and men in the world's work by using the person of Queen Isabella and the part she took in discovering America. A statue of the Queen will be erected by the association and also a pavilion, where women may meet each other according to profession, taste or interest from all over the world.¹⁹⁵

This represents the first indication in the *Chicago Tribune* that the women of Chicago were not united in their vision of their role at the Fair. The Auxiliary has been created to fight to bring the Fair to Chicago. Now this was all but secured they were turning their attention to their other aim: a building at the Fair in which to display women's work.¹⁹⁶ The Auxiliary's emphasis was on the arts and crafts produced by women, not on women's professional achievements. Their most recognisable member was Bertha Palmer, the wife of Chicago hotel and property magnate Potter Palmer. The Auxiliary were accepted far more quickly by Chicago's society than the Isabellas as their position relied far less on a claim of absolute equality for women and because many of the women involved were the wives of Chicago's most prominent citizens.¹⁹⁷

In the end, though, the connection to Chicago society was not of use in claiming the upper hand in organising women's participation. The

¹⁹⁵*Chicago Tribune* March 18 1890, p.10

¹⁹⁶Weimann, *The Fair Women*, op. cit., p.36.

¹⁹⁷*Ibid.*, p.30.

Springer Amendment, which guaranteed women's involvement, also laid out how they were to be appointed. Consisting of two sentences in the section of the bill which set out the responsibilities for a National Commission, it stated:

And said Commission is authorised and required to appoint a Board of Lady Managers of such numbers, and to perform such duties as may be prescribed by said Commission. Said Board may appoint one or more members of all committees authorized to award prizes for exhibits which may be produced in whole or in part by female labor.¹⁹⁸

When the Executive Board were called upon, in May 1890, to further clarify what role women should play in the Exposition, and gain official recognition for their work, they were unable to do so. Unwilling to act in a way that could be construed as usurping the authority of the National Commission, they informed the women that they would have to wait until the Commission made their decision.¹⁹⁹ The Queen Isabella Association almost immediately put forward a statement claiming that they did not wish to be recognised by the National Commission. They claimed that as the Board of Lady Managers should be national in character and was to assist in awarding prizes for the exhibits in which women's work was presented, it should be made up of at least one member from every state and territory, and that the women of these states should organise in order to nominate members for the Board. While they, the Queen Isabella Association, aimed to build a statue and a women's building. They also called upon the Board of Lady Managers to meet in Chicago to elect officers and vote on whether they wanted women's work to be displayed separately, as the Women's Auxiliary wanted, or whether, as the Isabellas hoped, women's work would be displayed alongside men's work. In the *Chicago Tribune* Frances Dickinson suggested that the National Commission might in fact rule

¹⁹⁸Fair Bill, Quoted in Weimann, *The Fair Women* op. cit., (1981) p.33

¹⁹⁹*Chicago Tribune* May 29th, 1890, p.2

out displaying women's work separately, although there is no evidence to suggest that this was more than wishful thinking, or an attempt to promote her own organisation's ideas.²⁰⁰

Meeting again in late June, the Queen Isabella Association attempted to organise a national ballot by which the members of the Board of Lady Managers could be elected. They claimed that a popular vote on the topic would increase interest in the Exposition and therefore raise attendance at the Exposition. They also created a committee to call upon the wives and daughters of the National Committee, when the Committee met in Chicago, likely in order to curry favour for the Isabellas' cause.²⁰¹ In any case, the push to ensure that the the Board of Lady Managers was truly national was key to the Isabellas' attempt to take control of the Board of Lady Managers. They, due to their links to national suffrage organisations were much more easily able to raise support on a national level, but they were far less entrenched in Chicago society than the Auxiliary.²⁰²

In the end it was almost the end of 1890 by the time the National Committee appointed the Board of Lady Managers. Aware of the divisions between the Isabellas and the Auxiliary, they made an attempt to please both groups, and create a Board in which the two factions could work together. The Board they created was comprised of two members from every state and territory and the District of Columbia, as well as another eight members-at-large. In addition to this, and likely to stave off claims that they were favouring the Isabellas, with their national scope, they appointed an additional nine members from Chicago, eight of whom were members of the Auxiliary, and only one, Frances Dickinson, who was an Isabella.²⁰³ This was a disappointment to the Isabellas. In September they had been promised that the Auxiliary and the Isabellas would both get three spots of the nine Chicago delegates but when the names of the women to be appointed were leaked to the

²⁰⁰*Chicago Tribune* June 6th, 1890

²⁰¹*Chicago Tribune* June 20th, 1890, p.3

²⁰²Weimann, *The Fair Women*, op. cit., p.40.

²⁰³*Ibid.*, p.40-1.

Chicago Tribune on September 28th, Thomas Palmer, the President of the National Committee (no relation of the Chicago Palmers), his mind had been changed.²⁰⁴ The *Tribune*, who throughout the summer seemed to have built a close relationship with the Isabellas, and who had frequently published notices and articles about the Association, headlined their article: 'Palmer's Coup D'Etat.'²⁰⁵ Though the headline referred to National Committee President Thomas Palmer, and though the Auxiliary claimed to be dissatisfied with the power wielded by the Isabellas through the states' delegates, it was at this point that Bertha Palmer began to be able to take control. The Board of Lady Managers met for the first time in November 1890, and Bertha Palmer was elected its president.²⁰⁶ No reason was given to the press for the virtual takeover of the Chicago delegation by the Auxiliary, indeed Thomas Palmer seems to have been reluctant to discuss it at all, claiming to the *Tribune*, that he could not remember the names of the women nominated.²⁰⁷ The Chicago delegation, who by dint of their presence in the city took the lion's share in responsibility for women's participation in the exposition had undergone an extensive rebalancing. This suggests that the Auxiliary's outlook, plans and membership might have been more palatable to the National Committee, than those of the self-consciously, and publicly feminist Queen Isabella Association. In addition, the way in which this struggle was played out in public, particularly in the pages of the *Chicago Tribune* shows that Chicago's socially engaged women, even those who could not be said to be on either side of the debate, would have been aware of what was happening.

Hannah Solomon was, through the Chicago Women's Club, acquainted with women involved in both the Auxiliary and the Isabellas. Although the Chicago Women's Club is more associated with Palmer and Henrotin when scholars have discussed these events, the President of the Queen Isabella Association, Julia Holmes Smith, was also

²⁰⁴*Chicago Tribune* September 14th, 1890, p.9

²⁰⁵*Chicago Tribune* September 28th, 1890, p.2

²⁰⁶Weimann, *The Fair Women*, op. cit., p.47-8.

²⁰⁷*Chicago Tribune* September 28th, 1890, p.2

an active member.²⁰⁸ In a draft of a speech given by Solomon forty years later, at the 1933 Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago, she emphasised the work of suffragists Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B Anthony, as well as Women's Christian Temperance Union leader Frances Willard, and claimed that at the 1893 meeting of the National Council of Women, Susan B Anthony "converted us all to suffrage."²⁰⁹ It would not be out of the question to suggest that Solomon may have shared ideas in common with members of the Queen Isabella Association. To entirely cast the battle between the two factions as on ideological grounds would be reductive, as it was also much to do with the various personalities involved. Bertha Palmer, in her position as President of the Board of Lady Managers, intended to use the women's display at the exposition to highlight the plight of working women.²¹⁰ She also hoped to make the women's building as accessible as possible to working women, even writing to Jane Addams, of whom she was an early supporter and donor to Hull-House.²¹¹ The difference then, may have been one of presentation. Palmer, from the start, presented herself as in favour of a women's effort which presented a united front for their sex.²¹² In contrast, in addition to their explicit alignment with suffrage and other feminist causes—which some found unpalatable—the Isabellas encouraged their members to divide themselves into separate departments depending on what occupation they were engaged in.²¹³ While the Isabellas did form a committee to look at housekeeping as an occupation, this occurred almost a year after the committee for women

²⁰⁸Weimann, *The Fair Women*, op. cit., p.28–9.

²⁰⁹MS749, American Jewish Archive, Box 2, Folder 8

²¹⁰Weimann, *The Fair Women*, op. cit., p.50.

²¹¹Jean Bethke Elshtain. *Jane Addams and the Dream of American Democracy: a life*. New York: Basic Books, 2002, p.198.

²¹²The Official Manual of the Board of Lady Managers of the World's Columbian Commission: The Minutes of the Board from the Date of its organisation, November 19, 1890, to the Close of its Second Session, September 9, 1891, Including the Act of Congress, and Information in Regard to the Action of the World's Columbian Commission and of the Chicago Directory of the Columbian Exposition. Chicago: Rand, McNally & Company, 1891, p.55–6

²¹³Chicago Historical Society, Queen Isabella Association, Box 1, Folder 1

in medicine was formed. In stating that the role of this committee was “to elevate housekeeping to the dignity of a profession,” the Isabellas showed that their career-orientated leaders were out of step with the vast majority of middle and upper-class American women for whom housekeeping was seen as the highest calling. The suggestion their position needed elevating was therefore seen as a condescending one.²¹⁴ In addition, their concentration on women in professional paid work ignored the unpaid philanthropic and volunteer work done by middle and upper class women, who were left out of the Isabella’s call for a “great federation of women in occupations for a livelihood.”²¹⁵

To an extent, by the time Solomon was asked to take charge of Jewish women’s contributions the question as to which faction had control of women’s contribution to the Exposition had been settled. Bertha Palmer and the Auxiliary were firmly entrenched in leadership positions. However, Palmer removed the Isabellas from positions of responsibility with great thoroughness and consolidated her own position by ensuring that that all major decisions were directed to her, demonstrating the level of control she exerted over all women involved in the Exposition.²¹⁶ The Queen Isabella Association, who had been early favourites to lead women’s contributions to the Exposition were relegated to building an architecturally unremarkable meeting-house away from the site of the Exposition and, while they still held professional women’s congresses, they became an almost forgotten side-note to the Exposition.²¹⁷ Their removal from the Exposition stood as a stark reminder that those with too radical ideas would not be accepted at official women’s events, shaping the way in which other women’s contributions were organised.

²¹⁴*Chicago Tribune* February 6, 1891, p.5

²¹⁵Chicago Historical Society, Queen Isabella Association, Box 1, Folder 1

²¹⁶*Chicago Tribune* February 5, 1891, p.5

²¹⁷Chicago Historical Society, Queen Isabella Association, Box 1, Folder 1

3.2.3 Hirsch as a Constant Support?

One of the most famous stories about the foundation of the NCJW is that of Solomon attending a planning meeting for the Jewish Congress. After being told that there was no space for a substantive contribution for women, Solomon supposedly told the male organisers that the community's women "did not care to cooperate with [them]."²¹⁸ However, the narrative that she presents is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, the timescale Solomon suggests is not entirely convincing. In her autobiography Solomon suggests that she began to work towards the Jewish Women's Congress in 1891, while the first official moves towards organising the Jewish Congress took place at the New York Meeting of the Central Conference of American Rabbis in July of 1892.²¹⁹ As Deborah Grand Golomb suggested, this reordering of events is actually unsurprising.

It is generally assumed that this unpleasant meeting acted as a catalyst for the formation of the women's group. The story recounted by Hannah Solomon, however, appears to have been an after-the-fact justification of an organisation that had already been decided upon by the women themselves. Jewish men, backed by religious, social and cultural tradition, comfortably excluded women from their public activities. It was an unprecedented reversal of roles for Jewish women to gather together on a national basis in a group solely devoted to women. In this context, Solomon naturally ascribed a role to the men, albeit a negative one.²²⁰

This assertion possibly sheds interesting light on the fact that Solomon particularly emphasises that she asked for her attendance at the meeting

²¹⁸Solomon, *The Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*, op. cit., p.83.

²¹⁹Union of American Hebrew Congregations. *Judaism at the World's Parliament of Religions: comprising the papers on Judaism read at the Parliament, at the Jewish Denominational Congress, and at the Jewish Presentation*. R. Clarke, 1894, p.i.

²²⁰D Golomb. "The 1893 Congress of Jewish Women: Evolution or Revolution in American Jewish Women's History?" In: *American Jewish History* 70 (1980), pp. 52–67, p.61.

be entirely struck from any records.²²¹ The problematic element of the narrative as Solomon presented it, was that Solomon both described the male leaders of the Jewish Congress as resistant to women playing an active role in the Congress, and yet Emil Hirsch is lauded as a “constant support.”²²² Hirsch was a member of the ‘Joint Committee of the World’s Congress Auxiliary on the Jewish Denominational Congress,’ and one of only three members of that committee who were from Chicago, making him a key organiser of the Congress Solomon was supposedly excluded by.²²³

Hirsch was not only a Rabbi, but also Editor of the *Reform Advocate*, Chicago’s weekly English-language Jewish newspaper, whose opinions were very well recorded. The immediate reaction from the *Reform Advocate* when Solomon decided that the meeting of Jewish women should take place under that auspices of the Parliament of Religions, and in addition, should be separate from the more general Jewish Congress was not positive. An article published on October 2, 1892, almost a year before the Congress was to take place, makes it explicit that a Jewish Women’s Congress was not seen to be necessary.

We have been in receipt of some letters written by Jewish women, asking whether among the Jewish women there is a movement to make a display of the progress made by Jewish women in connection with the general woman’s exhibit at the World’s Fair....No doubt these letters are well meant, but their authors are laboring under a great mistake. Why the Jewish women as Jewish women should make the effort to illustrate the progress made by them in their capacities as members of the Jewish religious community, is certainly something that still awaits proof. As far as we can understand it, Jewish women, as women, are not different

²²¹Solomon, *The Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*, op. cit., p.83.

²²²Ibid., p.81.

²²³American Hebrew Congregations, *Judaism at the World’s Parliament of Religions: comprising the papers on Judaism read at the Parliament, at the Jewish Denominational Congress, and at the Jewish Presentation*, op. cit., p.vi.

from other women.²²⁴

There are several points of note within this article. Firstly, it very explicitly suggests that there had, as yet, been no firm plans made for a Jewish Women's Congress and indeed that this was a new idea, only recently suggested. This was, by late 1892, manifestly not the case. Solomon had been working towards the Congress for almost a year, and by late 1892, she had become certain that she could arrange a "Jewish Women's Congress worthy of the stirring Parliament of Religions."²²⁵ Second, it explicitly sets out the idea that there was not, and would never be, a difference between Jewish women and other women. This is a theme repeated throughout Hirsch's work. In an article written several years later for the *American Jewess*, the first English-language Jewish women's magazine in America, Hirsch wrote that "it is the ambition of the Jewess to be a woman so womanly as to exclude all qualifying adjectives;" highlighting his deep desire that Jews should be understood as different only in their religious beliefs and practices, and not in any more essential fashion.²²⁶ Third, it should be noted, that even in this short extract, the condescension with which he speaks of the Jewish women in his community is clear.

This tone, when discussing both the possibility of a Jewish Women's Congress, and the women who desire one, continued throughout the rest of the article. Hirsch goes on to suggest that the only women who he could imagine might need a separate congress to chart their achievements were 'colored' women. Hirsch was using this as a segue into a discussion of Judaism's status as a religion and not a race, and therefore

the progress of American womanhood has been [Jewish women's]. . . Our correspondents perhaps do not understand this. . . there is no cause to be ashamed of the fact that Jewish

²²⁴*Reform Advocate* October 2, 1892, p.214

²²⁵Solomon, *The Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*, op. cit., p.81.

²²⁶Emil G. Hirsch. "The Modern Jewess". In: *The American Jewess* 1.1 (1895), pp. 10–11, p.11.

women as such have refused to organize a Jewish auxiliary.

On the contrary, there is every reason to rejoice in this.²²⁷

The article ended by assuring Jewish women that “all necessary steps to have one or two of their number take part in the general parliament of religions.”²²⁸ Again, Hirsch wrote with a combination of condescension and outright misinformation, seeming to hope that if he publicly stated the Congress would not go ahead, Solomon and her organising committee would cancel it.

However, Hirsch seems to have had a change of heart at some point. As the Jewish Women’s Congress grew closer the *Reform Advocate’s* coverage of it became strikingly different. In a short article, directly attributed to Hirsch, he made a plea to his readers.

We publish today the appeal and program of the Jewish Women’s Committee. We would once more call attention to the noble work done by them. Let us one and all lend what aid we can to the cause... Let none of us fail to be enrolled among the number of those who will gladly show their appreciation of the efforts to win for Jewish women a place by the side of her non-Jewish sisters, worthy of the achievements of the past and the prophecy of still larger advancements in the future.²²⁹

Rather than decrying Jewish women for wanting to publicly discuss their progress, he actively encouraged his readers to celebrate the progress of Jewish women. More significantly, he suggested that their progress has not been entirely at pace with that of non-Jewish women. Though the articles within the *Reform Advocate* offer no specific explanation as to the reason for his change of heart, it perhaps should be noted that the program for the Jewish Women’s Congress shows ‘Dr. E.

²²⁷*Reform Advocate*, October 2, 1892, p.241

²²⁸*Ibid*

²²⁹*Reform Advocate* July 22, 1893, p.412

G. Hirsch' as a participant in two discussions.²³⁰

3.2.4 The Role of the Committee

According to her autobiography, Hannah Solomon had already made definite plans for the Jewish women's contribution to the World's Columbian Exposition before she even created a committee to carry out those goals. She had, with the help of her husband, begun to create a network of Jewish women, both through a number of visits to other cities, and by writing to as many Rabbis in as many communities as she could, and asking for details of "exceptional women."²³¹ Although Solomon was a member of a prominent Chicago family, she was not at this point well connected outside the city. For this reason, and for the practicalities of organising an event in Chicago, it is not surprising that almost the entire committee Solomon gathered to organise the Jewish Women's Congress were Chicago women. They were not, however, simply Solomon's social circle. Keenly aware, through her work with the Chicago Women's Club, and from observing the dynamics of the Women's Auxiliary, Solomon formed her committee from among the wives and daughters of the city's best connected Jewish families. She also largely selected from among the city's Radical Reform community. One member of the committee who was not well connected, and indeed who was still unmarried at 30, was Sadie American. Suggested for membership of the committee by someone other than Solomon, and later described by Solomon as having joined the committee "late in the day" and after all of the major decisions had been made, it was not obvious that American would go on to play such a large role in the Congress and the NCJW.²³²

²³⁰*National Council of Jewish Women Proceedings of the Jewish Women's Congress, Chicago, September 4-7, 1893, p.6-7*

²³¹Solomon, *The Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*, op. cit., p.81.

²³²*Ibid.*, p.89.

3.2.5 Jewish Women in other Exposition Events

Jews at other Congresses

The Jewish Women's Congress was not the only event at which Jewish women were represented. One of Hannah Solomon's tasks had been to facilitate some kind of Jewish women's representation at the World's Parliament of Religions. She was able to secure spots for two speakers, Josephine Lazarus and Henrietta Szold. This representation was important, but the speeches given were unremarkable, and made little impression. Despite the rift between the male-organised Jewish Congress, and Solomon's Jewish Women's Congress, there was eventually a female speaker at the first event, something that—if Solomon's account is to be believed—would not have happened without the Jewish Women's Congress as motivation. The speech was not among the most celebrated of the event, nor was it the only speech discussing the role of women in Judaism; as was the convention of the time, male communal leaders were considered more able to determine the roles women should fill, with women not given any meaningful degree of self-determination.

The Isabella Association's conference was not an official event of the Exposition, but it did eventually take place, in a building close to the fairground purpose-built for the occasion. They too included a talk on the role of Judaism, though not given by a Jewish woman. No sources remain which can illuminate the precise content of the paper, as their conference attracted no press coverage, but the program suggests that it did not come from a Jewish perspective²³³

In some ways, it is likely that the contribution made by Jewish women to the Columbian Exposition can never be accurately quantified. Delegates from all over the world attended fringe conferences, and there were significant Jewish contributions made to many of them, including Isidore Singer, later the editor of the Jewish Encyclopaedia, who represented Austria at the Congress of Charities, Correction and

²³³Chicago Historical Society, Queen Isabella Association, Box 1, Folder 1

Philanthropy.²³⁴ It would not have been out of the question for Jewish women of a certain social class to have formed part of a delegation for one of these events, nor would it have been impossible for Jewish women to have contributed to the national exhibits from a country like the United Kingdom or Germany, where a significant elite and middle-class Jewish community existed. However, if these contributions existed, they were not presented as Jewish contributions, nor were they pointed to as of specifically Jewish interest according to the Jewish guidebooks to the fair.²³⁵

Jewish Women as Entertainment

The transition of the Jewish community from a point where they were racially othered to one where they were unquestionably considered white was not without its struggles. Though Jews were not considered to be as low in the order of things as black Americans, they were considered to be racially different, and by many people, racially inferior. Though for the wealthiest in the Jewish community, their money allowed them access to elite social circles, this access was not unconditional and they were forced to fight to show that they belonged there.²³⁶ Outside of the encounter with the American Jewish women of the Jewish Women's Congress, the way in which most visitors to the Exposition would encounter the Jewish woman was at the Midway Plaisance, where Jewish Women were part of the entertainment offered. This area, the first pleasure park built in conjunction with a World's Fair, derived much of its attraction, and profit from providing a space where the, mostly white American, visitors could encounter an exotic 'other,' and the most exotic of the 'others' were the "Orientals" from the Middle East and North Africa.

²³⁴*General Exercises of the International Congress of Charities, Correction and Philanthropy*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1893, p.6.

²³⁵Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett. *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums and Heritage*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, p.101.

²³⁶Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness*, op. cit., p.4.

The mid to late nineteenth century was a period in which the Western obsession with the East was on an upswing, and its links to the narrative in which the Exposition was presented are deep. In fact, in his introduction to the Fair's commemorative book, President of the Fair's National Board, Thomas Palmer wrote:

The whole [Fair] if viewed by that worthy would make Haroun al Raschid go wild with despair and Scheherezade go mad with envy because Aladdin and his lamp, her greatest achievement, was surpassed from the shores of an inland lake on the margin of the prairie.²³⁷

If the whole White City was to be characterised as an Aladdin's Cave of cultural wonders, it was on the Midway that the American visitors could see the 'East' up close; but the East with which the Americans were presented was mediated through a Jewish gaze. Sol Bloom, a Jewish Chicagoan, had been appointed commissioner of the Chicago Exposition to Turkey, Palestine and Morocco and was given ultimate responsibility for those exhibitions on the Midway. He was instrumental in personally hiring many of the people populating the Turkish village.²³⁸ Indeed, Walter Roth suggests that in order to successfully populate the exhibits, Jewish Chicagoans were hired to pretend to be from the middle east.²³⁹

However, the link between the oriental fantasy of the Midway, and the Jews of Chicago was not simply found in the identity of the man organising it, nor in the fact that many of those in the Turkish Village were, in fact, Jews themselves. In her work of *World's Fairs*, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has asserted that "two places—Holy Land of the Bible, and the Orient of the Arabian Nights—occupied one space in the minds of visitors to the Chicago Fair" and that "Jews were central

²³⁷Benjamin Cummings Truman. *History of the World's fair; being a complete description of the World's Columbian exposition from its inception*. Chicago: Mammoth Publishing Company, 1893, p.20.

²³⁸Gilbert, *Perfect Cities: Chicago's Utopias of 1893*, op. cit., pp.33–4.

²³⁹Roth, *Looking Backwards: True Stories from Chicago's Jewish Past*, op. cit., p.22.

to both, even if they were only intermittently visible in either."²⁴⁰ Her argument centres around the idea that to the non-Jewish observer, Judaism remained an ancient religion; the predecessor of Christianity, rather than a modern, liberal faith. While much of the key literature on the idea of 'Orientalism' in this period looks at the European context, others, such as Douglas Little, have suggested that:

The Puritans who founded 'God's American Israel' on Massachusetts Bay nearly four centuries ago brought with them a profound fascination with the Holy Land and a profound ambivalence about the 'infidels'—mostly Muslims but some Jews—who lived there.²⁴¹

Little goes on to discuss the way that late nineteenth century American evangelicals particularly used images of the Middle East to understand and sympathise with American Jews.²⁴² In this context, the presentation of Jews on the Midway can be seen as a continuation of a narrative in which Jews represented a link to Christianity's past, but had little to do with the modernity celebrated elsewhere in the Exposition.

'Oriental' women were in particular a popular exhibit on the Midway, with the show at the various theatres representing some of the most successful, and most profitable ventures there. The commemorative volume 'History of the World's Fair' describes the Turkish Theatre, where four fifths of the company were Jewish, in detail.

The Turkish theatre is the great attraction in this little community, however. Eighteen houris²⁴³ of the Orient and sixty-five men have been picked from the companies of Constantinople, who dance, play, sing and form an orchestra, a stock company and a chorus. The complement is fully

²⁴⁰Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "A Place in the World: Jews and the Holy Land at World's Fairs", op. cit., p.60.

²⁴¹Douglas Little. *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004, p.9.

²⁴²Ibid., p.12.

²⁴³A Houris is a heavenly maiden of Islam, as described in the Qur'an

made up, and there are soubrettes in baggy trousers, heavy tragedy in a fez, and low comedy in a turban... performing the Turkish dance, which is rendered by the aid of a silk shawl, waved above the head to the accompaniment of rhythmical finger snappings.²⁴⁴

However, while this relatively staid description was made of the entertainment in the Turkish Theatre, other descriptions hint at the far more sexualised natures of some of the other performances.

To the front comes a stately creature in chocolate colored skirts, whose neck and bosom are weighted with brass chains and whose feet are covered with red slippers... She shuffles and stamps and undulates to the cries of her companions, and the crowning glory of her dance is the protruding and revolving of her stomach until it appears to roll up on itself... As she passes away, a handsome Arab girl comes down the stage, who wears a lavender cap and whose head is encircled with brass chains, and rings that pass under her chin... The theme of the girl's dance is love, but it is the coarse animal passion of the East, not the chaste sentiment of Christian lands.²⁴⁵

This othering, though not specifically of a Jewish women, reflects the way in which 'oriental' women were portrayed as sexual creatures, unlike chaste 'Christian' women, and when combined with the way in which Jewish and Arab women were presented side by side as 'women of the east' shows how an almost primitive narrative of the Jewish women could be constructed on the Midway, in stark contrast to, and perhaps providing some additional context to, the way in which Jewish women were presenting themselves several miles uptown at their Congress

²⁴⁴Truman, *History of the World's fair; being a complete description of the World's Columbian exposition from its inception*, op. cit., p.558.

²⁴⁵University of Illinois at Chicago Special Collections, Worlds Columbian Exposition Collection, Box 2, Folder 12

3.2.6 The Jewish Women's Congress

When the Congress finally arrived in the September of 1893, the Exposition had been open all summer, and the Jewish Congress had come and gone a few weeks previously. It would not be the only event taking place in the Congress Building that week; the much larger Catholic Congress was also in progress. However, Solomon and her committee had been more successful than many people had expected when putting together their program, and attracting press coverage. They had four days of full sessions, and the major Chicago newspapers had shown an interest and would go on to cover the event.

Was the Congress Radical?

When scholars of American Jewish Women's History came to reconsider this period, perhaps the first question asked was if the Jewish Women's Congress had actually been radical at all. The answer they came to was no.²⁴⁶ Those scholars largely limited their examination of the content of the speeches given at the congress. Though, of course, this was an important facet of the Congress's message, the act of putting Jewish women on a stage to speak on these subject was in itself a radical act. A particularly strong example of this can be found by examining the ways in which the involvement of Ray Frank has been understood.

Frank's mere presence was a radical move. While Frank was careful never to claim the title of Rabbi, it was one that was frequently given to her by others. By the time she spoke at the Jewish Women's Congress, Frank had gained national attention as a preacher, particularly in amongst the non-Jewish press in Nevada and California, where she was allegedly known as "The Girl Rabbi."²⁴⁷ At the time immediately prior to her attendance at the Congress, she had been one of the

²⁴⁶See Paula Hyman 'Vanguard or Rear Guard' and Deborah Golomb 'The 1893 Congress of Jewish Women: Evolution or Revolution in American Jewish Women's History'

²⁴⁷R Clar and WM Kramer. "The Girl Rabbi of the Golden West". In: *Western States Jewish History* 18.2 (1985), pp.223.36, p.102-3.

first two female students at Cincinnati's Hebrew Union College.²⁴⁸ This would, for the vast majority of women in attendance, have been the first time they had seen a woman offer a prayer at a large public event, as Frank did at the beginning and end of the conference.²⁴⁹ Whatever was said in her paper, the *de facto* position of Frank as a female spiritual leader for the group was a powerful one.

Jonathan Sarna, though not discussing this event in particular, but rather examining Frank's public speaking in a more general way, claimed that "for the most part, though, hers was a conservative message. She opposed women's suffrage, spoke of motherhood as the culmination of womanhood, and reminded women 'how all-important the home and the family are.'"²⁵⁰ Though the theme of women's responsibilities in the home was one of the key elements of Frank's speech at the Congress, to reduce the message to that is rather reductive. In fact, her message was a complex one, and sometimes contradictory, blending of a belief that women are unquestionably able to take on the role of rabbi, and yet women's first duty is in the home. She states that

Some things and privileges belong to [men] by nature; to these true woman does not aspire; but every woman should aspire to make her home a temple, of herself a high priestess, of her children disciples.²⁵¹

This statement would seem to support the idea that her view of women's roles was fundamentally conservative. Yet in the next sentence, she proceeds with a far more radical statement, saying women "may be ordained rabbi, or be the president of a congregation—she is entirely able to fill both offices."²⁵² Schuly Schwartz argues that Frank stopped short of actually calling for the ordination of women, and in fact Frank

²⁴⁸Diner and Benderly, *Her Works Praise Her: A History of Jewish Women in America from Colonial Times to the Present*, op. cit., p.251.

²⁴⁹Jonathan D. Sarna. *American Judaism: A History*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004, p.142.

²⁵⁰Ibid., p.142.

²⁵¹Frank, "Jewish Women of Modern Days", op. cit., p.63.

²⁵²Ibid., p.63.

was echoing an idea she had articulated in the 1880s, that of wives of Rabbis having shared in their husband's vocation.²⁵³ While this is certainly one of the ideas presented by Frank in her paper, it is not the only one, as Frank asserted that "intellectually [women] were the compeers of their husbands; practically, they excelled them," and that "enough has been given to disprove all doubts as to the Jewish woman's capacity in religious matters, both as pupil and instructor."²⁵⁴ Frank seemed to be asserting that women have proved themselves more than capable of holding a position as a religious leader, as long as this did not cause them to neglect responsibilities in the home. While now this might seem somewhat archaic, in 1893 the idea was no less than revolutionary. Though the Radical Reform movement discussed the possibility of women holding the position of Rabbi in the 1890s, in fact the first female Rabbi was not ordained in the United States until the 1970s.²⁵⁵ The eighty year break between Frank's clear articulation of the idea, and the first woman's achievement of that status speaks to the forward thinking displayed at the Congress.

Portrayals of Philanthropy at the Congress

One of the central themes of the Congress was Jewish women's involvement in philanthropy. Not only was the Congress's third day almost exclusively devoted to the subject, but ideas about philanthropy and charity were present in virtually all of the papers, in one form or another. From discussions of 'The influence of the Discovery of America on the Jews' to 'Jewish Women of Modern Days', involvement in philanthropic endeavour of some sort is central to the conception of an ideal Jewish woman, and to her role as a public person. However, one of the keys to understanding the complex web of reactions to the Congress, and its portrayal of philanthropy, is the fact that no unan-

²⁵³Schwartz, *The Rabbi's Wife: The Rebbetzin in American Jewish Life*, op. cit., p.22.

²⁵⁴Frank, "Jewish Women of Modern Days", op. cit., p.61.

²⁵⁵Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting: The National Council of Jewish Women, 1893-1993*, op. cit., p.73.

imous vision of women's roles and responsibilities was put forward, nor was there a single definition of philanthropy. Rather, the Jewish Women's Congress provided a plurality of views, some radical, others less so, and within the speeches given, Jewish women from a number of sections of the community could find their viewpoint expressed. Given the transitionary nature of the 1890s, this is not surprising. By allowing a fluid definition of these concepts, the organisers of the Congress were able to include a far broader range of women on the program than otherwise would have been possible. On one point, though, there does appear to have been universal agreement: that philanthropic activity should be tightly regulated. While almost all of its forms are debated, all those who discuss philanthropy agree that there should be "a crusade... against careless and unthinking charity."²⁵⁶ This advocacy of what is often called 'Scientific Philanthropy' is unsurprising. For most of the second half of the nineteenth century, there had been a move away from the old fashioned modes of charitable giving where money and goods were handed from one individual to another. In the United States, the Civil War had led to a substantial formalisation in the way that philanthropy was organised.²⁵⁷ In addition the Gilded Age, and the rise of social Darwinism led to the growth of a belief that pauperism was due to a flaw in a person's character. A belief grew that giving money would simply encourage people to become reliant on handouts, rather than working to better their situation. With the rise of progressive politics in the early years of the 1890s, this view was beginning to be diminished, particularly in Chicago where Progressivism took an early foothold, however, philanthropy was still seen as something that needed to be tightly controlled, and all services overseen to prevent a duplication of services which could be exploited by those seen to be

²⁵⁶R. W. Navara. "Women's Place in Charitable Giving". In: *Papers of the Jewish Women's Congress, 1893*. The Jewish Publication Society, 1894, pp163-5, p.164.

²⁵⁷see Giesberg *Civil War Sisterhood*. However it must be noted that no comparable book exists looking at the way philanthropy was dealt with in the Confederacy, which leaves many questions about the difference in post-Bellum philanthropic practices in the Southern United States.

undeserving of assistance. However, beyond this point, there seems to have been little agreement amongst the women of the Jewish Women's Congress.

The American Jewish Women in charge of organising the Jewish Women's Congress were caught in a moment where both the terms used, and the methods of Philanthropy were in flux. Even the most basic of points do not seem to have been agreed upon prior to the congress. Though, for clarity's sake, the term philanthropy is used throughout this study to refer to a range of things, the women of the congress used it in a variety of ways, as they did the word 'charity'.²⁵⁸ No two speakers seem to have used it in the same way, and some explicitly contradicted each other.

In her paper on "Charity as Taught by the Mosaic Code", Eva L. Stern is full of praise for the idea of charity:

The enslaved condition of the Jews for four hundred years has tempered the spiritual teachings of the world by having developed a Moses. It has put into touch with each other men of wildest lives, of extremest education, of conflicting faiths, and this link between men is 'Charity as taught by Mosaic Law'; it humanises religion, and religionizes humanity.²⁵⁹

However, this was in direct contradiction to what Julia Richmann had said the previous evening, when she called for the end of 'charity', using it in a much narrower sense.

The Jews of America, particularly the Jews of New York City, are, perhaps, the most charitable class of people in the whole world. Time, labor and money are given freely

²⁵⁸As discussed in the introduction, this study uses the word 'philanthropy' to refer to the way in which a group, religious or non-religious, sought to impose their vision of the good life. This is taken from the introduction to *Charity, Philanthropy and Civility in American History* edited by Friedman and McGarvie.

²⁵⁹Eva L. Stern. "Charity as Taught by the Mosaic Code". In: *Papers of the Jewish Women's Congress, 1893*. The Jewish Publication Society, 1894, pp.133-44, p.134.

in some directions. But charity is not always philanthropy; and we have reached a point in the development of various sociological problems which makes it imperative that philanthropy be placed above charity. The need of charity must disappear as we teach the rising generation how to improve its condition.²⁶⁰

These two cases illustrate the different backgrounds from which Congress speakers were recruited. The idea of charity as an unthinking form of philanthropy, as espoused by Richman is characteristic of the nascent Progressive movement, of which Richman, an educational reformer from New York, was a member. Conversely, Stern's use of the word is more characteristic of the Gilded Age, and earlier. This illustrates the way in which the Congress was a space for old and new ideas to meet, although the women who attended did not always see eye-to-eye.

While it is important to note that these show the conflicting ideas as to how aid should be administered, if indeed aid should be administered, it also demonstrated the innate knowledge that all philanthropic activity was operating within a strict set of rules. While the substance was very much in contention, the idea that there was a right and wrong way to operate was the lynchpin on which all discussion of philanthropy was held. These 'rules' of philanthropy were articulated in different ways at different points throughout the Congress, but the precise nature of the rules by which aid should be awarded were not. There were, though, two real points on which there was all agreed, and then a variety of ideas which while not universally agreed upon were explored by several of the speakers.

The first agreed upon rule was that involvement in philanthropy of some kind was a requirement of Judaism. Though most of the speakers did not articulate that requirement as fulfilment of *Tzedakah*, it is this sense of obligation towards giving which is hinted at. Stern addressed this idea most eloquently:

²⁶⁰Julia Richman. "Women Wage-Workers". In: *Papers of the Jewish Women's Congress, 1893*. The Jewish Publication Society, 1894, pp.91–107, p.105.

Almsgiving is a cardinal requirement of the Law. The first fruits of corn and wine and oil and flocks were to be given to the priests, because in their holy office they could not till the ground, or tend to the herd, and supplementing this there is the finest of human laws:

'Six years let the inhabitants of the land enjoy the fruits as a reward for the acquisitions which they have made and for the labors which they have undergone in cultivating the land; but for one year, namely the seventh let the poor and needy enjoy it.'

Can we overestimate these precepts... These doctrines are like strands of assorted pearls, and lie deep in Jewish hearts; they are the strength of their strength.²⁶¹

Here Stern spoke to both divine and cultural edicts which commanded early Jews to participate in almsgiving, but her message was that these commands endured.

While Stern concentrated on the demand from Judaism, Carrie Benjamin discussed the way in which the group's female identity made specific demands upon them. Although she placed it in a Jewish context, she articulated an argument that was made by many American women of the nineteenth century in order to justify their entrance into the public sphere and their transformation of philanthropy into a feminine activity.

Woman's fitness for the work of charity is emphasised throughout the old Hebrew writings. According to their idea the perfect woman must possess energy, strength of purpose and active zeal in ministering to the poor at her door, giving them her time, her trouble, her loving sympathy. She *may* open her mouth to wisdom, but her tongue *must* know

²⁶¹Stern, "Charity as Taught by the Mosaic Code", op. cit., p.141-2.

the law of kindness. As the needle to the pole, so should a true woman's heart turn to deeds of charity. If a man's proper study is man, woman's proper study is charity.²⁶²

Particularly significant here is Carrie Benjamin's insistence that involvement in charity was not only an expected activity for a Jewish woman, but rather is the defining characteristic of a woman. This is particularly significant given that she was later to become the president of the NCJW's Philanthropy Committee, giving her articulation of philanthropy as a natural expression of appropriate womanhood further weight. Her paper went on to explain that woman "was a gift of God's compassion for man, when God saw that it was not good for man to be alone. Hence she is an attribute itself of a divine charity."²⁶³ Benjamin here showed the deeply intimate connection between philanthropy and femininity which was understood to exist by this group of women. By not following the correct philanthropic mores, these women understood that they would not just be showing themselves to be bad philanthropists, but as women were natural philanthropists, they would be displaying themselves to be bad women.

None of the ideas which speakers at the Congress presented in their talks were particularly innovative—indeed in almost all cases, they were articulations of commonly held ideas. It was not in any way controversial when Sadie Leopold noted that "philanthropic aid on the part of the many has thus far not availed, nor has the individual himself succeeded in ameliorating his own condition."²⁶⁴ Goldie Bamber, who became the Massachusetts Vice-President of the NCJW, expanded on this idea, suggesting that not only was there a sector of the Jewish community that were in need, but that "woman is the Messiah come to

²⁶²Carrie Benjamin. "Women's Place in Charitable Work: What is it, and what should it be?" In: *Papers of the Jewish Women's Congress, 1893*. The Jewish Publication Society, 1894, pp.145–56, p.146.

²⁶³Ibid., p.146.

²⁶⁴Sadie Leopold. "Women Wage-Workers: With Reference to Directing Immigrants". In: *Papers of the Jewish Women's Congress, 1893*. The Jewish Publication Society, 1894, pp.108–14, p.111.

deliver them from their second bondage of ignorance and misery.”²⁶⁵ Saying this, she was following a well-trodden path. In many ways these were seemingly self-evident points. The expansion of the Jewish community through migration from Eastern Europe had made the problem of poverty in the Jewish community a very visible one, and given that the audience for these speeches were largely Jewish women with leisure time to be filled, it seems obvious that the solution presented would be women's involvement in philanthropy. However, though the sentiments presented were not new, some may have been uncomfortable. The idea that philanthropy should only be given to those who deserved the help was not unique to the Jewish community, but when Carrie Benjamin warned that “If a charitable door is opened, whether it leads to a benevolent individual or to a benevolent society, the throngs that enter are mainly shams and cheats,” it sounded harsh, even to those who were already adherents of scientific philanthropy.²⁶⁶ Even more stark was Eva Stern's warning that “even to-day, here in our midst, we have Jewish philanthropists who give a tenth of their earnings to the poor and needy, and though this unselfish charity is unstintingly dispensed, it is given with a wise heart, lest the poor should organize themselves into bands of idle parasites, and paralyse society.”²⁶⁷ Again, this message was not unusual, although this is a rather more direct articulation of the idea than is often found. There is an assumption that can be found within nearly all of the papers that the majority of the poor are responsible for their own condition through laziness or criminality.

Although not all of the papers dealing with philanthropy discuss these ideas, the theme of education runs strongly through many of the papers which were presented at the Congress. An assumption seems

²⁶⁵Goldie Bamber. “Women's Place in Charitable Work: What is it, and what should it be?” In: *Papers of the Jewish Women's Congress, 1893*. The Jewish Publication Society, 1894, pp.157–62, p.162.

²⁶⁶Benjamin, “Women's Place in Charitable Work: What is it, and what should it be?”, op. cit., p.149.

²⁶⁷Stern, “Charity as Taught by the Mosaic Code”, op. cit., p.135.

to have existed that by adulthood, immigrant Jews are too ingrained in a mindset which prevented them from becoming truly productive and assimilated members of the American Jewish community. The mentality the speakers refer to is an articulation of wider Reform-oriented beliefs of the superstitious nature of Orthodox Judaism, which prevented its adherents from integrating fully in modern American society. It also referred to the belief held by many in the Established Jewish community that new immigrants refused to even try to integrate into American society because of a belief that non-Jewish society was inherently antisemitic, making any attempt pointless. Sadie Leopold expressed this idea most directly.

With the mother we can do nothing. Marrying young, as Russian Jews will, she is old at thirty; the outgrowth of a civilization that looks upon women as an inferior being; beset with all the superstitions that centuries of religion's darkness have put upon her, unenlightened, and in some instances ignorant of the simplest laws of household cleanliness, her one strong passion is her love for her children, through them alone can she be reached.²⁶⁸

Interestingly though Leopold's characterisation of Russian Jewry betrayed the deep rooted prejudices of the Established Jewish community, she took pains to first assert that these perceived deficiencies were not racially produced, but rather formed through a lifelong experience of oppression from a superstitious form of religion. Secondly, she asserted that even those immigrant women who could not be reached had the common experience of love for their children with the assimilated Jewish women in attendance at the Congress. This presentation of the uniting force of motherhood, rather than asserting a shared experience as Jewish women, shows the degree to which some of the women at the Congress were ambivalent about how to present their Judaism. Whilst

²⁶⁸Leopold, "Women Wage-Workers: With Reference to Directing Immigrants", *op. cit.*, p.111.

in name, it was shared with the new Russian Jewish immigrants, the Radical Reform Judaism practiced by many in Chicago's elite community was hugely different. Whilst Chicago's elites saw their religion as a rational distillation of Jewish principles, they saw the faith practiced by the new immigrants as so wholly steeped in ancient superstition as to not really be worthy of being called Judaism. Minnie Louis, one of the Congress's speakers from New York, spoke on this topic:

The progress, the redemption of man in every sense, depends upon his education, the standard, self-conceived or inculcated, that he strives to attain; no 'trolley' contrivance can accelerate its prescribed path; by slow degrees the ideas unfold.²⁶⁹

This process of educating new immigrants as to what their aspirations should be was central to the philanthropic mission as laid out by the Congress. Indeed, Louis went further and explicitly stated why the process may be a lengthy one, speaking of "the indiscretion of elevating the unenlightened Jews too suddenly into an unaccustomed atmosphere of culture—Moses kept them in the wilderness till the older generations had entirely passed away."²⁷⁰ Here the choice of 'unenlightened' as a descriptor, indeed as the descriptor which titles the paper, is a significant one; it points to a key dividing line between those who are practising philanthropy, and those who are its intended recipients. This line is not simply a geographical one, nor is it racial or linguistic, nor is it simply about the distance in years from migration to the United States. The Established Jewish community were largely those for whose families had found themselves renewed by the experience of *Haskalah*, the Jewish enlightenment of the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

²⁶⁹Minnie D Louis. "Mission Work Amongst the Unenlightened Jews". In: *Papers of the Jewish Women's Congress, 1893*. The Jewish Publication Society, 1894, pp.170–86, p.177.

²⁷⁰*Ibid.*, p.181.

The relative size of the Established Jewish community, even given the number of elite Jews who had found success in banking and commerce, was dwarfed by the numbers who were beginning to arrive from Eastern Europe. Though this disparity in size was never addressed outright, it was hinted at in the suggestion that philanthropy should be more and more tightly focused, in order that the greatest impact could be reaped given the limited resources at their disposal. Part of this was the idea that only those who could actually be expected to learn should be targeted: specifically immigrant children.²⁷¹ This was a policy already familiar to the Jewish community in Boston, according to the paper given by Goldie Bamber, who noted that “in Boston, we have commenced with the children, trusting through them to influence their elders; they are the future citizens and in them we are not obliged to contend with confirmed habits, old world prejudice and superstitions.”²⁷² However, she qualified her assertion, saying that this was not because adults were unable to change, but rather due to an idea that children would learn more swiftly, were less likely to be set in their ways, and would be able to influence their families.

The similarities between these two examples seems significant when it is noted that these two papers were not written by those concerned with the theory of philanthropy, but instead by those who were, already in 1893, practically involved on a personal basis with philanthropic projects in New York and Boston, and who dealt with people on a face-to-face basis. The characterisation of the disinclination of adult immigrants to entirely submit to the Americanisation regime as ‘prejudice’ speaks of the degree to which the philanthropists were entirely convinced of the rightness of their actions. It seems to suggest that the philanthropic establishment considered objections to their work as irrational and baseless.

Though late-nineteenth century mores allowed the education of

²⁷¹Leopold, “Women Wage-Workers: With Reference to Directing Immigrants”, op. cit., p.112.

²⁷²Bamber, “Women’s Place in Charitable Work: What is it, and what should it be?”, op. cit., p.157.

male and female children to be the domain of women, much of the work being carried out was targeted at young women, who as future mothers were seen as the more urgent target. However, partnerships were built with other groups in order to provide educational opportunities to all Jewish children. Though few Jewish women attended college, a significant number of men from established middle and upper-class Jewish families did.²⁷³ In Boston, a partnership was built with some of the Jewish men attending Harvard, leading to the decision to "open a boys club, and a more motly group than the fifty ragged, dirty news-boys and boot-blacks who assembled on the first evening, it would be difficult to find. . . The aims were the same as in the girls' school. . . The depth of enthusiasm of the Harvard man, who himself washed and combed a bright eyed little gamin, was not participated in by all; but night after night, after study and business hours, social and household demands, these earnest men and women devoted themselves to the making of worthy American citizens."²⁷⁴

Perhaps one of the most self-reflective ideas expressed in the papers is that of the utility of Philanthropy to those who practiced it. While the women of the Congress contextualised it as one of a range of civic and cultural duties, Carrie Benjamin reminded her audience that "if charity gives employment to the idle rich, let alone the idle poor, it prevents much mischief."²⁷⁵ The majority of the Established Jews who attended the Congress came from families who had found success in the United States. Though for many this success was a continuation of a middle-class existence in Europe, the Jewish community were not immune to the narrative of America as a saviour/homeland. Indeed, the ways in which America's existence had been a boon to Judaism was a topic explored by several Congress papers. One such paper was given by Pauline Rosenberg who would return to Pennsylvania and

²⁷³Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness*, op. cit., pp.126–8.

²⁷⁴Bamber, "Women's Place in Charitable Work: What is it, and what should it be?", op. cit., p.160.

²⁷⁵Benjamin, "Women's Place in Charitable Work: What is it, and what should it be?", op. cit., p.148.

found the Council's fourth section, the Columbian Council, representing the Pittsburgh-Allegheny area.²⁷⁶ She very specifically laid out how philanthropy could ensure the continuation of the United States as a land of opportunity for Jews.

To relieve and elevate oppressed Jews has been [the Union of American Congregations'] noblest task, and through its agency the immigrants coming to the United States are taught self-reliance and self-help. No matter how ignorant through oppression these people are, their progeny show marked signs of improvement and Americanism, and removed from the yoke of the oppressor, the third generation of this remarkable people on American soil, with their inherited powers of adaptability, will retain only their religion as an indication of Judaism.²⁷⁷

Here philanthropy was the key to stripping what reformers saw as the unnecessary superstitions of the Old World and transforming Judaism into a modern faith that would allow its adherents to thrive in their new home country.

3.3 Organisation

Sadie American's speech 'Organization,' given at the Congress's final session, and in many ways seen as its centrepiece. It is largely remembered as the point at which the National Council of Jewish Women was actually created. Though the call for the formation of the NCJW was not a spontaneous one, and in fact had been intended as an outcome of the Congress since its inception by Hannah Solomon, American's speech presented it as an organic answer to the questions raised by the

²⁷⁶Ida Cohen Selavan. "The Founding of the Columbian Council". In: *The American Jewish Archives Journal* 30.1 (1878), pp.24-42, pp.24-5.

²⁷⁷Pauline Rosenberg. "Influence of the Discovery of America on the Jews". In: *Papers of the Jewish Women's Congress, 1893*. The Jewish Publication Society, 1894, pp.66-73, p.72.

papers Jewish women had read at the congress. Her speech, 44 pages long in its printed form, contained far more than the announcement of the new group. Rather, she gave a wide ranging account of, as she put it “work Jewish women have done together in associations or societies, large or small.”²⁷⁸ She then used this to put forward a case as to why a single organisation was necessary. Of course the idea of a national organisation had not originated with the Chicago group. However, within American’s speech, clues to the form the organisation can be found, particularly in the influences American claims and those she dismisses. What could be seen immediately was that the Chicago group had a clear idea as to the way they hoped their organisation would work, and finding the examples of organisations in the American Jewish communities wanting, they looked further afield to their non-Jewish counterparts, and European Jewish communities for inspiration.

3.3.1 Comparisons to London

The first report of Jewish philanthropic work described by American was not that of a major United States city, but in fact London. This is not entirely surprising; part of British women’s contribution to the Women’s Building at the exposition was a report titled ‘Philanthropic Work of British Women’ compiled by Baroness Burdett-Coutts, one of the wealthiest women in late-Victorian England, and a friend of Queen Victoria.²⁷⁹ It therefore seems natural that the Jewish women of London would have been inclined to also provide an account of their philanthropic work. It is less clear however, why American would have chosen to open with this section, particularly given that the report in written form is more than four pages long, and is followed by an assertion by American that “Time will not permit, for our own country, more than a report curtailed so as to give merely an idea of the extent

²⁷⁸American, “Organization”, op. cit., p.218.

²⁷⁹Maude Howe Elliott. *Art and Handicraft in the Women’s Building of the World’s Columbian Exposition*. New York: Rand, McNally and Company, 1894, p.229.

and character of what is being done.”²⁸⁰ The idea that] Britain could provide an example to the United States was not only found in the NCJW. Throughout the Progressive Era, it was commonly accepted that American philanthropy was essentially the child of the British system, and that by examining the work of British organisations, American philanthropists could explore their own institutions, and understand them more clearly.²⁸¹ Indeed, none of the United States cities discussed by American received as lengthy analysis as did London. Also, by addressing British women’s philanthropy first, American positions it as a benchmark by which the philanthropic endeavours in US cities could be compared. It is revealing that she began by noting that the report, titled “Philanthropic Work [was] divided into four subdivisions: Religious, Educational, Recreative and Charitable.”²⁸² In this way, American, by showing how it has been done in London, was able to show a model of an inclusive definition of Philanthropy, under which Charity was considered a part, but not its sole form.

The Religious and Educational forms of philanthropy were dealt with rather briefly, with American pointing to Sabbath schools for religious training, and the institutions such as Training Schools, when examining educational philanthropy. Here American specifically asserted that unlike in London, the United States had made a commitment to offering “an ordinary education to all, irrespective of race or creed.” Schools that were funded by Jewish women were necessarily open to any child who wished to attend.²⁸³ It was under the label of ‘recreative’ philanthropy that American mentions Girls’ Clubs, children’s entertainments, summer excursions to the country, and other ways in which philanthropists sought to “go among the poor, endeavouring to brighten their lives by social entertainment.”²⁸⁴ This is the longest of the four sections of the report, and the area of philanthropic work where

²⁸⁰American, “Organization”, op. cit., p.223.

²⁸¹Edith and Grace Abbott Collection, University of Chicago, Box 7, Folder 8

²⁸²American, “Organization”, op. cit., p.219.

²⁸³Ibid., p.219–20.

²⁸⁴Ibid., p.221.

American admonished those listening that in this form of philanthropy “our sisters across the water are in quantity, though not in quality, ahead of us.”²⁸⁵ This was a topic she returned to later in the speech, again concluding that the “time and attention given to and for the beneficial results of recreative work among the poor in London are but faintly shadowed forth on this side of the water.”²⁸⁶

American also made the assertion that there are other features of the philanthropic establishment which do not exist in major US cities. In some cases, as with a loan association or a home for working women, both of which, American asserted, were absent in New York, she advised that this deficiency be remedied. In other cases, such as that of a Rescue Home, a project of London’s Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women,²⁸⁷ American asserted that there was no need for one.²⁸⁸ These assertions, when taken together, seem to aptly demonstrate why American began her speech by recounting the philanthropic work of London’s Jewish women; by showing that there are areas in which London appears to be outdoing major cities in the United States, American was able to demonstrate that the United States should not be considered the leader in women’s philanthropy, and therefore was able to open the door to the suggestion that the creation of a single Jewish women’s organisation would be able to remedy that situation.

²⁸⁵Ibid., p220.

²⁸⁶Ibid., p.224.

²⁸⁷The Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women, originally formed in 1885, opened a Rescue House for unmarried mothers to be trained for domestic service very early in its existence, however, by the 1890s the organisation, and its Rescue House, were better known for their work fighting Jewish prostitution and the so called White Slave Trade. See Gartner *The Jewish Immigrant in England 1870–1914* and Bristow, *Prostitution and Prejudice*

²⁸⁸American, “Organization”, op. cit., p.224.

3.3.2 The nature of American Jewish Women's philanthropy

After her rather expansive report on work in London, American is less effusive in her discussion of philanthropic work in US cities. She does note that this is to some degree caused by the fact that they sent enquiries as to the nature of women's philanthropic work to as many Jewish communities as they were able to contact, "the requests did not meet with more frequent and full response."²⁸⁹ However, for those cities for which she is able to provide information, her tone seems to be key—while in her discussion of the organisations in London she spoke with unabashed admiration, she seemed to be more guarded when discussing work being carried out in the United States. She noted that a great number of associations and institutions exist within the Jewish community, but she suggests that they are old fashioned in their methods, and outlook.

There are societies in plenty, sewing for the very poor; but there are too few societies which teach the very poor and helpless to sew for themselves. . . There are Sabbath Schools to teach the children of the poor something of their religion, and much of the form to which the adherents of orthodoxy cling. These Sabbath Schools are almost exclusively instituted, managed and taught by the orthodox among us, and good work they have accomplished. Yet it is time we of the reform temples should bestir ourselves in this direction, bringing new methods and new ideas to fertilize old soil.²⁹⁰

Here one of the key justifications for the creation of the NCJW was introduced: philanthropy could be used to modernise not only those being taught, but also, through the example of more progressive women,

²⁸⁹Ibid., p.218.

²⁹⁰Ibid., p.223.

those teaching.²⁹¹ American, herself an adherent of the particularly radical form of Reform advocated by Emil Hirsch's Temple Sinai, asserted that the old Jewish women's philanthropic groups are "not good enough."²⁹²

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the women of the NCJW were not the originators of Jewish Women's institutional life, nor were the first organisation for Jewish women which existed on more than a local scale. When Sadie American finished discussing local Jewish women's philanthropic organisation, she indeed acknowledged those other larger-scale organisations. She went on, though, to explain that in her eyes none of the organisations currently in existence were truly a national organisation for the mutual improvement of Jewish women, along the lines of the one the Congress's organisers hoped to found. The *United Order of True Sisters* was the first group mentioned by American.

There are among the Jewish women various benefit and secret societies, such as the True Schwestern whose purpose is mutual aid in cases of sickness and death, and noble friendships and endeavour, together with some charitable work among the very poor.²⁹³

Here American clearly played down the philanthropic element of the *UOTS*, asserting that for that organisation, philanthropy was merely an afterthought. She also placed it "amongst the Jewish women" and not as a Jewish women's organisation. This subtle difference speaks to the *UOTS* as an exclusive organisation, to which one had to be invited. The exclusive nature of the organisation is further emphasised by her use of its German name, even though many *UOTS* lodges were operating

²⁹¹The use of 'reform' and 'orthodox' here do not refer to different denominations, which would be more formally constituted in the early twentieth century, but as an identifier of the more and less progressive streams within what at that time was still the loose affiliations of a form of Judaism which found its roots in Judaism, later to organise itself into largely Reform and Conservative movements.

²⁹²American, "Organization", op. cit., p.224.

²⁹³Ibid., p.228.

in English by the 1890s.²⁹⁴

The other organisation mentioned by American in this section of her speech was the *Daughters of Zion*. This group, unconnected with the better known *B'nai Zion* which would be founded in 1908, was likely the first Zionist women's organisation, predating *Hadassah* by thirty years. But American entirely dismissed its importance.

The existence of this society will be a surprise to many of us; yet while we do not in the least share in the national idea, in fact, can scarcely comprehend it and strongly oppose it, we can all see here in the colonization of Palestine another chance to bring happiness to the persecuted of our religion."²⁹⁵

The NCJW would remain officially ambivalent about Zionism for many years, indeed Hannah Solomon never supported the idea of a Jewish homeland, despite a lifelong friendship with Henrietta Szold. It seems unlikely that American was simply using this opportunity to discuss a tiny organisation with little foothold in the Established Jewish community she was addressing. Instead it seems that she was using this as an opportunity to assert the American identity of the Jewish community and emphasise the fact that their group would not support Zionism.

Though Sadie American found much room for improvement, she did find some philanthropic projects worthy of praise. American was particularly complimentary of some of the literary and cultural groups organised within communities, singling out those in Baltimore, Rochester, St. Louis and Detroit for praise. She linked their merit to the idea of "Recreative Philanthropy" and the mutual self-improvement which groups of that sort could provide.

Perhaps the most surprising organisation for which American had particular praise was the *Philadelphia Wayfarers Lodge*. This institution,

²⁹⁴Wilhelm, *The Independent Orders of B'nai B'rith and True Sisters: Pioneers of a New Jewish Identity 1843-1914*, op. cit., p.204.

²⁹⁵American, "Organization", op. cit., p.228.

run by members of the city's Russian-Jewish community marked the only point in her speech where American mentioned an organisation run by new immigrants from Eastern-Europe, though of course many had been formed across the United States. It could be argued that American's inclusion of the *Wayfarer's Lodge* points to a willingness by American to include institutions of this sort if she was informed of their existence. It seems more likely that she was persuaded to include them as a token example, particularly given that no example of an organisation founded by new immigrants from Eastern-Europe was given in the section on Chicago, information about which was easily accessible to her.²⁹⁶

The fact that American heaped the most praise on the projects of her own community should perhaps be expected. She particularly noted that plans were underway for a Jewish Social Settlement, along the lines of Hull-House. Here American explicitly lauded the Established Jewish community in Chicago for aligning themselves with the nascent Progressive Movement—an example she encouraged the rest of the country to follow. This example challenges the idea that the *NCJW* was founded as a fundamentally conservative organisation. Here the progressive aims of the organisation were not hidden, but explicitly presented as the way in which the community should move forward.²⁹⁷

3.3.3 The Need for a New Organisation

American asserted that the moment the community found themselves in, at the closing of a successful Congress, represented perhaps the only real chance to create a national organisation of Jewish women.

Not again may we have together so many women from all parts of our country, drawn hither for the purpose of representing Judaism at its best. Let us strike while the iron is hot. Let us form an organisation whose object shall be the

²⁹⁶Ibid., p.221.

²⁹⁷Ibid., p.229–30.

spreading of understanding of and devotion to the highest type of Judaism, in whose service shall be put every faculty of our being.²⁹⁸

Her emphasis was placed on the religious mission of the proposed organisation, but its wider philanthropic mission was implied, recalling the effort which American placed in equating the opportunity for deeper philanthropic activity as a necessary task in spreading the Reform Judaism she advocated. American asserted that this gathering of Jewish women from around the United States was unprecedented, and certainly her point was a salient one. Solomon's autobiography noted the difficulty she faced in organising the Congress due to the lack of connection between the women of different communities.²⁹⁹ However, before that opportunity could be acted upon, American was forced to justify why a national organisation was necessary at all. The critiques she addresses are powerfully reminiscent of the critiques of the Jewish Women's Congress put forward in the *Reform Advocate* by Emil Hirsch. Essentially, she broke down her reasoning into three parts: why she felt a national organisation was necessary, why she felt this organisation needed to have a visibly Jewish identity, and finally why she felt it should be an organisation of women.

In order to address the first of these points, American began by offering a definition of an organisation, in opposition to an association.

Association and organisation are often used interchangeably, and therefore it becomes necessary for us to bear in mind the distinction between the two. An association is a number of people banded together in pursuit of one end, each of whom may be doing the same thing. An organisation is such an association of units, in which the work necessary for the attainment of an end is ordered, divided, apportioned among its members, so that each becomes an organ, through

²⁹⁸Ibid., p.258–9.

²⁹⁹Solomon, *The Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*, op. cit., p.81.

which a special part, and that part only, of its work is to be done.³⁰⁰

American made the case that the current philanthropic efforts being undertaken by Jews in the United States could be labeled 'Associations' as she defined them, and that what was needed was an 'organisation', which would direct philanthropic efforts in a far more efficient fashion. This argument was a conventional one, made throughout this period as notions of 'scientific philanthropy' caused a reexamination of the way philanthropy was conducted. Greater levels of organisation were thought to be the best way to ensure that there was no overlap in provision which would allow recipients to become dependent on philanthropic assistance.

American addressed the question as to why the organisation should have a specifically Jewish identity in a number of ways. She first emphasised her belief that immigrant Jews, coming from lands where they had been oppressed, would refuse to accept even well meant aid from an organisation which did not identify as explicitly Jewish.³⁰¹ Her second suggestion was that a Jewish organisation was needed in order to allow Jewish women to grow closer.

We need a wider organisation. We have some organisations 'tis true, but you have seen that they are all confined to charity, they do for others—we need to be taught our duty to ourselves; they go and give—we need to be taught that to go and get is of equal importance, we need to be taught the value of the word *mutual*. . . For the poor in pocket, in mind, in spirit, much is done; the rich in purse and intellect do much for themselves; the average woman is neglected.

Her we desire and aim to reach.³⁰²

Here again American provided a clear articulation of the desire to form a philanthropic organisation which would unite Jewish women, and

³⁰⁰American, "Organization", op. cit., p.233–4.

³⁰¹Ibid., p.254.

³⁰²Ibid., p.248.

provide them with a common sense of belonging. Her use of the word 'charity' points back to her earlier definitions, describing it only one element of philanthropy, whereas any new organisation would be all-encompassing, allowing Jewish women to participate in philanthropic projects of all kinds

Perhaps her most radical idea was her admission that Jews in the United States were still to a degree held back by both antisemitism and the hierarchical class structure of the Jewish community.

Jews are justified in organizing because environment, heredity, social conditions and prejudice within as much as without their ranks sweep before their doors an accumulation of material, through which it is their duty to cut a way to the great green common and the invigorating air of the eternal heights of true freedom.³⁰³

On the whole, speakers at the Congress perpetuated the polite fiction that unlike Jews in Europe their community was treated like any other group and was untroubled by antisemitism. Other papers at the Congress had been full of praise for the United States, where they were able to "live in friendship and peace, not antagonism; in love, and not in hate; and, in all questions absorbing the nation, working hand in hand with the Christian, making a brotherhood of man."³⁰⁴ To suggest that an organisation was in part necessary to combat prejudice that still prevented the Jews from achieving 'true freedom' seems shocking indeed, but combined with the suggestion that prejudice within the Jewish community was also an ongoing problem was even more shocking. Other papers at the Congress had demonstrated a huge degree of antipathy towards new Jewish immigrants, yet American demonstrated that at least to some within the community, this was a problem to be fixed. American's sentiment seems so different from the majority of those expressed at the Congress that it should not be suggested that

³⁰³Ibid., p.251.

³⁰⁴Rosenberg, "Influence of the Discovery of America on the Jews", op. cit., p.73.

her beliefs were commonly held, however, the fact that she was able to express them before the largest audience at the Congress should not be forgotten.

In her answer to why the organisation should be exclusively of women, American abandoned any streak of radicalism, and returned to a very conventional explanation; suggesting that a separate organisation of women was necessitated by the separate responsibilities of men and women. She appealed to the notion of women as social housekeepers, “whose spiritual eye discerns through the mist and cloud the steep and narrow path which must be followed.”³⁰⁵ As long as it did not interfere with her responsibilities to home and family, it was widely accepted that those specific responsibilities carried on into wider society, and these ideas provided the foundation for the social acceptability of women’s philanthropic work. They would continue to be expressed well into the twentieth century, even as women took leading roles in the social welfare movement on a more and more political level.

American’s speech was, by all accounts, received very warmly. As had been planned by the Congress’s organising committee, a motion was called and it was agreed that a new organisation should be formed: the *National Council of Jewish Women*. No time was wasted, and the records of the Congress show that a structure, borrowed from the *National Council of Women*, was established, where a Vice-President from every State or Territory would be appointed, and in turn would answer to a National Committee. Though women from across the nation were present at the Congress, most of the members of the National Committee were from Chicago, largely the women who had organised the Congress—with Hannah Solomon as President, and Sadie American as Corresponding Secretary. These were the two positions holding most power.

³⁰⁵American, “Organization”, op. cit., p.250.

3.3.4 The Press and the Congress

Though a complete collection of the papers given at the Jewish Women's Congress was published, and Hannah Solomon's autobiography gives some flavour of the way the event was received, the newspaper coverage the event received provides further insight into the Congress. A number of Chicago's major daily newspapers, included mention of the Congress. These accounts provide a counterpoint to the dry account in the published papers and Solomon's own account. They allow insight into the way those at the time viewed the Congress, particularly what the non-Jewish majority understood to be its message and purpose. The very fact of its inclusion in these newspapers speak to the reach the event had outside of a Jewish audience. Four of the city's best read titles, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Inter-Ocean*, the *Evening Post* and the *Daily News*, who together had a daily readership of over half a million people, covered the event.³⁰⁶

The first mention of the Jewish Women's Congress in the non-Jewish press occurred the day before it began in the *Chicago Tribune*, which printed the program for the entire event.³⁰⁷ However, the first substantive discussion of the event occurred on its first day, September 4th in the *Daily News*, which, as an evening paper, could report events as they occurred. Not a long mention, it in fact is a short paragraph at the end of a longer article largely discussing the Catholic Congress which was occurring at the same time. In fact, universally the coverage of the Jewish Women's Congress in the *Daily News*, the *Evening Post* and the *Inter-Ocean* can be found in relation with the coverage of the Catholic Congress, most likely a simple function of their status as parallel sessions in the Parliament of Religions. Under the headline "They Speak of Religion", the final subheading recounts a "Large Gathering of Jewish Women."³⁰⁸ In this way, the Jewish Women's Congress seems to be subordinate to the Catholic Congress, especially as the headline

³⁰⁶Erickson, "Newspapers and Social Values: Chicago Journalism, 1890-1900", op. cit.

³⁰⁷*Chicago Tribune* September 3, 1893, p.8

³⁰⁸*Daily News* September 4th, 1893, p.2

sat directly below one announcing “Communication Received from the Pope”.³⁰⁹ However, three pictures appear on the page, and the one closest to the headlines is of Ray Frank, one of the young women involved with the organisation of the Jewish Women’s Congress. It seems strange though that her picture is given no context, simply labeled “Miss Frank”, and even appearing in a different column to the section addressing the Jewish Congress. Indeed, even in the section about the Congress, Frank does not seem to be mentioned at all; or rather, perhaps the press found the session to have a surfeit of Franks, as in addition to Ray Frank who gave an opening prayer, Henrietta Frank was part of the discussion panel, and both are labelled ‘Mrs. Frank’ in the article.³¹⁰ Though the picture is a simple line drawing, her lack of mention in the article suggest that she was chosen more for her status as a young woman, than for her contribution to the Congress itself.

The *Inter-Ocean*, *Chicago Tribune Evening Post* and the *Daily News* all published reports of the Jewish Women’s Congress on September 5th; the *Post* and the *Daily News*, as evening papers, reported on that day’s events, while the *Inter-Ocean* and *Tribune* reported on the opening day’s proceedings. The paragraph in the *Inter-Ocean* was far longer than the one which had appeared in the *Daily News* the previous evening, however, it was not as prominently displayed. Again tucked onto the end of a much more extensive article which discussed the opening of the Catholic Congress, the inclusion of the Jewish Women’s Congress seemed more of an afterthought. Each of the papers was listed, and each of the women who presented was praised, but the article seems rather formulaic. The article began by announcing that “Hall 7 was packed yesterday morning with an audience largely composed of Jewish women to Inaugurate the Jewish Women’s Religious Congress.”³¹¹ Two things in particular stand out from the tone of the article; firstly, the

³⁰⁹Ibid

³¹⁰*National Council Of Jewish Women Proceedings of the Jewish Women’s Congress, Chicago, September 4–7, 1893, p.6*

³¹¹*Inter-Ocean* September 5th, 1893, p.4

addition of the word 'Religious' to the title of the congress makes explicit the way in which the event was perceived by the press. Though Solomon herself later noted that she explicitly chose to site the Congress in the World's Parliament of Religions to emphasise Judaism's status as a religion, it seems interesting that the press seemed to find it necessary to draw their reader's attention to that fact.³¹² Indeed, both the *Daily News* and the *Evening Post* on occasion add 'Religious' to the title of the Congress, indicating that this emphasis was commonly needed outside of the Jewish community.³¹³ However, this word is not found in Burrows's book about the Parliament of Religions, nor in the Records of the National Council of Jewish Women suggesting that the added word was the innovation of the Chicago press.³¹⁴ It seems then that despite the careful positioning of the Jewish Women's Congress, and the lengths to which the Jewish Denominational Congress had gone only a week earlier to insist upon the view of Judaism solely as a religion, and not as a race, this was something which Chicago's populace was yet to accept.³¹⁵

The second notable aspect of the article is the distinct impression that it gives that the event was of limited general interest to those outside the Jewish community. Beginning as it did by emphasising that the attendants were largely Jewish women, it goes on to add "among them was a sprinkling of Christians of both sexes," which extends a rather dismissive tone to the inter-faith participation.³¹⁶ It went on to add that a Mrs Hooker, a non-Jewish attendant "spoke of her admiration for the Jewish race and told the women to go on as they had begun and great achievements would be theirs."³¹⁷ Not only did this again emphasise a racial view of Jewish identity, the

³¹²Solomon, *The Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*, op. cit., p.81.

³¹³*Daily News* September 6th, 1893, p.6, *Evening Post* September 6th, 1893, p.3

³¹⁴Burrows p.1461–1467, *National Council of Jewish Women* Proceeding of the Jewish Women's Congress, Chicago, September 4–7, 1893 *Reform Advocate*

³¹⁵Walter R Houghton, ed. *Neely's History of the World's Parliament of Religions*. Chicago: P T Neely, 1893, p.867–870.

³¹⁶*Inter-Ocean* September 5, 1893, p.4

³¹⁷*Ibid.*

tone was condescending. This contrasted strongly with the manner in which the Catholic Congress was discussed on the same page; here the *Inter-Ocean* adopted a tone of stark seriousness, explaining that “the prelates, priests, and people of the church to which Columbus belonged gathered yesterday in the hall named after the famous sailor to inaugurate the Columbian Catholic Congress.”³¹⁸ Immediately the *Inter-Ocean* set the Catholic Congress as central to the Columbian quadricentennial, which the Exposition was intended to celebrate. The article went on to describe the “stars and stripes, emblem of American liberty and citizenship, [which were] not the least noticeable feature of the decorations.”³¹⁹ Here Catholicism was positioned as not only part of America, but central to the history of the nation, and the Catholic link to an American identity is confirmed.³²⁰ Though it is not indicated in the existing literature on the newspaper, there seems to be a certain level of Catholic sympathy in the *Inter-Ocean*’s reporting. This is not only visible in the way in which the Catholic Congress was reported on, but extends throughout the decade; in 1898, the announcement of the end of the war with Catholic Spain shares the front page with the announcement from Rome that 40 new Catholic Bishops had been recognised, even though none were American.³²¹ Though this slant to their reporting does not seem to have been entirely representative of their editorial focus, it certainly may have coloured the way in which Jewish women’s philanthropy was reported upon.

The *Chicago Tribune*’s coverage of the opening of the Jewish Women’s Congress was relatively lengthy and of a far more descriptive tone than many of the articles dealing with Jewish women’s philanthropy. Under the title “Women Rule the Jewish Congress”, it began “Women elbowed, trod on each others’ toes and did everything else they could without

³¹⁸Ibid.

³¹⁹Ibid.

³²⁰This position seems to be particular to the presentation of this event, and not of a wide acceptance of Catholicism throughout American society, nor indeed within the Progressive Era’s press. For a full discussion of the topic, see Nordstrom, J. *Danger on the Doorstep: Anti-Catholicism and American Print Culture in the Progressive Era* 2006

³²¹*Inter-Ocean* November 29, 1898, p.1

violating the proprieties to gain the privilege of standing edgeways in a hall heavy with the fragrance of roses yesterday morning.”³²² The combination of the title, and the descriptive nature of the article shed a greater light on the atmosphere of the event than in any of the other newspapers. It is made obvious that the event was of great importance to the Jewish women who attended, which was emphasised later in the article where the author adds that the small number of men who did attend were “thrust into the background.”³²³ Discussing the women who attended, the *Tribune* emphasised that they were mostly young women, which adds to the impression of the event as one of vitality and modernity.

The *Evening Post* and *Daily News* articles about the Jewish women’s congress from its second day were both rather short. They were again buried beneath longer articles about the Catholic Congress, and yet in the *Daily News* the mention of the Jewish Women’s Congress was more prominent. Though the mention itself was less than 13 lines of one column, it was mentioned by a subheadline “Papers at the Meeting of Jewish Women,” meaning that it was much more easily stumbled upon by those who were not reading the newspaper exhaustively.³²⁴ Conversely, though the mention in the *Post* was actually slightly longer, and on page three, rather than page six, it was not mentioned in a headline, simply appearing in a short section entitled “In Other Congresses”, and appearing below a paragraph detailing the events organised by the German Catholic Young Men’s Guilds, and the Catholic Benevolent Legion. As the entire section dealing with the Parliament of Religions is titled “Church and Society”, the inclusion of the Jewish Women’s Congress would have gone unnoticed to all but the most diligent readers.³²⁵

Interestingly it was the next day’s events which were catalogued most prominently in the non-Jewish press, though they were only reported on by one newspaper, the *Daily News*. Unlike the previous

³²²*Chicago Tribune* September 5, 1893, p.8

³²³*Ibid.*

³²⁴*Daily News* September 5, 1893, p.6

³²⁵*Evening Post* September 5, 1893, p.3

day, when a brief mention had been included on page six, on this occasion the Congress was reported as front page news. A subheading mentioned them at the centre of the top of the page and although the section discussing the Jewish Women's Congress appeared under a much lengthier section about the Catholic Congress, it was the mention of the Jewish Women's Congress that proved to be the more eye-catching, as it included a picture, which the section on the Catholic Congress did not. Under the headline "Jewish Ladies Talk of Charity", the *Daily News* seemed to have a much clearer idea of the way in which it wishes to position the event.³²⁶ While on previous day's, it simply listed the papers read under a general headline, here the day's topic of discussion was far more prominent. With the addition of the discussion of philanthropy, the tone of the coverage of the event changed. The event was referred to as the "Jewish Ladies' Congress," which although not the official title of the event, removed the word 'Religious', which had been used on previous days. This was not informed by a dramatic change in the content of the papers delivered as religious issues were prominent within the discussion when Eva Stern, (whose picture was used by the *Daily News*) gave a paper titled "Charity as Thought By The Mosaic Law".³²⁷ The inclusion of the topic of philanthropy seemed in some ways to universalise an event, which up to this point had been largely portrayed as of limited interest. Discussions of philanthropy fit much more readily into the received model of appropriate femininity of the period, and within that framework Jewish women could be much more easily positioned as simply 'women'. This coverage harked back to Hirsch's desire for no qualifying adjectives. However, it must be asked why the *Daily News* chose to cover the events from the third day of the Jewish Women's Congress, when others did not? As has already been mentioned, the *Daily News* was groundbreaking in its cultivation of a female readership, perhaps making a discussion of women's philanthropy from any community of more inherent interest

³²⁶*Daily News* September 6, 1898, p.1

³²⁷*Ibid.*

to that publication.³²⁸

Following its prominent coverage of the penultimate day of the Congress, the event's final day was not mentioned in the *Daily News*, nor is it mentioned in the *Tribune*. The *Inter-Ocean* did include a short mention of the closing of the Congress, but as with the rest of its coverage, it was to be found at the the end of a lengthy article about the Catholic Congress. It is interesting to note that the mention of the Jewish Women's Congress was to be found below—and was rather shorter than—the mention of the Congress of Colored Catholics.³²⁹ This adds to the impression of the *Inter-Ocean* as a newspaper with a Catholic slant, suggesting that despite the profound racism of the period, the readers of that newspaper would find the events of the Congress of Coloured Catholics more significant than the Congress of Jewish Women.

The *Evening Post*'s final article was slightly longer, and a little more prominent, being found on page three in the middle of the page, and had a headline and sub-heading to draw attention to it as separate from the article about the Catholic Congress above. The article largely recounted the decision of the Jewish Women's Congress to form a permanent national organisation of Jewish women, in a session which the *Post* described as having had "the largest audience that [had] yet attended any of [the Congress's] meetings."³³⁰ It seems that like the article in the *Daily News* from the previous day, the *Post* provided a more extensive coverage of the Jewish Women's Congress when the issue to be discussed was philanthropic activity, and this was certainly the light in which the foundation of the Jewish organisation was portrayed. Sadie American was quoted in the article as saying that:

the primary object of all organisations among our sex. . . should
be the pursuance of charitable work, and then this is done

³²⁸Tree, "Victor Freemont Lawson and His Newspapers, 1890-1900: A Study of the Chicago Daily News and the Chicago Record", op. cit., p.15.

³²⁹*Inter-Ocean* September 8 1893, p.8

³³⁰*Evening Post* September 7, 1893, p.3

the realization of every other wish will have come.³³¹

Though the speech given by American ran to forty-seven pages in its printed form, it seems telling that this was the idea which the *Post* wished to emphasise.³³² The article ended by noting that delegates at the meeting discussed the “methods and systems of charity work adopted by the Personal Service Society, which was the model the congress... thought of imitating when it [became] a recognised charitable institution.”³³³ It is not clear what the Personal Service Society was, nor where the link to the *NCJW* came from, but it is interesting that the link was made to a non-Jewish organisation other than the *National Council of Women* which the *NCJW*’s organisers freely admitted they were modeling themselves on

There are several issues of note in the way that these brief articles positioned both the Jewish Women’s Congress and the nascent *National Council of Jewish Women*. The first was that, although the Jewishness of the event was mentioned, it was not the emphasis of the articles. In particular, the quote from American emphasised the importance of philanthropic activity for all women. This seems to add to a sense of the universalisation of the Congress, providing justification for its relevance outside the Jewish community. In addition, there was almost no mention of the event as having religious ties within many of the articles. The headline of one article was “Meeting of Jewish Women”, which removed the addition of ‘Religious’ which had been used on previous days. In fact, the only mention of religion in the articles about the final day was made within a direct quotation from the resolution founding the *National Council of Jewish Women*.³³⁴ As with the previous day’s article in the *Daily News*, the framework of a discussion of philanthropy allowed the *Post* to position the event within an accepted model of feminine behaviour which could be of interest to the wider

³³¹Ibid.

³³²*National Council of Jewish Women* Proceedings of the Jewish Women’s Congress, Chicago, September 4–7, 1893, p. 218–262

³³³*Evening Post* September 7, 1893, p.3

³³⁴Ibid.

community.

3.4 The Legacy of the Congress

The Jewish Women's Congress was a transformative event, not simply because of the fact that it gave rise to the *NCJW*, but also because it was the first time that a national gathering of Jewish women had been organised. There were pressures—internal and external to the Jewish community—that shaped the way that the congress was organised. The women who organised the Congress were faced with the task of creating an event that proved acceptable to both their own communal leaders, including Emil Hirsh, who suggested that they need not separate themselves from non-Jewish women, and the women of the Women's Auxiliary, who requested a specifically Jewish contribution. Though the example of the disenfranchisement of the self-consciously feminist Isabellas the women of the Jewish Women's Congress were provided an example of the power of the elite women organising the Women's contribution to the Columbian Exposition. In fact, Solomon was able to negotiate these demands by organising her event to the specifications given by the Auxiliary, and only later asking for permission from the Jewish community.

Though it would be easy to suggest that the Established Jewish community was monolithic, and indeed that is the way in which events such as the Congress have been presented at times, in fact a closer examination shows that the women of the Congress, even those who would go on to be members of the *NCJW* did not express uniform ideas. While there were elements that united them, including the idea that philanthropy of some sort was necessary, and that there were rules by which philanthropy should be practiced, in fact at the end of the Congress when the *NCJW* was brought into being, very few of these questions had been settled. A universal philanthropic organisation, as a way of imposing an all-encompassing notion of the good life was seen

as a way to not only help others, but also as a way of uniting Jewish women

An organisation which shall unite in true fellowship and noblest endeavour all thinking Jewish women, which shall be the means and medium of interchange of ideas and thoughts, and projects and services; which shall encourage jousts and tournaments of the mind on ground where she o'erthrown shall rise like Antaeus, with strength renewed from touch of mother earth; which through knowledge and experience shall beget wisdom, and from whose head will spring Minerva-like a free and fiery spirit, animating, actuating, directing to all things good, and true, and beautiful.³³⁵

Additionally, as the coverage in the non-Jewish press shows, the notion of a national Jewish philanthropic organisation provided a way for non-Jews to make a connection to this group.

Chicago, as home city to the congress was central to the form that the Congress finally took—its community was more orientated towards Radical Reform than any other major city in the United States, and one of the earliest to participate in Progressive philanthropic projects. Though radical ideas were by no means central to the Congress, the election of Solomon and American, self confessed Radical Reformers, to the positions of greatest power within the NCJW allowed them scope to create the organisation that they envisaged, and that was certainly one with reform-minded ambitions, as the *National Council of Jewish Women's* early years would prove.

³³⁵American, "Organization", op. cit., p.248.

4

Developing the NCJW

4.1 Organisational Foundations

Although the formation of the National Council of Jewish Women was agreed, in principle, at the end of the Congress of Jewish Women in 1893, far more work would be necessary to actually bring an organisation on the scale envisioned into existence. This would largely be co-ordinated by the same group of Chicago women who had organised the Congress. As the birthplace of the Council, and home of all of the members of its first set of national officers (including its President, Hannah Solomon, Corresponding Secretary Sadie American and Recording Secretary Carrie Wolf), the Chicago Section of the *NCJW* was the first to be organised. It served as a model held up to other groups of Jewish women interested in forming their own Sections.³³⁶The national and

³³⁶Solomon, *The Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*, op. cit., p.102.

later international iterations of the NCJW (two Canadian Sections of the NCJW were created in the 1890s), were influenced by the ideas and experiences of the same group of Chicago Jewish women who had organised the Jewish Women's Congress. This is not a period Hannah Solomon discussed at any length in her autobiography, skipping almost directly from the 1893 Congress to the first Triennial Meeting of the NCJW, which took place in New York in 1896. Faith Rogow also skips from the founding of the organisation to the first triennial, though provides a little more detail.³³⁷ This skipping over of a three year period suggests the growth of the NCJW was an uncomplicated process, an idea bolstered by the fact that by 1896, the Council had grown to fifty sections, with four thousand paying members.³³⁸ But other sources show that however the process was later memorialised, the growth of the council was by no means uncomplicated; the survival of the organisation through those delicate years was not always certain. In order to secure the NCJW, Chicago women worked incredibly hard, both when creating their own section—proving it could be done—and when working with new sections, in person and through letters.

4.1.1 Chicago's Example

The Jewish Women's Congress had been a great success; the number of attendees had been so much greater than expected that larger rooms had to be found for the sessions on more than one occasion. But a great deal of work remained to turn the ideas and enthusiasm shown at the time into a viable organisation.³³⁹ By the end of the final session, it was agreed that a Vice President should be elected for each state, and five had been appointed: for Illinois (Babette Mandel, wife of Department Store owner Emanuel Mandel), New York, Colorado, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania. However, Hannah Solomon was gifted with the right

³³⁷Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting: The National Council of Jewish Women, 1893-1993*, op. cit., p.25.

³³⁸Ibid., p.26.

³³⁹Solomon, *The Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*, op. cit., p.87.

to appoint the remaining Vice Presidents at her discretion, indicating the level of personal control she was handed as founding President.³⁴⁰ Unsurprisingly, these new Vice-Presidents were mainly women who had played a role in organising the Congress or had been chosen to deliver papers. Two of the women chosen, Carrie Benjamin (Colorado) and Goldie Bamber (Massachusetts), had spoken as part of the same session and on the topic of Philanthropy, with Benjamin delivering a paper titled “Woman’s Place in Charitable Work: What is it and What should it be” and Bamber acting as respondent.³⁴¹ This emphasises that from its inception, philanthropy was central to the NCJW’s identity, and with Religion and Education, formed their tripartite mission.

The women of Chicago—many of whom had been able to attend the Congress—had at this point at least the grudging support of communal leaders and were able to organise the first meeting of the Chicago Section of the National Council of Jewish Women, which was held in the large meeting room at Temple Sinai and attended by Emil Hirsch and four other Chicago Rabbis, showing the broad support for the project. Indeed, Hirsch printed American’s speech in the *Reform Advocate*, serialised over two weeks, granting the “plea for a National Organisation of Jewish Women” another degree of publicity.³⁴² This should not, however, be taken to mean that the support of the Rabbinical elite of the city was unconditional. In the run up to the inaugural meeting of the Chicago Section of the Council, Hirsch published a number of articles in the *Reform Advocate* that, while encouraging the development of women’s roles within the Jewish community, also advocated keeping them within limits, and suggesting that whilst no inherent barriers prevented women from rising to the Rabbinate, no woman had yet proven herself ready for the role.³⁴³ He also reprinted, in three parts,

³⁴⁰Papers of the Jewish Women’s Congress 1893, National Council of Jewish Women Collection, Library of Congress, Box 1–34, Folder 1

³⁴¹Hannah G. Solomon, ed. *Papers of the Jewish Women’s Congress, 1893*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1894, p.7.

³⁴²*Reform Advocate* September 23rd, 1893, pp.89–92, September 30th, 1893, pp.106–112

³⁴³*Reform Advocate* November 11th, 1893, pp.201–2, p.202

a speech given at the Jewish Denominational Congress at the World's Parliament of Religions: 'The Position of Women Among the Jews,' written by the male Dr. M. Landsberg. While it advocated the "final step" towards the "full participation" of women in the religious life of the Jewish community, the speech expanded upon this to explain that "There is no conceivable reason why our women should not have a voice in the management of our congregations, why they should not enjoy all the privileges of active membership, why they should not be elected to lend their aid, their wisdom and enthusiasm as trustees and members of the school boards."³⁴⁴ Here, it is once again emphasised that though Hirsch's Radical Reform movement did advocate fuller religious participation for women, he maintained that men were the ones best able to define the limits of that inclusion and he seemingly rejected the idea of women's self-determination.

The new organisation was not charged for the use of the meeting room at Temple Sinai and it has been suggested that this was in an effort to get women more involved in Synagogue life. Rogow goes so far as to suggest that this move anticipated the widespread formation of Temple Sisterhoods, but this is overstating the case.³⁴⁵ She is correct to the extent that no confederation of Temple Sisterhoods existed before 1913; when the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods was formed, it was by Carrie Simon, who had served as secretary in her NCJW Section.³⁴⁶ However, in many cases these were reformulations of organisations which had existed prior to a national federation, some dating back to the 1880s as 'Sisterhoods of Personal Service'.³⁴⁷ At one point Hannah Solomon suggested that rather than form an entirely new organisation, the Congress of Jewish Women should be used to confederate these local societies.³⁴⁸ It would, however, be true to say that this was an

³⁴⁴*Reform Advocate* November 25th, 1893, pp.237-8, p.238

³⁴⁵Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting: The National Council of Jewish Women, 1893-1993*, op. cit., p.25.

³⁴⁶Schwartz, *The Rabbi's Wife: The Rebbetzin in American Jewish Life*, op. cit., p.28.

³⁴⁷Goldman, *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery: Finding a Place for Women in American Judaism*, op. cit., p.206-7.

³⁴⁸Letter from Carrie Wolf to Hannah Solomon and Sadie American, University

innovation for Chicago, as the Jewish women's organisations in that city were mainly more traditional sewing circles, as well as the Johanna Lodge of the *United Order of True Sisters*, the women's auxiliary to the *B'nai B'rith*.

The meeting of the Chicago Section of the *National Council of Jewish Women* was held in January of 1894 and attracted around 300 local Jewish women. It opened with a speech from Hannah Solomon, in which she laid out what she saw as the aims of the new organisation.

As a Council of Jewish Women must have a *raison d'être* essentially Jewish, so this Council has as its main purpose the awakening of our women and our men to the need of a better knowledge of our religion. Therefore, the Council will throw its force into an endeavour to remove the dense ignorance in which Judaism has been shrouded.³⁴⁹

To advocate the de-mystification of Judaism in one of the most famous Radical Reform synagogues in the country demonstrates powerfully the activist roots of the organisation, and the degree to which it was influenced by the theological convictions of the women who created it. Sadie American emphasised this, when closing the meeting, by paying tribute to Hirsch as the "great teacher of this temple."³⁵⁰ However, by the time a circular was sent out to Jewish congregations around the country, urging them to form their own sections of the Council, this radical edge seems to have been tempered. Rather than claim a central aim of reform-minded religious education, the twin aims of religious education for women and philanthropic action were presented on a more-or-less equal footing. Of the four papers mentioned as forthcoming at the Chicago Section, two were on religious subjects and two on philanthropy. The religious topics were uncontroversially titled: 'Women in Israel' and 'The need and uses of a closer study of the Bible'.

of Illinois Special Collections, Historical Encyclopaedia of Chicago Women Project Collection, Box 53, Folder 399

³⁴⁹*Reform Advocate* January 27th, 1894, pp388–9, p.388

³⁵⁰*Ibid*, p.389

Instead, it was the papers on philanthropic topics which demonstrate the NCJW's more radical edge, making a nod to the progressive edge of Chicago's philanthropic culture by discussing 'Organisation and personal service in Philanthropic work,' and 'College Settlements,' both of which were cornerstones of the Progressive philanthropic philosophy.³⁵¹

The Chicago section raced to be the first section to meet, but in doing that, they came up against the patterns of work already in place in Chicago's Jewish communal life. The *Reform Advocate* noted that while the early response to the National Council in Chicago was overwhelmingly enthusiastic, and that the number of attendees grew at each meeting, the timing was not ideal. Many of the wealthier members of the Chicago Jewish community left the city for all or part of the summer, and it was therefore conventional for only a limited program of events to take place at that time, if at all. The NCJW decided that little could be done at that stage, other than gaining members and making plans. They resolved that practical work would begin in the autumn.³⁵² This is not to say that these early meetings had no impact: one hundred and fifty women paid their \$1 yearly dues and became full members of the NCJW in the first six weeks of the Chicago Section's existence; 'A Constitution for Local Sections' was drafted, in which they attempted to create a pattern for their organisation which was flexible enough to meet the each community's specific circumstances. The March meeting, again held at Temple Sinai, was the first at which a paper was read and its contents discussed, the format which would become usual. Henriette Frank, Hannah Solomon's older sister, and the Chicago Section's first president was praised for her "splendid opening of the literary career of the Section."³⁵³ A similar format was used for the April meeting of the Section, in which two papers were read, one on a religious topic and one on a topic linked to philanthropy. In

³⁵¹*Reform Advocate* May 5th, 1894, p.185

³⁵²*Ibid*

³⁵³*Reform Advocate* March 31st, 1894, pp.108-9, p.108

an interesting reversal of the expected roles of the day, it was Hannah Solomon who delivered the religiously-themed paper, while a Mr Jesse Lowenhaupt spoke on philanthropy. It is interesting to note that this meeting was held on a Sunday, in order that it could be attended by “members of the Council who [were] occupied during the week.”³⁵⁴ While the leadership of the NCJW, and likely the largest part of its membership, were married women who did not work, this weekend meeting, and the expectation expressed that this would be an ongoing pattern, with one in every three meetings taking place on a Sunday, show that the needs of working women were being considered at a very early stage by the Chicago section.³⁵⁵ It was also obvious at this early stage that the Chicago Section was keen to involve itself in the wider philanthropic culture of the city, with Jane Addams invited to give a short talk on Hull-House.³⁵⁶

Those members of the Chicago Section who were in Chicago in the summer of 1894 were able to begin some practical work. A small sewing school established, with the dual aim of keeping Jewish girls in a structured environment during the time the public schools were not in session, and allowing them to earn money.³⁵⁷ This was not a particularly innovative project; a similar sewing room had been a project of the Chicago Women’s Club.³⁵⁸ However, it does mark the start of practical philanthropy performed by the NCJW in Chicago.

By the autumn of 1894, there were around a thousand women who had paid to become members of the NCJW. Sections had nominally been organised in Chicago, Quincy, IL., Baltimore, Newark, Philadelphia, Duluth, Denver, Allegheny and New York. Not all of these groups had

³⁵⁴Ibid, p.109

³⁵⁵Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting: The National Council of Jewish Women, 1893-1993*, op. cit., p.55.

³⁵⁶*Reform Advocate* March 31st, 1894, pp.108–9, p.109

³⁵⁷*Reform Advocate* December 15th, 1894, pp.270–272, p.270

³⁵⁸The Chicago Women’s Club sewing room was patronised by a number of women from the new Eastern European Jewish community, and it was where Hannah Solomon had, the previous winter, first come into contact with this community. In her autobiography, Solomon credited this project with opening her eyes to the numbers of poor Russian-Jewish women in need in the city of Chicago.

grown beyond the embryonic stage, though.³⁵⁹ Three days after the *Reform Advocate* published an article about the Council—celebrating the milestone of ten established Sections—Sadie American wrote to Hannah Solomon, describing the nascent Philadelphia Section as “a flunk.”³⁶⁰ It was clear that without a concerted effort by the Council’s national leadership, it was not certain that their organisation would develop beyond Chicago. Therefore, the Council’s national leadership, largely controlled by Solomon and American, devised a several-pronged approach to increasing the size and stability of the NCJW outside Chicago. First, they continued to correspond with women who had attended the Congress, and with women they knew personally in other ways. Second, they used the existing relationship with Emil Hirsch to publish reports in the *Reform Advocate*, which—though a Chicago newspaper—would be noticed elsewhere, particularly in other reform-minded communities. They also began to associate themselves with both the National Federation of Women’s Clubs and the Illinois Federation of Women’s Clubs on an institutional level, with Hannah Solomon becoming Vice President of the Illinois Federation, in her capacity as the representative of the Council.³⁶¹ Finally, Sadie American made an extended trip to the East Coast, where she represented the NCJW personally and tried to encourage the Jewish communities she visited to organise their own sections.

American’s trip lasted about two months, probably from early December 1894 to early February 1895, and seems to have largely consisted of stays in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and New York, with a number of shorter stops in smaller towns at specific request. While she was away, American continued to act as the Council’s Corresponding Secretary, but Hannah Solomon was obliged to take over some of the practical elements of American’s job which could not be conducted away from

³⁵⁹*Reform Advocate* December 15, 1894, pp.270–272, p270

³⁶⁰Sadie American to Hannah Solomon, December 18th, 1894, Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 6, Folder 10

³⁶¹Illinois Federation of Women’s Clubs, First Annual Meeting, 1895, Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 4, Folder 1

Chicago. Sadie American's letters to Hannah Solomon provide some of the most detailed evidence of the struggle to launch the NCJW outside of Chicago, and the ways in which Solomon and American's plans for their organisation were tested by the practicalities of working with diverse communities, particularly on the East Coast.³⁶² By the time American arrived in Pittsburgh, it seemed a Section had already been organised there, presided over by Pauline Rosenberg, who had spoken at the Jewish Women's Congress, who American happily noted had created a section "entirely in accord with our orders in every way."³⁶³ This was not surprising, as Pittsburgh was an urban community similar in many ways to Chicago, and the model created by the Chicago Section could be copied relatively easily.

It is also clear that when American was encouraging the creation of a section, she was sensitive to local circumstances. In the case of Youngstown, a small community fifty miles from Pittsburgh, American noted that it was a local man who had the greatest level of enthusiasm for the creation of a Council Section, the father of the Pittsburgh Section's Vice-President. American asked Solomon to write a letter supporting the creation of a section in Youngstown, emphasising the attendance of Christian women at the Jewish Women's Congress. Here American displayed the degree of flexibility which was available to local communities in forming Council Sections; in a largely self-contained community of the sort which existed in Chicago, the possibility of the Council as a site where Jewish women could entertain and educate their Christian friends would not have been a priority, but in a smaller town where, as American put it "all mingle," the possibility of non-Jewish women being able to join the Council made the new organisation more viable.³⁶⁴

³⁶²Sadie American to Hannah Solomon, December 8th, 1894, Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 6, Folder 10

³⁶³Sadie American to Hannah Solomon, December 4th, 1894, Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 6, Folder 10

³⁶⁴Sadie American to Hannah Solomon, December 5th, 1894, Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 6, Folder 10

American then moved on, to Philadelphia, where she stayed for more than two weeks. Though the city had a reputation as a centre of Jewish women's philanthropy, American's letters betray a deep sense of frustration with the lack of success which she had with the creation of a Section there. One of the things that American blamed for her lack of success was an element of snobbery amongst the Philadelphia community.

You see the fault is in the people here who are too calm and self-contained to show the effect of anything and really who are too self satisfied to concede that there can be anything new or anything more for them esp. if it comes from out of Phil.³⁶⁵

While the Jewish community in Chicago was influenced by a broader philanthropic culture which emphasised innovation, this trip to the East Coast showed that this was not the case elsewhere.

Although it was American who made this visit, as the practicalities of married life and motherhood prevented Solomon leaving Chicago, American recognised that the greatest authority lay with Solomon and that as President, Solomon was the more powerful of the two, able to be more persuasive. But American's domineering personality and her didactic manner were always in evidence. Letters from American to Solomon are full of hastily-scratched edits, turning orders into suggestions, in deference to Solomon's position, and pleas that Solomon contact women reticent to create Council section, in the hope that the request of the President would hold more sway than that of the Corresponding Secretary.³⁶⁶ At the same time, American's writing style is familiar, bordering on the tactless; she carelessly hands over tasks she had forgotten, assuming that Solomon would have the time to complete

³⁶⁵Sadie American to Hannah Solomon, December 24th, 1894, Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 6, Folder 10

³⁶⁶Sadie American to Hannah Solomon, December 8th, 1894, Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 6, Folder 10

them instead.³⁶⁷ American was not afraid of holding forth on matters when she was convinced her own opinion was the correct one. This was particularly evident when Solomon began to organise the NCJW's contribution for the national meeting of the National Federation of Women's Clubs, which was to take place the following year in Washington DC and would provide a significant platform to introduce the NCJW to a broad non-Jewish audience. American took exception to the fact that Minnie D Louis had been asked to speak in the morning, and in the afternoon. She took it upon herself to arrange a new speaker, only informing Solomon after she had already done this, and asking Solomon to be the one to inform Louis that her afternoon speech was no longer required.³⁶⁸ This disagreement about the program for the National Federation of Women's Clubs continued for several weeks.

Even at this early stage of the Council's existence, it is clear that there was a gulf between Solomon and American's opinions about the relationship between the Council and the Jewish community in Chicago from which it sprang. Solomon favoured delegating the responsibility to speak on the Council's behalf to those she knew personally, most of whom were of course Chicago women, whilst American constantly encouraged the addition of women from around the country, lamenting, for example, that she was "very sorry that [they didn't] have a NY name on the Constitution."³⁶⁹ Hannah Solomon does not seem to have reacted well to American's actions. Though her replies to these missives have been lost, American notes that Solomon had failed to reply to her letters.³⁷⁰ However, there are also indications that at least on the side of American, the relationship between the two was friendly enough for personal anecdotes to be shared; on one occasion after describing

³⁶⁷Sadie American to Hannah Solomon, December 9th, 1894, Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 6, Folder 10

³⁶⁸Sadie American to Hannah Solomon, December 14th, 1894, Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 6, Folder 10

³⁶⁹Sadie American to Hannah Solomon, December 31st, 1894, Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 6, Folder 10

³⁷⁰Sadie American to Hannah Solomon, January 1st, 1895, Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 6, Folder 10

a dinner she had attended in New York, American said of another guest “He is charming. Too bad he is married.”³⁷¹ This sort of slightly indiscreet comment seems unlikely to be something shared between two women who had no personal relationship at all.

Sadie American arrived in New York on either the 30th or 31st of December, 1894. She complained to Solomon that the New York Section of the *National Council of Jewish Women* was badly organised and that she needed more copies of the Council’s constitution and programs of study as New York had “wasted theirs” and were “crying out for more.”³⁷² The New York Section of the *National Council of Jewish Women* had been formed in the spring of 1894 but even at its first meeting, the deep misgivings that some had in New York about the new organisation were obvious. At the inaugural meeting of the Section, a paper titled “The Revival of Judaism”, was assigned to Esther J Ruskay, later described as a “fine poetess, and fearless champion of Orthodoxy”.³⁷³ Instead of praising the way in which the Reform Movement had refreshed a flagging Jewish faith, as others had, she instead denounced modernisation and railed against “the empty forms of worship that for the past 25 years [had] been served up. . . as religion and religious training”.³⁷⁴ She also dismissed philanthropy but as a folly Jews were clinging to because of the want of religious fulfilment. This strident dismissal of the movement from which the Council had emerged, and indeed of which the leadership of the Council represented the radical fringes, was a less-than-auspicious beginning. In a move seemingly designed to reconcile the more conservative members with the group to the more reform-minded, Rebekah Kohut—the widow of conservative Rabbi Alexander Kohut who described herself as having progressive

³⁷¹Sadie American to Hannah Solomon, January 18th, 1895, Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 6, Folder 10

³⁷²Sadie American to Hannah Solomon, February 4th, 1895, Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 6, Folder 10

³⁷³Rebekah Kohut. *My Portion*. New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1925, p.201.

³⁷⁴Paper read at the organisation of the New York Section of the National Council of Jewish Women (note, erroneously dated May 1893, likely May 1894.) The Records of the National Council of Jewish Women, Library of Congress, Box 2–34, Folder 5

leanings—was made President. She had not been in attendance at the Jewish Women’s Congress as she had not wanted to leave her husband, who had then been in declining health, and when she was chosen to be the President of the New York Section, she was away in San Francisco visiting her sister after her husband’s death.³⁷⁵ While this conciliatory move smoothed over the women of New York enough that a Section could be formed, it did not silence all dissent; American noted to Solomon that “everyone” thought that Julia Richman should have been President.³⁷⁶ Richman, who had presented the paper on ‘Women Wage-Workers’ at the Jewish Women’s Congress was a renowned educational reformer but was not religiously observant. The likelihood that Richman was a popular figure among New York’s more religiously conservative faction is slim; what is more likely is that American was socialising largely with the progressive Jewish community, with whom she sympathised, and the assertions she made were a reflection of this.³⁷⁷

While she was in New York, American again brought up her misgivings about the decisions Solomon had made when putting together the panel for the meeting of the National Council of Women in Washington DC. While the previous month, American had her way on the issue of Minnie D Louis, she now expressed a concern that the program was too full of Chicago women. In this case, it seems that Henriette Frank, Solomon’s older sister, had been added to the program. Here American’s reaction seems telling:

I would like to see see Henriette go on one of the morning programs, but again I say there is no room to place her on our Tuesday evening especially if I get the NY woman we need. . . We need NY. If you fill the program from the west

³⁷⁵Kohut, *My Portion*, op. cit., p.199, 203.

³⁷⁶Sadie American to Hannah Solomon, January 13th, 1895, Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 6, Folder 10

³⁷⁷Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting: The National Council of Jewish Women, 1893-1993*, op. cit., p.37.

you will make a fatal mistake.³⁷⁸

Her determination to place a New York woman on the evening program seems odd, especially when it is remembered how vehemently she rejected Minnie D Lewis, who was herself from New York. In fact, American was again attempting to push forward members of the specific clique from the New York Section with whom she was friendly, centred around Julia Richman. A few days later, Isabel Richman Wallach of New York was added to the program, having been asked to prepare a talk entitled 'The Religious Education of Children.' Given that she was Julia Richman's younger sister, it seems again that American got her way on the matter.³⁷⁹

4.1.2 Appearing at the National Council of Women's Second Triennial

After the wrangling and disagreements over the program, the Second Triennial of the National Council of Women of the United States took place from February 18th to March 2nd 1895 at Metzerotts' Music Hall in Washington DC.³⁸⁰ The *Council of Women* was made up of seventeen institutional members, and three local affiliate sections. Despite its relatively small size at this point, it had a number of very influential members, particularly the *National American Women's Suffrage Association*, headed by Susan B Anthony, and the *Women's Christian Temperance Union*, headed by Frances E. Willard. However, the NCJW was not alone within the *Council of Women* in representing the women of a minority religious group attempting to gain a greater degree of acceptance: the *National Woman's Relief Society*, headed by Zina D. H. Young, and the *Young Ladies National Mutual Improvement Association*, headed by Elmina

³⁷⁸Sadie American to Hannah Solomon, January 19th, 1895, Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 6, Folder 10

³⁷⁹Sadie American to Hannah Solomon, January 21st, 1895, Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 6, Folder 10

³⁸⁰*New York Times*, October 25th, 1894.

S. Taylor were both women's organisations created by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (or Mormons).³⁸¹

The NCJW took to the stage on Tuesday February 19th, with participants in morning, afternoon and evening sessions. Their spot, taking one half of the evening session, was particularly significant for them, as they shared it with the *Women's Christian Temperance Union*, with Frances E. Willard chairing the first half, and Hannah Solomon the second half. The exposure which the Council gained from this placement should not be underestimated, and Solomon herself recounted that participation in the Triennial opened doors for her; while there she formed a friendship with Susan B. Anthony, which lasted until Anthony's death.³⁸² However, it should equally not be forgotten that this might have been a profoundly uncomfortable pairing. The Temperance Movement was not known for welcoming non-Protestant women. When Rebekah Kohut was asked to address a WCTU meeting she found the members to have been profoundly affected by antisemitic stereotypes:

Obviously their idea of a Jew or Jewess had been built upon the sort of misinformation common to those who live remote from the world, as most of them did. They were one more confirmation of my father's statement that people with a smattering of knowledge readily believed the fantastic. To those women, wholly unacquainted with Jews, it was a revelation to come face to face with a Jewess who had neither distorted features nor spoke a distorted language. Their imagination, fed on bizarre pictures and grotesque literature, had led them to expect a caricature.³⁸³

Though, in her address, the *Council of Women's* President, Anna Wright Sewell emphasised that "the council is neither Jew nor Gentile," she also noted that "on its platform every one of these beliefs may find an

³⁸¹Louise Barnam Robbins. *History and Minutes of the National Council of Women of the United States*. Boston, MA: E. B. Stillings and Company, 1898, p.164-6.

³⁸²Solomon, *The Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*, op. cit., p108-9.

³⁸³Kohut, *My Portion*, op. cit., p.215.

opportunity for either positive or negative expression," which, though framed as a positive suggests that criticisms of religious minorities (and likely not limited to Judaism) might have found voice at the *Council of Women*.³⁸⁴ Others have also noted that the *WCTU* was, while the most popular of the women's organisations in the 1890s, also one that was renowned for the way in which deep-seated prejudices of the period would find popular expression. Almost totally comprised of Christian Evangelicals, the *WCTU* at times was the site of fierce debates over whether to allow immigrant women to become members, and was even criticised by Ida B. Wells, the foremost African-American women's activist of the period, for Frances Willard's deeply racist rhetoric and failure to condemn lynching.³⁸⁵ Indeed, there is evidence that in many mid-western states, those women who had been the leadership of the Temperance movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries went on to become the leaders of the *Women's Ku Klux Klan*.³⁸⁶ Indeed, there a need for far more analysis of the right-wing articulations of women's political activism in this period. Many of those who have studied the *WCTU* do not seem to be able to conceive of non-Christian women as a force in American society who could have interacted with the women of the *WCTU*, and certainly the leaders of the *WCTU* themselves do not seem to have seen non-Christians as a group within American society deserving of attention. Willard's pleas for the *WCTU* to be open to all women rings a little hollow.³⁸⁷ Though this again provides no direct evidence as to how this session at the *Council Of Women* was received, it provides more context as to the deeply uncomfortable atmosphere which seems likely. ³⁸⁸

³⁸⁴Robbins, *History and Minutes of the National Council of Women of the United States*, op. cit., p.207.

³⁸⁵Carol Mattingly. *Well-Tempered Women: Nineteenth Century Temperance Rhetoric*. Carbondale, Il: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998, p.75-7.

³⁸⁶Kathleen M Blee. "Women in the 1920s Ku Klux Klan Movement". In: *Feminist Studies* 17.1 (1991), pp.57-77, p.64-5.

³⁸⁷Mattingly, *Well-Tempered Women: Nineteenth Century Temperance Rhetoric*, op. cit., p.45.

³⁸⁸This is not to suggest that Willard herself was the main problem, but that the

The *Council of Women* stated that the greatest achievements of their national meetings was “in bringing together women whose lives [were] in different avenues and whose interests [were] in different lines of work,” but also to “illustrate and emphasize the unity of humanity.”³⁸⁹ To that end, the participation of the *National Council of Jewish Women* was successful. At a time when the organisation was only beginning to take root amongst the Jewish community, they were able to present themselves alongside some of the best-known national organisations, and found themselves mentioned in the mainstream press. This included the *New York Times*, who included Solomon in a list of women “conspicuous in the gathering owing to their prominence in women’s work.”³⁹⁰ However, there is little which could tell us whether they were met with a positive response; Solomon entirely omits any mention of the reactions to the event in her autobiography, and even the *Reform Advocate* only printed an edited version of Solomon’s address; perhaps this silence is telling. The recap of the evening section in the *Chicago Tribune* gives a clue to a possible lukewarm reaction faced by the NCJW, noting that the Jewish presentation provided “food for thought,” and that “it was news to some that intemperance [was] almost unknown among the Jews,” suggesting that indeed, the pairing with the WCTU overshadowed any independent message the women of the Council hoped to bring, and that they were faced with an audience who had little knowledge of the Jewish community outside of the era’s pervasive prejudices.³⁹¹

4.1.3 The Problems of Religious Plurality

As the *National Council of Jewish Women* grew in size, the problems inherent when creating a sense of unity in an organisation which spanned across a continent became obvious. Any attempt to unify

general atmosphere of the WCTU was.

³⁸⁹*New York Times* February 18th, 1895

³⁹⁰*New York Times* February 19th, 1895

³⁹¹*Chicago Tribune* February 25th, 1895, p.12

Jewish women, particularly one which came from within a community which was progressive to the point of alienating more conservative factions, would not be easy. One of the ways in which the Council tried to promote a sense of national unity was to create a program of study on philanthropy and religion for each of the Sections to follow throughout the year. In the early years of the NCJW, the annual report of the committees on philanthropy and religion was reprinted as *Program for the Year*, containing a list of books considered to be helpful in introducing topics, and a list of themes to be discussed at each meeting of smaller 'Circles' within each Section which were thought to facilitate a more interactive discussion of the given topics. However, while these 'Circle' meetings were controlled on a national level, the monthly meetings of each section, the national committee suggested that "the program shall be made out by the Local Committee on Religion and Philanthropy, sanctioned by the Local Board of Directors."³⁹² In this way, a combination of national control and an appreciation of the necessity of providing local flexibility was provided. However, by the end of the Council's first decade, the Religious mission of the NCJW had been all but abandoned, leading to a lingering sense that "from the beginning, Council members seemed more interested in pursuing Philanthropy than reading religious texts."³⁹³ In fact, the picture is far more complex.

It seems that the idea to create a program for use on a national scale grew from the early publication of the topics covered in Chicago Section meetings, in both the *Reform Advocate* and in circulars sent by the National Committee to local sections. Rather than a new innovation, it seems to have been a consolidation and formalisation of something which had already occurred in a more *ad hoc* fashion. Though in the

³⁹²Program of the National Council of Jewish Women, 1897, Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 10, Folder 5

³⁹³William Toll. "From Domestic Judaism to Public Religion: Women and Religious Identity in the American West". In: *Women and American Judaism: Historical Perspectives*. Ed. by Pamela S. Nadell and Jonathan D. Sarna. Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2001, pp. 128–147, p.141.

original publication of the Chicago Section's planned lectures there had been equal emphasis placed on religious and philanthropic topics, that same equality is not found in all presentations of the study program. The *American Jewess*, in its article on the 1895–96 program, wrote that

it behoves every section, every circle, and each individual member to become with heart and soul an active partner of the leaders of the association, who declare that the primary object of the N.C.J.W 'is to promote a thorough, systematic and widespread knowledge of Judaism.³⁹⁴

Here the emphasis has been shifted to place the religious mission of the organisation at the centre of its presentation; it goes on to discuss the philanthropic mission of the Council, but this discussion is largely centred on projects such as the creation of programs providing religious education to Jewish children, and therefore as an offshoot of the religious work, rather than as part of a dual mission.³⁹⁵ This contrasts with the picture found in the Council's program for 1897, which asserts that

"the religious and philanthropic work. . . shall be done side by side, that is , a part of the Circle meeting shall be devoted to the religious portion of the program, and a part to the philanthropic portion.³⁹⁶

Here, the equality of the two areas of study seems paramount. Though this disparity could have been a feature of the editorial bias in the *American Jewess* rather than reflective of a shift in priorities, it seems more likely that it was in fact a combination of the two factors for two reasons: firstly, the growing emphasis on Philanthropy over religion is visible in other sources, and secondly, this broadening of emphasis is visible within the run of the *American Jewess*. By 1896, an article on the

³⁹⁴*American Jewess* Vol. 2, No. 2, November 1895, pp.115–118, p.115

³⁹⁵*Ibid*, p.115–6

³⁹⁶Program of the National Council of Jewish Women, 1897, Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 10, Folder 5

Council while not mentioning Religion at all, noted that “Philanthropy received a goodly share of attention and earnestness in all branches of study was a main feature of every circle.”³⁹⁷

While some Council sections, particularly New York, sought a greater emphasis on religious matters, the opposite was true of other sections. In some communities there were existing organisations which served the religious needs of the women in the community, and instead they sought different things from their new organisation. The St. Louis, MO Section was founded in 1895 after Hannah Solomon made a personal visit to the city to encourage their participation in the NCJW. The city’s Jewish community had an existing commitment to philanthropy, and many of the women who were attracted to the NCJW were already members of non-Jewish progressive organisations. In fact, when they gave instruction to local delegates prior to the New York Triennial in 1896, they expressed a desire that the NCJW change the wording of article two of its constitution, replacing ‘Judaism’ with ‘humanity.’ This appears to have been an attempt to broaden the appeal of the Council in a relatively small community who had “little success or interest in the Council’s religious agenda.”³⁹⁸ The St. Louis delegates were not able to address the matter when the Constitution was discussed in New York, and by the end of the 1890s, the St. Louis section of the NCJW had faded away, and would not be re-established until after the First World War.³⁹⁹

In many ways, the discussion of religion was far more likely to emphasise the points at which there were significant splits within the organisation. While measures such as encouraging a degree of local independence allowed the organisation to function, the central control inherent in providing an annual program would emphasise the gulf between different members’ attitudes to matter of doctrine and practice. While the Radical Reform members of Chicago’s Temple Sinai who

³⁹⁷*American Jewess* Vol. 2, No. 9, June 1896, p.498

³⁹⁸Peterson, ““One Heart, Many Souls”: The National Council of Jewish Women and Identity Formation in St. Louis, 1919-1950”, op. cit., p.40, p.51.

³⁹⁹Proceedings of the First Triennial, NCJW, 1896, p.280–1

headed the *NCJW* were committed to observing a Sunday sabbath, most within the *NCJW* found this to be objectionable. Even Rosa Sonnenchein, the *American Jewess's* editor, who was at the forefront of a number of campaigns for religious reform (especially the campaign to allow women to become full and named members of their Temples) decried the idea of a Sunday Sabbath, stating:

The sacredness of the Sabbath is above question, and if the day is violated in our time, its sanctity can nevertheless not be obliterated. The time may come when all Jews will be able to keep it in the same religious spirit.⁴⁰⁰

The fact that even the *American Jewess*, which on other matters seemed so liberal, firmly placed themselves on the more conservative side of the debate, even when Sonnenchein could have chosen not to address the matter at all, demonstrates how far outside the mainstream Solomon, American, and the founders of the *NCJW* found themselves on the issue of religious practice.

The issue of the Sunday Sabbath came close to, if not destroying the nascent organisation, then forcing a change of leadership which would have radically altered its course. In 1896 when the *NCJW* held its first triennial in New York, the debate over the Sunday sabbath came to a head after a tense meeting, where Solomon's sister Henrietta Frank was publicly criticised for suggesting that though observance of the Sabbath was key to Judaism, the day of the week chosen was not. The issue almost cost Solomon her Presidency.

A number of the delegates were orthodox, and believing in the observance of Saturday as the day of worship, felt that the president of the National Council of Jewish Women should be one who adhered to this custom. When, therefore the issue [of Solomon's re-election] was raised, a speaker from the floor stated that she thought that the president of

⁴⁰⁰*American Jewess* Vol. 4, No. 4. October 1896, pp.45-6, p.45

the Council should be one who 'consecrated the Sabbath.' Immediately, I countered with, 'I consecrate every day of the week.' This statement was hailed with touching acclaim, and I was duly re-elected.⁴⁰¹

Solomon recalled this as a moment of triumph, and indeed, when her granddaughter Frances Angel was interviewed, she described it as "one of the high points in the history of the Council."⁴⁰² But in this case, surely the line between triumph and crushing defeat was a narrow one, and Solomon could equally have found herself ousted as President of the organisation she had founded.

Indeed, perhaps the best indication that Solomon did in fact take this threat to her presidency seriously was the way in which Sadie American was finally ousted from her position as Corresponding Secretary of the organisation. As will be discussed further in Chapter 5, Solomon and American's relationship would sour by the end of the NCJW's first decade of existence, it was American's public lauding of the Sunday Sabbath that would eventually led to Solomon withdrawing her support from American, and putting her weight behind another candidate. American railed against what she saw as Solomon's hypocrisy on the subject.

When you say to give a pledge not to say one word for three years on my own beliefs, and your own, after all I had said in my report, and you in yours, is a trifle and not a matter of principle. I confess I cannot follow you.⁴⁰³

American went on to note that as she was a paid teacher at Sinai Congregation's Sabbath School, she of course would publicly advocate for the Sunday sabbath. Although American claimed that she had kept her promise to never mention her opinions at a forum where it could

⁴⁰¹Solomon, *The Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*, op. cit., p.106.

⁴⁰²Small Collections, American Jewish Archive, SC11722

⁴⁰³Sadie American to Hannah Solomon c.1900, Historical Encyclopaedia of Chicago Women Project Records, University of Illinois, Chicago Archives, Box 56, Folder 399

be construed as the policy of the NCJW, the press reports of American's sermons seem not to have differentiated between her opinions as a citizen and employee of Temple Sinai, and those of a representative of the NCJW. Though Solomon herself remained a member of the Radical Reform community, and along with her family continued to celebrate the Sunday Sabbath, the 'triumph' of the first Triennial gave her an appreciation for the importance of separating her personal beliefs from those of the organisation, and exercising discretion lest she be accused of once again steering the NCJW in a direction more radical than the majority of the members were comfortable with.⁴⁰⁴

This would not be the end of the controversy entirely. In 1898, the *American Jewess* published an Editorial that argued that the NCJW's leadership in New York should take a greater role in the leadership of the organisation nationally, particularly in religious matters, given that the Sunday Sabbath was not common in New York's Jewish Community. Though this part of the editorial does not specifically contrast New York and Chicago, the implication is clear given that Sonnechein noted that the "East [had] remained more conservative in religious matters than the West." This was reasonable given that both the New York Section's founder, Minnie D. Louis, and Rebekah Kohut, its first President, believed that the NCJW's religious functions should take precedence over all else, and one of their key campaigns was for proper observance of the Sabbath.⁴⁰⁵ The subject of Sonneschein's ire, though, was made explicit in the Editorial's third section, where she expressed disgust towards the Chicago Jewish community for their frequent charitable events held on Friday evenings, disregarding the Jewish laws of Sabbath observance. Sonnechein did not frame it as an issue related to the Sunday Sabbath, despite the first section of her Editorial, but instead as one of philanthropy usurping the place of religion.⁴⁰⁶ Though the

⁴⁰⁴Helen Solomon to Hannah Solomon, 1902, Hannah G Solomon Family Collection, American Jewish Archive, Box 18, Folder 4

⁴⁰⁵Elisabeth Israels Perry. *Belle Moskowitz: Feminine Politics and the Exercise of Power in the Age of Alfred E. Smith*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, p.29–30.

⁴⁰⁶*American Jewess* Volume 6, Issue 4, January 1898, pp.191–194

two issues were both critiques of the level of religiosity in the Chicago Jewish community, they should not be conflated. Though the issue of the Sunday Sabbath is raised, that is not explicitly linked to Chicago's NCJW leadership points to an important nuance; though the question of Sabbath observance continued to be a frequent topic of discussion in the magazine's pages, the critique was never personally levelled at Solomon, American or the NCJW's Chicago Leadership. Instead it was always couched in general terms, and officially, the NCJW maintained a strict policy of neutrality on the matter.⁴⁰⁷ This neutrality held until 1900 when, at the Cleveland Triennial, it was agreed, despite pleas from American and Solomon to retain the policy of neutrality, that no NCJW activities could violate the traditional Sabbath laws. It was at this point that the Council all but abandoned an idea of retaining a religious function, something cemented as the flow of Jewish migrants to the United States increased in the wake of the 1903 Pogroms. The divisive nature of the religious function rendered it unpopular, and it was then entirely supplanted by the increasing need for Philanthropic aid within the immigrant community.⁴⁰⁸

This defeat of the Chicago women at the head of the NCJW—and indeed required a significant climbdown from the defiant attitude which Solomon had presented in New York in 1896—was presented in a very different way in the *Reform Advocate*. Unsurprisingly for a publication so intimately entwined with Chicago's Radical Reform community, it supported the Sunday Sabbath faction, lead of course by Hirsch's own congregants. The week before the Cleveland Triennial, Hirsch devoted the first six sides in his March 3rd issue to the matter. His articles asserted that the Council was on the edge of being "wrecked on the rocks of bigotry and fanaticism."⁴⁰⁹ Hirsch asserted to his readers that rather than being an issue which the grass roots of the organisation were in favour of addressing, the Sunday Sabbath question was instead being

⁴⁰⁷*American Jewess* Volume 5, Issue 5, February 1898, pp.245–8

⁴⁰⁸Perry, *Belle Moskowitz: Feminine Politics and the Exercise of Power in the Age of Alfred E. Smith*, op. cit., p.29.

⁴⁰⁹*Reform Advocate* March 3, 1900, p.69

driven by the Jewish newspapers, and a small minority of the New York Section, who, with their Rabbis' encouragement were seeking to take control of the NCJW themselves. Perhaps most interestingly here, Hirsch made a reference to the fact that it took a significant amount of hard work on the part of the Chicago leadership of the NCJW to ensure the organisation survived.

Three years, during which all the work of agitation and propaganda, of organisation and advising fell to the lot of these Chicago Sinai women, passed and the outcome justified everywhere the wisdom of the original intention to leave theological questions to the theologians and while conceding the right of each sister to think and do for herself, to stand for the vital things common to all, and the first triennial[sic] meeting assembled in New York. Of course the chance to disturb the peace of the Council by throwing a theological bomb into its ranks was too glorious a temptation for New York women and their "dear pastors" to resist.⁴¹⁰

Here Hirsch wrote the story of the NCJW in two ways which radically diverge from the narrative which the NCJW themselves and Hannah Solomon, would present at a later date. First, Hirsch placed emphasis on the fact that it was the Radical Reform community in Chicago who had driven the expansion and solidification of the NCJW in those first years. This far more closely describes the reality of that period than many other sources. However, at the same time, Hirsch used his platform to suggest the source of the tension on this issue rested entirely with the New York Section. This does not seem to be borne out by other evidence; it was a member of the Montreal Section who raised the question at the 1896 Triennial, and Minnie D. Louis, of the New York Section was among those defending the rights of the Chicago women to celebrate the Sunday Sabbath, saying "I feel that we must not leave this Convention without feeling that every one is a Jewess at

⁴¹⁰*Reform Advocate* March 3, 1900, p.69

heart, no matter what her convictions about a ceremonial may be.”⁴¹¹ The issue with New York seems powerfully reminiscent of the wider enmity between the two cities touched on in chapter one of this thesis. Later, particularly once the Immigrant Aid work at Ellis Island became the most important national cause of the NCJW, the New York Section would eclipse the Chicago Section, and there would certainly be a power struggle between the two after Sadie American moved from Chicago to New York and took up leadership of that Section. However, neither of these were more than on the horizon in 1900, and so it is interesting that Hirsch would pre-emptively pit the two cities against each other, not because of any real division in the NCJW at this point, but as part of the two cities ongoing power struggle.

Though Hirsch’s framing of the Sunday Sabbath issue ultimately did not prevent it from being close to a disaster for the Chicago women, and indeed (as we have seen) Hannah Solomon particularly moderated her behaviour drastically from that of four years previously, the coverage by the *Reform Advocate* displayed the defiance absent from the countenance of the women themselves. In his March 17th issue, under the headline “Triumphantly Re-Elected”, Hirsch declared

Notwithstanding the fierce and malicious fight made in some of the Jewish sheets against the election of Mrs. Solomon and especially against Miss Sadie American, both of those officers, as well as the other incumbents, were triumphantly and practically unanimously re-elected at the Thursday afternoon session.⁴¹²

However, unlike his articles prior to the Triennial, this did not make the front page, and was buried half-way down a column, inside the newspaper, after a number of speeches from the Triennial had been printed. This less-than-auspicious placement by Hirsch, no matter what spin he attempted to put on the issue, suggests that ultimately he knew

⁴¹¹Proceedings of the First Triennial, NCJW, 1896, p.391

⁴¹²*Reform Advocate* March 17, 1900, p.115

that the victory was less than 'triumphant'.

Hirsch's final word on the matter is even less conspicuous, but no less telling. In the March 24th issue the *Reform Advocate* printed the final part of the conference proceedings, which included the resolution that no Council business could be conducted on a Saturday; this perhaps was the most bitter defeat. While Solomon and American held their positions, largely due to their force of personality and status as founders, this change in the organisation's constitution represented the point at which the issue itself was defeated. However, Hirsch added an addendum to the resolution:

The Chicago delegation are recorded as voting in the negative on this resolution, believing that the Council should leave such matters to the individual sections.⁴¹³

While Hirsch is forced to admit defeat, he reminds his readers that Chicago's delegation remained firm to their radical reform leanings. Indeed, as he observed to end his leading article, "the radical does not need—and will not ask for—the consent of a band of pretendedly orthodox slanderers and traducers."⁴¹⁴

While this argument had significant repercussions in the direction which the *NCJW* would take in future years, its representation in the Chicago press at once minimises the issue, and uses it as representative of a number of much wider issues. For Hirsch, the Sunday Sabbath fight was not simply about the role of religion in this women's organisation, but rather was one salvo in a much wider fight about the influence of Reform and Orthodoxy in the United States, as well as the battle of supremacy between New York and Chicago. By adding these elements to his coverage, Hirsch found hooks by which his work could gain a much wider readership, many of whom might otherwise have had little interest in the inner workings of the *NCJW*. However, as a national figurehead for the radical reform movement—and at this point perhaps

⁴¹³*Reform Advocate* March 24, 1900, p.169

⁴¹⁴*Ibid*, pp.163–4

the best-connected Jewish man in the city—Hirsch could admit that Chicago's women had lost this fight, and that again influenced the way in which the story was told to the wider community.

4.1.4 The Problem of Distance

As the NCJW grew in size, it became clear that though the organisation worked well in large cities, with a sizeable Jewish population who were fairly homogeneous, many Jewish women simply did not live in these places. As Sadie American had found in Youngstown, a degree of flexibility was needed for communities not on Chicago's scale, and indeed the needs of women who were isolated from any Jewish community were very different from the needs of the urban women who had founded the organisation. Technologies which aided communication improved throughout the 1890s, particularly after the introduction of access to the telephone, however, residential ownership was still only about 2% and local calls accounted for the largest portion of phone calls made in 1900. It was imperative that the *National Council of Jewish Women* be structured in a way that allowed local sections to run without frequent contact with the National Committee.⁴¹⁵ However, there is evidence that the National Committee attempted, to some degree, to control the leadership of other sections, attempting to ensure that those in leadership positions were sympathetic to the beliefs of the National Committee. This is most explicitly expressed in a letter from Sadie American to Hannah Solomon, written while American was in Philadelphia in 1894. Although two women from San Jose, CA, had offered to form an NCJW Section in the city, American informs Solomon that she had "not let them form a section as I found that we would never get the other crowd."⁴¹⁶ Though at the time, Solomon and American were actively trying to grow the organisation, American's

⁴¹⁵Claude S. Fischer. "Gender and the Residential Telephone: Technologies of Sociability". In: *Sociological Forum* 3.2 (1988), pp. 211–233, p.214.

⁴¹⁶Sadie American to Hannah Solomon, December 24th, 1894, Hannah Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 6, Folder 10

actions show that it was not simply important to grow the organisation, but to grow it in a way that would promote certain mentalities, and attract what Americans seem to have perceived as the 'correct' people.

The NCJW was relatively swift to catch on in large cities with substantial Jewish communities. But at the 1896 triennial in New York, Miss Berg of Philadelphia appealed for extra resources to be sent to smaller communities, to enable the NCJW to act as a beacon around which local Jews could gather.⁴¹⁷ One such city pointed out as an example of good practice was that of Louisiana, Missouri, where a section was organised, despite the town being so small that it did not have any kind of religious leadership.

Besides having monthly evening meetings, the reading circle meet every Saturday morning, devoting the time to Bible study, and, in addition reading a published sermon of one of our Rabbis. This serves a twofold purpose, for besides doing the prescribed circle work, an air of devotion is lent to the Sabbath day, and the members are enriched by the perusal of homiletic literature. The morning's program might be augmented by the singing of appropriate melodies, and, in course of time, a nucleus would be formed for a Sabbath service, decorous and devout, even without the Rabbinical leader.⁴¹⁸

While the existing understanding of the NCJW has emphasised it as a largely urban organisation mainly concerned with philanthropy, anecdotes such as this paint a portrait of an organisation with far broader appeal. For this community, the NCJW was an organisation that allowed women to create a space for religious worship outside of the authority of the Rabbinical hierarchy, albeit within tightly proscribed perimeters.

The question of how best to communicate and foster a sense of national unity within the organisation remained, particularly given the

⁴¹⁷Proceedings of the First Triennial, NCJW, 1896, p.307

⁴¹⁸Proceedings of the First Triennial, NCJW, 1896, p.191

local variations in the aims and attitudes of the sections in this early period. Again it was at the New York Triennial that this issue was debated. Rosa Sonnenschein, whose magazine *The American Jewess* had first been published the previous year, and who had from the beginning been involved in the NCJW made an offer to make her magazine the official organ of the Council. This was not an entirely selfless offer; Sonnenschein had struggled to gain a foothold in the market and becoming the official source of news for a growing organisation like the Council would have provided her with an automatic customer base. Like the Council, Sonnenschein's magazine had struggled to position itself in the market, lasting for only four years, struggling financially throughout.⁴¹⁹ While Sonnenschein was firmly against the Sunday Sabbath, her magazine was in other ways highly Reform-minded, and led a charge to gain women full membership of their Synagogues. Sonnenschein herself noted in an editorial that

there is but one Jewish congregation in the world where women have the unconditional right of membership, and that is the blessed Temple Isaiah, in Chicago. And what we will state now will surprise many and may be news even to some Chicago women. In all humility we wish to say that this important fact was accomplished through the influence of the *American Jewess* and through the direct efforts of its editor.⁴²⁰

Sonnenschein's spearheading of this cause ran the risk of alienating the more conservative members of her audience, while her vehement objections to the Sunday Sabbath led her to criticise the most progressive Jewish women often, and it was likely this critique which cost her the official association of her magazine with the NCJW.

Sonnenschein spoke in person at the 1896 Triennial, saying

The aim of the *American Jewess* is to keep the Jewesses

⁴¹⁹Schwartz, *The Rabbi's Wife: The Rebbetzin in American Jewish Life*, op. cit., p.21.

⁴²⁰*American Jewess* Vol 2, No 4, December (1896), p.337–8

throughout the country in mental touch with each other, and it reaches many women in large cities who are not yet members of the Council, and can be induced through the columns of the *American Jewess* to become such. It reaches a great many women who already are members of the Council, and it is a paper for women and by women.⁴²¹

.She was supported by a number of high-profile members of the Council in her endeavour: Rebekah Kohut, President of the New York Section, and Carrie Benjamin, President of the Philanthropy Committee, both noted the usefulness of having at least specific columns within a magazine or newspaper to disseminate information to members. Kohut noted that while the circulars sent from the organisation's leadership in Chicago were an important source of information, space in a newspaper or magazine would allow communication between the different Sections on a much wider scale. However, she was also careful to note that this communication need not be through the *American Jewess* in particular.⁴²²

American and Solomon, though, were determinedly against Sonnenschein's offer, with American in particular delivering a blistering attack on the *American Jewess*.

The Council stands for religion and philanthropy. The *American Jewess*, so far as I have read its pages, stands for story writing and for the publication of papers of women. . . . When the Council has an organ, it should exclusively be an organ to serve Judaism as such, and philanthropy as such, and it should be a religious journal and nothing else.

Solomon spoke a little more moderately but suggested that the *American Jewess* was not the only Jewish newspaper to make such an offer to the NCJW, and that the committee found the Jewish press wanting. Several

⁴²¹*Proceedings of the First Triennial of the National Council of Jewish Women* Jewish Publication Society of America (1897) p.395

⁴²²*Ibid*, p.396

motions to make the *American Jewess* the official organ of the NCJW were denied.⁴²³

Though the *American Jewess* continued to print articles about the NCJW, and indeed by leaders such as Solomon and American, it did not survive. In 1899, it ceased publication, ending with a blistering editorial by Sonnenschein, who assigned blame for her magazine's failure to the readers, to the publishers and to the English-speaking Jewish community in general, whom she attacked by suggesting that their lack of support for her magazine was due to a fear of having their neighbours see them receive a magazine with 'Jewess' in the title.⁴²⁴ In fact, there were several factors which likely contributed to the magazine's failure, not least Sonnenschein's early support for Zionism, which put her at odds with the majority of the Established American Jewish community.⁴²⁵ Though at its peak of popularity the *American Jewess* claimed a circulation of around 29,000, even its association with the NCJW (albeit an unofficial one) did not save it from bankruptcy, and the NCJW found that a national newsletter supplemented with supplemental local bulletins suited their needs.⁴²⁶ Sonnenschein herself dropped into obscurity, and died in St. Louis in 1932.⁴²⁷

4.2 Building Connections Worldwide

The role of the *National Council of Jewish Women* in international relief is one of the best-explored facets of the Council's work. Their role at Ellis Island, assisting immigrant women is one for which they are best remembered. However, the leaders of the NCJW saw their nascent

⁴²³Ibid, p.395–8

⁴²⁴*American Jewess* Vol. 9, No. 5, August (1899) p.3

⁴²⁵Jack Nusan Porter. "Rosa Sonnenschein and The American Jewess: The First Independent English Language Women's Journal in the United States". In: *American Jewish History* 68.1 (1978), pp. 57–63, p.60.

⁴²⁶Selma Berrol. "Class or Ethnicity: The Americanized German Woman and her Middle Class Sisters in 1895". In: *Jewish Social Studies* 47.1 (1985), pp. 21–32, p.23.

⁴²⁷Porter, "Rosa Sonnenschein and The American Jewess: The First Independent English Language Women's Journal in the United States", op. cit., p.63.

organisation as having an international role, or at least making its presence felt internationally from its earliest days. As discussed in Chapter Two, Sadie American drew significant parallels between the American and British Jewish establishments in her speech 'Organisation', which birthed the NCJW. By the following year, the first mentions of the NCJW appeared in London's *Jewish Chronicle*.⁴²⁸ By the end of the decade, the NCJW had been represented in London at the meeting of the *International Council of Women* by Sadie American and at the Council's second Triennial, held in Cleveland, a paper written by Lily Montagu (Daughter of Samuel Montagu, First Baron Swaythling) titled "The Relation of Faith to Conduct in Jewish Life" was read as Montagu was unable to attend in person.⁴²⁹ Whilst this demonstrates that the NCJW had at least superficial international connections in the first decade of its existence, their ambitions in this early period went much deeper.

The leadership of the *National Council of Jewish Women* did not simply hope to assist their co-religionists around the world, or even just those foreign Jews arriving on American shores in ever increasing numbers. Indeed, the early rhetoric of the NCJW displays a rather less than filial attitude towards their Eastern European sisters. What is obvious from the earliest stages though is that the leadership of the NCJW were aware of their place within an international intellectual community. This is not only evidenced by their early correspondence with English Jews. The NCJW took great pains to portray themselves as a quintessentially American organisation, despite the number of well placed members who had been born in Europe. Like other Middle Class Americans of their age, they supported a notion of high culture which was dominated by European writers. The list of books to be read in their Philanthropy circles again provide evidence of this; alongside books such as the *Hull-House Maps and Papers* sit works by Charles Booth and other notable British progressives of the time.⁴³⁰ The way in which the leadership of

⁴²⁸*Jewish Chronicle* December 28, 1894, p.6

⁴²⁹Fabric of My Life Chapter Drafts, Hannah G Solomon Family Collection, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Box 3, Folder 3

⁴³⁰Report of the National Committee on Philanthropy, 1898, Hannah G Solomon

the NCJW linked the history of Philanthropy to Britain was not unique, indeed it was a practice which can be found in other philanthropic groups of this period. Jane Addams' autobiography takes the time to show how her inspiration for Hull-House was to be found in London's East End at Toynbee Hall, and indeed when two former Hull-House Residents created the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy (later subsumed into the University of Chicago as the School of Social Service Administration) students were required to study 'English Philanthropy' in order to understand the foundations of the American system.⁴³¹ However, while these intellectual links have proved relatively simple to trace, and other elements of the NCJW's international efforts are well understood, a great many questions still remain about the NCJW's international ambitions, particularly in its first decade.⁴³²

The *National Council of Jewish Women* took particular inspiration from the American *National Council of Women* in its organisational identity. It cannot be forgotten that the *International Council of Women* was founded in 1888 alongside the NCW, and therefore the question of the degree to which the *National Council of Jewish Women* saw their own future as part of a network of Jewish Women's organisations is yet to be answered. The *World Congress of Jewish Women* was held in Vienna in 1923, with Rebekah Kohut as President.⁴³³ However, this organisation rather than having the wide-ranging ambitions of the NCJW was instead particularly concerned with continuing the work reconstructing Jewish communities in Europe in the wake of the First World War, which had been started by the NCJW's Reconstruction Committee that had started in Riga, Latvia.⁴³⁴

By the NCJW's first triennial in 1896, there were already two interna-

Collection, Library of Congress, Box 10, Folder 5

⁴³¹English Philanthropy Lecture Notes, Edith and Grace Abbott Collection, University of Chicago, Box 7, Folder 8

⁴³²McCune, *The Whole Wide World, Without Limits: International Relief, Gender Politician and American Jewish Women, 1893-1930*, op. cit.

⁴³³Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting: The National Council of Jewish Women, 1893-1993*, op. cit., p.168.

⁴³⁴Kohut, *My Portion*, op. cit., p.278-9.

tional sections, in Toronto and Montreal. At the first Triennial, a motion was put forward to change the name of the organisation to the *International Council of Jewish Women* in recognition of this fact. Although this motion failed, it demonstrates the awareness of the NCJW's early influence outside of the United States.⁴³⁵ The *National Council of Jewish Women of Canada* was organised as a separate institution a year later, in 1897, however, the links to its parent organisation remained clear, with the new organisation retaining the motto 'Faith and Humanity'. In 1899, after Sadie American, Julia Richman and Maud Nathan represented the NCJW at the *International Council of Women* meeting in London, they were invited to a meeting of British Jewish Women held at the home of Leopold and Maria De Rothschild, where the Jewish Study Society was founded, later to become the *Union of Jewish Women of England*.⁴³⁶

The NCJW's influence on the foundation of similar organisations in other countries continued into the twentieth century. Hannah Solomon and Sadie American took German translations of the NCJW's Constitution with them when they travelled to Berlin for the 1904 *International Council of Women Congress*, and several months later, Bertha Pappenheim founded the *Jüdischer Frauenbund*, which was certainly considered by the NCJW leadership to be the German equivalent to their organisation.⁴³⁷ By the time Solomon came to write her autobiography in the early 1940s, she noted that there were *Councils of Jewish Women* in eleven countries. However, the degree to which these Councils were connected to their American predecessor remains unexamined. One of the organisations particularly mentioned by Solomon was the *National Council of Jewish Women of Australia*, which Solomon noted had "nine flourishing sections."⁴³⁸ However, the Jewish community in Australia was largely made up of more recent Eastern European immigrants, and an

⁴³⁵*Proceedings of the First Triennial of the National Council of Jewish Women* Jewish Publication Society of America (1897) p.6–7, 280

⁴³⁶Fabric of My Life Chapter Drafts, Hannah G Solomon Family Collection, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Box 3, Folder 3

⁴³⁷Kohut, *My Portion*, op. cit., p.283.

⁴³⁸Fabric of My Life Chapter Drafts, Hannah G Solomon Family Collection, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Box 3, Folder 2

annual report of the Melbourne Bialystocker Centre from 1947, quoted in Rebecca Kobrin's *Jewish Bialystok and its Diaspora*, places the *National Council of Jewish Women* alongside Yiddish Schools, Zionist groups, the Bund and Talmud Torah in the list of organisations which used rooms for their meetings.⁴³⁹ With the NCJW in America remembered as a somewhat conservative organisation, largely supported by middle-class Reform-minded Jewish women, particularly those of German decent, seeing the NCJW in this solidly Eastern European context in Australia raises many questions about the way in which these *Councils of Jewish Women* related to each other as an international network. While these questions sit outside the scope of this project, they indicate a possible direction in which this research could continue.

4.3 Philanthropy as an Expression of Patriotism

The Spanish-American War, officially lasting ten weeks in the spring and summer of 1898, was strictly intended to be a formalisation of the United States' intervention in the Cuban War of Independence. The sinking of the US battleship 'The Maine' caused an unwilling McKinley administration into finally declaring war in April 1898, as newspaper barons Hearst and Pulitzer declared the Spanish to be to blame for the attack, and published lurid accounts of supposed Spanish atrocities in Cuba, now accepted to be largely fabricated. Although the war officially broke out in the Caribbean, it was also fought in the Pacific, where the Spanish colonies of the Philippines and Guam were the sight of hostilities.

Fuelled as it was by the popular press, this war became the site of a particular patriotic fervour; and whatever the ostensible reason for the war's outbreak, was very much part of the expansion of the global

⁴³⁹Rebecca Kobrin. *Jewish Bialystok and Its Diaspora*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010, p.126.

American sphere of influence. This was particularly true in the Pacific, where the United States had been gaining footholds in order to make easier the expansion of trade with Asia. Indeed, American businessmen had been involved in the overthrow of Hawaii's Queen Lili'uokalani in 1893, and the formal annexation of Hawaii—which had been agreed in 1897—occurred in June, 1898, which the Spanish-American War was in progress.

A number of scholars have pointed out the tone of unabashed American imperialism present during the Spanish-American War. Not only was much of the rhetoric racist, it also espoused a very specific notion of gender; this was where Theodore Roosevelt's 'Rough Riders' made their name.⁴⁴⁰ In *The Price of Whiteness*, Eric L Goldstein points to these reasons to suggest that 1898 was a crisis point of anxiety in the established Jewish community, who felt they were under pressure to prove their American identity, against a backdrop of media suggestions that Jews could never be real men or real Americans.⁴⁴¹

The national leadership of the NCJW were convinced of the need for the Jewish community to conspicuously demonstrate their American patriotism by contributing to the war effort in some way. However, they also felt that there was a danger that the reputation of the Jewish community could be damaged if the help on offer was not offered in what contemporary mores deemed to be the correct way. To this end, they sent a circular out in June 1898 to all their Sections, encouraging them to play a role in the soldiers' and sailors' benevolent funds being organised across the country. The circular gave very precise instructions as to the way that help should be offered, based on the example of the Chicago Section, who had helped organise the *Illinois Soldiers and Sailors Benevolent Fund*.

Given that the circular was sent not only to the Sections, but also Jewish press organisations, it is clear that this was intended as a public

⁴⁴⁰Kristin L. Hoganson. *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked The Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998, pp.112–3.

⁴⁴¹Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness*, op. cit., p.35.

statement of intent. In addition, it announced that Hannah Solomon would, once the Sections had reported their actions, send a letter to President McKinley. It is clear that the decision for the NCJW to become involved in the war relief effort was intended to be a statement to the community at large. This is explicitly mentioned in the circular:

We ask. . . that each one do what she can freely and willingly that the Council of Jewish Women may stand in the forefront of loyal women, who, though deprecating that the nations have not passed beyond the stage where war is possibly, yet do what in them lies to render it less hideous and fearful.⁴⁴²

Here, philanthropy is directly and consciously being used to assert the Jewish community's American identity during a crisis point, and it was again the example of the Chicago Section which was held up nationally as an example of correct behaviour.

4.4 Moving Forward

While in the first years of the *National Council of Jewish Women's* existence, it was not always clear what form the organisation would finally take, or even if the organisation would survive, by the end of the 1890s both of these questions were settled. Chicago's Section had created a pattern of meetings on religious and social subjects which became a formalised pattern through the Committees on Philanthropy and Religion. By the end of the decade, it had Sections nationally, and had even flirted with international expansion. The NCJW was eventually able to gain footholds in small and large communities by showing flexibility that allowed its Sections to adapt to suit the needs of its members, and though it would not have an official magazine in its earliest years, it was able to use circulars, as well as an informal relationship with the *American Jewess* to keep in contact with its members.

⁴⁴²Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 6, Folder 10

The Chicago Section was immediately popular—many members shared the Radical leanings of the *NCJW*'s leadership—but not all were quick to warm to the new organisation. In its attempts to create national unity amongst Jewish women, in fact many of the cracks in the unity of the American Established Jewish Community were revealed. This was exacerbated by the Chicago leadership of the *NCJW* and their membership of a congregation on the Radical Fringes of the Reform Jewish community. It was this stress point, particularly the argument over the adoption of the Sunday Sabbath, which was the closest the Chicago-based leadership of the *NCJW* came to losing control of the organisation they had started, and perhaps the point at which the organisation might have failed altogether. However, the *NCJW* survived by shifting focus away from the religious education element of its original mission and focusing on the philanthropic work it would become best known for. But in this early period, the Council's philanthropic work was all being carried out on a local level. It would only be in the twentieth century that larger co-ordinated campaigns would be created. The larger and more innovative Sections, though, were held up as examples of what could be achieved, and none more so than the Chicago Section.

5

Finding a Place in their Community

5.1 Chicago's Jewish Philanthropic Network

The Jewish philanthropic network in Chicago was well-developed even before the creation of the *National Council of Jewish Women*. The late 1880s and early 1890s saw the development of a number of new organisations which attended to the needs of the growing Jewish population in the city. In 1892, the *Society for the Aid of Russian Refugees* became the first real attempt by the established Jewish community in Chicago to create a coherent plan for the rising number of Eastern European Jews arriving in North America from the Russian Empire. Though the numbers arriving in Chicago were dwarfed by the number who settled in port cities such as New York and Montreal, the numbers arriving were significant. The report of the first annual meeting, held

in February, 1893, six months prior to the Jewish Women's Congress, showed that 1057 applications for money had been made to the fund in its first year of existence. After this first year, the functions of this organisation were handed over to the *United Hebrew Charities*. At this point, the greatest number of applicants were unmarried men, and therefore to some extent, their assistance fell outside the purview of Chicago's Jewish women's organisations. Following the conventions of the period, these groups were more involved in the assistance of women and families.⁴⁴³

One of the major problems faced by the Chicago section of the *National Council of Jewish Women* in their first decade was finding a place in the city's philanthropic network. The first centralisation of Jewish charities had occurred in 1859 with the foundation of the *United Hebrew Relief Association*.⁴⁴⁴ This was largely a clearing house where money collected by a number of organisations and events throughout the city could be collected and distributed to those in need. By the 1890s, the *United Hebrew Charities*, like many late nineteenth century organisations, had invested in charitable institutions. They were responsible for administering funding to a number of bodies; the largest was the Michael Rees Hospital, founded in 1881, but also the Home for Jewish Orphans, the West Side Dispensary and the Home for Aged Jews.⁴⁴⁵

One of the key functions of the *United Hebrew Charities* was to ensure that there was no duplication of services. A major factor in the drive to organise philanthropy was the fear that the 'undeserving poor' would take advantage of small-scale personal philanthropy and that the ability to take from a number of sources would encourage dependence and 'pauperism' rather than spurring them on to self-sufficiency. These institutions were therefore tightly regulated. They provided what

⁴⁴³*Reform Advocate*, March 4, 1893, p.46-8

⁴⁴⁴Cutler, *The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb*, op. cit., p.19.

⁴⁴⁵Minnie F. Low. "Philanthropy". In: *The Russian Jew in the United States: Studies of Social Conditions in New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago, With a Description of Rural Settlements*. Ed. by Charles S. Bernheimer. Philadelphia: John C. Winston Co, 1905, pp.87-99, p.88-9.

might be seen as a 'safety net' for those in desperate and immediate need rather than any kind of long-term assistance.

The NCJW's early projects follow the same model. As discussed in the previous chapter, the first practical philanthropy organised by the Chicago section was a sewing room for Jewish Women, copying a project of the *Chicago Women's Club* which had been operated since the late 1880s. However, the philanthropic landscape in Chicago was being transformed in the early 1890s by a Progressive reassessment of how the city's poor could best be helped. It can, however, be challenging to see the precise ways in which the Progressive influence shaped the actions of the NCJW. They have largely been seen as more reflective of the Gilded Age women's clubs which the non-Jewish elite women of Chicago had participated in since the 1870s. These clubs were certainly an influence on the NCJW given that, as will be explored in the next chapter, Hannah Solomon and her sister had been the first Jewish women invited to join the Chicago Women's Club, but when some of the key projects of the 1890s are examined, these distinctions begin to be clarified.

One of the defining features of Gilded Age philanthropy was the insulation from those actually being helped. As Kathleen McCarthy puts it:

[Clubs] occupied the midpoint between personal benevolence and professionalism. While antebellum elites regularly visited the poor themselves, their Gilded Age counterparts regularly met with peers to discuss the latest trends. During the Progressive era, their sons and daughters would continue to turn to clubs for enlightenment, but they perceived the problems differently, viewing them through the eyes of the settlement workers, sociologists, and physicians who lectured them.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴⁶McCarthy, *Noblesse Oblige: Charity and Cultural Philanthropy in Chicago 1849-1929*, op. cit., p.31.

The NCJW was a club and they certainly (as was shown in the last chapter) met to discuss the latest trends in the study of philanthropy, but they did more than that. Inspired by, and sometimes working with, Progressive pioneers like Jane Addams of the Hull-House Settlement House, they created and ran institutions which—unlike the ones already existing in the city—were not there to provide help at the point of crisis, but would instead, it was hoped, work within communities to create new opportunities for those they sought to help. These institutions were largely there to assist women and children.

At the same time, the women of the NCJW were unable to completely side-step the control of the city's male elites. Appeals were made for money and assistance to sources such as Emil Hirsch's Sinai Congregation and, of course, the *United Hebrew Charities*. And on occasions when the Jewish male elites involved themselves in philanthropic causes, the women of the community were expected to devote themselves to these causes and allow men to take over positions of control.

5.2 The Maxwell Street Settlement

The Maxwell Street Settlement House was, for almost 30 years, a key institution for Chicago's Jewish community. It was one of the places where the Jews of Chicago came into contact with each other on a regular basis, regardless of class, or denomination or length of residence in the United States,. In part modelled on Jane Addams's Hull-House Settlement House, which was only a few blocks away on the Near West Side, Maxwell Street was a place for new immigrants to take classes on a variety of subjects, including learning to speak English. It also provided access to a variety of leisure activities, including art and sports teams. For any researcher, examining the origins of the Maxwell Street Settlement, or details of its day-to-day operation, is a challenging prospect, as it seems that none of the Settlement's records

remain. There are still a number of sources in books and newspapers of the period, as well as in several memoirs.

The article on 'The Chicago Ghetto' in the *Hull-House Maps and Papers*, first published in 1895, provides a little information on the origins of the Settlement. It credits 'a prominent Jewish rabbi', likely Emil Hirsch, with the idea and notes the wide variety of educational activities on offer to adults as well as to children. It also describes the Settlement as being run by two college-educated Jewish men.⁴⁴⁷ However, the Settlement's inception seems to have been a rather more complicated process; various sources credit upwards of eight people with the foundation of the Maxwell Street Settlement House.⁴⁴⁸ What is certain though, is that the women of the *National Council of Jewish Women* were intimately involved in its creation.

The first traces of the idea for some sort of Jewish settlement house can be found in the *Reform Advocate* in early 1893. In an article written by an anonymous writer, known only as K.L., it was lamented that "Christian ladies at the Hull-House [were] doing noble educational work for many Jewish young men and women."⁴⁴⁹ The article, though it never fully expresses the idea that a settlement house should be opened by Jews for Jews on the Near West Side, does suggest the need for some sort of educational institution in the neighbourhood where new immigrants could be taught, in both Hebrew and simple English, how to be Americans, and suggests New York's Hebrew Institute as a possible example. However, the key difference here is in the scale of the institution suggested. The newspaper article suggests that the new immigrants should be taught about "cleanliness, dress, manners, social and business etiquette, care of teeth, marriage, parentage, filial duty, why the Jew should not preach anarchy in America, why the Jew

⁴⁴⁷Charles Zeublin. "The Chicago Ghetto". In: *Hull House Maps and Papers*, 1895. Ed. by Rima L. Schultz. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007, pp. 96–106, p.101, 103.

⁴⁴⁸Sarah Imhoff. "After the Parliament: The Maxwell Street Settlement". American Academy of Religion Conference. 2009.

⁴⁴⁹*Reform Advocate* April 8, 1893, pp.46

should not send his family to the Hebrew-Christian mission, why the Jew should be an American citizen, etc. etc.”⁴⁵⁰ This gives little credit to the sense of the new immigrants, assuming that they would need education in the most basic of functions. The Maxwell Street Settlement, as it was actually constituted, suggested that once in contact with the new immigrants, it was realised that far more could be achieved, with classes where subjects such as such as politics, current affairs, or the novels of George Elliot could be discussed, as well as more practical subjects such as English, German and bookkeeping taught.⁴⁵¹

The Jewish Women’s Congress is generally seen as the point at which the idea for a Settlement House was crystallised in the mind’s of Chicago’s Jewish community, and therefore, unsurprisingly, both Hannah Solomon and Sadie American seem to have been involved in its creation, along with a number of other Jewish women, including the NCJW’s vice-president for Illinois, Babette Mandel.⁴⁵² In her autobiography, Hannah Solomon notes that the first actual meeting related to the subject was in 1892, at Hull-House. Here, again, the idea does not seem to have been in full fruition, with Solomon describing a decision to create a “social centre” in that neighbourhood.⁴⁵³ Certainly, the idea was at an advanced enough stage to be mentioned by Sadie American in her speech at the 1893 Jewish Women’s Congress, where she announced that “there is about to be formed a Social Settlement of Jewish Young People.” By this time, the nature of the proposed settlement is completely clear. It was to be devoted to “the raising of people from their outward and inward degradation.” It was explicitly Progressive in its commitment to “work directly among [immigrants], to become their friends, not their benefactors nor patrons, and thus to teach and influence them, as only personal contact can teach and influence.”⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵⁰Ibid, p.47

⁴⁵¹Zeublin, “The Chicago Ghetto”, op. cit., p.103.

⁴⁵²Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting: The National Council of Jewish Women, 1893-1993*, op. cit., p.231.

⁴⁵³Solomon, *The Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*, op. cit., p.98.

⁴⁵⁴American, “Organization”, op. cit., p.230.

Following through on the commitment made in this speech, American was to become one of the teachers at Maxwell Street.⁴⁵⁵

The NCJW's Chicago Section would continue this relationship with the Settlement; references to discussions on the subject of settlements are found in *Reform Advocate* articles about the Section's monthly meetings.⁴⁵⁶ Although it could not be suggested that the NCJW founded the Settlement directly, certainly what can be said is that they used their audience to publicise it.

Whilst the importance of settlement houses in urban Jewish communities has been discussed, explicit connection to the *National Council of Jewish Women* has rarely been made. Although the Maxwell Street Settlement House is mentioned in Hasia Diner and Beryl Lieff Benderly's *Her Works Praise Her*, the link to the NCJW is never made. In fact, when the NCJW's work in settlements is finally mentioned, the earliest example credited is from 1907.⁴⁵⁷ In this way, Diner and Benderly place the NCJW at the tail-end of the Progressive movement, of which the settlement house was considered one of the key institutions. In fact, the involvement of these women from the very first meetings of the organisation place the NCJW on the cutting edge of philanthropic thought. Maxwell Street was a contemporary of New York's Henry Street Settlement (sometimes called the Nurses Settlement), founded in 1893 by Lilian Wald, one of the best-known settlement houses to be set up by a Jew.⁴⁵⁸ Indeed, the NCJW very early involvement in this project places them amongst the earliest founders of settlements in the United States; only six American settlement houses are known to have been founded before 1892.⁴⁵⁹ Without doubt, this calls into question the notion that while the NCJW might have at times espoused radical

⁴⁵⁵Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting: The National Council of Jewish Women, 1893-1993*, op. cit., p.21.

⁴⁵⁶*Reform Advocate* March 31, 1984, p.109

⁴⁵⁷Diner and Benderly, *Her Works Praise Her: A History of Jewish Women in America from Colonial Times to the Present*, op. cit., p.235, pp.255-6.

⁴⁵⁸*Ibid.*, p.237.

⁴⁵⁹Stivers, *Bureau Men, Settlement Women: Constructing Public Administration in the Progressive Era*, op. cit., p.56.

ideas, any substance was carefully hidden, and activist goals had to be hidden behind maternal rhetoric.⁴⁶⁰

5.3 The Bureau of Personal Service

Unlike the Maxwell Street Settlement House, the Bureau of Personal Service was entirely created as a project of the Chicago Section of the *National Council of Jewish Women*. Like Maxwell Street, however, it is largely ignored in the literature. As in the case of Maxwell Street, Diner and Benderly credit its creation to Minnie Low.⁴⁶¹ Yet Hannah Solomon in her autobiography claims the idea as her own, which claim is supported by the fact that prior to becoming the Bureau's Executive Director, Low had been Solomon's personal secretary. Solomon describes how the thousand dollars used to initially set up the project was raised through a one-day Bazaar held by the Chicago Section; the Bureau opened its doors in 1897.⁴⁶²

The Bureau, at first called 'The Seventh Ward District Bureau of Associated Charities', was a truly Progressive project. As its original name suggested it was set up in a specifically-defined local area to meet the needs of the women and children in that locality. From Twelfth Street South to the river, and between Johnson Street and the river, it provided medical care of all kinds, legal advice to those who needed it, and attempted to systematically catalogue the various communal agencies within the immigrant community in order to direct those in need to the most appropriate place.⁴⁶³ Solomon was quick to note that although the Bureau was started by the NCJW's Chicago Section—Solomon herself was its Chairman for the first thirteen years of its existence—it was operated as a separate entity, as the Council "believed

⁴⁶⁰Sarna, *American Judaism: A History*, op. cit., p.143.

⁴⁶¹Diner and Benderly, *Her Works Praise Her: A History of Jewish Women in America from Colonial Times to the Present*, op. cit., p.256.

⁴⁶²Solomon, *The Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*, op. cit., p.93-4.

⁴⁶³Seventh Ward District Bureau of Associated Charities, Report, 1897-99, Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 4, Folder 1

that better cooperation with other agencies would be secured if it functioned as an independent body.”⁴⁶⁴ However, the extent to which this was actually true is debatable. The accounts for the first thirteen months of its existence show that it remained highly dependent on money from the NCJW. All but three of the people subscribing money listed as individual subscribers for the 1899–1900 financial year were women, and the NCJW itself accounted for \$1427, almost three quarters of the Bureau’s expenses the previous year.⁴⁶⁵

The Bureau seemed to take a great deal of inspiration from Hull-House, which was situated in the neighbouring Ward. These institutions were founded before formal training in Social Work was available, and before the time when the label ‘Social Work’ was even applied to the sorts of work done at the Bureau.⁴⁶⁶ It was set up, not as a relief agency, but “as a center of information and investigation, and a place where the poor of the neighbourhood can go for assistance, protection or advice upon all matters, however trifling, that may interest or trouble them.”⁴⁶⁷ The detailed investigation of the neighbourhood which was conducted through the Bureau also appears to have taken inspiration from the residents of Hull-House. The 1897–99 Report systematically presents the loan societies, synagogues, schools, societies and settlement houses in the area, with information on the precise nature of each one. The inspiration of their near neighbours in the Ninetieth Ward is visible; this document is very like the articles accompanying the Hull-House Maps and Papers which had been published four years earlier.

The Bureau was hailed as non-sectarian by its founders but in fact assisted only Jewish residents in the neighbourhood. When non-Jews applied for help, they were sent to other institutions with which the

⁴⁶⁴Solomon, *The Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*, op. cit., p.94.

⁴⁶⁵Seventh Ward District Bureau of Associated Charities, Report, 1897–99, Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 4, Folder 1

⁴⁶⁶Fabric of My Life Chapter Draft, Hannah G Solomon Family Collection, American Jewish Archive, Box 5, Folder 1

⁴⁶⁷Seventh Ward District Bureau of Associated Charities, Report, 1897–99, Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 4, Folder 1

Bureau created reciprocal arrangements to take on Jewish cases from other districts.⁴⁶⁸ Solomon would not, however, admit that this was the case at the time. She went so far as to deny the idea that there remained a need for separate Jewish institutions, performing a level of integration in her public rhetoric which her community had not yet achieved.⁴⁶⁹ Certainly, work was done alongside Hull-House and Henry Booth House, two non-Jewish settlement houses close by. A nurse from Hull-House was one of three to help with medical provision for the Bureau, and the Bureau assisted Hull-House and Henry Booth House in investigating claims for assistance made by Jewish families.⁴⁷⁰

As the Bureau began with only one paid member of staff, superintendent Minnie Low, the largest share of the work—which largely consisted of going out into the community and spending time with Jewish families in the neighbourhood—was done by volunteers, all but one of whom were women.⁴⁷¹ They secured the *pro bono* assistance of a number of lawyers and were some of the first to provide free legal assistance to the Jewish poor.⁴⁷² They also built relationships with a number of the city's judges and State's Attorneys. Most radically, the description given by Low of the work done by their volunteers seems remarkably modern in its attitude.

The poor should not be inflicted with an army of well-intentioned but untrained women as Friendly Visitors. It is an infringement upon their privacy. But Visitors working under the direction and guidance of District agents, who are conversant with the histories of the families, who know

⁴⁶⁸Fabric of My Life Chapter Draft, Hannah G Solomon Family Collection, American Jewish Archive, Box 5, Folder 1

⁴⁶⁹Seventh Ward District Bureau of Associated Charities, Report, 1897–99, Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 4, Folder 1

⁴⁷⁰Ibid., Fabric of My Life Chapter Draft, Hannah G Solomon Family Collection, American Jewish Archive, Box 5, Folder 1

⁴⁷¹Seventh Ward District Bureau of Associated Charities, Report, 1897–99, Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 4, Folder 1

⁴⁷²Fabric of My Life Chapter Draft, Hannah G Solomon Family Collection, American Jewish Archive, Box 5, Folder 1

their needs and can council with some degree of understanding and intelligence, can accomplish untold good in their personal efforts.⁴⁷³

The first professional programs for the study of what would come to be known as social work would not exist for ten years, and Edith Abbott, who would help found the first as part of the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy in 1908, noted that “the old Charity organisation Societies acted as a Council of Social Agencies and did have a lot of community organisational work to carry.”⁴⁷⁴ The pattern of work adopted by the NCJW-funded Bureau was part of the early movement towards organised, professional social work. Even more radical was the way Low discussed those in need.

In our intercourse with the poor we are often unfair in our criticisms. We admit that the circumstances make the thief. . . Very few are wholly worthy or unworthy, and the latter need us sadly. To exaggerate want, or to conceal any favorable details is the stock in trade of those suffering for the necessities of life, especially among the ignorant, where truth is at best never a question of training, but their very wretchedness should teach us to be merciful.⁴⁷⁵

This open and public declaration that philanthropic work was more complicated than the simple sifting of the deserving and undeserving seems ahead of its time, particularly when contrasted with the report of the *United Hebrew Charities* published only a few months earlier in the *Reform Advocate*. Whilst the Bureau was working directly within the most impoverished Jewish community in the city and trying to provide the means for people to help themselves the *UHC* was maintaining

⁴⁷³Seventh Ward District Bureau of Associated Charities, Report, 1897–99, Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 4, Folder 1

⁴⁷⁴The Rise in Professional Social Work, Edith and Grace Abbott Collection, University of Chicago Archives, Box 6, Folder 1

⁴⁷⁵Seventh Ward District Bureau of Associated Charities, Report, 1897–99, Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 4, Folder 1

its support of large institutions such as the Home for Aged Jews and the Chicago Home for Jewish Orphans. Their rhetoric was also very different to that of Low and the Bureau. The *UHC* talked of “raising the moral sense of our applicants to the point where they will realize that it is better, not only for the community, but for themselves in the end, to fight the battle of life, as far as possible, with their own resources and ask aid of others only when the necessity has become extreme and then, to regard any aid merely as a temporary loan.”⁴⁷⁶ Harking back to Gilded Age philanthropic rhetoric, the *UHC* maintained the notion that philanthropic aid was only to be available at points of exceptional crisis, unlike the far more progressive approach being practiced by the Bureau’s Visitors, who could be called on to provide information and support in an ongoing fashion.

It is unsurprising, given the wildly divergent attitudes towards philanthropy, that the *UHC* and the Bureau were not connected. What is surprising though was that Solomon asked that the Bureau be allowed to become an agency of the *UHC* in 1897. In the published version of her autobiography, this is neutrally worded, explaining that the *UHC* “did not wish, at the time, to extend its work.”⁴⁷⁷ However, in the drafts Solomon provides a little more insight into where the point of difference lay, stating that “the charity board did not wish to extend its work as they felt they had enough to care for those who found them.”⁴⁷⁸ It seems therefore that the Bureau’s proactive approach—pioneered by Hull-House and other settlement houses and key to Progressive philanthropy—at this point had few supporters in the *UHC*. It should also be noted that when, thirteen years after it was founded, the Bureau became part of the *UHC*, Solomon left her position as chairman.⁴⁷⁹ By the time the *Chicago Jewish Community Blue Book* was published in 1918, no mention of the *NCJW*’s role in the foundation of the Bureau

⁴⁷⁶*Reform Advocate* October 8, 1898, p.117

⁴⁷⁷Solomon, *The Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*, op. cit., p.94.

⁴⁷⁸*Fabric of My Life* Chapter Draft, Hannah G Solomon Family Collection, American Jewish Archive, Box 5, Folder 1

⁴⁷⁹Solomon, *The Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*, op. cit., p.94.

was mentioned in its entry, and its managing committee was entirely male, though Minnie Low remained Superintendent.⁴⁸⁰ The Bureau, despite being created and run for over a decade by the NCJW found itself pushed out by male members of the community once it had proved itself a success, and once its methods had become more widely accepted. This appears to have been a pattern.

5.4 The West Side Sabbath-School

The West Side Sabbath School is another institution for which little source material is available. Attached to Temple Sinai, it is mentioned in a number of directories of the Chicago Jewish Community, including the *1918 Blue Book*.⁴⁸¹ It is also mentioned in the 1907 *Directory of Jewish organisations in the United States*, where it appears in Sinai Congregation's entry as subordinate organisation. This entry also lists its address, giving it as 199 West 12th Place, on the Near West Side, three blocks north of Maxwell Street.⁴⁸² The *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, published as a series of articles between 1901 and 1906 and partially edited by Emil Hirsch, described it as "a Jewish mission-school... where over 300 children, boys and girls, are instructed in Jewish history and religion."⁴⁸³ At no point is a specific history of the institution given, but its place as a project of the congregation listed in the American Jewish Yearbook in 1899, 1900 and 1907 shows that it was nationally recognised as a point of pride for the temple.

That there was a connection between the NCJW and the West Side Sabbath-School is well known; Sadie American was a paid teacher there.⁴⁸⁴ American herself wrote about this in a letter to Hannah

⁴⁸⁰Chicago Jewish Community Blue Book, op. cit., p.80.

⁴⁸¹Ibid., p51.

⁴⁸²Henrietta Szold, ed. *The American Jewish Year Book*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1907, p.159.

⁴⁸³Chicago. 1906. URL: <http://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/4320-chicago>.

⁴⁸⁴Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting: The National Council of Jewish Women, 1893-1993*, op. cit., p.225.

Solomon, in which she mentioned that as a member of staff there, she was expected to teach about some of Sinai Congregation's more radical beliefs, including the Sunday Sabbath.⁴⁸⁵ As was discussed during the previous chapter, this was a contentious issue for the NCJW, and so American's public teaching on the subject at the Sabbath School placed her in a precarious position at times. However, this was not always the case. The records of Chicago Sinai Congregation show that the Sabbath School had in fact originally been founded by the Chicago Section of the *National Council of Jewish Women*, and Temple Sinai only became involved when the Chicago Section asked for financial assistance.⁴⁸⁶

The commitment of the *National Council of Jewish Women* as a national organisation to the creation and improvement of Sabbath Schools in Jewish communities all over the United States is well known. When the resolutions which would form the basis for the NCJW's constitution were drawn up at the Jewish Women's Congress, the third resolution was that the NCJW would "apply knowledge gained in this study to the improvement of the Sabbath-Schools."⁴⁸⁷ By July 1895, about a year after the first of the local sections had met, a number of NCJW Sabbath Schools had been established, including ones in Minneapolis and Cincinnati.⁴⁸⁸ A separate Sabbath School Committee was established by the end of that year, headed by noted New York educational reformer, Julia Richman.⁴⁸⁹

The Chicago Section's desire to open a Sabbath School is less easy to track in the documents. It does not appear to have been an early priority of the group, or at least not one publicised in the *Reform Advocate* or

⁴⁸⁵Sadie American to Hannah Solomon, prob. 1900, University of Illinois Special Collections, Historical Encyclopaedia of Chicago Women Project Records Collection, Chicago Archives, Box 56, Folder 399

⁴⁸⁶Chicago Section of the National Council of Jewish Women to the Board of Chicago Sinai Congregation, March 17, 1896, Sinai Congregation, Chicago Il. Collection, American Jewish Archive, Box 4, Folder 2

⁴⁸⁷*American Jewess* Vol. 1, No. 1, April 1895, p.27

⁴⁸⁸*American Jewess* Vol. 1, No. 4, July 1895, p.189

⁴⁸⁹Proceedings of the First Convention of the National Council of Jewish Women, Held at New York, Nov. 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19, 1896, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1897), p.4

the *American Jewess*, unlike their sewing room, their Summer School or their involvement in Settlement House work. By the NCJW's first triennial though, the Chicago Section reported that

A mission Sabbath School for girls has been established with sessions each Sabbath afternoon from 2:30 to 4 o'clock. The attendance averages over two hundred. Sinai Congregation defrays the expense of the maintenance of this Sabbath School.⁴⁹⁰

More detail on this arrangement is found in letters written by chairman of the Chicago Section's Sabbath School Committee, Rosalie Sulzbager. The school opened on January 11th, 1896, meeting in four rooms at a building on South Canal Street in the Near West Side neighbourhood. Despite Sinai Congregation's commitment to the Sunday Sabbath, the West Side Sabbath-School taught on Saturday afternoons in its early days, attracting an average of 250 girls each week. It was started using a series of donations from NCJW members, and the only expense at first was the use of the rooms, and the teaching was entirely done by volunteers. However, the Chicago Section realised this was not a sustainable plan and therefore sought funding from Sinai Congregation at the synagogue board's annual meeting held on April 6, 1896.⁴⁹¹ That this request was granted is confirmed by the report to the first triennial six months later.

The financial connection with Temple Sinai continued and by 1898 little had changed. The Chicago Section's Sabbath School Committee provided an annual report which was read at the Congregation's annual meeting in March, 1898. At this point, the Sabbath School was still officially known as the Sabbath School of the Council of Jewish Women, although Sinai Congregation appears to have been its sole financial supporter. The school was limited by the size of the four rooms where

⁴⁹⁰Ibid, p.71

⁴⁹¹Chicago Section of the National Council of Jewish Women to the Board of Chicago Sinai Congregation, March 17, 1896, Sinai Congregation, Chicago Il. Collection, American Jewish Archive, Box 4, Folder 2

it continued to meet, but other factors were also mentioned. The report provided a two-fold explanation for why it remained limited to girls, noting that religious instruction was already available to boys on the Near West Side, but also, that “girls had a more direct influence on the home, and that many a little seed planted in the Sabbath School would blossom and bear fruit in the home.” The report also reveals the desire of the Chicago Section to expand the Sabbath School, something which had already started when the first paid teachers were hired. It also reveals that while Sinai Congregation were happy to meet the Sabbath School’s expenses, which totalled around \$55 a month, they were not actively involved with the project; Sulzberger rather pointedly finished the report by saying “It is unfortunate that not more of the members of the Board have visited us during the past year, as we feel convinced they would have seen for themselves the necessity of supporting this worthy institution.”⁴⁹²

This would not be the case the next time a report of the Sabbath School was contained in Sinai Congregation’s annual report. At some point in 1899 or 1900, the Sabbath School came far more directly under the control of the Board of Sinai Congregation, particularly under the control of Emil Hirsch himself. In a statement made by Hirsch to the Board on March 16, 1900, he stated “the work of our congregational school had been of a high order,” and went on to discuss how he had come to devote more of his own attention to the project. To this end, he had begun teaching the graduating class, made up of thirteen- and fourteen-year olds.⁴⁹³ Other changes had also been made, most significantly that the Sabbath School now admitted male students. Likely this was also the period in which the curriculum at the Sabbath School began to include the teachings of the more radical Reform Judaism practiced by Sinai Congregation, including the celebration of the Sunday Sabbath, mentioned by Sadie American as part of the

⁴⁹²Report of the Sabbath School of the Council of Jewish Women, March 16, 1898, Sinai Congregation, Chicago Il. Collection, American Jewish Archive, Box 4, Folder 2

⁴⁹³Report on the Sabbath School, 1900, Sinai Congregation, Chicago Il. Collection, American Jewish Archive, Box 4, Folder 2

curriculum she taught there.⁴⁹⁴

Here again, as would occur at the Bureau of Personal Service, the women of the NCJW had created and run a successful institution for a number of years, then found themselves pushed out and their places taken by male leaders of their community. Women continued to be involved at the West Side Sabbath-School, but as the NCJW became less religiously focused and Temple Sisterhoods became more common, the NCJW's Chicago Section no longer had a direct role. Women's involvement in the Sabbath School appears to have been conducted on an *ad hoc* basis until the formation of the Chicago Sinai Temple Sisterhood in 1914.⁴⁹⁵

5.5 The Charity Bazaar

The occasions in which women found themselves usurped in their own institutions were not the only occasions on which male and female philanthropists met. When large philanthropic events were organised by Chicago's established Jewish community, men and women almost always worked alongside each other, albeit with strictly proscribed roles. Organised nominally by the Young Men's Hebrew Charity Association and the United Hebrew Charities, a charity Bazaar which was described by the *Reform Advocate* as the "greatest affair of its kind ever held in the West," was held in Chicago from November 29 to December 7, 1893. The *Reform Advocate* informed their readers that the Bazaar would be the "talk of the town," something certainly borne out in the press coverage it received.⁴⁹⁶ There does not seem to have been any scholarly attention paid to this event; other than press reports, the only record of the event is a photographic collection held at the University of Illinois, Chicago. The Bazaar itself seems to have been a combination of an

⁴⁹⁴Sadie American to Hannah Solomon, about 1900, Historical Encyclopaedia of Chicago Women Project Records, UIC Archive, Box56, Folder 399

⁴⁹⁵*Chicago Jewish Community Blue Book*, op. cit., p.54.

⁴⁹⁶*Reform Advocate* November 19, 1898, p.218

exposition, where philanthropic and social welfare endeavours such as the Chicago Training School were able to display their methods, a market hall, where everything from confectionery to insurance was sold, a cultural event, where art and photography were displayed, and a social event, with an extensive program of entertainment.⁴⁹⁷ However, as an event that was organised by a male-led philanthropic group, one might wonder how much it can tell us about Chicago's press reaction to Jewish women's philanthropy. However, even a cursory examination of newspaper coverage of the event shows that Jewish women played a significant role in the organisation and execution, and the names mentioned are familiar from the *NCJW*. The press reaction to this co-operative relationship can illuminate the contemporary understanding of the ways in which male and female philanthropy was conducted, provide a deeper understanding on the limits of acceptable feminine philanthropic activity, as well as demonstrate the roles that the Council played when working with other Jewish groups.

The first mention of the Bazaar in the *Inter-Ocean* is fairly typical of the way in which the event was announced in the other non-Jewish newspapers. On Tuesday November 29th, the day before the fair opened, a small article on page five announced: 'Ready For The Fair'. Its opening paragraph described the Bazaar as the "queerest jumble [the venue] ever had to contend with."⁴⁹⁸ Though the article rightly points out that the Bazaar was put together by the Young Men's Hebrew Charity organisation, several paragraphs later it describes how the stage manager of the auditorium where the Bazaar was being held had "a crowd of women following him, asking about this and that, and wanting everything done at once."⁴⁹⁹ This paints a picture of an event where women were playing a significant role. The first mention of the Charity Bazaar in the *Reform Advocate* occurs earlier in the month, on November 19th. Under the headline "The Charity Fair," it makes clear in the

⁴⁹⁷Ibid. p.218-219

⁴⁹⁸*The Daily Inter-Ocean*, November 29th, 1898, p.5

⁴⁹⁹*The Daily Inter-Ocean*. November 29th, 1898, p.5

first paragraph that the event was being held “under the auspices of the Young Men’s Hebrew Charity Association and the United Hebrew Charities,”; throughout, the article places much more emphasis on the role of men in organising the Bazaar.⁵⁰⁰

However, there exists significant difference in the way that the Bazaar is portrayed depending on whether the role of men or women is being emphasised. This is particularly evident in the coverage from the *Daily* and *Sunday Inter-Ocean*. The *Daily Inter-Ocean* had one of the smaller readerships of Chicago’s daily newspapers, averaging a daily printing of around 36,000 in this period, which rose slightly to around 40,000 for the Sunday edition.⁵⁰¹ With its motto ‘Republican in Everything, Independent in Nothing’, it was one of the most steadfastly conservative of the Chicago newspapers.⁵⁰² The article that recorded the opening day of the Bazaar certainly emphasises the role played by men in its organisation; the article is subtitled ‘Young Men’s Hebrew Charity Association Bazaar Begins with Great Success’. However, the presentation of the event as a masculine endeavour goes deeper. While it does spend large swaths of the first paragraph describing the scene, that paragraph ends with Israel Schrimski, the Bazaar’s President stating that they would make \$100,000 and B. V. Becker, one of the fair’s organisers, stating that they wouldn’t “be satisfied with a cent less than \$125,000”.⁵⁰³ Though of course, it is not strange to see that a charity endeavour had particular financial aspirations, to make such an explicit reference to them was not as common. These predictions also appeared in the *Reform Advocate*, where the first paragraph of the first article on the subject ends with confident assurances that “the net receipts will not fall below \$100,000”⁵⁰⁴. Neither the *Daily News* nor the *Chicago Tribune* include these quotations, nor even a suggestion that the fair had

⁵⁰⁰*Reform Advocate* November 19th, 1898, p 218

⁵⁰¹Erickson, “Newspapers and Social Values: Chicago Journalism, 1890-1900”, op. cit., p.133.

⁵⁰²Tree, “Victor Freemont Lawson and His Newspapers, 1890-1900: A Study of the Chicago Daily News and the Chicago Record”, op. cit., p.37.

⁵⁰³*Inter-Ocean*, November 20th, 1898, p.1

⁵⁰⁴*Reform Advocate* November 19th, 1898, p.218

a specific financial target. Indeed, the inclusions of financial specifics seems more appropriate to the announcement of a business endeavour. This contrasts markedly with the coverage of December 4th, when the Hebrew Bazaar again reached the front page of the *Inter-Ocean*, of the Sunday edition this time. The Bazaar is the leading story, but what are most noticeable are the two pictures with dominate the page: one a picture of Mrs Emanuel Mandel, the 'Chairman of the Ladies' Executive Committee of the Bazaar', the other a group of six women titled 'A Group at the Charity Bazaar'.⁵⁰⁵ The pictures are line drawings, as the Bazaar occurred prior to the period where photographs were commonly able to be reproduced in a newspaper on a regular basis.⁵⁰⁶ The way in which the group of women were pictured is therefore very interesting, providing as it does, not an actual record, but an impression of the event. Significantly, there is very little contextual background in the picture; there is no real view of the event itself. Instead, the picture seems more concerned with showing the way that the women are dressed, which though not explained, appears to be in a mix of historical and national costumes. No matter the content of the article, these pictures instantly inform the impression of the Bazaar gained by the reader. The fact that both pictures are of women suggest that this was a feminine event, and the way the group is presented, particularly in the way the audience's attention is drawn to the women's appearance, suggests a social event.

The *Reform Advocate's* coverage at first appears to be a hybrid between these two approaches. Though it begins by emphasising the male leadership of the Bazaar's organising committee and the specific financial and educational aspirations for the event, it also includes mention of women's roles in the event. Indeed, its coverage of the particulars of the event are rather more detailed than the other publications. This is perhaps to be expected from the newspaper published by the community who organised the Bazaar. The article pointed out that while the

⁵⁰⁵*The Sunday Inter-Ocean*, December 4th, 1898, p1

⁵⁰⁶for a fuller exploration of the development of the use of pictures in journalism see: Brown, J. *Beyond the Lines: pictorial reporting, everyday life, and the crisis of gilded-age America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002)

event was organised by men, many of the booths and attractions were to be operated by women. However, when it points to specific booths operated by women's organisations, rather than by women as individuals, there is something of a pattern. The "Ladies Parlour" was turned into an art gallery, the Young Ladies Benevolent Society operated a photographic booth, and the Council of Jewish Women a book stall.⁵⁰⁷ This coverage seems to emphasise male control over the event as a whole, despite the number of women who played significant roles on a personal level. This impression is deepened by the specific indication that on an institutional level, women's contribution to the Bazaar was limited to cultural and artistic pursuits, rather than the business-like aims of the event, ensuring that the readers of the article were left in no doubt that the charity Bazaar would respect the expected gender mores of the period.

In the *Reform Advocate's* first article on the Bazaar after it opened, the same pattern is followed. Again, under the headline "The Great Fair", the first paragraph assures the reader of the event's male leadership and specific financial aims. It goes on to provide a little information about each of the booths at the fair, but unlike other articles, it barely mentions the social aspects of the event. Only two very short paragraphs are devoted to the ball at the event, less than the space devoted to the Tombola.⁵⁰⁸ An indication as to why the *Reform Advocate* in particular was disinclined to emphasise the social aspects of the event can be found in an article published in the *Chicago Tribune* in June 1900. Although this was 18 months after the Bazaar had taken place, it indicates a broader shift in attitudes that was occurring throughout the period. Titled 'He Condemns Charity Balls', the short article recounts the National Conference of Jewish Charities, which had taken place over three days at Sinai Temple. The title referred to a speech given by a

Rabbi Edward Callisch of Richmond, Va. [who] strongly denounced the practice of giving charity balls, banquets,

⁵⁰⁷*Reform Advocate* November 19th, 1898, p.218–9

⁵⁰⁸*Reform Advocate* December 3rd, 1898, p.247–52

Bazaars, fairs, raffles, and similar entertainments for the raising of money for the relief of the poor. He also criticised rich people who join in charity work with a view of gratifying their vanity and becoming leaders in philanthropy.⁵⁰⁹

The appearance of this article on the fourth page of the *Chicago Tribune* and the newspaper's choice to emphasise that particular admonition out of a three-day conference speaks of a particularly virulent sense of distaste for a class of event, which less than two years earlier, the same newspaper had described as being "the radiance of society awhirl in the dance."⁵¹⁰ Such a short time could not change attitudes so completely, and so it seems likely that the Jewish community were aware of the ambivalence with which the Bazaar might be viewed, hence the rather businesslike way with which it was discussed in the *Reform Advocate*.

However, that muted tone was certainly not present in the coverage of the Bazaar in the *Daily News*, which again largely presented the Bazaar as a social event. The same story was put forward in Chicago's most popular newspaper. In its coverage of the opening of the Bazaar, it subtitled the article "Crush of Beauty and Money", evoking an event that had more to do with elegant sociability than of worthy philanthropy.⁵¹¹ It has already been noted that the *Daily News* was the first of Chicago's newspapers to target female readers, but it was also renowned for its rather sensationalistic style.⁵¹² This was certainly the case in the reporting of the Bazaar, which was largely made up of human interest snippets, such as the few paragraphs where a male visitor bemoaned the Bazaar as the "biggest matrimonial agency in the country."⁵¹³ Rather than an examination of the event's aims, or the causes supported, the *Daily News* centred its coverage around the social interactions taking place. The coverage of the Bazaar was actually

⁵⁰⁹*Chicago Tribune*, June 14th, 1900, p.4

⁵¹⁰*Chicago Tribune* November 30th, 1898, p.5

⁵¹¹*The Daily News* November 30th, 1898, p.6

⁵¹²Tree, "Victor Freemont Lawson and His Newspapers, 1890-1900: A Study of the Chicago Daily News and the Chicago Record", op. cit., p.17.

⁵¹³*The Daily News* December 3rd, 1898, p.3

rather less than in the *Tribune* or *Inter-Ocean*, publishing only two short articles: one on November 30th and one on December 3rd. However, unlike the other two journals, it resumed coverage on December 7th, two days after the close of the Bazaar, to cover the ball organised to celebrate the event.⁵¹⁴ That article was longer than the previous two combined and accompanied by a picture, which neither of the previous articles were. The picture shows the two young women who were chosen to lead a march at the Ball, Elsie Snyderdacker, and Rose Mandel. The *Daily News* chose to emphasise them by captioning the picture with “Two Young Women who will Lead the Lines of Beauty Tonight”.⁵¹⁵ The beauty of the young women at the ball was a recurring theme of the article, and was mentioned several times. Though this is typical of the newspaper’s society pages, a brief examination of the rest of the issue may shed some light on the reasons why this particular event was well covered.

The *Daily News*, like all newspapers, was highly reliant on advertising revenue in order to remain profitable. In the December 7th issue, half and quarter page advertisements appear for several department stores, including ‘A.M. Rothschild’, ‘Schlesinger and Mayer’ and ‘Mandel Brothers’.⁵¹⁶ These names can also all be found in the article about the ball as box-holders at the event.⁵¹⁷ In fact, the families who owned these department stores were heavily involved with the organisation of the fair. ‘Schlesinger and Mayer’ were behind a doll’s house exhibit which was incredibly popular and extensively remarked upon in the *Sunday Inter-Ocean*⁵¹⁸. The Mandel family were perhaps the most involved; with Babette Mandel, wife of the department store owner Emanuel Mandel, and Illinois State President of the NCJW, serving as Chairman of the Ladies Executive Committee; their daughter Rose

⁵¹⁴*The Daily News* December 7th, 1893, p.3

⁵¹⁵*Ibid*, p.3

⁵¹⁶*Ibid*, p.5, 11 & 16

⁵¹⁷*Ibid*, p.3

⁵¹⁸*The Sunday Inter-Ocean*, December 4th, 1898, p1

also played a role as a 'beauty', leading the procession at the ball.⁵¹⁹ There is perhaps no connection between Rose being pictured and hailed as a beauty in the same issue of the *Daily News* where her father's department store paid for several large adverts, though Barth asserts that in this period it was accepted that "some editors granted favours to certain advertisers."⁵²⁰ It is impossible to know whether the *Daily News* was influenced in their coverage of the Bazaar in this way. However, the *Daily News* was owned and edited by a deeply Christian man, and yet his newspaper's financial success depended in part on successful Jewish businesses.

Another significant aspect of the way in which the Charity Bazaar was positioned in the popular press was the way in which it was understood within the metropolitan imagination of Chicago. Even five years later, the World's Columbian Exposition had a profound effect on the way in which Chicago understood itself. It proved to be such an important event that the city added a third star to its municipal flag, adding the World's Columbian Exposition to the city's incorporation and the 1871 fire on the list of the most important events in Chicago's history. It was into this framework that the mainstream press positioned the Bazaar. From the first article, the *Inter-Ocean* referred in their headlines to the Bazaar as 'The Fair', a title which seems to hark back to the Exposition. There are, though, far more explicit references which make it clear that the two events were linked in the city's imagination. In the November 29th article, the author describes the Bazaar's lavish decoration, and mentions that women in attendance suggested that the "White City [had been] outdone," making a direct reference to the central collection of white stucco buildings where the World's Columbian Exposition's main exhibits had been held.⁵²¹ The same comparison was made in the *Inter-Ocean's* next issue, when the Bazaar's opening was covered. Describing the

⁵¹⁹*Chicago Social and Club Register*. Crest Publishers, 1921, p.87.

⁵²⁰Barth, *City People: The Rise of Modern City Culture in Nineteenth Century America*, op. cit., p.77.

⁵²¹*Inter-Ocean* November 29th 1895, p.5

scale of the event, the author suggests it was ‘like the World’s Fair—it was impossible to see it all in one visit.’⁵²² The *Inter-Ocean* was not the only newspaper to make this comparison—indeed, the *Tribune* subtitled its article on the opening of the Bazaar: “Auditorium Theatre Is Transformed Into a White City of Charity,” again clearly marking this as the Columbian Exposition’s successor. However, while the *Inter-Ocean*’s praise was effusive, suggesting that the charity Bazaar exceeded the White City, the *Tribune* was more guarded, suggesting that it was “as beautiful on its scale as was the larger White City, from which many of its details were copied.”⁵²³ However, this was likely not a slight to the organisers, but instead a reflection of the more serious tone of the *Tribune* when compared with the *Inter-Ocean*. While the *Inter-Ocean* concentrated on a description seemingly to evoke in the reader the tone of the event, the *Tribune* seemed more concerned with the practical work which had been done to ready the venue for the event, to the extent that they included a line drawing of the booths being built.⁵²⁴

The appearance and atmosphere of the Bazaar were also deployed in another manner; it is clear from the first paragraph of the November 30th article from the *Daily Inter-Ocean* that a romantic view of the East profoundly influenced the way that the Charity Bazaar was conceived of in the popular press. Described as an “Aladdin’s palace,” and of “glittering like a thousand jewels,” it is clear that Chicago’s newspapers associated the Bazaar, at least to some degree, with an imagined ‘Orient’.⁵²⁵ As the way in which Jews were imagined as part of an ancient *Orient* at the Columbian Exposition had shown, this narrative, no matter the lengths to which the acculturated Jewish community had gone to justify their membership in the American mainstream, was hard to escape. Even more than simply imagining Jews as a product of a mythic *East*, there was also a conflation of Jews and Arabs in the minds of nineteenth-century Americans clearly evident, even in this

⁵²²*Inter-Ocean* November 30th 1895, p1

⁵²³*Chicago Tribune*, November 30th 1898, p.5

⁵²⁴*Chicago Tribune* November 29th, 1898, p.2

⁵²⁵*The Daily Inter-Ocean* November 30th, 1898, p.1

short section. The interior of the Bazaar is described as having having “dainty minarets,” which evoked the architecture of the Mosque.⁵²⁶

This evocation of the East was not strictly limited to the decor of the place. The *Daily Inter-Ocean* described the “costumes of Greece and Egypt and Hungary, with all their simplicity and all their daring of color, and, more than all, a gorgeous assembly of lovely women, who moved from place to place, made a new panorama and one long to be remembered.”⁵²⁷ Here, it does not simply seem to be the costumes that suggest the exotic but the women themselves. The archetype of the beautiful and exotic Jewish woman was a staple of the nineteenth century literary imagination.⁵²⁸ Indeed, this was an image even deployed within the Jewish community; the Jewish women’s magazine, the *American Jewess*, published an engraving titled “‘The Old Woman’—In the Harem”, in its July, 1895 issue.⁵²⁹ This particularly resonates as many of the articles in that issue deal with ‘The New Woman’, and the positive progress made by American Jewish women.⁵³⁰ These stereotypes, typified by the exotic harem girl, seem to be entirely opposite to the sedate conformity of the Jewish woman which the *Reform Advocate* presented, and yet it seems to have remained a part of the way in which the Chicago press imagined Jewish women.⁵³¹ However, it seems significant that the ‘exotic’ women remain anonymous, while the women mentioned as taking part in the organisation of the event were named, suggesting a conflict between the imagined Jewish women, and the reality with which the press were faced.

Noticeably absent is any reference to the wider Jewish community of Chicago. There is one reference in the *Sunday Inter-Ocean* to the cultural heritage of the established Jewish community in Germany, with an assertion that the charity Bazaar was a common event in

⁵²⁶*Inter-Ocean* November 30th, 1898, p.1

⁵²⁷*Inter-Ocean* November 30th, 1898, p.1

⁵²⁸N Valman. *The Jewess in Nineteenth Century British Literary Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp.10–13.

⁵²⁹*American Jewess* Vol.1, No. 4, July 1895, p.168

⁵³⁰*Ibid*, pp.169–171

⁵³¹*Reform Advocate* November 19th, 1898, pp.218–9

Germany; however, there is no mention of the rapidly increasing size of Chicago's Jewish population from Eastern Europe.⁵³² This lack of connection between the community who practiced philanthropy and the community likely to be the target of their work is stark, seeming to at worst erase the majority of Chicago's Jews from attention, and at best to simply divorce these two sections of the Jewish community in the minds of those reading about the event. It is counter-intuitive to devote such attention to a philanthropic event but the focus here is manifestly not on the outcome of the philanthropy—outside of simply listing the amount of money raised. The focus of the press coverage was the way in which philanthropy itself was practiced, either as a social event, or as a more businesslike endeavour; the newspapers gladly play the audience to the activity, allowing the Jewish community to perform in public. Though, like all audiences, Chicago's newspapers could not always be relied upon to interpret the events in the manner preferred by those organising them.

5.6 Masculinity and Philanthropy

One thing which particularly the *Reform Advocate's* presentation of the Charity Bazaar emphasises is that the men in the community were faced with specific philanthropic mores which had to be obeyed, or their place in Chicago society would be at risk. Indeed, perhaps this might also explain some of the reasons which for which the Bureau of Personal Service and the West Side Sabbath School found themselves under nominally male control, having been originally built up by women's groups. It should not, however, be forgotten that the concepts of Jewish and American masculinity have not been static, and that the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries represented a crisis point in the conception of masculinity. Though it is a topic which has been little examined, philanthropy played a role in the public dialogue about

⁵³²*The Sunday Inter-Ocean* December 4th, 1898, p.1

acceptable manhood; philanthropic involvement was an expected part of the role of a wealthy man, as it was of a wealthy woman.

Some scholars, as well as some contemporaries, have viewed the actions of these men as combative and disrespectful, particularly when male and female philanthropists came into contact, and have expressed doubts that the men's motivations for philanthropic action went beyond an expression of power, money and ego. But the expression of those traits, as negative as they may have been to those on the receiving end of that philanthropy, was a key display of appropriate masculinity. Jewish men in the late nineteenth century were perceived and presented by non-Jews as feminised. Scholars, particularly Daniel Boyarin, have looked at the ways in which this impacted the actions and sense of identity for Jewish men. Their work has chiefly concentrated on the ways in which secularisation has led to a fetishisation of a Western European hegemonic ideal and thus a desperation for Jewish men to prove their masculinity by imitating the actions of the largely Protestant hegemony.⁵³³ However, philanthropy does not seem to have been considered as an arena in which Jewish men were able to display their masculinity, possibly because it has been in many ways seen as a feminine activity, inextricably linked with a sense of public motherhood.

In fact, philanthropy played an important role in the formulation of the new violent masculinity embodied in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by figures such as Theodore Roosevelt.⁵³⁴ A strong sense of benevolence was expected of a 'true man', which brought power and authority over the lower classes. Philanthropy also provided the tempering to the necessary violence of the 'natural man,' which prevented the unchecked barbarism of what Roosevelt and others believed to be the white American's racial inferiors.⁵³⁵ Though this racial

⁵³³Daniel Boyarin. *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Hetrosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, p.72.

⁵³⁴Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked The Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars*, op. cit., p.9.

⁵³⁵Gail Bederman. *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995, pp.71-4.

discourse was in its early stages at the start of the 1890s, it was far more common by the latter part of the decade, and the ability of Jews to integrate into American society because of their race was called into question. This heightened the sense of anxiety faced by the Established Jewish Community, fearing that if they failed to conform exactly to expected social and cultural mores they would lose their position as Americans. Jewish male philanthropy was a public action, and one that was discussed in the Jewish and the non-Jewish press. Though it was less critical for Jewish men than for Jewish women, where philanthropy was at the centre of a limited range of options for access into the public sphere, philanthropy was another platform to show non-Jews that the Jewish community belonged in America.

One of the key texts which laid out the duties of the American man towards the poor in the late nineteenth century was Andrew Carnegie's *Gospel of Wealth*. First published in 1889, it presented a millionaire's manifesto in which Carnegie laid out his idea that the "proper administration of wealth. . . the ties of brotherhood may still bind together the rich and poor in harmonious relationship."⁵³⁶ Carnegie justifies the capitalist system by casting it as a meritocracy, where the talented rise but wealth is inevitably held by the few. However, when he is faced with the question of how that accumulated wealth should be disposed of, Carnegie proposes three options: the first, bequeathing wealth to the next generation is painted as the least desirable option, as Carnegie sees hereditary wealth as a burden. The next option, the distribution of wealth after a man's death, is seen as less than ideal as the man has no control over how it is used. Carnegie therefore prefers the third option, that of the distribution of wealth for the public good during a person's lifetime. Carnegie sets out what he sees as the duty of the rich:

To set an example of modest, unostentatious living, shunning display or extravagance, to provide moderately for the

⁵³⁶Andrew Carnegie. *The Gospel of Wealth and Other Timely Essays*. New York: The Century Company, 1901, p.47.

legitimate wants of those dependent upon him; and after doing so, to consider all surplus revenues which come to him simply as trust funds which he is called upon to administer. . . the man of wealth therefore becoming the mere trustee and agent for his poorer brethren, and bringing to their service his superior wisdom, experience and ability to administer, doing for them better than they would or could for themselves.⁵³⁷

This is considered by many to be the archetypal expression of a profoundly patriarchal form of philanthropy, but Carnegie's book was also attempt to publicise and popularise a specific idea of philanthropy and social relations. Though the scale of the actions described by Carnegie truly would have only been a possibility for the millionaires, the attitude he espoused was intended to, and did, take hold of the middle classes as well. Originally published in a magazine, it was distributed throughout the United States and Europe and reprinted with other essays in book form. One phrase that seems immediately significant in gauging the ways in which the established Jewish community in Chicago might have reacted to Carnegie's text is the idea that the rich should live 'unostentatiously,' "shunning display or extravagance." The image of the wealthy Jew—even, to an extent, those Jews of more limited means—as prone to tactless and ostentatious displays of wealth is a well-documented one, both at the time and in later scholarship. Though it seems unlikely that this was an explicit reference to the Jewish community, it is now and would have been then, highly resonant.

The Jewish community in Chicago had a central core of wealthy, well-integrated families, many of whom had lived in Chicago almost since its incorporation, and largely belonging to Temple Sinai. It was from this group that most of Chicago's centralised philanthropy was administered. The Board of Sinai Congregation certainly considered themselves to be responsible for encouraging philanthropy within the

⁵³⁷Ibid., p.63.

Jewish community; in their 1893 Annual Report, they suggest that Hirsch's "constant endeavours to engraft upon the minds of listeners a sense of responsibility are bearing rich fruit... The message he preaches inspires his hearers and this community, but finds its way to the thinking Jews all over the United States."⁵³⁸

As part of his philanthropic philosophy, Carnegie ranked donations in the order in which he felt they benefited society. Topping that list was the foundation of a University, and second to that the creation of a Library. Sinai Congregation donated \$27,000 to the foundation of the University of Chicago, and maintained a close relationship with that institution, further solidified by Hirsch's appointment as a Professor of Rabbinic Literature and Philosophy in 1892. When it came time to create a library for that department, Sinai Congregation called upon its members to help them fund this project: "The Sinai Library as a gift of Sinai's members... would be another monument erected by us in our march towards the light."⁵³⁹ The Temple's Financial Year report discussed the donation and repeatedly uses the words 'honor' and 'duty'. The use of these words, key concepts of 'true manhood', suggest that while creating the library was expected to bring prestige upon the community it was also a responsibility—a continuation of a precedent that had been set with the original donation.

Hirsch also used his position as the editor of the *Reform Advocate* to make attempts to ensure that all of those within the established Jewish community accepted their philanthropic responsibilities. Philanthropy was a frequent topic of his Editorials, and reports from the various communal institutions such as the Michael Rees Hospital and the Jewish Training School were published on a regular basis, with reminders to the readers that extra funds were always needed. He also used the pages of his newspaper to campaign for a greater degree of organisation and control within the *United Hebrew Charities*, arguing that the system

⁵³⁸Financial Year Report 1893, Sinai Congregation, Chicago II. Collection, American Jewish Archive, Box 3, Folder 9

⁵³⁹Ibid

whereby organisations that were members of the *UHC* sent delegates to vote on certain issues had become outmoded as the organisations were now contributing little money. Instead, he argued for direct suffrage within the *UHC* for all those who donated above a certain level.⁵⁴⁰ This direct link between the amount donated and the ability to make decisions about the appropriate use of that money is reminiscent of Carnegie's assertion that the wealthiest within a group were—in some inherent way—the most able to administer money. However, it also provides an argument for philanthropic control within the family to rest with the male head of household, choking off one of the key routes into communal power for middle-class and elite Jewish women.

The tension between the more autocratic Carnegian philanthropic ideal and the Progressives can be clarified through the lens of gender. Carnegian philanthropy was essentially masculine, providing a way to “[ask] Daddy for a dime”.⁵⁴¹ Conversely, though the Progressive movement was home to both men and women, it can be understood as far more feminine, placing a greater emphasis on the needs of mothers and children within a community—traditionally seen to be areas of women's concern. By working within communities, they were able to reach a far greater number of women who were more tied to the spatial boundaries of a community by the necessities of home and family. Carnegian philanthropy centred itself on the idea that society could be lifted by the improvement of opportunities for a male wage-earning head of household, whereas the Progressives were more focused on the needs of the family as a whole. They were not, however, entirely different: both were certain that philanthropy should be meticulously organised, to ensure no overlap of services, and that the least productive way to help those in need was to simply give money to them.

A key point of concern for the Jewish men of Chicago was that, as its name suggests, the Gospel of Wealth was an explicitly Christian work.

⁵⁴⁰*Reform Advocate*, October 10, 1891, p.1

⁵⁴¹Elayne Clift. “Preface”. In: *Women, Philanthropy and Social Change: Visions for a Just Society*. Ed. by Elayne Clift. Medford, MA: Tufts University Press, 2005, p.ix.

Not only did it suggest that one of the best philanthropic donations that could be made was the building of a Church, but the foundation of Carnegie's philosophy is founded entirely in a conception of the duties of a Christian man. Members of Chicago's Jewish elite were involved with philanthropic organisations that had an explicitly Christian message, albeit not a proselytising one.

For the most part, though, the Jewish community formed parallel institutions, and though they often called them secular, formed agreements with other organisations to refer non-Jews to non-Jewish institutions and take Jews who sought help from Jewish institutions.⁵⁴²

It would not be until the early years of the twentieth century when Julius Rosenwald began his philanthropic work that Chicago's Jewish community had a 'millionaire' of the type described by Carnegie, and as a product of this later time, Rosenwald's foundation supported a far more diverse range of projects and institutions than Carnegie had recommended. However, in the late nineteenth century, the men of Chicago's Jewish elite certainly seem to have been influenced by the tenets espoused by Carnegie and his contemporaries, who set participation in an autocratic, institution-based form of philanthropy as a key part of accepted masculinity in this period. The expression of that philanthropy, however, may have been negative—not only for those who received their attention, but also for those who worked alongside them. In understanding their actions as an expression, as a portrayal of an 'appropriate' masculinity at a point when Jewish men's ability to be masculine was called into question, a new perspective on their work can be gained, and it can be understood within a wider context.

Within the Jewish community in Chicago, this group of men were certainly in possession of the greatest share of the power and wealth. But they faced external pressures to conform or face losing that position. The temptation here would be to vilify the men of Chicago's Reform Jewish community for the efforts to exert such a degree of

⁵⁴²As has been shown this was the case with the Bureau of Personal Service and its relationship with Hull-House.

control over the philanthropic efforts of the women in their community. Much of the previous scholarship on the NCJW—and other elite Jewish women's organisations—has understood them as Jewish only in name, limiting the recognition of the pressures these women faced. It would similarly be a mistake to underestimate the influence of the growing antisemitic sentiment in the United States in this period on the men of the community. At the time, the leadership of the NCJW seem to have been frustrated with the actions of the men of their community. This is something which can be seen particularly well in the way the creation of the NCJW has been remembered, with Hannah Solomon storming out of a planning meeting after being told women had no place but as hostesses.⁵⁴³ However, judgements on the actions of these men only distract from understanding the ways in which the pressures of race, class and gender intersected for Chicago's Reform community. Without at least considering these intersections, any understanding of the Jewish community in Chicago is incomplete. There is no easy way in which the power structure of this community can be ordered without oversimplification. However, the ways in which the male elites were an interested party in the wider philanthropic actions of the women in this community cannot be ignored. Any understanding of the relationship between the men and women of this community must take into account the ways in which the men's ability to present themselves as appropriately masculine depended on the acceptance of the women as appropriately feminine. Both groups sought acceptance as sufficiently American, which depended on their ability to shape the actions of the new immigrant majority, highlighting the fragility of their positions in Chicago society.

The effects of these intersections is clear throughout the philanthropic projects created by the NCJW. In wanting to present their work—and through that, themselves—as 'appropriately feminine', their involvement in projects such as the Maxwell Street Settlement House were minimised. In order that the male elites of the community were

⁵⁴³Solomon, *The Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*, op. cit., p.82–3.

seen as in control of important projects, the women of the NCJW lost control of the Bureau of Personal Service and the West Side Sabbath School entirely. However, though unpublished documents such as the drafts of *Fabric of My Life* reveal the frustration and anger Solomon and others within the NCJW must have felt, these references were gone by the time the book was published in 1946. Their removal fifty years after the events show just how deeply the Established Jewish community in Chicago wanted to be seen as functioning within the gender norms of the time.

6

Jewish Women and Non-Jewish Philanthropy

6.1 Separation—Exclusion and Choice

When Sadie American rose to speak to the Jewish Women's Congress to propose a permanent Jewish women's organisation, one of the objections she addressed was that Jewish women had no need of forming a separate organisation, and should not be separating themselves from non-Jewish women in this way. This was, indeed, an argument that had been made by Emil Hirsch when he explained his objections to the Congress taking place at all.⁵⁴⁴ American addressed this topic, saying

Do some claim that organisation will separate us more from the world? I answer, It will not. We must look facts in

⁵⁴⁴*Reform Advocate* October 2, 1892, p.214

the face. We are separated from the rest of mankind by barriers which must be broken down... We are all members of that great organisation of which the all-pervading Spirit of the universe is head, which works for truth and justice and righteousness. And we, by working under its guidance, not for the Jews alone, but for the elevation and progress of mankind, will join hands with those outside the wall, whose end and aim are one with ours.⁵⁴⁵

The implication American makes is that antisemitism had placed a restriction on Jewish women joining non-Jewish organisations, and that by establishing a Jewish organisation, using that to work with non-Jewish women on that organisational level, these antisemitic barriers could be broken and Jewish women would be free to join whichever organisation they wished to.

As the previous chapter shows, the *National Council of Jewish Women* did work with non-Jewish organisations on several projects, but there remains an impression in the scholarship on Chicago's philanthropic past that Chicago's Jewish citizens were largely occupied with their own parallel set of institutions which operated alongside, but not with, their non-Jewish neighbours.⁵⁴⁶ Many Jewish scholars, though, have suggested the exact opposite. Hasia Diner, suggested that "by the turn of the twentieth century American-born Jewish women under forty... mirrored very closely the domestic patterns of the Protestant middle class among whom many of them lived," and that Jewish women "could find many other opportunities to do good works among Christians."⁵⁴⁷ This implies that joining an exclusively Jewish organisation such as the *NCJW* was a choice made by women wanting the opportunity to make a closer connection with their Jewish identity. This seeming contradiction reflects the varying degrees of opportunity

⁵⁴⁵American, "Organization", op. cit., p252.

⁵⁴⁶McCarthy, *Noblesse Oblige: Charity and Cultural Philanthropy in Chicago 1849-1929*, op. cit., p.66.

⁵⁴⁷Diner and Benderly, *Her Works Praise Her: A History of Jewish Women in America from Colonial Times to the Present*, op. cit., p.241, 260.

open to Jewish women in the 1890s within non-Jewish organisations. It suggests that a more nuanced analysis is needed. Currently scholars seem to be drawn to extremes with Jewish women involved in either only Jewish philanthropy, or only in non-Jewish organisations, whereas many Jewish women were involved in both. When Jewish women were not involved in non-Jewish organisations this could reflect a choice made to foster a greater sense of Jewish identity but might also be reflective of exclusion due to antisemitism. None of these possibilities are mutually exclusive, and in order to better understand how these links were created, and how they have been represented, it must be remembered that at different times it has been both politically, socially and personally expedient to present these events in particular ways.

6.2 The Chicago Women's Club

6.2.1 Reviewing the Role Played by the Chicago Women's Club in the Foundation of the National Council of Jewish Women

The *Chicago Women's Club* was formed in 1876, one expression of a national movement which saw women all over the United States, and internationally, organise themselves into groups where they made social connections, educated themselves, and organised philanthropic action, both social and cultural. It was, however, an elite organisation, with new members invited to join, rather than a system whereby anyone could become a member. Its first project was the organisation of study classes on art and literature for its members.⁵⁴⁸ Though one or two of the early members of the Club had attended college, and were professional women, the larger portion of its members were upper-class married women who had few responsibilities within the home

⁵⁴⁸Henriette Greenebaum Frank and Amalie Hofer Jerome. *Annals of the Chicago Woman's Club for the First Forty Years of its Organization, 1876-1916*. Chicago: Chicago Woman's Club, 1916, p.10.

and were therefore able to join these new public organisations. These organisations provided avenues for education and female friendships which they missed out on by not attending college; the *Chicago Women's Club* was known to its members as a substitute for University.⁵⁴⁹

The Club's interests in philanthropy and reform was also developed early in its existence. This was likely due to an outgrowth of the academic study of philanthropy which had taken place within the Club. Cultural philanthropy was also a way for these women to share their interest in the Arts—some of its earliest philanthropic projects were the creation of a scholarship to study at the Chicago Art Institute for a graduate of the Chicago Public School system, and to raise money so that a mural could be painted at the McKinley High School.⁵⁵⁰

Hannah Solomon, then Hannah Greenebaum, and her sister Henriette were among the early members of the *Chicago Women's Club*, joining in 1877, and as Solomon frequently recounted, they were the first Jewish members of the organisation, likely the first Jews many of the members of the Club had ever met. She was also the youngest member of the organisation when she joined at age 18.⁵⁵¹ It was, in fact, her membership in this organisation which led directly to the opportunity for the creation of the *National Council of Jewish Women*. Solomon was asked to take on the task of organising the contribution of Jewish Women to the Columbian Exposition by Ellen Henrotin, with whom she was acquainted through the Club.

Hannah and her sister Henriette became prominent members of the organisation, and Hannah remained associated with it until her death, assuming a more prominent role in the organisation again after her tenure as President of the NCJW came to an end. However, Henriette was more prominent, as the fifth President of the organisation, taking

⁵⁴⁹McCarthy, *Noblesse Oblige: Charity and Cultural Philanthropy in Chicago 1849-1929*, op. cit., p.47.

⁵⁵⁰Frank and Jerome, *Annals of the Chicago Woman's Club for the First Forty Years of its Organization, 1876-1916*, op. cit., p.11.

⁵⁵¹Fabric of My Life Chapter Draft, Hannah G Solomon Family Collection, American Jewish Archive, Box 3, Folder 6

charge from 1884 to 1885, and also as co-editor of the organisation's official history, published in 1916, one of the few sources which recount the early years of the organisation.⁵⁵²

6.2.2 Hannah Solomon and the Chicago Women's Club in the 1890s

Perhaps the best-known event of Hannah Solomon's time in the *Chicago Woman's Club*, was the paper she presented to the Club in 1892, entitled 'Our Debt to Judaism.' This was an event that Solomon emphasised in her autobiography, which was then emphasised by scholars such as Rogow as a transgressive action, where she "dared to break an unspoken Club ban on formal discussion of religion."⁵⁵³ Rogow then goes on to suggest that Solomon chose to speak on the ways in which Christian women's philanthropy, and indeed all of Christianity, owed a debt to Judaism, and to encourage her fellow clubwomen to understand the differences between the two religions. However, in a draft of a speech on the *Chicago Woman's Club*, Solomon presented a subtly different picture. Her original draft noted that 'the Program committee asked [her] to present a paper on Judaism', however she then crossed out 'a paper on Judaism' and replaced it with 'its first paper on Religion.' This substitution of a more neutral 'religion' for 'Judaism' removes a sense in the earlier phrasing that her Jewishness was central to her identity in the club.⁵⁵⁴ It also emphasised the way in which she presented Judaism as simply a religious matter, something further borne out by the fact that the Club had, in 1877, heard a paper on Spinoza, showing that some matters of Jewish thought had previously been discussed. Religion had already been addressed, albeit in tangential ways—a pa-

⁵⁵²Frank and Jerome, *Annals of the Chicago Woman's Club for the First Forty Years of its Organization, 1876-1916*, op. cit., p.5.

⁵⁵³Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting: The National Council of Jewish Women, 1893-1993*, op. cit., p.14.

⁵⁵⁴The Chicago Women's Club and Education, The Hannah G Solomon Family Collection, American Jewish Archive, Box 3, Folder 6

per titled ‘Woman’s Relation to Church and State,’ was presented in 1877.⁵⁵⁵ However, where Solomon’s paper does seem to depart from earlier form is that in standing as a Jew, speaking on the ways in which Judaism and Christianity differed, she brought into relief the fragility of the existing attitude which existed within the Club which stated that despite the

heterogeneous character of our membership, which brings together every phase of religious, social and political opinion, antipodes in thought upon many topics, and yet harmonizes the whole upon a universal humanitarian basis.⁵⁵⁶

In the draft of her speech, Solomon went on to explain that ‘Tolerance... had advanced sufficiently’ for the paper’s successful reception, and for members of the club to invite her to speak elsewhere, and even for the paper’s publication in the Unitarian publication *Unity*.⁵⁵⁷ By relating that tolerance had advanced by 1892, she rather suggests a lack of tolerance in earlier times. This article is significant in being one of the only places where she gives any detail on the way that the paper was received. Though it is one of the most frequently mentioned incidents when Solomon’s early life is discussed, the mentions are generally limited to a mention that the paper was presented, and that it was a success.⁵⁵⁸

One of the most high-profile projects with which the *Chicago Women’s Club* was involved in this period was the creation of the city’s Juvenile Court, the first of its kind in the world. Hannah Solomon worked on a number of committees involved in the creation on the Court—which came into being in 1899—alongside Jane Addams and Ellen Henrotin, who were like Solomon members of the *Chicago Women’s Club* but better remembered for their work elsewhere: Addams for Hull-House

⁵⁵⁵Frank and Jerome, *Annals of the Chicago Woman’s Club for the First Forty Years of its Organization, 1876-1916*, op. cit., p.29, 32.

⁵⁵⁶*Ibid.*, p.62.

⁵⁵⁷The Chicago Women’s Club and Education, The Hannah G Solomon Family Collection, American Jewish Archive, Box 3, Folder 6

⁵⁵⁸Solomon, *The Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*, op. cit., p.43.

and Henrotin for the Columbian Exposition and her presidency of the *Women's Trade Union League*.⁵⁵⁹ Solomon became a member of the Juvenile Courts Committee, which was tasked with finding the money to pay for the court program, including the salary of the probation officers.⁵⁶⁰ This was a high-profile role for Solomon, placing her alongside Julia Lathrop, who was at that time President of the Juvenile Courts Committee. Lathrop later became head of the US Children's Bureau, the first time a woman had headed a United States Federal Bureau.⁵⁶¹ The Juvenile Court program was a strongly Progressive project, and it would not be until 1967 that there was federal recognition of the idea these women put into practice in Chicago: that young offenders were best served by being handled separately from adult offenders, lest the child's "impulsive action. . . [lead to] a prison term and a life of crime for the city youngster."⁵⁶²

6.2.3 Henriette Frank's Presidency

Though Hannah Solomon's autobiography notes that her sister Henriette also joined the *Chicago Woman's Club*, and that she was later its president, this is often forgotten. Indeed, in the only major book on the early years of the NCJW, Rogow mentions Henriette joining the Club, and yet a page later seems to forget this, writing as if Solomon were the sole Jew in the organisation.

As the first Jew in the *Chicago Woman's Club*, Solomon was familiar with the role of being the representative Jew in a non-Jewish context. She knew that many of her co-members

⁵⁵⁹Frank and Jerome, *Annals of the Chicago Woman's Club for the First Forty Years of its Organization, 1876-1916*, op. cit., p.177.

⁵⁶⁰Mary Lynn McCree Byan and Allen F. Davis. *100 Years at Hull-House*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990, p.146.

⁵⁶¹Helene Silverberg. "Introduction: Toward a Gendered Social Science History". In: *Gender and American Social Science: The Formative Years*. Ed. by Helene Silverberg. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998, p.3-32, p.15.

⁵⁶²Allen F. Davis. *American Heroine: The Life and Legend of Jane Addams*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973, p.150.

based their opinions on Jews on their opinion of her.⁵⁶³

An examination of the *Chicago Women's Club* shows that Henriette Frank was arguably the more prominent of the two sisters, certainly in the years before Solomon quit her presidency of the NCJW.⁵⁶⁴

Henriette Frank, né Greenebaum, was several years older than her sister Hannah, and was already married when she and Hannah were invited to join the Club. She and the oldest of the Greenebaum children, Therese, had been educated at a Jewish boarding school in Germany where her education had included a study of languages, history, geography, German and English literature, as well as more creative subjects such as sewing and music. This was in contrast to Hannah, and the rest of her younger siblings, who were all educated within the Chicago Public Schools system.⁵⁶⁵ Solomon noted that Henriette was a particularly able musician, and this was a skill she would use later in life while involved in the Maxwell Street Settlement House.

It was this rounded education which would stand her in good stead when she was selected as a founding member and a year later the second chairman of the 'Art and Literature Committee', of which Hannah Solomon was also a founding member. The Club's official history notes that Frank lead classes which the women created for themselves for six years, on topics such as history of art, and Greek and German literature.⁵⁶⁶ As has already been noted, these classes were some of the earliest projects of the organisation, and it was her leadership here which allowed Frank to rise to the position of President of the organisation only seven years after joining. It was under Frank's leadership that the Club moved into a permanent headquarters, the

⁵⁶³Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting: The National Council of Jewish Women, 1893-1993*, op. cit., p.12.

⁵⁶⁴The reasons why Solomon is often portrayed as the sole Jew in Chicago's non-Jewish organisations will be explored later in this chapter

⁵⁶⁵Fabric of My Life Chapter Draft, Hannah G. Solomon Family Collection, American Jewish Archives, Box 3, Folder 3

⁵⁶⁶Frank and Jerome, *Annals of the Chicago Woman's Club for the First Forty Years of its Organization, 1876-1916*, op. cit., p.32.

former Art Institute building, as a result of the move renamed the Chicago Club. It was also during Frank's presidency that the Club's more practical philanthropic efforts became more prominent, including projects such as the efforts to appoint a matron for the city jail when female prisoners were incarcerated.⁵⁶⁷

Frank's involvement with the Club extended past her presidency. In 1895, through the Club, she was elected to a committee formed to help explore the provision of Kindergartens in Illinois Public Schools. She was Treasurer of the committee tasked with fund-raising for the Illinois Industrial School for Girls, and was tasked with providing a greeting in German to the delegates of the International Congress of Chambers of Commerce when it was held in Chicago in 1912. She was also, of course, prominent enough within the club in 1915 to be chosen to read extracts from the Club's records prepared by the Club History Committee, as part of the celebration of the organisation's 39th anniversary. She was subsequently chosen as one of the two editors for the Club's official history, published a year later.⁵⁶⁸ It also gave her the opportunity to gain a voice outside of the Club and the Jewish community, as evidenced by her invitation to speak to the Chicago Women's League, in January 1896, giving a paper entitled 'Why I Am A Jew.'⁵⁶⁹ In this paper, Frank was able to discuss not only Judaism but the Radical Reform Judaism of the elite community associated with Emil Hirsch's Temple Sinai. In this case, it was again involvement with philanthropy that provided an avenue through which this group of Jewish women were able to present themselves as Jews to other elite women who otherwise might never have contact with the Jewish community.

⁵⁶⁷Ibid., p.45.

⁵⁶⁸Ibid., p.148, 275, 310, 357.

⁵⁶⁹Why I Am A Jew by Henriette G Frank, Hannah G Solomon Family Collection, American Jewish Archive, Box 8, Folder 2

6.3 The Vacation Schools Movement

One of the least often remembered projects begun in the 1890s by the *Chicago Woman's Club* were the Vacation Schools, run in conjunction with the Chicago Parks District. This project began in 1896, with a suggestion that some kind of additional schooling be provided through the summer months in the most deprived areas of the city. After successful summer programs in a small number of schools in 1896 and 1897, it was suggested that a larger-scale project should be attempted the next year, and a city-wide committee was formed with representatives of fifty-one of women's clubs from across the city and suburbs. The *Chicago Woman's Club's* status as the most elite of the city's women's clubs was confirmed by the fact that the president of this new joint committee was chosen from that club: Sadie American.⁵⁷⁰ In fact, not only did American serve as President of the Committee, she was elected to the Board of the new organisation, alongside a number of Settlement workers (including Jane Addams), principals of several of the city's philanthropically-run schools (including Gabriel Bamberger of the Jewish Training School) and two professors from the University of Chicago. Though American's role in this project is little remembered, and in fact not mentioned in Rogow's history of the NCJW, it brought her some measure of national attention, leading her to publish an article in the *American Journal of Sociology* on the topic.⁵⁷¹ It also provided her with international attention; she presented a paper titled 'Vacation Schools' to the educational section of the International Congress of Women, held in London in 1899.⁵⁷²

The *Civic Federation*, of which American was an Executive Committee member, was also involved in the development of the Vacation Schools movement, with their board deciding in 1898 that the city's women's

⁵⁷⁰Frank and Jerome, *Annals of the Chicago Woman's Club for the First Forty Years of its Organization, 1876-1916*, op. cit., p.208.

⁵⁷¹Sadie American. "The Vacation School Movement". In: *The American Journal of Sociology* 4.3 (1898), pp. 309–325.

⁵⁷²American, *Sadie Report of the Chairman of the Chicago Permanent Vacation School and Playground Committee of Women's Clubs*, 1899, p.11

clubs should take charge in the campaign to have these schools adopted into the public school system, rather than entirely supported through private philanthropy.⁵⁷³ In order for this to occur, a change in Illinois law was needed, which American and two other women travelled to Springfield to secure. The amendment which was needed passed the State's house unanimously, but languished in the State Senate until, as American wrote in her annual report,

several days before the close of the session a telegram was received urging that someone go to Springfield to look after it. No one else being able to go, your chairman felt compelled to do so. She spent the last three days of the session at Springfield, not leaving until the bill was passed. She returned to Chicago, happy that so much had been accomplished, when suddenly she received word that the Governor was disinclined to sign the bill. Several good friends came to the rescue and the bill was signed.⁵⁷⁴

This use of legislative means to advance a socially conscious agenda was typical of the Progressive political agenda of the day, a tactic pioneered in Chicago by the women of Hull-House, who had used it earlier in the decade to have new labour restrictions enacted.⁵⁷⁵

Entrance to the Vacation Schools was through invitation, with the regular schools of each neighbourhood being asked to select those that they considered in greatest need of the summer program.⁵⁷⁶ One of the key aims of the school was the Americanisation of the students, but it went further. They instilled the students with a sense of Chicago identity and of pride in the city. Each morning, they were required to recite a 'Civic Creed':

⁵⁷³American *Report of the Chairman of the Chicago Permanent Vacation School and Playground Committee of Women's Clubs*, 1899, p.7

⁵⁷⁴Ibid, p.10

⁵⁷⁵Robyn Muncy. *Creating a Femal Dominion in American Reform: 1890-1935*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, p.25-6.

⁵⁷⁶Milliken, Orris, *Report of Superintendent of Vacation Schools* 1899, p.19

God hath made of one blood all nations of men, and we are his children, brothers and sisters all. We are citizens of these United States, and we believe our Flag stands for self sacrifice, for the good of all the people. We want, therefore to be true citizens of our great city and will show our love for her by our works.

Chicago does not ask for us to die for her welfare, she asks us to live for her and so to live and act that her government may be pure, her officers honest, and every corner of her territory shall be a place fit to grow the best men and women who shall rule over her.⁵⁷⁷

They were not only a project in which the Jewish community had a strong stake as organisers, they also represented, in 1899, the largest group of users, with 516 pupils out of just over 2,300 across the system.⁵⁷⁸

While the Vacation Schools operated in the mornings, temporary playgrounds were set up across the city to entertain children in the afternoons. Again, Sadie American was key in their creation. She worked with Chicago's Mayor and City Council in 1899 to secure \$1,000 of public money, which was supplemented with \$800 she raised from philanthropic contributions.⁵⁷⁹ She also published a paper on the topic in the *American Journal of Sociology*, discussing the ways in which playgrounds for children had been set up in cities around the United States, including Chicago, as well as what American reformers had learned on the subject from Europe.⁵⁸⁰ American's work on the subject allowed the creation of playgrounds across a number of deprived neighbourhoods in the city, building on the example of Hull-House, which had built a playground for the residents of the 19th Ward earlier

⁵⁷⁷Ibid, p.20

⁵⁷⁸Ibid, p.31

⁵⁷⁹Noyes, William *Summer Playgrounds in Chicago, 1899—Secretary's Report 1899*, p.38

⁵⁸⁰Sadie American. "The Movement for Small Playgrounds". In: *The American Journal of Sociology* 4.2 (1898), pp. 159–170.

in the decade.⁵⁸¹ American's efforts were the opening phase of a project which would, by 1917, create over 100 municipal playgrounds across the city.⁵⁸²

6.4 The Civic Federation

6.4.1 The foundation of the Civic Federation

Chicago's *Civic Federation* was founded in the early 1890s, partially in response to the rather scathing picture of Chicago, and its political and civic corruption, published in William T Stead's *If Christ Came to Chicago*. Lyman Gage, President of the First National Bank of Chicago, and one of the chief architects of the Chicago bid for the Columbian Exposition, had sought to organise a "voluntary association of citizens for the mutual council, support, and combined action of all the forces for good."⁵⁸³ It is unclear how far these efforts progressed in the years before Stead's visit to Chicago, but at the second of two public meetings organised by Stead to deliver the findings, a new organisation was proposed and four months later, in February 1894, a charter for the *Civic Federation* was issued, stating the organisation's tripartite purpose:

1. To form a new non-partisan organisation that promoted honesty, efficiency and economy in the local government;
2. To convene to diverse citizens of Chicago, who though living in different parts of the city, and having different nationalities by birth, and different creeds, still share a concern for the well-being of Chicago;

⁵⁸¹Shannon Jackson. *Lines of Activity: Performance, Historiography, Hull House Domesticity*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2001, p.120–1.

⁵⁸²Philpott, *The Slum and The Ghetto: Immigrants, Blacks and Reformers in Chicago, 1880-1930*, op. cit., p.96.

⁵⁸³James Weber Linn. *Jane Addams: a biography*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000, p.162.

3. To increase the number and efficiency of agencies designed to discover and correct abuses in municipal affairs, and to increase the citizens interest in such affairs⁵⁸⁴

The organisation was massive in scope, with a central council numbering a hundred, and a branch in each of the city's wards, as well as six departments: philanthropic, industrial, municipal, educational, moral and political.⁵⁸⁵ Unsurprisingly for its size, the *Civic Federation* represented a diverse set of interests. Led by Gage, with Bertha Palmer as Vice-President, on its surface it represented the city's Gilded Age establishment, whose traditionalism had been there for all to see in the run-up to the Columbian Exposition.⁵⁸⁶ However, some of the most influential members of Chicago's progressive movement, including Jane Addams and Graham Taylor, founder of the Chicago Commons Settlement and an influential Christian leader in the city, also took on prominent roles, with Addams at one point heading the organisation's Committee on Industrial Arbitration, and advocating remarkably progressive reforms to the state's procedures for settling labour disputes.⁵⁸⁷

6.4.2 Jewish Women in the Civic Federation

From its inception, the *Civic Federation* placed in its charter a commitment to be both non-political and non-sectarian. Its commitment to being non-political waned in the 1930s when it transformed into an organisation chiefly concerned with tax reform, and took on a recognisably right-wing bent, and from the start it was seen to have to at least some degree a religious mission: that "the remedy for such conditions was proposed in the name of Christ, and by methods avowedly Chris-

⁵⁸⁴Civic Federation Collection, DePaul University Special Collections Box 1, Folder: The Civic Federation in the (Eighteen) Nineties—Louise W Knight

⁵⁸⁵Linn, *Jane Addams: a biography*, op. cit., p.162.

⁵⁸⁶Civic Federation Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Box 1, Folder: Fifty Years on the Civic Front by Douglas Sutherland, 1943

⁵⁸⁷Linn, *Jane Addams: a biography*, op. cit., p.162–3.

tian.”⁵⁸⁸ However, it also had strong links to Chicago’s elite Jewish community from its earliest years. Emil Hirsch (noted in the organisation’s official history as “the militant head of Sinai Congregation”) became one of four new trustees appointed in 1895, a year after the organisation’s foundation.⁵⁸⁹ In addition, Adolph Nathan, another prominent member of the Chicago Jewish community, who had previously served as a director at the World’s Columbian Exposition, also took a leading role in the organisation.⁵⁹⁰ With these prominent male members of the Jewish community involved, it is therefore unsurprising that the prominent female members of the Jewish community were also, with both Hannah Solomon and Sadie American finding themselves in leadership positions within the organisation. In 1898, a list of the members of the committees which made up the organisation showed that Sadie American was a member of the twenty-one strong Executive Committee, alongside Jane Addams, Adolph Nathan and other prominent Chicago citizens. It is worth noting that sixteen members of this committee were male; American was one of only five women on the organisation’s governing board. Hannah Solomon was a member of the Philanthropic Committee, which was chaired by Lucy Flower, one of the most prominent educational reformers in Chicago, and the first woman to be elected as a trustee of the University of Chicago. Also on that committee was Julia Lathrop, at the time a Resident at Hull-House.⁵⁹¹ Sadie American remained on the Executive Committee in 1899; however, Solomon’s name does not appear.⁵⁹² This is unsurprising, as in 1899 Solomon scaled back her public commitments to take care of her elder son, Herbert, who suffered a long illness and subsequently

⁵⁸⁸Civic Federation Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Box 1, Folder: The Civic Federation of Chicago—George Straube

⁵⁸⁹Civic Federation Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Box 1, Folder: Fifty Years on the Civic Front by Douglas Sutherland, 1943

⁵⁹⁰Truman, *History of the World’s fair; being a complete description of the World’s Columbian exposition from its inception*, op. cit., p.33–4.

⁵⁹¹Notice of Meeting, 1898, Civic Federation Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Box 1, Folder: Administrative Correspondence—1898–1902

⁵⁹²Letter to Mr W.A. Giles, July 8, 1899, Civic Federation Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Box 1, Folder: Administrative Correspondence—1898–1902

died.

Few records remain of the early years of the *Civic Federation*, and it has been ignored by many of those who have written about the development of philanthropy and social reform in Chicago, likely because of its later incarnation as an anti-tax group. It is therefore impossible to determine how involved Solomon and American were with the day-to-day workings of the organisation in the 1890s. However, their appearance on these committees, alongside some of Chicago's most prominent citizens and best-remembered reformers speaks to the status that they, through their leadership of the *NCJW*, had reached by the 1890s. It is also significant that Solomon's place was on the 'Philanthropy' committee, suggesting that though the *NCJW* presented itself as a religious organisation to those within the Jewish community, it was seen by those in the wider establishment as broadly philanthropic. This conferred a level of expertise on that subject to its leaders. What this snapshot of involvement in the *Civic Federation* shows above all, though, is that Solomon and American were accepted amongst the elites of the city in philanthropic terms, and their work placed them amongst some of the most famous philanthropists of the age—of whom perhaps the most famous was Jane Addams.

6.5 Hull-House

6.5.1 Jewish involvement in Hull-House

Even before Jane Addams became the first American woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize, she was nationally and internationally known. Certainly, Hannah Solomon was keen to emphasise the relationship the *NCJW* had had with Addams, who was invited to Solomon's seventy-fifth birthday celebrations.⁵⁹³ However, they also had a personal friendship, and Hannah Solomon's diaries show that the two did meet from time to time in the 1890s, and she was an invited speaker at several

⁵⁹³Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 4, Folder 2

NCJW Triennials ⁵⁹⁴ Addams was also friendly with other members of Chicago's elite Jewish community, being the first woman invited by Emil Hirsch to speak from the pulpit of Temple Sinai.⁵⁹⁵

Hannah Solomon, in a draft of her autobiography, characterised herself and the other Jewish women of Chicago, as Addams's "willing followers."⁵⁹⁶ It is also clear from the way she is used by the editors of the *American Jewess* that she is understood nationally by Jewish women as an almost heroic figure. Her name and even once her likeness are used in several issues when famous and worthy women are referred to.⁵⁹⁷

As discussed in the previous chapter, on an organisational level there were clear links between the *National Council of Jewish Women* and Hull-House. The Bureau of Personal Service worked with Hull-House closely and Hannah Solomon and Jane Addams were on friendly terms. However, there is surprisingly little evidence that elite Jewish women were personally involved at Hull-House. After 1902, there was significant Jewish involvement in Hull-House, as Julius Rosenwald, perhaps the most prominent Jewish philanthropist that Chicago ever produced, became a major donor and eventually a trustee of the organisation. This period of involvement falls outside the temporal scope of this discussion, and even after his involvement, there is little evidence that elite Jewish women followed his example.

As this chapter explores, Jewish women were not only involved with but also took leadership roles in a number of non-Jewish organisations. And, as discussed in the previous chapter, elite Jewish women, the Chicago Section of the National Council of Jewish women in particular, were early participants in, and arguably the originators of, the idea for the Maxwell Street Settlement. Indeed, outside of Chicago, elite Jewish women, including Lillian Wald at the Henry Street Settlement in

⁵⁹⁴Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 10, Folder 4

⁵⁹⁵Solomon, *The Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*, op. cit., p.111.

⁵⁹⁶American Jewish Archives, Hannah G Solomon Family Collection, Box 3, Folder 6

⁵⁹⁷*American Jewess* Volume: 1, Issue: 4, July, 1895, pp. 158, Volume: 1, Issue: 5, August, 1895, pp. 256–258, Volume: 2, Issue: 7, April, 1896, pp. 376–378

New York and Eva Hoffman in Boston, were leaders in the settlement movements in their own cities.⁵⁹⁸ Yet, despite its early reputation as the centre of Chicago's burgeoning reform movement, Hull-House did not seem to become a place where elite Jewish women would volunteer their time.

That is not to say that there is no evidence at all that elite Jewish women were involved. Sadie American wrote that she was to spend a week at Hull-House.⁵⁹⁹ In fact, the account books at Hull-House confirm this, showing that she paid a token amount to stay there.⁶⁰⁰ However, a thorough search of the cashbooks show that though others paid to stay at the settlement on a short-term basis, American's name is not among them. Though this cannot of course be taken to mean that she never did stay there again.

A number of other projects were achieved in personal collaboration between elite Jewish women in Chicago and Hull-House. Perhaps the most notable when considering the leadership of the NCJW was the Helen Day Nursery, run by Hannah Solomon's daughter Helen after her graduation from college in 1902. This venture, standing as it does slightly outside the time period considered cannot be examined at great length, but in her autobiography Solomon recounts how, when the family were considering how Helen might use her university education, Jane Addams was the one to suggest that a day nursery for working women, similar to the one run at Hull-House, might be an answer.⁶⁰¹ The nursery was funded through the United Hebrew Charities, and remained open until 1920.⁶⁰²

⁵⁹⁸James J Connolly. *The Triumph of Ethnic Progressivism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998, p.61.

⁵⁹⁹Sadie American to Hannah Solomon, April 1894, Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 6, Folder 10

⁶⁰⁰University of Illinois Special Collections, Hull-House Collection, Folder 99

⁶⁰¹Solomon, *The Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*, op. cit., p.96.

⁶⁰²Cutler, *The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb*, op. cit., p.119.

6.5.2 Why did the Jewish community not participate more in Hull-House?

There is little evidence as to why the elite Jewish women of Chicago chose to be so little involved with Hull-House, despite their professed admiration for Addams, and the emphasis placed on the occasions that they did work together. Though Hull-House is most famous for its 'Residents'—mostly unmarried college-educated women who lived on-site and devoted themselves to community work—many other people were involved in other ways, teaching classes, leading groups or attending classes and lectures there. Many others supported the settlement house financially.⁶⁰³ However, while Hull-House is often portrayed as a secular organisation, its origins were linked to a sense of Christian responsibility for those around them. Addams's work was inspired by that of the Barnetts at Toynbee Hall in London, whom she visited a number of times and corresponded with.⁶⁰⁴ This is more commonly mentioned when discussing the fact that Jewish residents in Chicago's 19th Ward, where Hull-House was based, fearful of conversion or violence, were not always keen to visit the settlement house. But for the women of the NCJW, perhaps it was not fear that discouraged them from involvement but a sense of exclusion from the Christian social hegemony in which Hull-House operated.⁶⁰⁵

Hull-House was not a 'religious' settlement house, though a number of explicitly Christian settlement houses were in operation in this period in Chicago. However, Addams was baptised as a Presbyterian a week before Hull-House was opened and her commitment to social justice was rooted in an understanding of Christian socialism. A large number of the early residents of Hull-House adhered to various branches of Christianity. Addams's co-founder, Ellen Gates Starr converted to

⁶⁰³University of Illinois Special Collection, Hull-House Collection, Box 14, Folder 1

⁶⁰⁴Mary Lynn McCree Bryan, Barbara Bair, and Maree De Angury, eds. *The Selected Papers of Jane Addams: Vol. 2, Venturing into Usefulness, 1881–88*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009, p.492.

⁶⁰⁵Polacheck, *I Came a Stranger: The Story of a Hull-House Girl*, op. cit., p.51.

Roman Catholicism, and ended her life as a lay sister in a convent, though she never took orders.⁶⁰⁶

Addams herself, particularly in letters written while she was a student at Rockford Female Seminary in the late 1870s, seems to have devoted a great deal of thought to her personal beliefs.

Every time I talk about religion, I vow a great vow not to do it again, I find myself growing indignant & sensitive when people speak of it lightly, as if they had no right to, you see I am not so unsettled, as I resettle so often, but my creed is ever be sincere & don't fuss. ⁶⁰⁷

Martin E. Marty, in a lecture titled "Hull-House and American Religion", given as part of the celebration of Hull-House's centenary in 1989, made reference to this quotation from Addams, and noted that Hull-House was in fact the manifestation of a "religious vision of the 'no fuss' sort." Organised or institutionalised religion was seen as a problem to many in the Progressive Movement, as it was largely viewed as a conservative force. Particularly in the case of the new immigrants helped by Hull-House, religion was seen as a source of superstitions which held immigrants back from embracing American modernity. Yet at the same time, Marty asserts that Addams "saw what she was doing as somehow religious by her definition." ⁶⁰⁸ Those around her at the time also saw Addams as essentially Christian. In a letter to Addams's sister in 1888, Ellen Gates Starr wrote: "I have never known a Christian like [Addams]. She has nothing at all of formalism, but everything seems of so little consequence to her except the exact right thing, the precise life Christ wishes me to live." ⁶⁰⁹ Marty and others suggest that

⁶⁰⁶Sue Ellen Hoy. *Ellen Gates Starr: Her Later Years*. Chicago: Chicago History Museum, 2010, p.55.

⁶⁰⁷Jane Addams to Ellen Gates Starr, August 11 1879, Selected Papers of Jane Addams, Vol 1. p.286

⁶⁰⁸University of Illinois Special Collections, Jane Addams Hull-House Centennial program, Box 1, Folder 6

⁶⁰⁹Ellen Gates Starr to Sarah Alice Addams Haldeman, March 4th, 1888, The Select Papers of Jane Addams, Vol 2. p.577

this, rather than representing an inconsistency, is rather a representation of the rather common tendency among Progressive reformers to find a need to come to terms with the trappings of religion and transform their belief systems into something modern, personal, moral, pragmatic and rational. They were “inheriting intact religions and then changing them radically and drastically.” ⁶¹⁰

However, that transformation was post-Protestant and not divorced fully from its origins. The world-view in which these new understandings were created were underpinned by an understanding of the world profoundly influenced by New Testament teaching. Jean Bethke Elshtain, though her biography of Addams on occasion veers towards hagiography, explains this point particularly well:

[Addams's] bare-bones ethical system in which Jesus joins company with other moral teachers and all else is let go leaves little space for sacred liturgy, saints, incense, the mystery of the mass—and these predominated among her Italian Catholic neighbours in the 19th Ward. The Social Gospel is like a pair of sensible shoes for walking about and doing good works; but they are not pilgrim's sandals, with the soles worn paper thin by trudging miles to stand before a relic of the True Cross. A Christianity stripped of mystery had helped Addams find her way; unsurprisingly, she urged it onto others, but not in energetic proselytizing. Rather, she tried to live her creed and model a creative solution to the problems faced by educated young women.⁶¹¹

Elshtain goes on to explain how Addams lived her creed. The Hull-House gospel was not “philanthropy or benevolence but a ‘thing fuller and wider than either of these.’ It [was] nothing less than a Christian impulse to ‘share the lives of the poor’ in the way the Good Shepherd would have us do.”

⁶¹⁰Jane Addams Hull-House Centennial program, UIC Collection, Box 1, Folder 6

⁶¹¹Elshtain, *Jane Addams and the Dream of American Democracy: a life*, op. cit., p.76.

Addams's writings, as well as other works by the Hull-House residents in this period, continued to name religion as an important facet of communal life, regardless of their personal beliefs. As late as 1912, in a treatise on the problem of prostitution, Addams noted that:

Fortunately, the same crowded city conditions which make moral isolation possible, constantly tend to develop a new restraint founded upon the mutual dependences of city life and its daily necessities. The city itself socializes the very instruments that constitute the apparatus of social control—Law, Publicity, Literature, Education and Religion.⁶¹²

Religion here is obviously, for Addams, still one of the key means by which in which society is ordered. However, here it can be noted that no particular religion is indicated; the assumption is merely made that religion involves a degree of public confession, and therefore communal feeling, by which society can be ordered.

Christmas was celebrated at Hull-House with parties for residents of the neighbourhood. However, it was also one of the key fund-raising opportunities in the calendar. While in later years this was a more formalised campaign, with letters and flyers sent out to prospective donors, encouraging them to give during the Christmas season, it was noted in the Hull-House Account Books as a separate account as early as 1891. As part of the 1891 Christmas campaign, donations were made by at least one church, All Souls. In fact, several other churches are labeled as specific donors in the account book for 1890–1893. Their donations fall largely in the months of November and December, suggesting the Christmas period was significant in their decision to donate.⁶¹³ These are not huge sums, nor are they that frequent, although the Central Church Society, a Methodist organisation, donated over \$120 in December of 1893. They do however, raise the question as to why

⁶¹²Jane Addams. *A New Conscience and An Ancient Evil*. New York: Macmillan, 1912, p.72.

⁶¹³University of Illinois Special Collections, Hull-House Collection, Box 16, File 138

a non-religious organisation, which Hull-House claimed to be, was in receipt of donations from Churches. It seems plausible that the implicit Christianity of Hull-House was enough for churches to feel comfortable making donations, just as it may have represented a barrier to greater involvement at Hull-House by elite Jewish women. However, as the case *Civic Federation* shows, implicit Christianity alone was not enough to prevent Jewish women working with an organisation.

6.6 The Problem of the 'New Woman'

6.6.1 University Education

In the October 1885 edition of the Chicago-based magazine *The American Jewess*, the anonymously written section 'The Woman Who Talks' (widely attributed to editor Rosa Sonneschein) included a small subsection titled 'Colleges and Matrimony'. In full, the section read:

One hundred and eight and out of nine hundred and twenty ex-students of Newman College have married and but forty-one of three hundred and seventy-two Girton girls have done likewise. Of seventy-nine girls who gained the certificate of the mathematical tripos only six have figured out the Herculean proposition of capturing husbands. Now there you are, my dears, at the parting of two widely divergent paths—is it education or a man, a mathematical certificate or matrimony? It is yours to decide and in accordance therewith be forever blessed or eternally blasted.⁶¹⁴

A month later, in the November issue, the subject of the results of a college education were again discussed within the pages of the *American Jewess*, this time in the context of an article discussing the problem of members of the Jewish community converting to Christianity.

⁶¹⁴*The American Jewess* Vol 2, No 1, October 1985, p.61

The would-be-otherwise-than-Jew is most often found amongst that class of men and women who are best described as the socially ambitious, who have a college education and have had glimpses into an existence fascinating, novel and of glittering show and display, and conceive a strong antipathy to a religion which they suppose prevents admittance into that brilliant world.⁶¹⁵

Though college education for women is mentioned in other issues of the magazine, particularly in small articles which profile notable women, both Jewish and non-Jewish, these two brief mentions, from the first year of the magazine's publication are characteristic of the tone the magazine adopts towards the idea of college in the abstract, rather than when talking about a particular woman's life story.⁶¹⁶ Though the college education of elite Jewish women seems to have become normalised to a degree in the 1890s, the attitudes expressed by the magazine show that there remained a series of objections to Jews attending college, relating to the risk of them converting to Christianity, and in addition a more strident objection to Jewish women attending college, because of the idea that it would lead to them rejecting marriage in favour of a career.

This was certainly the state of affairs related by Irma Rosenthal Frankenstein, in her autobiography. Born to a middle-class German-speaking Jewish family in Chicago in 1871, Frankenstein worked as a teacher in the Chicago Public School system prior to her acceptance to the University of Chicago in 1892. Although she had already been

⁶¹⁵*The American Jewess* Vol. 2, No. 2, November 1895, pp.76–7

⁶¹⁶However it should also be noted that in only a handful of instances in which the magazine talks about college for women in the context of a particular woman's life story are they talking about a Jewish woman. More often they are discussing non-Jewish women. One of the exceptions to this is a profile of Rosalia Loew, published in the June 1896 issue, which makes pains to note that although Loew was a lawyer and had recently accepted a position as an Assistant Professor of Medical Jurisprudence, "the young lady has remained thoroughly womanly, and, like others of her sex, is burdened with domestic duties. If need be, besides being a lawyer, she is a dress-maker, cook and chamber-maid, and declares the home woman's most natural, most needed and happiest sphere." *The American Jewess* Vol. 2, No. 9, June 1896, p.475

working for a living, her college ambitions marked her out.

Among the girls I knew, there were only three who had college ambitions. They were rather brilliant girls and I did not feel myself in a class with them. There wasn't at that time, a woman's college in Chicago, and the majority of persons were still prejudiced against that was know as 'higher learning for women' ... Broadminded as my mother was, she was opposed to my going to college...

[B]ecause I wanted to go to college I was called a blue-stocking and there was a dire prediction in the family that I'd never find a husband.⁶¹⁷

It was the specific ambition of attending college that was particularly problematic in this case, with the (even in the late-nineteenth century) rather anachronistic reference to becoming a blue-stocking suggesting that the fear was not simply that college would persuade a woman to reject marriage. In this case, she was already working as a teacher, but that college education would render a woman unattractive to eligible men, and that marriage would reject her.

Hull-House was known in Chicago and outside for being a place where female college graduates were able to develop careers in the newly developing fields of social work and community organisation. Indeed, Hull-House played a leading role in the professionalisation of these fields. Until that time, they had been the domain of philanthropic and voluntary organisations. Former Hull-House Residents Edith Abbott and Sophonisba Breckonridge created the first school of social work and philanthropy, at first independently as the 'Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy', and then as part of the University of Chicago after it proved to be financially non-viable alone.⁶¹⁸ While it would

⁶¹⁷Ellen FitzSimmons Steinberg. *Irma: A Chicago Woman's Story 1871-1966*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2004, p.40-1.

⁶¹⁸In 1920 when the School became a department of the University of Chicago, Julius Rosenwald and the Jewish Associated Charities were major donors, The Edith and Grace Abbott Papers, University of Chicago, Box 4, Folder 3

become entirely acceptable for Jewish women to enter these professions within thirty years, even to the point of a Jewish School of Social Work opening in New York, in the 1890s the issue remained a contentious one, with the only sort of professional training open to women at the time particularly relevant to their endeavours being the few schools of nursing. However, Hannah Solomon's later reminiscences on the subject show a degree of ambivalence on the subject of whether the thorough professionalisation of the subject had been the best route, noting that they used "their brains for well planned charity" but endeavoured to find a balance whereby "the heart and the brain and the hand worked in harmony together."⁶¹⁹

Hull-House promoted the idea that a college education was necessary to engage in the kinds of work women had previously entered though voluntary work, they also worked in other ways to encourage young women to attend college. They worked closely with the University of Chicago which was, from its foundation in 1890, co-educational. As early as 1891, Hull-House ran college extension classes, aimed at and taught by young women, at Addams's *alma mater* Rockford Female Seminary in Rockford, Illinois. Lasting for the month of July, these classes were on a variety of subjects, including physical education, languages, science, music and literature, and though students had to pay for board and laundry, the classes themselves were free to attend. Hull-House also arranged reduced rates for the rail fare from Chicago.⁶²⁰ They also encouraged young women who had grown up attending Hull-House to attend college, providing all manner of evening classes at Hull-House, some taught by staff from the University of Chicago, which for some lead to entry to that institution even without a High School diploma, with a scholarship to cover costs and a loan to allow the student to continue to contribute to their family's upkeep.⁶²¹

⁶¹⁹Hannah G Solomon Collection, American Jewish Archives, Box 2, Folder 8

⁶²⁰University of Illinois Special Collections, Jane Addams Hull-House Collection, Box 55, Folder 688A

⁶²¹Polacheck, *I Came a Stranger: The Story of a Hull-House Girl*, op. cit., p. 77, 86–7.

This devoted emphasis to college education for women juxtaposes slightly uncomfortably with the message from the elite Jewish community. Although the community was in favour of women educating themselves on issues related to religion, art and philanthropy, it had yet to commit to the idea of women attending college. Even for those such as Hannah Solomon herself, whose daughter Helen attended college, the choice does not seem to have been a comfortable one. The letters Helen sent home during a year spent at Wellesley confirmed many of the ideas about women's colleges that the Jewish community feared.⁶²² The college was an insular environment, where all students, regardless of their faith, were required to attend church services and the prayer meetings of the houses where the students boarded. A few weeks into her year at Wellesley, Helen wrote to her mother, nothing that while she had been unable to arrange to attend a synagogue during the High Holidays, she had been, and intended to continue, attending a Christian church weekly, and had been participating in the service because she "didn't want to be an onlooker."⁶²³ Though Helen's later letters bore out her determination to attend a Christian church on a regular basis, they also note her bemused attitude towards Christianity, and towards the missionary attitudes of a number of her classmates.⁶²⁴

Her letters might have also confirmed other concerns that had been noted about women's colleges, that of their profoundly homosocial nature, and the effect that might have on young women's future prospects, and even desire, for marriage. It has been suggested that one of the reasons why Hull-House and other settlement houses developed in the way that they did was that the first generation of female college graduates wished to maintain or recreate the sort of supportive ho-

⁶²²Helen Solomon graduated from the University of Chicago, where she spent the major part of her college education. She also spent one year attending Wellesley College, a women's college in Massachusetts.

⁶²³Hannah G Solomon Family Collection, American Jewish Archive, Box 16, Folder 11

⁶²⁴Hannah G Solomon Family Collection, American Jewish Archive, Box 17, Folder 1

mosocial environment which had characterised their college years.⁶²⁵ While this idea is conjectural, given that Hull-House was always home to a number of male Residents as well as married couples, it speaks to the way in which Hull-House has been memorialised as a community of women, and also to the notion that the first generation of women to graduate from college largely remained unmarried, which (though it seems unlikely to be based on any substantive research) was a notion put forward as frequently in the 1890s as it has been since.⁶²⁶

Helen's letters relate a sense of a college life which was cut off from the outside world, where male visitors were so rare that they were always noted, and where there were no models of marriage for the students. As Helen somewhat undiplomatically put it:

All of the teachers here are 'Miss,' I think. It just seems as if the whole of the United States had dumped its 'Old Maids' at Wellesley to be utilized as faculty.⁶²⁷

Unlike the later convention of providing opportunities for students at single-sex institutions to socialise with the opposite sex at joint events, opportunities to socialise at Wellesley were again, female only. Helen wrote to her mother during her first month at Wellesley describing a dance she had attended the previous night, organised by a social club on campus known as the "Barn Swallows".

The Barn itself, as it was last night, is perfectly empty except for the benches along the walls, and has a fine dance floor. Again last night, the old girls took the new girls. I went with Pearl Brown, one of the Freeman girls. Of course, my program was all made out before we went, with partners I didn't know mostly, so I met lots of new people.

Mama, you can't imagine what a lark it all was—Just girls, girls, girls. Funny! We didn't even miss boys, and it

⁶²⁵Muncy, *Creating a Femal Dominion in American Reform: 1890-1935*, op. cit., p.5–6.

⁶²⁶Elshtain, *Jane Addams and the Dream of American Democracy: a life*, op. cit., p.24.

⁶²⁷Letter from Helen Solomon to Hannah Solomon, September 20th, 1901, Hannah G Solomon Family Collection, American Jewish Archive, Box 16, Folder 11

looked so much prettier without them. We all got along just beautifully too and I didn't have a bit of trouble though I played man and led in nearly every dance.. . . Mama, can't you imagine what a pretty sight it was last night—all the gay, gaily dressed girls?⁶²⁸

Helen's letter demonstrates the ways in which the young women within the closed world of a women's college parodied the social rituals of the day, with women playing male roles.

The anxieties about young Jewish women attending college began to fade in the late 1890s, particularly in Chicago, where the coeducational University of Chicago offered the opportunity for education without surrendering to the closed world of women's colleges. But for the elite women of the NCJW and similar organisations, there remained a gap in attitudes; they had not attended college as the Residents at Hull-House had and therefore viewed the qualifications necessary for effective social work in a different way.

6.6.2 Jewish ambivalence to the idea of the 'New Woman'

The women of the Progressive Movement are, and were at the time, identified as 'New Women.' However, as frequently as this term is used, and even though it was a label by which many of these women identified themselves, its meaning (then and now) is nebulous.⁶²⁹ It has largely been used as an umbrella term for college-educated middle-class women who got involved in political or social activism at the end of the nineteenth century or beginning of the twentieth century. The 'New' was intended to differentiate these women from their predecessors, the

⁶²⁸Letter from Helen Solomon to Hannah Solomon, September 29th 1901, Hannah G Solomon Family Collection, American Jewish Archive, Box 16, Folder 11

⁶²⁹The usage of the term New Woman here is a very particular one, although found in much of the literature on women within the Progressive Era. The connotations, though linked, are not entirely the same as in Britain, for example. For an examination of alternative portrayals of New Women see Ledger, S, *The New Woman : fiction and feminism at the fin de siècle*, 1997

women of the Gilded Age, with their ideas of *Noblesse Oblige*. 'New Women' were strongly associated with the idea that the wealthy should work amongst and in concert with the poor, and that philanthropy and social work should be professionalised. The idea of the 'New Woman' has often been seen as a reaction against the institutional philanthropy of the Gilded Age, but there is evidence that there was more of a fluid transition between the two; the meeting of Women's Clubs, many of them founded in the Gilded Age, was described as a "Mecca of New Women."⁶³⁰ In this way, the idea was not a reaction to Gilded Age attitudes, but something which grew out of them, as women gained a greater degree of social freedom, and were culturally permitted to play a more active role.

But, as has been already pointed out, the Progressive Movement was more than just a middle-class movement. Definitions of the 'New Woman' which are still accepted retain old ideas that limit membership of this group to wealthy white women, ignoring the actions and autonomy of women from minority groups. Particularly problematic is the idea of a college education as a prerequisite; for the vast majority of women, college was both economically and culturally impossible. As has just been discussed, this was the case for women within the Established Jewish community. And yet, the drive within these communities—particularly those communities with aspirations to acceptance and middle-class status—to be identified as 'modern' was incredibly strong. Many were fearful that being labeled as 'old-fashioned' or 'backwards' would undermine their status. In this way, the idea of the 'New Woman' was problematic, itself a microcosm of many of the tensions this community faced in the 1890s: a conflict existed between the desire to maintain their community's distinctiveness and identity, and the desire to be seen as a modern community within the American mainstream.

The *American Jewess*, the first English-language magazine for American-Jewish women, provided a site for the negotiation of this issue. Within

⁶³⁰*Chicago Tribune*, October 10, 1895

its pages the concept of the 'New Woman' was discussed, and though the tensions are never made overt, it is clear that a range of reactions to the concept were given voice. Over the four years from 1895 to 1899, the *American Jewess* was able to create a notion of the 'New Women' which balanced the desire to display themselves as a modern community, whilst maintaining the particularities of American-Jewish womanhood.

It is not surprising, given the significant media attention given to the phenomenon of the 'New Women' in this period, that the 'New Woman' is mentioned in the very first issue of the *American Jewess*. In a markedly more neutral tone than would later be the case, she is described as a "feminine phoenix" But in contrast to the ways in which the mainstream press were describing the 'New Woman', the idea of her as an unmarried woman was not referred to. Instead, they suggested that she needed to find a 'New Man' to be her partner.⁶³¹

The first part of the *American Jewess's* extended debate about the *New Woman*, one which would play out over the next year, gained steam in the magazine's second issue. In the *American Jewess's* second issue, the Editorial discussed at some length an article on the idea of the 'New Woman' from a recent issue of *Ladies' Home Journal*. In it, a Dr R. Parkhurst is extensively quoted, explaining that he had

yet to be convinced that any very considerable number of [women] are disposed to resist Nature's intentions for them, but the actuating impulse of those who do is doubtless a passion for some sort of celebrity, and an impatience at the seclusion and restraints which femininity, so construed, imposes upon them.⁶³²

This is the first time in which arguments appear that the *American Jewess* would repeatedly make in the subsequent year: that the phenomenon of the 'New Woman' was not as widespread as the press would have the public believe, that 'New Women' were seeking notoriety or fame,

⁶³¹*American Jewess*, Vol. 1, No. 1, p.40

⁶³²*American Jewess* Vol. 1, No. 2, p.103

and that the idea of resisting 'traditional expectations' was an unnatural one. However, even at this early stage, the *American Jewess* shows that its attitude was an ambivalent one, as the Editorial notes that "every old bachelor is responsible that some old spinster resists Nature's intentions."⁶³³ Though the *American Jewess* finds no fault with the idea of women choosing to forgo marriage and family being un-natural, it stopped short of condemning all single women, softening their chastisements by pointing out that not all unmarried women had chosen this state. This is perhaps unsurprising when it is remembered that Rosa Sonnenschien, the magazine's editor, was divorced.

It seemed though, that the idea of the 'New Woman' as an unmarried woman was not one which the *American Jewess* could easily sidestep, particularly in Chicago where the most celebrated of this group, Jane Addams, lived and worked. Addams and her contemporaries were seen as heralding a new type of woman, a woman whose sense of social maternalism drove her to transform social work into a paid profession and push women further into the political sphere than they ever had been before. The shadow of Addams and Hull-House was a long one, and as the government began to regulate the welfare of women and children, the women who had carved out careers in this space found themselves in more contact with the government than ever before.

The knee-jerk reaction to these ideas from the *American Jewess* was not a positive one, even if they did not seem to be able to articulate what, precisely, the problematic issue was. "Will somebody please show us the 'New Woman' we have heard so much about?" an article in the magazine's third issue asked. "We confess ignorance on the subject; as yet we have not met her in the flesh. We have, however, of late encountered her in fiction, studied and analyzed her, and now pray: May she never come to life."⁶³⁴ Again, we find a repeated idea: that the New Woman was not as prominent in reality as she was in the press or in fiction.

⁶³³Ibid, p.103

⁶³⁴*American Jewess*, Vol. 1, No. 3, p.101

It was the next month, though, that the *American Jewess* began to more fully explore the idea of the 'New Woman', and the tensions between the antipathy they had thus far displayed and the way in which the idea of the 'New Woman' was understood in wider Chicago culture became clear. This issue of the magazine contains perhaps the most extensive discussion of the idea of the 'New Woman' but is in many ways largely irrelevant to the debate. It begins with a frontispiece titled 'The New Woman' containing pictures of Jane Addams, Kate Field, Susan B. Anthony and Frances Willard. This frontispiece, like almost all the others in the *American Jewess's* four-year run, is of female role-models, but in many way they are odd choices. Despite the magazine's Jewish identity, none of the 'New Women' are Jewish, and despite the antipathy towards women who chose not to marry, all the women presented were unmarried (indeed two had long-term female partners). Though the issue contains a long article about the 'New Woman', it was written not by any of the *American Jewess's* regular contributors but by a Unitarian minister named Ella Bartlett. In it, Bartlett argued that although the word 'New' had been attached to a woman who is interested in matters such as education, civic issues, and property and voting rights, there were actually biblical women who exhibit the same qualities, and that they perfectly compatible with, indeed even desirable qualities for a wife and mother. However, her argument seems less than convincing juxtaposed against the frontispiece, which seems to entirely refute it, something emphasised by the fact that Bartlett was herself an unmarried woman and would remain unmarried. Bartlett contended that those who suggest that it was not logical to suggest that New Women would not marry. She suggested that that conclusion was based on an assumption that marriage was a burden that women wanted to avoid. She said that rather, the New Woman would seek to marry her equal in moral worth and therefore have a marriage that is a partnership. This is a repeat of the argument made in the magazine's first issue, perhaps suggesting that the *American Jewess's* readers remained unconvinced of its veracity.

Perhaps the most interesting part of this issue is not the article about the 'New Woman', but the article titled "The Old Woman" which accompanied it. As has been mentioned, it is generally accepted that the 'New' in 'New Woman' referred to a changed attitude from their Gilded Age predecessors. The *American Jewess* however, looked a little further back.

To understand the evolution of the sex one must visit the harems of Constantinople, where the primitive vocation of woman is still the same as of yore.⁶³⁵

Here the editors of the magazine sidestep the Progressive critiques of Gilded Age mores often made by 'New Women' in favour of making a comparison of a 'modern' woman with some kind of Orientalist fantasy. The *American Jewess* creates an appearance of modernity, by using a false equivalency.

In this issue, the *American Jewess* devotes substantial consideration to the 'New Woman' but in fact says very little about the issue at all. They entirely avoid engagement with the idea of the acceptability of the 'New Woman' to the Jewish community by having a non-Jewish woman write the article in praise of the idea, and providing only non-Jewish 'New Women' as examples.

Perhaps the most obviously negative mention of the idea of the 'New Woman' was made in the December 1895 issue of the magazine. 'The Woman Who Talks' was a recurring section in the *American Jewess*. A cross between a letters page and an informal discussion of current affairs, it is generally accepted to have been written by Rosa Sonnenschein, the magazine's editor, though this was denied at the time. In this issue, the section contains a brief story about two English 'Bachelor Women', friends of the poet Wordsworth. It also makes clear that women who placed themselves outside of the expected roles of wife and mother were not generally respected;

⁶³⁵*American Jewess* Vol. 1, No. 3, p.171

A female practitioner of medicine in Kansas City was recently refused a divorce on the grounds of insufficient reason for granting the decree. From the evidence, it appears that the plaintiff's husband flatly refused to be the kitchen mechanic while she was engaged in the duties of her profession. He not only would not cook, wash dishes etc., by himself, but he would not even assist her, preferring to enjoy a continuous *dolce far niente* while she did the hustling. Has the plaintiff not been so very new, she would have diplomatically stayed at home and required him to hustle, and upon his failure to do so have obtained her divorce on the sufficient grounds of nonsupport. She is welcome to this hint for future guidance.⁶³⁶

The *laissez-faire* attitude towards divorce is not surprising, given Sonnenschein's status as a divorced woman, but the contemptuous attitude towards a woman who worked outside the home is unexpectedly strong. The use of 'new' in this section shows that however the *American Jewess* equivocated, the idea of the 'New Woman' was embedded strongly enough in the consciousness of the established Jewish community to make a reference of this sort work. The use of new would cease to make much sense without its dual meaning; perhaps as a reference to the woman's youth, and certainly her naivety, but also to her status as a 'New Woman' who continued to work outside the home after her marriage.

The *American Jewess* could not avoid the idea of the 'New Woman' and from the generally positive mentions, it seems the magazine's editors were not able to simply dismiss the phenomenon as a creation of a sensationalist press, or render her an entirely negative figure. In Chicago, suggesting that 'New Women' were non-complicatedly bad was not possible due to Jane Addams and her cohort's central role in the city's philanthropic culture. Nor, though, did the magazine

⁶³⁶*American Jewess* Vol. 2, No. 3, Dec. 1895, p.171

seem to be able to embrace the idea of the 'New Woman', particularly as a model for Jewish women. Instead, their discussions display a profoundly ambivalent reaction.

If the discussion of 'New Women' in theory was problematic, then the NCJW's work on Progressive projects, both alone, as at the Bureau of Personal Service, or with non-Jewish women, many of whom identified as 'New Women', were almost unspeakable. Perhaps then it becomes more understandable that previous scholars have largely ignored the work of the NCJW along these more Progressive avenues. However, just as the *American Jewess* placed positive and negative mentions of the 'New Woman' only pages apart, the women of the NCJW seemed content to be Progressive in practice, whilst publicly maintaining a far more conservative face.

6.7 The Problems of Class and Tokenism

As the examples explored in this chapter have shown, it was not at all impossible for an elite Jewish woman to play even a leading role in a non-Jewish organisation in the 1890s. As the previous chapter showed, on an organisational level, the NCJW placed itself alongside other women's groups of the day on a National Level as a constituent of the Federation of Women's Clubs, and on a state level it was part of the *Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs*, where Hannah Solomon and Sadie American represented the NCJW. But it should not be assumed that this level of access would have been open to all Jewish women. Though the received story of Solomon's rise in Chicago society paints her entrance into these organisations as unproblematic, and even notes that she was not the first in her family to take a leading role in non-Jewish organisations, as her father had been a leader in the German community's movement to allow Beer Gardens to be open on a Sunday, her private papers provide a more nuanced view.⁶³⁷ A slightly altered

⁶³⁷Solomon, *The Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*, op. cit., p.30.

image emerges.

The earliest draft of the section of Solomon's autobiography that deals with the *Chicago Woman's Club* goes into significantly more detail about the process she and her sister went through to join the organisation.

We learned that when our names had been proposed, a serious argument had taken place as to whether the presence of women of another Faith might not prevent frank and open discussion of some questions which might arise. It was decided that a member should visit our house and bring back a report. The women delegated arrived one morning at about eleven o'clock. Mother invited her to stay so that she might meet the rest of the family at luncheon. She spent the afternoon with us and indeed she remained for dinner also! It was quite evident that her day was satisfactory, since we soon received notice that we had been elected to membership in the Chicago Women's Club.⁶³⁸

Though of course both the version which was finally included in her autobiography and this one end with both sisters invited to join, the extra detail provides a more nuanced view. What in the later drafts is termed 'debate' or 'discussion' over their membership is here termed 'argument'. Any reference to the visit from a member to inspect their suitability is entirely removed. These changes suggest that even over fifty years later, when she was writing her autobiography, Solomon still felt that her discussion of this subject needed to be moderated; with these extra details, this account of the incident shows that Solomon's path into non-Jewish society was not always a smooth one.

By the time Solomon's daughter left to attend college at Wellesley for a year, over twenty years had passed since Solomon had joined the *Chicago Woman's Club*, but Solomon still warned her daughter that

⁶³⁸Fabric of My Life Chapter Draft, Hannah G Solomon Family Collection, American Jewish Archive, Box 3, Folder 6

as one of a tiny minority of Jews in a non-Jewish environment, she would become a token by which the whole Jewish community would be judged, noting that “we Jews cannot be too careful in our ways when we are thrown in to contend with the world.”⁶³⁹ However, on other occasions, the place that she held as a sole Jew within non-Jewish organisations seemed a matter of pride to Solomon. In a letter written in 1910, she told Carrie Wolf that she “stood as a religious representative in the woman’s club” and compared her status to that of Sadie American, stating that American was “socially secluded, and unknown in organisations.”⁶⁴⁰ The implication here, being that she herself was the opposite. Solomon’s granddaughter recounted much the same thing when asked about Solomon’s relationship with non-Jewish women, noting that “the founding of the *National Council of Jewish Women*. . . [owed] its origin to the *Chicago Woman’s Club* because it was through the *Chicago Woman’s Club* that [Solomon] was asked to represent the Jewish women of the world in 1893.”⁶⁴¹ In the 1890s Solomon’s active participation in non-Jewish organisations was something rare enough to be commented on. In a profile of her published in the first issue of the *American Jewess* Solomon is described as “associating fraternally with Christians, admiring and assisting them in their noble works of charity.”⁶⁴²

While this sense of Solomon’s status as an *exceptional* Jewish woman seems to exist, so does the implication that this status was not earned through her actions, but was a question of her status as daughter of a prominent citizen. Solomon’s granddaughter Frances, was asked if Solomon’s access to Chicago’s elite society was developed through her own initiative and friendships, or if it was through a family connection,

⁶³⁹Hannah Solomon to Helen Solomon, September 16, 1901, Hannah G Solomon Family Collection, American Jewish Archive, Box 16, Folder 11

⁶⁴⁰Hannah Solomon to Carrie Wolf, 1910, Historical Encyclopaedia of Chicago Women Project Records, UIC, Box 56, Folder 399

⁶⁴¹Interview with Mrs Philip Angel, Hannah G Solomon Family Collection, American Jewish Archive, SC-11722

⁶⁴²*American Jewess* Vol. 1, No. 1, April 1895, p.26–7

and answered:

It really followed as the night the day, because her mother was active in the welfare of the city, her father was a great leader in the community, as were all her uncles... They had roots that were profound intellectually and culturally. Her father was listed in the second *City Directory of Chicago* and, from the moment they settled in Chicago, they all took hold and realised they had responsibilities and citizens... They didn't just sit around and talk about it, but vigorously attached problems that would move the Jewish and general community forward.⁶⁴³

However, her early contact with non-Jews was not in its entirety through her father's connections; Solomon was educated in the Chicago public schools system, and there found a number of non-Jewish lifelong friends.⁶⁴⁴

Though the group of women who created the *National Council of Jewish Women* and were prominent in Chicago's philanthropic landscape could all be categorised as the elite of Chicago's Jewish community, issues of class within that group were not entirely absent. Solomon's granddaughter, when asked about the social and cultural status the family had enjoyed, explained that though she disliked the concept of social 'strata', "if there was a top echelon," she would put the family there, and that particularly within the Jewish community of Chicago, the family's links with the early Reform movement, and Temple Sinai, were to at least some degree responsible for that status.⁶⁴⁵ This is unsurprising; many of the wealthiest and most prominent Jews of Chicago were members of Temple Sinai, including millionaire philanthropists and the head of Sears-Roebuck, Julius Rosenwald. Temple Sinai were

⁶⁴³Ibid

⁶⁴⁴Fabric of my Life Chapter Drafts, Hannah G Solomon Family Collection, American Jewish Archive, Box 5, Folder 3

⁶⁴⁵Interview with Mrs Philip Angel, Hannah G Solomon Family Collection, American Jewish Archive, SC-11722

also notable for their philanthropic gifts to non-Jewish causes; for example, the Board of Temple Sinai donated \$27,000 towards the foundation of the University of Chicago in 1890 and continued to provide financial support in that decade.⁶⁴⁶ Sadie American seems to have felt that the connections formed as part of that congregation were valuable, making references to a Sinai Ticket, in reference to the *NCJW*'s committee elections at the 1900 Triennial, which she felt she was being excluded from.⁶⁴⁷ Though it could be suggested that this was simply in reference to the women being longtime members of Temple Sinai, or those who shared its Radical Reform beliefs, it seems unlikely as American herself attended Temple Sinai, was an outspoken advocate for Radical Reform Judaism (to the extent that this caused her to be ostracised from more moderate elements of the *NCJW*) and even a teacher at the temple's Sabbath School. Instead, it seems to be her shorthand for the most connected women of the community, which Sadie American was not; something which Hannah Solomon alluded to when she mentioned that prior to American joining the organising committee for the Jewish Women's Congress she "did not know her," and remained a "casual acquaintance" until their close collaboration with the nascent *National Council of Jewish Women* rendered them closer friends for a while.⁶⁴⁸ However, American would never be part of Solomon's inner circle, which remained that of the connected Jewish women with whom she had been close as a child, including her sisters and her cousin, Lizzie Barbe, who was at that time prominent in the Chicago Jewish community as president of the Johanna Lodge of the *United Order of True Sisters*, the women's section of the *B'Nai B'rith*.⁶⁴⁹ She was also close

⁶⁴⁶Financial Year Report, March 30, 1893, Chicago, Illinois—Sinai Congregation Collection, American Jewish Archive, Box 3, Folder 9

⁶⁴⁷Sadie American to Hannah Solomon, 1900, University of Illinois Special Collections, Historical Encyclopaedia of Chicago Women Project Records, Box 56, Folder 399

⁶⁴⁸Hannah Solomon to Carrie Wolf, 1910, University of Illinois Special Collections, Historical Encyclopaedia of Chicago Women Project Records, Box 56, Folder 399

⁶⁴⁹Fabric of my Life Chapter Draft, Hannah G Solomon Family Collection, American Jewish Archive, Box 3, Folder 6

to Mrs Henry Adler, who in 1895 became the president of the *Young Ladies Aid Society*, later known as *Chicago Woman's Aid*, which was a Jewish organisation, originally formed in the 1880s to visit the sick at the Michael Rees Hospital.⁶⁵⁰ Barbe and Adler both played a role in the organisation of the Jewish Women's Congress, and both were involved in the Chicago Section of the *National Council of Jewish Women*; Barbe was a National Vice-President at one time. There is little evidence that either of these women, equally as socially connected as Solomon, played a major role in non-Jewish organisations.⁶⁵¹ This suggests that, despite American's assertion, upper echelon status did not automatically provide a Jewish woman with access to non-Jewish organisations; even Hannah Solomon, whose road was undoubtedly eased by her family's connections, worked hard to achieve her place.

Even when Jewish women did find themselves with significant roles in non-Jewish organisations, that was no guarantee of their legacy. Sadie American's work on Vacation Schools and Playgrounds had lasting effects and were nationally and internationally recognised efforts, and yet they are almost entirely forgotten. Indeed, by the time she died in May 1944, Sadie American had sunk into obscurity, her existence largely forgotten, particularly in Chicago. The *New York Times* published an obituary, noting the variety of work she had been involved in, in Chicago and New York, but also internationally.⁶⁵² The *Chicago Tribune*, however, managed a scant paragraph in the general obituaries section.⁶⁵³ She was only mentioned in Hannah Solomon's autobiography in passing, despite their close association for the first ten years of the organisation, and even today the NCJW website's 'History' section contains no mention of her, despite her central role in the creation of the organisation.⁶⁵⁴ Sadie American's minimization within the accepted

⁶⁵⁰Adele Hast. "Service to the Community: Chicago Woman's Aid 1920-1960". In: *Chicago Jewish History* 29.2 (2005), p. 10, p.10.

⁶⁵¹Solomon, *The Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*, op. cit., p.99.

⁶⁵²*New York Times* May 4, 1944

⁶⁵³*Chicago Tribune* May 4, 1944, p.16

⁶⁵⁴'History', *National Council of Jewish Women* accessed: 11/08/201,

memory of the foundation of the *National Council of Jewish Women*, and the role she played in other Chicago organisations, seems to at least in part have been a function of the bitter enmity which developed between American and Solomon from around 1900, and which deepened to the point that the two women (who had been friends) were by 1910 sending letters to each other through lawyers.⁶⁵⁵ Solomon's granddaughter referred to the rift in an interview conducted in 1970 as "the Sadie American episode." She described how there "was enormous friction and a final explosion," and noted that Solomon "won out."⁶⁵⁶

A letter written by Solomon in 1910 clarifies that to at least an extent, the split between the two was solidified by American's attempts to be recognised as co-founder of the *NCJW*, something which Solomon bitterly opposed.⁶⁵⁷ Carrie Wolf, who has been a member of the organising committee for the Jewish Women's Congress, wrote to both Solomon and American and counselled them against damaging the organisation with their fight.

Time was, when each of you bore willing testimony to the ability, the devotion, the effective service of each other, and the public gladly gave credit to both. Each of you is inseparably linked with the history and development of the Council, and no personal controversy, however bitter or extended can mar or minimize this record of honorable activity. Controversy can, however do this.⁶⁵⁸

Wolf went on to explain that in her recollection, Solomon had intended

http://www.ncjw.org/content_85.cfm?navID=27

⁶⁵⁵Letters from Hannah Solomon, Carrie Bernstein and Leon Alschuler, University of Illinois Special Collections, Historical Encyclopaedia of Chicago Women Project Records, , Box 2, Folder 12

⁶⁵⁶Interview with Mrs Philip Angel, Hannah G Solomon Family Collection, American Jewish Archive, SC-11722

⁶⁵⁷Letter from Hannah Solomon to Carrie Wolf, 1910, University of Illinois Special Collections, Historical Encyclopaedia of Chicago Women Project Records, Box 56, Folder 399

⁶⁵⁸Letter from Carrie Wolf to Hannah Solomon and Sadie American, 1910, University of Illinois Special Collections, Historical Encyclopaedia of Chicago Women Project Records, Box 2, Folder 12

for some sort of organisation to emerge from the Congress, but had been leaning towards a loose federation of existing organisations, while American had been “clear and determined from the first to build up on the plan of the Council of Women, that is, a national organisation with individual membership, the Sections of which should still be separate members.”⁶⁵⁹ American alluded to Solomon’s desire to bring existing societies under the *NCJW* umbrella in a letter written in 1894, showing that Solomon did not entirely abandon that notion even after the Council was in existence.⁶⁶⁰ Though American had a solid case for being credited with envisioning the organisation as it would finally take shape, Solomon—who was by then Honorary President of the *NCJW*—won the day, and less than five years later, American left the organisation altogether.

⁶⁵⁹*Ibid*

⁶⁶⁰Sadie American to Hannah Solomon, December 13th, 1894, Hannah G Solomon Collection, Library of Congress, Box 6, Folder 10

7

Conclusion

The *NCJW's* early years were not always happy ones. Later in life, Hannah Solomon and other *NCJW* leaders chose to present a view of that time which erased many of the struggles of the first ten years of the organisation. Instead they created a myth of inevitable success as part of community which was whole-heartedly supportive. Although the *NCJW's* survival was assisted by the right circumstances and an already recognised need for a way to connect Jewish women across the United States, this was not enough. Hannah Solomon and her co-founders worked hard and made difficult choices. Ultimately, this makes the story more interesting; it breaks down the image of the *NCJW* as out-of-touch club-women, a relic of another age by the start of the 1890s. Just as Hannah Solomon was more than her public image, so too was the *NCJW*.

The city of Chicago was key to the foundation of the *NCJW*; it had an elite open to Progressive ideas who were about to take a lead in

revolutionising the way America thought about welfare. It was such a young city that it prided itself on being open to the new and the modern. It was also a city of self-made men. Some of the city's elites had been born into wealthy families. But many had taken succeeded because of the business opportunities found in city expanding during an age of rapid technological advancement. This was true also inside the Jewish community, where families like the Greenebaums had risen to the social elite within fifty years, finding wealth, political and social influence which far outstripped that of their old lives in Germany. This was reflected in both the form the *NCJW* took—borrowed largely from the *National Council of Women*—and in their integration with non-Jewish umbrella organisations, creating links to Councils of Women on a local, national and international level.

There was alongside the group's rapid ascendancy a desire to transform Judaism into a 'modern' confessional religion, along the lines of Protestant denominations to which most of Chicago's non-Jewish elite belonged. The combination of wealth with an adherence to what became a particularly Radical Reform Judaism provided the circumstances for the creation of the *NCJW*. While others had suggested the idea of a national organisation for Jewish Women, it took this group to put that idea into practice. Solomon and American would later despair at the way the older communities, particularly Philadelphia, were slow to warm to new ideas, resting on their status as innovators which had been earned almost a century earlier by Rebecca Gratz when they became the first American Jewish community to embrace a role in philanthropy for women. The creation of the *NCJW* was seen by its founders as a modern approach to their works.

The last circumstance key to the foundation of the *NCJW* was the World's Columbian Exposition. When Chicago was chosen as host, in preference to old-established cities like New York and Washington DC, the committees organising the event were determined that the Exposition would have a lasting cultural and social impact on the city. The *NCJW* was but one of the several organisations and institutions

founded through or for the Exposition. The exposition was a catalyst, that allowed the full expression of an existing impetus. But it was not without its limits. The Columbian Exposition was the first World Fair to mandate a contribution by women, and to create a women's committee. The ways in which this played out were not ultimately as radical as some involved groups—the *Isabellas*, most notably—wanted.

The Women's Auxiliary, who took charge of women's contributions to the Exposition after the *Isabellas* were pushed out were not the only group who attempted to influence the way in which Jewish women would contribute the Exposition. Perhaps the most pervasive myth about the Jewish Women's Congress is one propagated by Solomon herself: that she made a serious attempt to be a part of the general Jewish Congress, but was rebuffed and condescended to by the male organisers, leading to her defiantly declaring she would form an event for women. This story is almost certainly apocryphal as her work on the Congress had begun a year before this supposed event, but it remains one of the best known anecdotes about the foundation of the organisation. Solomon in fact worked entirely independently of the male communal leaders while creating the Jewish women's contribution to the Exposition. Though Solomon would later credit Hirsch as a constant support, his reaction at the time was to not only deny that the Jewish Women's Congress was being organised, but to deny it was needed at all. However, once it became clear to Hirsch that the Congress would occur with or without his approval, he became involved in the event and was a speaker. The women of the NCJW faced serious limits on their presentations of both womanhood and Jewishness, though they were able to create an even more successful Jewish Women's Congress than they had expected, with larger rooms having to be found to accommodate the number of people attending.

While the Congress has been recognised as a significant event in American Jewish Women's History, there has also been a lack of understanding about the context within which the Jewish Women's Congress occurred. At the World's Parliament of Religion, there were two

speeches about the role of Jewish women given by Jewish women; for the most part, this was a subject discussed by others. The Jewish Congress featured male communal leaders pontificating on what their wives and daughters should be, and at the conference organised by the Isabellas, non-Jewish women presented the paper on Judaism. In the Exposition's commercial centre on the Midway, the representation of Jewish women was an Orientalist fantasy, with Jewish women as hyper-sexualised dancing girls in the Turkish Village. The association of Judaism with the imagined Orient was not something that ended with the fair; five years later, the press coverage of the 1898 Charity Bazaar resorted to Orientalist stereotypes to describe both the event and the female participants. Against this backdrop, the women at the Congress were leading prayers, seriously discussing their faith and attempting to demonstrate that Jewish women were able to live up to all expectations of appropriate American womanhood.

The reaction of the non-Jewish press to the Jewish Women's Congress shows the non-Jewish communities lacked any real interest in the event. It was only briefly examined, covered in far less detail than the Catholic Congress which took place the same week. The coverage of the Wednesday session, when philanthropy was discussed, was far more extensive than the coverage of other sessions. This suggests that presenting themselves as a philanthropic—rather than religious—group made it easier for the Jewish Women's Congress to communicate with the non-Jewish community.

Transforming the momentum from the Jewish Women's Congress into a national organisation of Jewish women was not easy. Prior to Hannah Solomon's efforts in creating the Congress, no national network of Jewish women existed; the papers read at the Congress illuminated the variations in practice, belief and opinion within the gathered groups. The choice of a centrally co-ordinated organisation—the form which the organisation eventually took—was not inevitable. Purportedly, Solomon herself had favoured a confederation of existing local organisations, something more like the *National Federation of Temple*

Sisterhoods. A close reading of Sadie American's speech "Organization" reveals much about the aims and intentions of the nascent organisation. In particular, it shows the religious aims were far more important than they later became. Philanthropy was one third of a tripartite mission, with an emphasis placed on scientific philanthropy, thought to discourage dependence on aid. Educational and cultural projects were also important; they were thought to give the poor—particularly the immigrant poor—the skills to acculturate themselves.

It was not easy to capitalise on the enthusiasm for the *NCJW* after the end of the Congress. Many of the women who had attended were from Chicago, so creating the organisation's first section was straightforward. The more demanding task, though, was persuading women from around the United States that this new organisation had something to offer. Sadie American's speech 'Organisation' discussed many of the philanthropic projects and institutions already in existence. Solomon and American were faced with the task of persuading Jewish women that the fledgling *NCJW* was not simply a duplication of existing organisations. Sadie American toured the East Coast, trying to build enthusiasm for the *NCJW* in some of the oldest Jewish communities in the country. But still she relied on Solomon's status as the organisation's president when she needed a point made forcefully. American's letters show a personal relationship—though not always an easy one—between the two that exceeded their positions as President and Corresponding Secretary of the *NCJW*. Though Solomon would later deny it, in these early days American seemed to see Solomon as a friend.

American's trip was ultimately a success, although she was disappointed in the lack of enthusiasm in Philadelphia—home of many nationally recognised Jewish reformers. She had more success in some of the smaller communities she visited, and in New York, where she was able to present the new organisation in different ways to suit local circumstances. This flexibility was visible throughout the 1890s. The *NCJW* was able to attract members from large urban communities with existing philanthropic and social structures, but it also found strong

followings in smaller rural communities with no access to a Synagogue or other religious structures. It was clear though, even at this early stage, that of the two, Solomon was focused more on the Chicago community whilst American felt that New York—as the home to the largest Jewish community in the United States—should be given a greater role in the organisation. Their disagreement on the matter, partially due to relative population size, was also a function of their personal social circles; while Solomon's immediate social group was the same group of Chicago women with whom she had grown up, American had formed friendships with a number of New York-based Jewish women involved in Progressive projects. This would foreshadow American's move to New York in the early 1900s, when she became the President of the New York Section.

Despite the flexibility given to the *NCJW*'s Sections, as the 1890s progressed, the extent of difference in opinion and religious practice across the organisation became a point of contention. In the twentieth century, the *NCJW* became almost entirely focused on philanthropy and social reform. Some have suggested this was always the case, but the Sunday Sabbath controversy demonstrates that the organisation did have early ambitions to balance philanthropy and religious study.⁶⁶¹ This argument pitted the Radical Reform Judaism to which the *NCJW*'s leaders adhered against almost the entire body of American Judaism. While later Solomon and others would cast it as a high point in the organisation's first decade, Solomon came perilously close to losing her position, and religious practice was de-emphasised to prevent the organisation from fragmenting.

Although Philanthropy had always been a key element of the *NCJW*'s mission, after this controversy, it became the organisation's focus. Chicago again took a leading role, and was cast as an example for the rest of the organisation to follow. The women of the *NCJW* had obviously become aware of the advantages of participating in philanthropy. Not only were they convinced that their 'scientific' philanthropic

⁶⁶¹Schwartz, *The Rabbi's Wife: The Rebbetzin in American Jewish Life*, op. cit., p.28.

methods would help those in need become self-reliant, but they believed that publicising their projects would allow them to demonstrate that they were participating in all parts of American life.

The NCJW's philanthropic projects were more Progressive than it has generally been thought. They were involved in the foundation of the Maxwell Street Settlement House and were the founders of the Bureau of Personal Service. They also created other projects—such as the West Side Sabbath School—longstanding within the community. Unfortunately, in some cases, their role was not publicised; in others they were pushed out of the organisations they had founded in order to give leadership roles to men from the community. In the case of the West Side Sabbath School, the Chicago Section of the NCJW repeatedly pleaded with the Board of Temple Sinai for more attention, until Emil Hirsch took an active role and the link to the NCJW was all but forgotten. The same pattern can be found in the relationship between the NCJW and the *United Hebrew Charities* in the case of the Bureau of Personal Service. In its first years, attempts to join the UHC were rejected, but when the UHC became more interested in Progressive projects, Solomon was pushed out of the organisation and the Board became almost entirely male. Again, the NCJW's link to this project has been almost forgotten.

While it would be easy to chastise the male leaders for their actions, context is again important. The late 1890s represented a crisis point in American masculinity, and Jewish men were singled out in the press as a group who could not be properly masculine. Just as the way in which the women of the NCJW interacted with new immigrants was a product of the philanthropic mores of the day, so was the way in which male leaders interacted with the women of their community. As Hannah Solomon noted in her autobiography, "Though it is obvious that every forward step met some such stubborn resistance, we really dare not be too critical of these Jewish men, since their attitude was the accepted one of that day."⁶⁶²

⁶⁶²Solomon, *The Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*, op. cit., p.83.

It is perhaps understandable that when the *NCJW* ceased to have a role in projects they had founded, their contributions were forgotten. However, other factors have also contributed to the lack of understanding of their early work. In particular two contradictory views expressed by different groups of scholars have contributed to the *NCJW*'s virtual absence in much of the literature. Scholars of Women's History or the Progressive Era have dismissed it as a Jewish group that had little to do with what the rest of the city, while many Jewish historians have seen it as so similar to non-Jewish organisations as to be outside of their field of study. In fact, the *NCJW* was a key point at which the Jewish community mixed with the non-Jewish community. It gave Jewish women a way to work with non-Jewish women on both an institutional and a personal level. Although Solomon and her sister were already members of the Chicago Women's Club by the time the *NCJW* was founded, the organisation opened doors for other members, including Sadie American, who worked on nationally-recognised projects including the Summer School (which still exists), which involved directly lobbying the State Senate in Springfield.

Given this involvement with Progressive groups and projects in the 1890s, it is perhaps surprising that the *NCJW* didn't have much contact with Hull-House. Hull-House's fame even today is great enough that even the minor links between the two are mentioned on the *NCJW*'s website.⁶⁶³ But due to a combination of a Christian socialist ethos at Hull-House and the fact that it embraced an ideal of unmarried womanhood—which normalised a university education for women, about which the Established Jewish community was still ambivalent—they were never more than neighbours at the time, even though Solomon would later build a friendship with Jane Addams which lasted until Addams's death in 1935.

Even though their relationship with Hull-House was not as close as the *NCJW* has attempted to suggest, the leaders of the *NCJW* were invited to participate in some of the highest-profile projects and in-

⁶⁶³*NCJW Website*

stitutions of the day. From sharing a stage with the NWCTU at the Washington DC Conference of the NCW in 1895 to participating in projects like the nationally-influential Juvenile Court, the NCJW became fully integrated in the philanthropic life of Chicago. Hannah Solomon would vociferously assert that even with the numbers of women who joined the NCJW in its first decade, it was her family's status in the upper echelons of Chicago society which allowed her to push the NCJW to national and international prominence. Though certainly her family connections were invaluable at times, the NCJW opened doors for other women. Due to Solomon—and Sadie American's—hard work during the 1890s, it became possible for membership of the NCJW to be parlayed into philanthropic and political work on local, national and international levels. Solomon herself was able to take advantage of this, but so was American, who, was by Solomon's admission "not known."⁶⁶⁴ prior to becoming part of the NCJW.

The NCJW had an impact on the lives of the women of Chicago's Established Jewish community in the 1890s, giving them influence, access and recognition they had never previously enjoyed. The NCJW took the particular form that it did—a national federation of forty-nine local chapters and five thousand members in 1900—because of the particular circumstances in Chicago in the 1890s and because of the hard work of the women who founded it.⁶⁶⁵ It was radical; the NCJW and its leaders participated in cutting-edge Progressive philanthropic projects alongside the most celebrated philanthropists and reformers of the age. Hannah Solomon noted in the dedication to her autobiography that to successive generations the world of their forbears is "full of charm and quaintness," but by peeling away the cozy reminiscences she shared in her later years, the foundation of the *National Council of Jewish Women* becomes a more interesting story, and a more impressive

⁶⁶⁴Hannah Solomon to Carrie Wolf, 1910, University of Illinois Special Collections, Historical Encyclopaedia of Chicago Women Collection, Box 56, Folder 399

⁶⁶⁵*Reform Advocate* March 10, 1900, p.5

achievement.⁶⁶⁶

⁶⁶⁶Solomon, *The Fabric of My Life: The Story of a Social Pioneer*, op. cit., p.xiii.

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