Women's activism in social reform has become a subject of intense inquiry by historians in recent years. Various historical studies detailing the roles of female reformers during the Progressive Era, the impact of women and professionalization in certain fields such as social work and home economics, and the participation of women in government agencies in the New Deal have contributed to our understanding of the ways in which social welfare and women intersect. If, as some historians suggest, the roots of female reform activity established in the Progressive Era found fruition in the government programs of the New Deal, how did they remain vital during what one reformer called the "tepid, torpid years" of the 1920s?

Scholars have emphasized the creation of parallel structures and institutions which gave women powerful voices in both the private and public realms of policy-making. Kathleen McCarthy, for example, has shown that women, denied access to traditional male networks of power, created unique structures within the sphere of voluntary organizations. These experiences transformed nonpoliticalized women into powerful and influential policy makers. Robin Muncy contends that not only did women reformers influence policy but in certain areas, such as child welfare and regulating female workers, women virtually controlled the direction reform would take. According to Muncy, the process of professionalization enabled women reformers to strengthen their positions and expand their influence.

Women's historians have paid particular attention to the issue of sisterhood and whether women crossed class or racial lines in order to share power and economic resources. Did female reformers and their constituents actively pursue the ideals of a common sisterhood? Nancy Hewitt's analysis of the idea of sisterhood strongly suggests that although women united in cross-class organizations more often than men, there was no such thing as a universal women's culture. Hewitt calls for a reexamination of this emphasis on sisterhood and states, "To recognize and illuminate the realities of all women's historical experience, we must acknowledge that community was more a product of material conditions and constraints than of ideological dictates. And that therefore diversity, discontinuity, and conflict were as much a part of the historical agency of women as of men."

The study of the Pittsburgh Young Women's Christian Association during the Progressive Era through the 1920s offers an opening into the issue of cross-class sisterhood. Founded in 1875, the Pittsburgh YWCA was composed of middle-class
volunteers (often the wives and daughters of the community's business leaders), working-class women (shop clerks, industrial workers, and an increasing number of office workers), and trained social workers who ran the programs of the organization. This article maintains that, rather than sharing one vision of reform, women activists in the Pittsburgh YWCA subscribed to a collective belief in the mission of the organization, and this overrode personal differences. The Pittsburgh YWCA developed a structure through which women could direct social policy and wield power in a community which routinely excluded them in matters of civic and labor reform. For the middle-class women of the Pittsburgh YWCA, the decade of the 1920s was crucial because events forced them to redefine not only the role of the organization in the larger community, but also their personal commitment to a program of reform which often conflicted with class interests. The professional social workers and to some extent, the working-class activists of the YWCA, determined the directions reform would take. Yet middle-class support was vital to the success of the organization at both the national level and in Pittsburgh. For the women of the Pittsburgh YWCA-middle-class volunteers, professional social workers, and working-class clientele—the divisive issues of the 1920s resulted in a stronger and broader commitment to labor reform.\(^5\)

Allegiance to the new YWCA industrial reform program was first tested in early 1921 when the YWCA of Pittsburgh began its fund raising campaign. In a significant departure from tradition, the $200,000 campaign launched on January 10 was the first joint effort of the two major and independent associations in Pittsburgh—the Central and East Liberty YWCAs. The two boards had debated the wisdom of such a cooperative fund drive, but ultimately decided to attempt it. The YWCA drive was a trial run, because the two boards would merge not only fund raising efforts but their entire operations in 1925. The city federation of the YWCA needed $200,000 to cover the operating expenses of both YWCAs and to construct additional housing and a swimming pool at the East Liberty Y.\(^6\)

The Sunday Pittsburgh newspapers previewed the campaign with headlines and accompanying photographs of the YWCA team captains. During the following week, the papers ran daily endorsements from World War I veteran groups and local ministers. Suddenly, on January 18th the fund raising was suspended, supposedly "in deference to the European relief fund [headed by future President Herbert Hoover]." In truth, however, the YWCA of Pittsburgh was not reaching its goal as planned. Why did it fail?\(^7\)

On January 8, 1921, two days before the start of the YWCA's fund drive, William Frew Long, vice president of the Employers' Association of Pittsburgh, sent a letter to approximately 300 Pittsburgh businessmen urging them to refuse to contribute to the YWCA. Long suggested that if the business community knew about the YWCA's industrial program, it would not be supportive. He outlined the YWCA
program, charging that the organization promoted:
1) Industrial Democracy
2) Collective Bargaining
3) A share in shop control and management by the workers
4) Labor's desire for an equitable share in the profits and management of industry
5) Protection of workers from enforced unemployment
6) A minimum wage
7) Government labor exchanges (employment offices)
8) Experiments in cooperative ownership.

According to Long, "The YWCA has done and is doing good work along some lines and it is greatly to be regretted that they should have taken this excursion into a field about which they know nothing. . . ."18

Long's description of the YWCA's national industrial program which he distributed at the Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce meeting the following week, derived from a document known as The Social Ideals of the Churches. The Creed,
as it was called, was first adopted by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in 1919 and by the YWCA at its national convention in Cleveland in April of 1920. This document was "a brief consensus of Christian opinion regarding the application of the principles of Jesus to the life of the world to-day." In other words, it was a statement outlining the views of the Christian Church concerning industrial and living conditions of the working class. The decision to adopt this resolution had not been easily reached by the convention delegates. Many of the women present at the convention disagreed with The Creed, particularly those statements pertaining to the right of workers to organize and engage in collective bargaining.9

The YWCA's adoption of The Creed, which served as a document outlining its policy of industrial democracy, affected numerous local associations across the country. Nowhere was the controversy surrounding The Creed more apparent than in Pittsburgh, a heavily industrialized city with an influential business elite. Support of industrial democracy meant support for the working class and social justice. The upper middle-class women who sat on the boards of the Pittsburgh YWCA, despite their bonds to the industrial elite, stood behind the program of industrial democracy explicit in The Creed because of their loyalty to the organization and its goals. By supporting The Creed, these middle-class women joined with the professional social workers who staffed the YWCA's programs and the industrial workers who composed its clientele in an effort to achieve social justice. Indeed it appears that the working-class constituency of the YWCA forced the issue by demanding that Christian women examine industrial conditions and endorse reform. The significance of this development becomes clearer when contrasting the YWCA's position with the YMCA. In fact, the Pittsburgh YMCA denied any involvement with or support for The Creed. The 1921 controversy over The Creed suggests that class and gender issues were interwoven and that women's involvement and agenda in voluntary organizations was different than men's, even in the "New Era" of the 1920s.10

Many of the delegates to the Cleveland convention suspected that controversy would surround the adoption of The Creed. After all, the original sponsors of this document, the Federal Council of Churches, was controversial. The Council had supported the Inter-church Movement and its report on the 1919 Steel Strike which, utilizing social science research methods, exposed the living and working conditions of steel workers. Sympathetic to labor interests, the authors of the study recommended that collective bargaining be supported by all Christians. Businessmen and corporate leaders were outraged over the conclusions of that study and believed that they had been tricked into donating money to a cause which contradicted their best financial interests. After The Social Creed was approved, the main financial supporters of the Council cut off funding. As Ralph M. Easley, chairman of the Executive Council of the National Civic Federation warned in a letter to the United States Steel Corporation: "There certainly ought to be no trouble in having
the loyal American members of the Protestant churches have these men kicked out of their positions, or at any rate put in places where they cannot poison any one but themselves.”

It is clear that the National Board of the YWCA anticipated criticism of its adoption of *The Creed* and was prepared to justify its actions. In an article in the November 1920 issue of the YWCA journal, *The Association Monthly*, a plan for implementing the resolutions of the Cleveland convention was outlined. The author explained that the role of the YWCA was to investigate working conditions—to be “seekers after truth.” Also, each association was to increase its industrial membership and to understand “the needs of industrial girls by board and committee women in cooperative effort with these girls.” In April, 1921, another article in *The Association Monthly* reminded the YWCA members that each one must “Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

How prepared were the members of the two Pittsburgh YWCAs to answer their critics in 1921? It is doubtful that any of the board members expected problems concerning the fund raising campaign. They had lined up the appropriate endorsements from ministers and groups of citizens. They launched the campaign by holding a rally where the basketball teams from the Central and East Liberty YWCAs were present, showing the importance of new facilities for physical education activities. Most importantly, each campaign team was captained by a respected and monied society matron. Certainly no mention of industrial democracy was included in the publicity which surrounded the campaign.

Another strong indication that the YWCA of Pittsburgh was unprepared for the Employers’ Association attack was the flurry of correspondence between Pittsburgh and the National Association of the YWCA after the January 8th letter, not before. Not only were women from the Pittsburgh YWCAs writing National Board to apprise them of the situation, but also the National Association received letters from Pittsburgh members asking for explanations regarding the industrial program. For instance, on January 20, just a few days after Long's letter was distributed, Anna C. Cheseborough asked Henrietta Roelofs, the General Administrator of the National Association, why the YWCA chose to support *The Social Creed of the Churches*. Roelofs responded: “In general there has developed a much more widespread interest in the wages, hours and working conditions of women. There has also been the effect on the part of trade union leagues to organize girls into unions. Therefore it was but natural that our industrial membership should concentrate upon these matters.”

Roelofs also sent a letter the same day to Edith Long, the General Secretary in Pittsburgh, suggesting that the “Pittsburgh situation has national as well as local significance.” Roelofs felt that it was time to send Florence Simms, the National Industrial Secretary, to Pittsburgh. Eventually, Esther Hawes, the Field Secretary for the National Association, not Florence Simms, met with the membership of the
YWCA women in Pittsburgh. After a great deal of discussion, "the Convention action was upheld." But the damage had been done. The Employers' Association forced the YWCA women to defend their position regarding industrial democracy thereby losing momentum in the fund raising drive. The City Federation of the YWCA of Pittsburgh raised only $90,000 of an anticipated $200,000 during the 1921 financial campaign.

The significance of this incident lies beyond the inability of the YWCAs of Pittsburgh to reach their funding goal in 1921. For the National Association of the Y, it forebode more problems to come. In fact, other city associations suffered similar fates that year. The New York City and Chicago YWCAs were also targets of their city's employers associations. The Cleveland convention's endorsement of The Creed was costing the associations funding and continued controversy.

Despite difficulties with leading businessmen, the YWCA's position regarding industrial democracy found support in other quarters, including individuals and newspaper editorial pages beyond Pittsburgh. Herbert Knopf of New York sent $25 to the Pittsburgh YWCA. Various newspapers, including the New York Evening Post and the Philadelphia Public Ledger, wrote lengthy articles in support of the Pitts-
burgh YWCA. Yet, the Pittsburgh papers were silent. Survey magazine, an offshoot of the widely acclaimed social and industrial survey of Pittsburgh with Paul Kellogg as editor, also ran an article about the incident with the headline “Blacklisting the YWCA.” The Christian Advocate in a February 10th article queried: “Will the Employers’ Association of Pittsburgh extend its blacklist so as to include the churches whose initiative the “YW” has followed? They have not yet blacklisted the Y.M.C.A. They can hardly be so unchivalrous as to wage war only upon women.”

In actuality, it was not only the Employers’ Association but also the Young Men’s Christian Association (YWCA) of Pittsburgh which was unchivalrous to the women of the YWCA. The General Secretary of the Pittsburgh YMCA denied that the National YMCA had passed a similar resolution concerning The Social Creed of the Churches, even though it was a matter of public record, and stressed that the Pittsburgh Association was “totally free of outside influences.” Local control of the YMCA was in the hands of the businessmen who feared unions and industrial “reform.” It is not surprising that the local administrator of the YMCA would support those class interests which in turn supported him and would condemn the actions of the Pittsburgh YWCA.

The sentiments of the Pittsburgh YMCA were typical of the local associations of the YMCA in other cities as well. The Chicago YMCA, for example, was instrumental in the fight against union organizing among stockyard workers beginning in 1917. In his study of black migration to Chicago, James Grossman documents the important role the Wabash Avenue YMCA played in employer control of the stockyard workers in Chicago. Grossman states that “Workers who showed up at meetings were bombarded with information designed ‘to try to undermine’ bona fide stockyards unions.” The YMCA helped employers recruit anti-union leaders by selecting “the right black men for the plant representation boards.”

Kenneth Fones-Wolf’s examination of labor reform in the Philadelphia YM and YWCA argues that the industrial work of both Ys was “under the strict control of the local corporate elite.” While the YWCA in Philadelphia became a center of trade union activity, the YMCA’s Kensington branch, located in that city’s most heavily industrialized, working-class neighborhood, was almost abandoned because of a lack of working-class involvement. Fones-Wolf believes that “working-class men assigned little importance to the YMCA as a political instrument.” A major reason for workers’ lack of interest in the YMCA was “its control at the local level by anti-union employers. . . .” On the other hand, working-class women viewed the Philadelphia YWCA as one of the few available vehicles to promote social change and gain political and economic influence.

In each case—union organizing in the stockyards of Chicago, trade unionism in Philadelphia, support for industrial democracy in Pittsburgh—the YM and YWCAs adopted distinctive public policy positions and roles. The local YMCA associations were closely tied to and supervised by the city’s industrialists and business
elites. Male union leaders were not welcome to use the YMCAs to attract members or as meeting places. In contrast, the YWCAs did not discourage union membership. In fact, through the increasing influence of the national Industrial Department, middle-class women of the YWCA were made aware of factory conditions, hours, wages, etc. and encouraged to support protective legislation. By the late 1910s, working-class YWCA members became vocal proponents of industrial reform.21

In order to understand the focus for the YWCA's support of industrial democracy, it is necessary to examine the organization of the YWCA and in particular, the work of the Industrial Department. The YWCA movement in the United States originated in New York City when an association was formed in 1858. The organization was based upon the work of two English groups—the General Female Home and Training Institution and the Prayer Union. As was the case with its English predecessors, the American YWCA was begun out of concern for "the temporal, moral and religious welfare of self-supporting young women." Boarding homes (established to create a home-like Christian environment), lunch rooms, housing and employment bureaus, classes (both for job training and cultural enlightenment) and social activities were established by the growing number of associations through the years. Although the local associations were engaged in similar projects, they did not organize into a federation until 1906. Grace Dodge became president of the National Board of the YWCA of the United States and offices were opened in New York City in 1907.22

The YWCA movement came to Pittsburgh as early as 1875 when an association was formed in the east end. The East Liberty Y was primarily involved in relief activities, because there was no organized charity in the community. The board of the East Liberty Y bought a house which provided rooms for 30 working women in 1892. After that point, the association concentrated on helping self-supporting women. At the same time the East Liberty Y was growing in membership and services, another YWCA was established in Pittsburgh, this time in the downtown or "Triangle" area. The Central YWCA of Pittsburgh and Allegheny was formally organized in 1891 for the sole purpose of helping "the great numbers of young girls from the surrounding town and country coming into the Triangle to work." Over the next three decades the Central Y extended its influence to establish three branches—the International Institute in Oakland, the Centre Avenue YWCA (the black branch) and the Lawrenceville branch. In 1925, the East Liberty and Central YWCAs merged, forming the Young Women's Christian Association of Pittsburgh.23

The relationship between the National Board and the local associations was complex. The National Board provided an employment bureau for association secretaries, guidelines for hiring and wages, and information on programming and social issues. It also organized yearly conventions. The local boards directed the activities of their associations, hired and fired their secretaries, and raised the
funds necessary to support their projects. Representatives from the local associations met yearly in convention to establish policy. The employees of the YWCAs were called secretaries. (By the 1920s, the majority of secretaries were trained social workers.) They carried out the policy of the conventions, as well as directives from the local boards and the National Board. This was not always an easy task.

Industrial work began when local secretaries visited the factory districts and held lunch hour Bible classes. During the 1890s, such “industrial extension” work took place in New York City, Dayton, Milwaukee, and Pittsburgh. Industrial clubs grew out of these meetings, and local associations began to hire secretaries whose duties included work with the “industrial girls.” In 1904, Florence Simms was hired as National Industrial Secretary. As one historian of the YWCA described Simms and her work: “When she spoke at conferences and elsewhere she aroused general secretaries and others to face their responsibility for knowing actual industrial conditions and working for the basic needs in the lives of industrial girls. And she awakened in many a board woman and general secretary the realization that in trying to bring about better conditions for these girls they could use the same zeal...
they had put into Bible classes. . . "25

By 1918, over 800 local industrial clubs had been organized with more than 30,000 members. The National Industrial Department under Simms' leadership hired staff members trained in the social sciences and encouraged working women to raise questions regarding their working conditions. As Simms wrote, "We began to change from the type of work in which we were doing for girls, thinking for them, to that in which we began to feel the solidarity of the whole human family."26

Industrial club members, which included factory, department store and telephone workers, began to meet together at summer conferences (The first was held in Canton, Pennsylvania in 1912), where they voted that they should "work for laws to improve working conditions, should cooperate with the Consumers' League and other organizations that were active toward the same end, and should study the laws of their own states." The YWCA sponsored the first conference of industrial workers in Washington, D.C. in 1919. Out of that conference came the resolution to sponsor a set of standards for women in industry which resulted in the adoption of the controversial Social Ideals of the Churches.27

Industrial extension work began early in Pittsburgh. In the 1890s, Charlotte Adams, a YWCA secretary, made regular visits to bakeries and cigar factories. By 1900, lunch hour hymn and gospel services were held each week at Marvin's Bakery, Jenkinson's Cigar Factory, Union American Cigar Factory, Ward Mackey's Bakery, Armstrong Cork, The James McClung Co., National Biscuit, the Duquesne Co., and American Stogie. In five of the factories, the company provided a piano, and the workers formed choruses. The workers at the Jenkinson Cigar Factory formed a self-governing industrial club in 1901, and at least for some of the employees, it provided relaxation and an alternative to the monotony of the job. For other factory workers, the industrial clubs offered opportunities denied to them elsewhere. One member of the Jenkinson club said "she had never enjoyed anything so much for it was the first time she had seen no class distinction."28

Extension work among industrial women workers in Pittsburgh continued to grow in the 1910s, reaching a peak during the war years. By the 1920s, each of the branch associations sponsored industrial clubs consisting of various types of workers. For instance, the Centre Ave. YWCA (the black branch) had a club for garment workers and a club for domestic servants. The North Side Center sponsored a club of about 35 factory workers. The center at Turtle Creek (Wilmerding) had an industrial club of Westinghouse employees.29 In 1928, the various industrial clubs of Pittsburgh organized a city-wide Council of Industrial Girls. By World War I, the clubs had begun to move in new directions—from studying the Bible to studying industrial conditions and from self-improvement classes to working for social change. On both the national level and in Pittsburgh, the members of the industrial clubs were a dominant force within the YWCA by the 1920s.30
When the women met at Cleveland in 1920, strong factions collided. For the first time in the history of the YWCA, women workers addressed the convention and urged adoption of the entire Creed, including collective bargaining. Many middle-class board members, representing various local associations, argued vehemently against it. One woman warned that as YWCA members “we [are] losing our religion and [are] in danger of Communism.” The Pittsburgh contingency in Cleveland was composed of several board members from both YWCAs, the secretaries and several members of the industrial clubs. If the 30,000 or so working women within the YWCA viewed the adoption of The Creed as an indication of their growing power within the National Association, those Pittsburgh working-class women must have believed as well that their policy-making role had been strengthened within their local associations.

However, the YWCA also comprised two other groups of influential women. The secretaries (professional social workers) employed by the board carried out policy but also helped to determine what directions that policy would take. With Florence Simms as National Secretary of the Industrial Department, the policy regarding industrial workers, wages and conditions became increasingly more liberal. In many cases, that caused a conflict with the third group—the upper-middle and middle-class board members and supporters of the YWCA.

We know that many of the Pittsburgh members disagreed with the decisions of the Cleveland convention, and even among those who stood behind the YWCA through its fund raising crises, there were moments of doubt. Writing in April of 1921, Ivy Birchfield, President of the Board of the Central YWCA, suggested that the Industrial Department “may approve of the teachings of Socialism, Radicalism, Trade Unionism and all these imply.” In a letter to Mrs. Robert Speer, President of the National Board, Birchfield cited a list of authors which the National Industrial Department had recommended to the local associations. Among others, she identified Harriet Stanton Blatch as a “Radical of the Left Wing” and noted that Florence Kelley had written for the Socialist Review. No doubt Birchfield spoke for others on the board when she asked: “What can be gained by the teachings of these people, but harm?”

This attitude was also present in the actions of the Philadelphia Board of the YWCA in 1918 that Ken Fones-Wolf describes in his study of labor reform in the Philadelphia YM and YWCAs. According to Fones-Wolf, the industrial workers, upset over the firing of the extension secretary and the eviction of several boarders at the Kensington branch, marched into a meeting of the Board where they demanded a vote and were summarily thrown out by the local police. The issue precipitated a struggle between “the old guard” and a new liberal insurgency group that finally took control in Philadelphia and pushed for industrial reform. Karen Mittleman argues that this incident was only “a temporary triumph for Social-Gospel advocates.” She believes that the middle-class women of the YWCA
only desired “to uphold Christian standards of decency and fairness in industry,” not challenge the ‘employers’ power in the workplace.”

In Pittsburgh a less dramatic change took place. Although not always conversant with the day-to-day operations of the organization, the middle-class women who sat on the boards of the YWCA had often been involved in association work for years, if not decades. Their mothers, daughters, aunts, sisters and female friends also worked for the same causes. Many times, they corresponded daily, discussing policy and strategy. The YWCA represented not only an opportunity to spread the ideals of Christianity and the Social Gospel, but also a way to exert leadership. Although class interests were never irrelevant, many of the middle-class women disregarded pressure on them by their male relatives and social peers. As one YWCA secretary recalled of the 1920 controversy, many board members were shocked at industrial conditions, and “they felt guilty about their own privileges and determined to take some action.” Often their position created “a threat to their marriage and family life, but they stood firm because they were convinced it was right.”

Rumors spread throughout Pittsburgh that many supporters of the YWCA had resigned over the issue of industrial democracy. Certainly, the board members did not. The same women would continue to launch new fund raising campaigns, oversee the 1925 merger, and support the work of the YWCA for years to come. None of the extension workers or secretaries were fired. In fact, the women of Pittsburgh became advisors to other city associations faced with similar problems.

Esther Hawes, the staff worker sent to calm the women of the Pittsburgh Associations in 1921, later became the General Secretary of the combined YWCA of Pittsburgh. Hawes, commenting upon action of the board to sponsor five bills of social legislation in 1933, said: “[It gives me] certain satisfaction since only a few years ago the YWCA was condemned for being socially minded and particularly for favoring collective bargaining. . . .”

Ivy Birchfield, the author of the letter expressing her concerns over the “radical” inclinations of the YWCA, remained a vital member of the Y. After visiting the national headquarters in 1928, the executive secretary praised Birchfield in a letter to Esther Hawes. She also reminded Hawes that “they are rare women that you are working with these days.”

It is naive to believe that all of the middle-class women of the Pittsburgh YWCA unquestioningly joined together for the betterment of their working-class sisters. No doubt, many supported The Creed believing that it would do less societal harm than militant labor activity which they had witnessed in the 1919 Steel Strike and the 1916 Westinghouse Strike. Because of the efforts of the professional social workers of the YWCA, more and more middle-class women had become outraged at the working conditions their sisters endured. Perhaps the board members were also acknowledging the importance of the YWCA’s growing working-class
membership. Instead of fighting the increasing power of the industrial workers of the YWCA, the middle-class board members chose to endorse this program of industrial reform, gaining the support rather than the ire of their working-class sisters. With a strong voice in national YWCA issues, the industrial workers were forcing other members of the YWCA to examine industrial conditions and policies. In other words, by 1921 social reform was no longer coming from "the top down" in the Pittsburgh YWCA. The middle-class board members did what Florence Simms had urged—"to change from . . . doing for girls, thinking for them, to [feeling] the solidarity of the whole human family."

This episode in the history of the Pittsburgh YWCA illustrates class conflict within a gender-specific organization as illustrated by a leadership which was somewhat reluctant in endorsing the goals of its working-class constituency. However, when threatened by outside forces which had the potential of destroying the organization, the women closed ranks, sharing a belief in the value of their activism. For all of the women—middle-class volunteers, working-class women, and professional social workers—the importance of the YWCA as a conduit for reform superseded personal interests. The 1921 crisis forced the membership of the YWCA to strengthen its commitment to labor reform and to reaffirm its position in the community. Unity among the membership would be challenged again in the following decades, but the women of the Pittsburgh YWCA would continue to uphold and expand their roles as social reformers.

Notes

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1. The proliferation of research on women and reform created a problem of definition. Historians such as William O'Neill and Stanley Lemons used the term social feminism to characterize the activities of women involved in reform activities—club women, municipal reformers, settlement workers, and labor reformers. In the 1973 book, The Woman Citizen: Social Feminism in the 1920s (Chicago: University of Illinois Press), Lemons equated social feminism with all Progressive female reform. Nancy Cott takes issue with the use of this term in her article, "What's in a Name? The Limits of 'Social Feminism'; or, Expanding the Vocabulary of Women's History" which appeared in The Journal of American History in December, 1989. Cott argues that the use of such a broad and vague definition obscures differences in emphasis and philosophies among thousands of women activists. According to Cott, "The use of social feminism as an umbrella term neither deals with the broad political spectrum from left to right that women's politics occupied (as men's did) nor recognizes that women's loyalties and alliances outside of feminism shaped their woman-oriented activities." p. 819.

historians have examined women's social, political, and labor reform activities during the 1920s. See, for example, Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Linda Gordon, *Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence* (New York: Viking, 1988); and Elisabeth Israels Perry, *Belle Moskowitz: Feminine Politics and the Exercise of Power in the Age of Alfred E. Smith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). However, Elizabeth Anne Payne in *Reform, Labor, and Feminism: Margaret Dreier Robins and the Women's Trade Union League* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988) rejects the emphasis on continuity, arguing that Robins, as well as others such as Jane Addams and John Dewey, saw the New Deal as a betrayal of Progressive values, viewing the "innovations of the 1930s as an abandonment of the American reform tradition, a substitution of bureaucratic liberalism for voluntary social service and civic education." p. 3.


4. Nancy A. Hewitt, "Beyond the Search for Sisterhood: American Women's History in the 1980s," *Social History*, 10 (1985), pp. 299-321; Kathryn Kish Sklar also calls for an examination of difference in the history of women and social welfare, see "A Call for Comparisons," *American Historical Review*, 95 (October, 1990), pp. 1109-1114. However, Maureen Flanagan in her study of the Chicago City Clubs, concluded that "because of their gender experiences, the Woman's City Club members were more open to the possibilities of cross-class alliances than were most of their male counterparts." In "Gender and Urban Political Reform: The City Club and the Woman's City Club of Chicago in the Progressive Era," *American Historical Review*, 95 (October, 1990), p. 1050.

5. Labor reform for women workers was a major goal of several organizations, especially the Women's Trade Union League. See Nancy Shrom Dye, *As Equals and as Sisters: Feminism, the Labor Movement, and the Women's Trade Union League of New York* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1980) and Payne, *Reform, Labor, and Feminism*, passim.


8. Edith Long to Florence Simms, January 14, 1921, National YWCA Papers; William Frew Long to Employers' Association of Pittsburgh, January 8, 1921, National YWCA Papers. The Employers' Association, formerly the Manufacturers' Association of Pittsburgh, had been active in the 1916 Westinghouse strike and fought the eight-hour day. After the strike ended, the association distributed to its membership lists of workers whom it considered dangerous, including saleswomen, stenographers, teachers, and laborers. David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 322-327.


10. Mrs. William Brown, writing in *The Association...*
tion Monthly in 1921 acknowledged that the YWCA and YMCA differed in policy regarding The Social Ideals of the Churches. She attributed this to "the different nature of our constituency" and proposed that the YWCA was fulfilling its original mission of serving young women and girls. "Answering Our Critics," pp. 137-138. Although a number of historians are presently working on various aspects of the YWCA, no comprehensive study has been published. Institutional histories include: Elizabeth Wilson, Fifty Years of Association Work Among Young Women (New York: Woman's Press, 1916); Mary S. Sims, The First Twenty-Five Years (New York: Woman's Press, 1932); Anna V. Rice, A History of the World's Young Women's Christian Association (New York: Woman's Press, 1948); Mary S. Sims, The Natural History of a Social Institution—the YWCA. (New York: Woman's Press, 1936); Mary S. Sims, The YWCA—an Unfolding Purpose (New York: Woman's Press, 1950); and Marion O. Robinson, Eight Women of the YWCA (New York: National Board of the Young Women's Christian Association of the U.S.A., 1966).


13. Pittsburgh Press, January 9, 1921; Of the six women appearing in a photograph of YWCA fund workers in the Pittsburgh Press, five were listed in the 1920 Pittsburgh Blue Book.


19. Ira Katznelson argues in his study, City Trenches: Urban Politics and the Patterning of Class in the United States that Americans identify themselves as workers while at work and as members of ethnic groups and communities while at home. He states, "What is distinctive about the American experience is that the linguistic, cultural, and institutional meaning given to the differentiation of work and community, a characteristic of all industrial capitalist societies, has taken a sharply divided form, and that it has done so for a very long time." This theory would help to explain the failure of the working-class Kensington branch of the YMCA. The Kensington YMCA depended on neighborhood support from trade union activists. Pro-union organizers gathered at or near the workplace, not the community social service center. See Ira Katznelson, City Trenches: Urban Politics and the Patterning of Class in the United States (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 17-31.


21. My analysis of the differences concerning labor issues between the YWCA and YMCA was reinforced in conversations with historians Nina Mjagkij and Thomas Winter, who research the YMCA. Also Susan Lynn, in her paper, "Women and Progressive Politics: The YWCA and the American Friends Service Committee and the Struggle for Racial Justice, 1945-1960" presented at the annual meeting of the Organization of American Historians, April, 1991, discussed ideological conflict between the two organizations.


25. Stewart, Industrial Work, pp. 5-10; The YWCA was not alone in its goal of educating and organizing women workers. Other organizations such as the Women's Educational and Industrial Union engaged in these activities. See Margaret Spratt, "Women Adrift and Urban Pioneers: Self-Supporting Working Women in America, 1880-1930" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Kentucky, 1988), chapter 3. Also see Joyce Kombluh and Mary Frederickson, eds., Sisterhood and Solidarity: Worker's Education for Women, 1914-1918 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984) for descriptions of various workers' programs and schools.


27. Mary Frederickson, "Citizens for Democracy: The Industrial Programs of the YWCA" in Sisterhood and Solidarity, pp. 77-78.


32. By the 1920s, the YWCA had become a complex bureaucratic social service agency. The "secretaries" were well-trained social workers who were placed in the local associations through an employment bureau operated by the national office. For a discussion of the professionalization of social welfare workers, see Roy Lubove, The Professional Altruist, pp. 22-54; Judith Ann Trolander, Professionalism and Social Change: From the Settlement House Movement to Neighborhood Centers, 1886 to the Present (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), pp. 31-49; and Daniel J. Walkowitz, "The Making of a Feminine Professional Identity: Social Workers in the 1920s," American Historical Review 95 October, 1990), pp. 1051-1075.


34. Ivy Birchfield to Mrs. Robert E. Speer, April 26, 1921, National YWCA Papers.


37. Philadelphia Evening Public Ledger, February 24, 1921; Minutes of the Pittsburgh YWCA, Pittsburgh YWCA Papers, HSWP.

38. Minutes of the Executive Board, February 15, 1933, Pittsburgh YWCA Papers, HSWP; Emma F. Byers to Esther Hawes, May 28, 1928, Pittsburgh YWCA Papers, HSWP.