

**MANLINESS, GOODNESS, AND GOD:
POVERTY, GENDER, AND SOCIAL REFORM IN
ENGLISH-SPEAKING MONTREAL,
1890-1929**

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with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores intersections between gender and poverty in social reform efforts within Montreal's English-speaking Protestant community between 1890 and 1929. Based on the premise that understandings of poverty were contingent less upon economic realities than upon attitudes towards masculinity and femininity, this thesis argues that as methods of social reform shifted over a forty-year period so did the ways in which poverty and gender intersected. Nineteenth-century evangelicals located poverty in men's abdication of their proper role as breadwinners, and posited that only by conversion and reintegration into an idealized web of Victorian domesticity could such men be lifted out of their economic circumstances. As the Protestant churches in Montreal began to adopt principles of the social gospel in the early twentieth century and began to view poverty less as an individual failing than as a consequence of the capitalist industrial system, this nineteenth-century evangelical concern for saving individual men was largely replaced by a focus upon reforming men and boys as a group as a way to alleviate poverty. In particular, Protestant reformers feared the repercussions of a general lack of interest in formal religious activities among men and boys, middle-class and poor alike. As the English Protestant churches established a missionary presence in Montreal's poorest areas, other reformers, led by the Montreal Local Council of Women, established methods of organized charity in the city. Inspired by British reformers, the Montreal Charity Organization Society (MCOS) and, during the Great War, the Montreal Branch of the Canadian Patriotic Fund (CPF) addressed the problem of poverty through "scientific" methods of investigation and relief which established the interrelationship between the

individual and an organic community. Where the MCOS, like the Protestant churches, identified poverty as a particularly male affliction, the exigencies of the First World War and the mandate of the CPF to aid dependents of servicemen shifted the locus of poverty from men to women. In this new association of poverty and women, poverty became feminized and sexualized as a moral disease of “loose” women. That poverty was variously constructed as masculine and feminine as methods of social reform changed throughout this period points to shifting understandings of poverty which referred only obliquely to economic conditions in Montreal’s working-class districts, but spoke strongly to middle-class attitudes towards gender and morality.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis has its origins in a conversation I had with a client of Tyndale-St. George Community Centre in Montreal in February 1997. I was visiting Montreal to attempt to locate sources for a vaguely defined project dealing with women and social reform organizations in Montreal at the turn of the century, and my research had taken me in the course of several days to various community centres, settlement houses, and archives in the traditionally working-class south-western part of the city. Located in the poor, predominantly black neighbourhood known as Little Burgundy, Tyndale-St. George Community Centre, operated jointly by the Presbyterian and Anglican churches, looked run-down that day, its faded exterior even shabbier through the lens of the steady February drizzle. Inside, the overworked secretary obligingly showed me to a filing cabinet, and I began to work, interrupted only by some stray three year olds from the daycare across the hall, and the frequent rumble of transport trucks on the Ville-Marie Expressway overhead.

Amidst the constant flow of people in and out of the office, a woman sat down beside me and, after inquiring about the hours of the food bank, asked me if I was conducting research for Black History Month. The conversation that ensued offered me both an enlightening and disturbing look into the experience of gender and poverty in late twentieth-century Canada. This woman who, despite the lines around her eyes and her weary demeanour, was probably no older than my own twenty three years, had three children, two of whom already attended school. She was upset because a social worker had visited her home that week and had informed her that if she and her husband had another child, as they planned, it would be removed from their care and placed in a foster

home. This woman proceeded to tell me that she had slept on the couch ever since the social worker's threat in order to avoid her husband's sexual advances which, it seemed, would almost certainly lead to pregnancy. She confided to me, a complete stranger, that she and her husband had not had sexual intercourse in three days and that she feared he might become abusive if she did not soon comply with his sexual demands.

This woman's story has stayed with me throughout the process of researching, writing, and rewriting this thesis. Most striking is that this woman's low economic status played itself out in her role as a mother and in her sexuality, two traditional and often contradictory benchmarks of femininity. That these "female" roles, the former the highest ideal of femininity and the latter its antithesis, had come under surveillance by the state in the guise of addressing this woman's poverty speaks to the interconnectedness of poverty and gender in current social welfare discourse. The recent protests of single mothers in response to substantial decreases in welfare payments, discussions about men's and women's relative eligibility for "workfare" in Ontario, and the formulation of methods by which to purge the pernicious "welfare bum" or "welfare queen" from social assistance rolls, illustrate a system in which gender influences the formulation and implementation of current social welfare policies.

This dynamic between poverty, gender, and social welfare, however, is not unique to the late twentieth century. It is the central argument of this thesis that as philosophies of welfare and methods of delivering social assistance in Canada shifted from an evangelical pattern of saving souls in the late nineteenth century, to an increasingly organic version of saving society in the adoption by Protestant churches of the social gospel, to a professionalized and bureaucratized model in the 1920s, poverty and gender assumed

different and unstable meanings, and intersected in mutable ways. Although many historians in Canada have already traced the trajectory of these broad cultural shifts, particularly in the context of the long-standing secularization debate, discussion of gender has been limited largely to studies of women's increasing participation in social reform, and to the continuities which maternal feminism identified between the private and public spheres. Unlike much of the current literature, however, this thesis applies gender theory to such cultural shifts in methods of charity and social welfare, and more particularly to contemporary understandings of poverty, in order to identify continuities and discontinuities in the ways in which masculinity, femininity, and poverty intersected in Montreal at the turn of the century.

Although poverty refers generally to a lack of material necessities, it is not a static concept. Rather, it has assumed moral and gendered dimensions which have manifested themselves in different ways throughout the development of welfare programmes in Canada. Just as understandings of poverty have been historically specific and contingent, so have uses of gender. By gender, I take Joan Scott's definition as "a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes" and "a primary way of signifying relationships of power."¹ Although essentialized as being "natural," gender is not prior to, but a variable in, social organization, and requires deconstruction and decoding in historical texts. Gender is not limited to constructions of male and female bodies; Scott observes, "Established as an objective set of references, concepts of gender structure perception and the concrete and symbolic organization of all

¹ Joan Wallach Scott, Gender and the Politics of History (New York, 1988), p. 42.

social life.”² Seemingly gender-free concepts, such as poverty, can thus hold gendered aspects that structure their meaning and shape their representation. It is crucial to note, however, that gender does not refer only to women or to femininity. Gender analysis is equally concerned with examining the social construction of masculinity and with destabilizing men as normative, genderless subjects of historical study. As Nancy F. Cott argues, gender history seeks “to remove the ‘unmarked’ quality of men and illuminate them as gendered subjects.”³ Thus, gender history interrogates social constructions of both masculinity and femininity and the relationship between the two, not only as expressed in men’s and women’s bodies, but also as enunciated in human ideas, symbols, and institutions. It is in this latter form that gender intersected with the idea of poverty in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Montreal to construct a discourse which offered little insight into conditions in the city’s working-class neighbourhoods, but spoke strongly to hegemonic attitudes and perceptions which the middle class held about masculinity, femininity, and the nature of poverty in a newly industrialized city.

This thesis will examine three distinct but overlapping understandings of poverty and social welfare which gained currency in the Protestant, English-speaking community in Montreal between 1890 and 1929. The first, the evangelical view, influenced strongly the approach that most Protestant churches took to the problem of poverty in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Evangelicals interpreted poverty less as a result of inherent inequalities in the capitalist industrial order than as a sign of moral and spiritual weakness which could be remedied only by conversion. As I argue in Chapter 1, the

² *Ibid.*, p. 45.

discourse surrounding poverty which was constructed by the Methodist-founded Old Brewery Mission between 1890 and 1914 also posited a fundamental connection between gender and poverty: not only were the destitute men who frequented the mission seen to have abandoned God, they also were thought to have compromised their masculinity by abdicating their primary role within their families as breadwinners. The only way to mitigate such violations of gender prescriptions was to reintegrate these men into a complex web of family, work, church, and Victorian respectability by holding evangelical services, preaching “muscular Christianity,” and, as the mission developed, training young women to be “good” mothers.

Increasingly convinced that individual salvation would only be possible by reforming society as a whole, thereby establishing the Kingdom of God on earth, at the beginning of the twentieth century Protestant churches in Montreal began to take a different approach to poverty. Influenced by social gospel thought, poverty became viewed less as an individual moral disease than as a larger problem of the organic whole which required a social solution. Chapter 2 explores this shift in religious outlook through the lens of Protestant efforts to address the social implications of poverty by establishing a presence in “the city below the hill.” Like its evangelical predecessor, however, this model of social reform was heavily gendered. Focused upon men and boys in particular, it was part of a larger discourse within Protestant churches on male absence from public forms of religion which posited that only by attracting boys and young men to religious worship

³ Nancy F. Cott, “On Men’s History and Women’s History,” in Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen, eds., Meanings For Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America (Chicago and London, 1990), p. 208.

and church-sponsored leisure activities could the related problems of poverty and male social disorder be diminished.

Although in the absence of state social programmes the churches had long assumed primary responsibility for the welfare of English Protestants in Montreal, by the beginning of the twentieth century members of the city's philanthropic community had begun to explore alternative ways of addressing poverty. Chapter 3 explores one such alternative, the British idealist-influenced movement towards "organized charity" which was first introduced in Montreal in the 1890s, gained authority with the establishment of the Montreal Charity Organization Society (MCOS) in the early part of the twentieth century, and reached the apogee of its influence in the work of the Montreal Branch of the Canadian Patriotic Fund (CPF) during the First World War. Although proponents of organized charity represented their methods as being "scientific," and therefore value-free, in its practical application organized charity mirrored many of the moral concerns and gender constructions of earlier religious approaches to poverty. In this examination of the MCOS and the CPF, I also trace the beginnings of professionalization in social work, a nascent field which, for all its claims to objectivity, still relied heavily on a moralistic understanding of human development which was characteristic of late nineteenth-century evangelical religion.

Although this study is primarily concerned with public representations of poverty and gender in the records of social welfare organizations in Montreal, it is important to understand the social and economic context for such representations, the English Protestant community in Montreal from 1890 to 1929. As Canada's first industrial metropolis and largest city during this period, Montreal developed the problems

characteristic of urban development before any other city in Canada. As a consequence, Montreal became the country's centre of debate on social problems, and during the period of this study developed a lively community of men and women who attempted to establish in their city the most current methods of social welfare. The vibrancy of this activity was only enhanced by the influence and strength of the Protestant churches in Montreal and by the situation of McGill University, perhaps Canada's premiere anglophone educational institution, in the heart of the city. The strength of the anglophone community and of its religious and charitable institutions may also be attributable to its position as a minority, albeit a powerful one, which defined itself against the francophone majority and, more particularly, against the powerful ultramontane Roman Catholic church in Quebec.

Unlike in Ontario, due to that community's status as a linguistic and religious minority it would be incorrect to identify an English Protestant cultural hegemony in Montreal in the late nineteenth century.⁴ During the Laurier Boom of the 1890s, Montreal's anglophone community was nevertheless at the apogee of its political, economic, and social power. In one of the many celebratory histories which were published in the city's 250th anniversary year in 1892, W.D. Lighthall praised Montreal as "the Alexandria of the West":

Few cities, if any, surpass it in **situation**. Past it, in front, sweeps the stately River of Rivers, the St. Lawrence, two miles in breadth, bearing down to the Gulf one-third of the fresh waters of the globe; in rear rises Mount Royal, its sides clothed with foliage, its recesses full of beautiful drives and views; and round about the city lies the extensive and fertile Island of Montreal, thirty-two miles long by nine wide, bordered with a succession of lovely bays, hamlets and watering-places.⁵

⁴ William Westfall, Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth Century Ontario (Montreal and Kingston, 1989).

⁵ W. D. Lighthall, Montreal After 250 Years (Montreal, 1892), p. 11.

This natural beauty was only enhanced by the creation of ordered natural space with the inauguration of Mount Royal Park in 1876⁶, and by the magnitude and frequency of “fine public buildings”⁷ which graced Montreal’s tree-lined streets. The completion of the new Royal Victoria Hospital in the early 1890s on the edge of Mount Royal Park provided a fitting monument to both the power that the idea of empire held over the English-speaking community in Montreal, and the influence of the anglophone elite in appropriating public space to take care of its own. Funded by Lord Strathcona and Lord Mount-Stephen, the hospital, “a huge and most picturesque building of uncut limestone, resembling some castellated Scotch palace,” boasted “the most modern hospital plans and principles.”⁸ Voicing the general conviction that Montreal was on the cutting edge of urban life, on the occasion of Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee the Reverend J. Douglas Borthwick stressed the divine mission of the city from the time of its establishment as a religious mission to the present day, observing that “[t]he small mustard seed, has indeed become a great tree, and the various nations of the Old World have lodged and are lodging in the branches thereof.”⁹

Already by the mid-nineteenth century, this “great tree” had supplanted Quebec City as the metropolis of Canada, becoming, as Paul-André Linteau argues, incontestably the most important economic centre in the country.¹⁰ By the 1890s, Montreal was the vibrant commercial centre of Canada, dominating manufacturing, banking, commerce, and shipping in Canada, and acting as a hub for the country’s newly completed railway

⁶ John A. Dickinson and Brian Young, *A Short History of Quebec*, 2nd ed. (Toronto, 1993), p. 227.

⁷ Rev. J. Douglas Borthwick, *History of Montreal Including the Streets of Montreal: Their Origin and History* (Montreal, 1897), p. 178.

⁸ Lighthall, pp. 76-7.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

system.¹¹ The city's population had more than doubled since Confederation, reaching over 216,000 people by 1891, while the total population of the island grew to 277,000.¹² Along with this population increase came a shift in ethnicity. Representing more than half the population of Montreal between 1831 and 1866, people of British origin experienced a decline not in numbers, but in their proportion of the city's population in the last decades of the nineteenth century, from 45 percent in 1871 to 33.7 percent by 1901. Meanwhile the francophone population increased substantially from 53 to 60.9 percent in these same years, attesting to the attraction which industrial work in urban centres held for those from rural Quebec.¹³ Despite the declining proportional significance of the anglophone community and the growth of a large francophone middle class, the English-speaking community nevertheless retained its social influence and economic ascendancy in Montreal. Indeed, much of Canada's wealth was concentrated in opulent mansions nestled on the idyllic slopes of Mount Royal just west of McGill University in an anglophone preserve known as the Golden Square Mile.¹⁴ It was from these heights that the Molson, Redpath, and Allan families enjoyed their fortunes, surveyed symbols of their wealth in the city below, and dreamed of expanding their empires on the river beyond.

¹⁰ Paul-André Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal depuis la Confédération* (Montréal, 1992), p. 15.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 40. Linteau notes, however, that part of this population increase was due to the City of Montreal's annexation of several adjoining municipalities, a process which began in the 1880s and continued until 1918. Only the wealthy communities of Westmount and Outremont, as well as working-class Verdun, resisted this trend.(p. 202)

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 44-5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 78-80. Linteau argues of Saint-Antoine Ward, of which the Golden Square Mile was a part, "Ce secteur cossu du quartier présente une unité architecturale, un équilibre d'environnement, une qualité de vie qui expliquent le nom de Golden Square Mile, le mille carré doré, qui lui a été attribué. C'est la partie la plus riche et la plus belle de la ville, celle que voient le plus souvent les visiteurs lorsqu'ils vont sur le mont Royal. Un tel spectacle devait certainement laisser de Montréal l'image d'une ville opulente."

Unseen by residents of the Golden Square Mile, however, were the neighbourhoods below the mountain terrace in Sainte-Anne Ward where the working class, upon whose labour the wealthy built their fortunes, lived and worked. This was also where, over the course of the several decades covered by this study, the women of the Old Brewery Mission, church settlement workers, COS and CPF caseworkers, and students from the McGill Department of Social Service studied the problem of poverty and carried out their work. In the same year that the Reverend J. Douglas Borthwick sang the virtues of Montreal in celebration of the Queen's Jubilee, Herbert Ames, a local shoe manufacturer, published a survey of living conditions of the industrial classes in the "city below the hill." Based firmly in the progressive reform movement and the nascent "science" of sociology, The City Below the Hill, one of the first studies to document the effects of industrialization in a Canadian city, provides a window into life in the working-class, largely Irish area of south-western Montreal known as "Griffintown" in the late nineteenth century. Located in Sainte-Anne Ward, Griffintown's landscape was cut through by the Lachine Canal, "*le berceau de l'industrie montréalaise au milieu du 19e siècle*,"¹⁵ as well as by factories and rail yards, and was populated by factory workers, Grand Trunk employees, and unskilled labourers.¹⁶ Indeed, below the pastoral scenes of upper-class life on the "natural" slopes of the mountain lay teeming working-class neighbourhoods in which insufficient wages, overcrowded housing, hunger, and disease heralded the advent of the modern industrial city. Espousing the position that physical environment necessarily structured moral life, Ames' goal was to analyze and ameliorate

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

the conditions of that new phenomenon of the capitalist order, the waged worker. In this vein, he hoped to use his study to lobby fellow businessmen and municipal government for support for “model accommodation”¹⁷ for the working class.

Ames was convinced that Montreal could not reach its full potential as a modern urban city if masses of people lived in abject poverty:

The real measure of advance in any city is not the increase in the number of very wealthy men, nor of handsome residences, but in the improved condition of the middle industrial class. Increase in ability to surround themselves with influences which improve the mind, morals and health of this part of the community means elevation for society from its foundations, whereby all above is also raised.¹⁸

Closely mirroring the increasingly social ethic of the Protestant churches and the widespread concern with social problems and the disintegration of community among contemporary British urban reformers, Ames espoused an organic vision of society which posited that “ordinary urban conditions are demoralizing and [...] no portion of the community can be allowed to deteriorate without danger to the whole.”¹⁹ His concern for urban conditions would find increasing expression in later years in his position as a member of the Advisory Board of the Old Brewery Mission, as one of the most prominent national organizers of the CPF, and as a reformist city alderman and Member of Parliament.²⁰

The varied approaches which Ames took to poverty in his prominent career as a reformer and philanthropist mirror the broader cultural shifts in understandings of poverty and gender which this thesis explores. That a single generation of reformers adopted such

¹⁷ Herbert Ames, The City Below the Hill: A Sociological Study of a Portion of the City of Montreal, Canada (Toronto, 1972: originally published in 1897), p. 112

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

different models of social welfare over a thirty-year period points to the highly unstable nature of understandings of poverty during a period of intense social and economic change at the turn of the century. The way in which poverty intersected with gender in contemporary discussions of economic problems in Montreal, however, remained remarkably stable even as ideas of social welfare shifted to reflect broader cultural and religious changes. Although evangelicals, social gospellers, and proponents of organized charity advocated different, if overlapping, approaches to “the problem of the city,” they agreed to the circular proposition that poverty posed a grave threat to middle-class Victorian gender norms, and that the violation of such norms would inevitably lead to moral decline and economic ruin.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. xi.

CHAPTER I
BEDS—10 CENTS, MEALS—10 CENTS, GOSPEL—FREE:
REPRESENTATIONS OF MANLINESS AND MOTHERHOOD AT
THE OLD BREWERY MISSION, 1890-1914

Two days before the Young Women's Home Missionary Society's soup kitchen opened in 1890, thirty-one-year-old Mina Douglas, the organization's corresponding secretary, lamented that she had "no power to work among the unconverted."¹ Yet her Christian credentials seemed impeccable. Mina's father, George Douglas, was a prominent Methodist preacher who held important positions within both local and national levels of the denomination, and served as principal of Wesleyan Theological College in Montreal for more than twenty years.² Mina's diary reveals the strength of her own religious convictions; indeed, scarcely a day went by when she failed to report in some detail upon a church service or a missionary meeting which she had attended. Like many women who belonged to the anglophone middle-class in Montreal, Mina lived squarely within the bounds of family and church. By early 1890, as she eagerly prepared for the first customers at the soup kitchen, she had translated her experience of the importance of the family and her unwavering Christian conviction into social service. After the soup kitchen's first day of operation when only four men took advantage of her new project, Mina, feeling more optimistic than earlier in the week, admitted that she was "much amused but not discouraged. This work is of God and must prosper."³

¹ Queen's University Archives, Douglas Family Papers, Box 2, "Mina E. Douglas," File 3, Diary, February 25, 1890.

² Katherine Ridout, "Douglas, George." *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. XII, 1891-1900 (Toronto, 1990), pp. 265-6. See also "The Late Dr. Douglas: A Powerful Orator, A Great Minister," *The Montreal Weekly Witness*, February 14, 1894, p. 1.

³ Diary, February 27, 1890.

The soup kitchen did prosper. Under the auspices of the Young Women's Home Missionary Society (YWHMS), whose membership was comprised mainly of members of Dominion Square Methodist Church and whose primary mandate was to give financial aid to home missionaries, the kitchen began to attract between sixty and one hundred men daily.⁴ The men could not only obtain an inexpensive meal in this small room in the working-class neighbourhood of Griffintown, but also browse through newspapers or attend evening gospel meetings. These meetings were conducted by several young men, and Mina observed that often "the small room was filled to overflowing, and there is reason to believe that some at least received an impulse towards manliness, goodness and God, which the mathematics of eternity alone can calculate."⁵ Mina's understanding of manliness hinged upon her nineteenth-century Methodist evangelical worldview, the central components of which, according to Marguerite Van Die, were "the centrality of the Bible, repentance, salvation through the atonement, and a life of service."⁶ For Mina, manliness required hard work, strength of character, independence, and, most importantly, a belief in the saving grace of God and a commitment to lead a Christian life. This understanding of manliness mirrored Mina's evangelical approach to social service which sought the reform and conversion of individuals as the most appropriate way to address the problems of industrial society.

Where Mina equated manliness with conversion and her own femininity with Christian service, the male board of directors which appropriated the work of the mission

⁴ QUA, DFP, Box 2. "OBM." File 27, Report of the Young Women's Home Missionary Society, 1890.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Marguerite Van Die, "'A March of Victory and Triumph in Praise of 'The Beauty of Holiness'": Laity and the Evangelical Impulse in Canadian Methodism, 1800-1884," in G.A. Rawlyk, ed., Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience (Montreal and Kingston, 1997), p. 76.

in 1892, when Dominion Square Church erected a permanent mission building on Craig Street, constructed gender in a much different way. In its broadening of the mission's original programme of relief work and religious services to include Mothers' Meetings, children's activities, and health clinics, this male board constructed a complex system of gender representation which was groomed for public consumption and more particularly aimed to elicit the financial support of respectable Christian businessmen. This system posited that masculinity was contingent upon a man's close relationship with the feminine domestic sphere and to a feminized church. Indeed, with the shift from female to male leadership in 1892, the Old Brewery Mission's (OBM) system of gender representation became predicated upon bringing men out of economic and moral poverty and back to "manliness" by reintegrating such men into a web of Christian obligation, family responsibility, and domesticity. OBM officials were aware, however, that this model of masculinity held little sway for many working-class men whose livelihood and very manliness were contingent upon physical strength. The OBM attempted to reach these men by offering a cogent programme of athletic activities and by preaching the virtues of "muscular Christianity."

If the mission had to cater to the interests of working-class men because of the range of leisure activities available to them in bars, fraternal orders, and on the street, working-class women who frequented the mission were accorded no such consideration.⁷ Unlike men, who could participate in commercial amusements or street culture without compromising their manliness, there existed few respectable leisure alternatives outside the

⁷ For a discussion of "rough" and "respectable" male culture in three small Ontario towns, see Lynne Marks, Revivals and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure, and Identity in Late-Nineteenth-Century Small-Town Ontario (Toronto, 1996), pp. 81-106 and 107-139.

churches for women, whether working- or middle-class.⁸ According to Lynne Marks, “Concepts of masculinity were flexible enough to allow for the ready movement from rough to respectable, in sharp contrast to the more constricting contemporary norms of femininity.”⁹ Consequently, notions of femininity transcended class lines, and women at the OBM were subject to the same standards of domesticity and feminine piety as their middle-class sisters. At the same time, the intricate female religious community in which Mina and the women of the YWHMS had addressed the problems of destitute men gave way to an idealized and uncomplicated version of femininity as motherhood. Working-class women were trained to occupy their rightful place as the moral centre of the family, embracing their husbands and sons in a web of domesticity so that the city’s men would never stray from the wholesome influences of home and church.

That poverty was not a function of economics but rather a moral problem which compromised a man’s masculinity and implicated the femininity of his mother points to the OBM’s gendered understanding of its clients’ circumstances. The ways in which the mission’s administration constructed poverty in its public documents said little about economic conditions in the newly industrialized city but spoke strongly to the way in which middle-class reformers prescribed the operations of masculinity and femininity in the working-class family. This chapter will examine such representations of masculinity and femininity in the rhetoric of the Old Brewery Mission, particularly notions of manliness

⁸ By the turn of the century, women, particularly young single women who had moved to urban areas to take waged employment, were participating in increasing numbers in commercial amusements and other “unrespectable” activities. Carolyn Strange argues that this phenomenon became a crucible for reformers who feared that young women’s femininity and morality would be compromised by such activities, and was constructed as the “girl problem”. See Strange, Toronto’s Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City, 1880-1930 (Toronto, 1995).

⁹ Marks, p. 106.

and motherhood, to uncover the gendered codes which underwrote perceptions of poverty, family, and Christian citizenship in Protestant, English-speaking Montreal from 1890 to 1914. This chapter will also attempt to place such gender ideology within the context of a shift which had taken place in the Methodist Church's evangelical mission; by the 1890s, the Methodist Church had largely rejected the disorderly expressions of faith which had characterized its camp meetings in the early part of the nineteenth century, and had embraced middle-class domesticity and an idealized Christian home as its predominant paradigm for evangelical piety.

The change in gender construction which was encoded in the records of the OBM as leadership passed from the YWHMS to a male board of directors in 1892 reflected this shift in the way in which the Methodist Church in Canada viewed its evangelical faith. By the 1850s, Methodists had begun to abandon radical expressions of evangelical fervour in favour of more orderly forms of worship. Urban Methodists, in particular, were influenced "by the re-ordering of an agricultural rhythm of time to the structured discipline of a commercial and an industrializing society."¹⁰ As the Methodist Church accommodated its faith to an urban, middle-class constituency and became increasingly concerned with middle-class order and respectability in the second half of the nineteenth century,¹¹ contemporary understandings of manliness changed. Although masculinity retained its core pre-industrial values of "strength, independence, and self-assertion,"¹² Lynne Marks observes that a competing version of manliness developed which reflected

¹⁰ Van Die, "A March of Victory and Triumph in Praise of 'The Beauty of Holiness,'" p. 77.

¹¹ For a discussion of the process of religious synthesis which brought together Protestant cultures of "order" and "experience" in mid-nineteenth-century Ontario, see William Westfall, Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ontario (Montreal, 1989).

¹² Marks, Revivals and Roller Rinks, p. 32.

the shift within Methodism towards a more orderly evangelical paradigm and catered to the need of its increasingly urban and middle-class congregations for respectability. This Victorian model of masculinity “reinforced [a man’s] role as respectable family provider but ... also reflected a particularly Christian masculinity that incorporated a commitment to domestic life.”¹³ Colleen McDannell has observed that this Methodist shift towards domesticity was part of a broader ideological change in Victorian culture which elevated the middle-class home as the cornerstone of Christian faith and society, and which, in its creation of divisions between work, leisure, and consumerism, tended to support the position of the middle class in a newly industrialized society.¹⁴ Drawing on the work of Mary Ryan, Mark C. Carnes argues that evangelical domesticity, and more particularly mothers, played an integral role in shaping middle-class masculinity in the nineteenth century: “The cradle of the middle class, and of capitalism itself, had been rocked by women.”¹⁵ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall have noted for an earlier period in Britain, however, that such a close connection between Christian, middle-class manliness and the domestic sphere ran counter to the requirements of men to be competitive and aggressive in the new commercial and industrial economy, and “came dangerously close to embracing ‘feminine’ qualities.”¹⁶ For poor men, on the other hand, Marks argues that

¹³ Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks*, pp. 32-33.

¹⁴ Colleen McDannell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900* (Bloomington, 1986), pp. 73 and 77. McDannell argues that there were few differences between Protestant and Roman Catholic views of home religion in this period, and that the two traditions developed a common conception of domesticity and family religious life. Although beyond the scope of this paper, McDannell’s observation could be of some significance for studies of religion and culture in the francophone and anglophone communities in Montreal.

¹⁵ Mark C. Carnes, “Middle-Class Men and the Solace of Fraternal Ritual,” in Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen, eds., *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America* (Chicago, 1990), p. 37.

¹⁶ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London, 1987), pp. 110-111.

such ideals held even less sway and suggests that “for some working-class men the particularly working-class masculine ideals of toughness and physical strength were incompatible with a feminized faith.”¹⁷

Indeed, there is much evidence which points to a gradual feminization of Protestant churches in Canada in the late nineteenth century as women assumed more active roles in one of the only public venues open to them. That Mína, a young, middle-class woman from a respectable Methodist family, could leave the safe slopes of Mount Royal to work among destitute men in a heavily industrialized and overcrowded area of Montreal seems odd in light of contemporary Victorian constructions of women as modest, demure, pure, and inextricably tied to the domestic sphere.¹⁸ Concerned by poverty, the disruption of “traditional” forms of family life, and a perceived decline in moral standards which accompanied urbanization, industrialization, and immigration at this time, many women organized themselves to identify and address these problems from a decidedly evangelical perspective. Sharon Cook places evangelicalism at the very centre of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union’s mission “to reform society around the concept of a reconstituted family committed to Christian values”¹⁹ in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet these women’s religious motivations and their explicitly evangelical Protestant worldview also allowed their actions to remain within the realm of

¹⁷ Marks, Revivals and Roller Rinks, p. 33. In a similar vein, other historians have argued that “many working-class men had embraced a ‘rough’ code of manhood formulated, in part, to resist the respectable, moralistic manliness of the middle class.” See Gail Bederman, Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917 (Chicago, 1995), p. 17.

¹⁸ See “Introduction” to F.K. Prochaska, Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England (Oxford, 1980) for a discussion of traits thought to be inherent in the female character in the British context.

¹⁹ Sharon Anne Cook, “Through Sunshine and Shadow”: The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, Evangelicalism, and Reform in Ontario, 1874-1930 (Montreal and Kingston, 1995), p. 6.

women's "proper" sphere since they were merely enlarging their roles as guardians of morality, the family, and the home. Argues Cook,

It was evangelicalism's emancipating theology that originally empowered women and caused them to approach temperance as a moral and religious issue, not simply a social one. It was evangelicalism's campaigns that taught women the power of effective collective action and provided them with a rationale to take progressive action against male vices. And it was evangelicalism's support for the ideology of the central place of home and family that continued to validate the progressive behaviour of these conservative women.²⁰

Linda Kealey observes that, convinced that "women's special role as mother gives her the duty and the right to participate in the public sphere," these maternal feminists appropriated such separate spheres ideology by reinterpreting the restrictive prescriptions of domesticity into more public "social housekeeping" terms.²¹ Seth Koven and Sonya Michel argue that throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women claimed new public roles for themselves, using "maternalist" political discourse to change motherhood "from women's primary *private* responsibility into *public* policy" in nascent state welfare structures. The new industrial city, "beset by the sins of capitalism, was also the site on which a newly imagined Eve would perform her redemptive acts as woman, mother, and citizen."²²

For members of the YWHMS, the strength of their Christian conviction and their belief that they were called to help the poor justified their incursion into a part of Montreal which few respectable ladies had seen, wished to visit, or even knew existed, all in the name of stemming the spread of male destitution and reconstituting the family. Indeed,

²⁰Cook, p. 7.

²¹Linda Kealey, "Introduction" in Kealey, ed., A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada, 1880s-1920s (Toronto, 1979), p. 7.

the cohesiveness and religious outlook of the YWHMS, of which the soup kitchen was an initiative, is a striking example of the distinctly female evangelical culture which Marguerite Van Die identifies as having emerged in Canada between 1830 and 1875. This “culture” consisted of “a world narrowly circumscribed by the parameters of kinship, community, of birth and death [...] With its own values, ranks and community networks, this culture depended for its continuity and integrity in large part on the spirituality of its female participants.”²³ Mina Douglas’s life fits well into the parameters of this female evangelical culture, for her daily activities centred around family, friends, and church activities. On New Year’s Day, 1890, Mina went to church in the morning, spent a quiet afternoon entertaining friends and family at home, and recorded in her diary:

Closed with prayer about 11 p.m. and the first day is gone, a happy day. Praise the Lord, if it had been sad, would we praise him also? May this year be the best. Make us all holy [...] May there be showers of blessings on the churches and individuals. We have so many loving friends.²⁴

Family was particularly central to Mina. Several years after the soup kitchen opened, when her older sister, Allie, died of Bright’s disease only one week after giving birth to her second child, Mina took responsibility for raising her nephew and infant niece.²⁵ Never marrying, Mina lived with her parents until their deaths, as was proper for a single, middle-class woman. Her involvement in the YWHMS mirrored her concern with family, community, and Christianity, and nurtured her commitment to helping the poor. Mina was

²² Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States (New York, 1993), pp. 1-2.

²³ Marguerite Van Die, “‘A Woman’s Awakening’: Evangelical Belief and Female Spirituality in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Canada.” in Wendy Mitchinson, *et al.* eds., Canadian Women: A Reader (Toronto, 1996), p. 65.

²⁴ Diary, January 1, 1890.

²⁵ See notes on Douglas Family Papers, Arranged and Described by Paul Banfield, QUA, Kingston, November, 1991. Both of these children were extremely successful: George Vibert Douglas (born 1892)

adamant that the soup kitchen would assist poor men back to these three pillars of a morally upstanding life, and she bristled at the suggestion of “older and wiser heads” that a soup kitchen was unnecessary:

Not needed! While at every corner a bright light invited the cold and half-starved to enter the green baize door of the saloon. Not needed! From the first day when the long-watched-for first applicant—a poor cripple—was welcomed to a seat by a bright fire, there has not been a doubt in the minds of the workers but that such a place was needed, and intensely needed.²⁶

Mina’s concerns inflected the purpose of the mission to keep men out of taverns and to lead them back to the straight and narrow path of stable family life and God.

As Mina and other members of the YWHMS planned the soup kitchen in early 1890, competing for their attention, while at the same time strengthening their Christian conviction, were the religious services of prominent Methodist revivalists John E. Hunter and Hugh T. Crossley. This pair had made headlines in 1888 when in one of their revivals Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald had professed conversion, and by some estimates the two had “saved” one hundred thousand people between 1884 and 1910.²⁷ Mina reported in her diary that the preachers arrived in Montreal on January 26, 1890, and she made almost daily reference to having attended their services throughout the following six weeks. The popular revivalists even honoured the Douglas household with their presence at dinner one night, a fitting tribute to George Douglas’s prominent position within the local Methodist clergy.²⁸

became a polar explorer and prominent geologist, while Allie Vibert Douglas studied astrophysics, beginning a long teaching career at Queen’s University when she was appointed Dean of Women in 1939.

²⁶ *Report of the YWHMS*, 1890.

²⁷ Neil Semple, *The Lord’s Dominion: The History of Canadian Methodism* (Montreal and Kingston, 1996), p. 220.

²⁸ *Diary*, February 15, 1890.

Yet Mina still seemed troubled that her religious convictions were inadequate for the work which lay ahead at the soup kitchen, lamenting after one meeting, “Somehow I cannot get to work—need to be stirred up—Lord make me of some use in saving immortal souls.”²⁹ As the fortunes of the revival looked up, however, so did those of the soup kitchen. On March 1, Mina reported that seventeen men had been at the soup kitchen, while the next day at the revival services run by Crossley and Hunter, “100 [came] forward—very powerful.”³⁰ On the final day of the revival, thirty-seven men availed themselves of the soup kitchen; of the meeting, Mina observed a “full church and very impressive service of farewells. Good advice given. Thank God for these meetings which are now over, and may rich blessings be upon Mr. H. and C. Amen—amen.”³¹ Thus, the awakening of female members of the YWHMS and Dominion Square Methodist Church to the economic and, in their eyes, moral conditions of the poor coincided with a general religious awakening in the Methodist community in Montreal. The connection between the two seems tenuous, but there are links none the less.

Although Methodism had moderated its often disorderly services by the 1850s, as the church traded its marginal status for a more respectable image and a share in the Protestant hegemony,³² in the 1890s Methodists were still trying to come to terms with this tension between disorder and order, emotion and rationality. In this context, Kevin Kee has argued that in their use of theatrical techniques, Crossley and Hunter attempted to reconcile these disparate elements of Methodist identity by balancing “Methodist fervour”

²⁹ *Ibid.*, February 12, 1890.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, March 1 and 2, 1890.

³¹ *Ibid.*, March 5, 1890.

³² Westfall, *Two Worlds*.

with concerns about respectability.³³ Kee also sees this revival team as addressing other challenges to traditional Methodism, particularly the tension between “different models of piety” which accompanied a growing emphasis on practical expressions of Christianity:

On the one hand, they [Crossley and Hunter] looked to the past and emphasized the necessity of a spiritual conversion to Christ. On the other hand, they looked to the future by emphasizing the necessity of ‘applied Christianity’.³⁴

Crossley and Hunter tailored their services to meet the spiritual needs of a middle-class, urban audience which provided the primary impetus to the social reform impulse of the late nineteenth century. Their services in urban centres, argues Kee, were “orderly meetings [...] respectable meetings, appealing to the ‘leading citizens’ and ‘business men’—those who financed the church and its programs, who occupied power in the community, and who were able to effect long-term change as guardians of God’s Dominion.”³⁵ Thus, in the Crossley and Hunter revival services which invigorated the Montreal Methodist community in early 1890, Mina and her YWHMS friends experienced the leading edge of a Methodism which increasingly recognized the church’s responsibility to others in the community, while retaining the traditional emphasis on the conversion of the individual to God.

Yet by preaching specifically to Methodist businessmen and other “respectable” male figureheads in the community, Crossley and Hunter implicitly undermined the individualistic ethic of the women who operated the soup kitchen by challenging Methodist men to take up the work of social service as a way to express their

³³ Kevin Kee, “The Heavenly Railroad: Ernest Crossley, John Hunter, and Canadian Methodist Revivalism, 1884-1910.” (M.A. thesis, Queen’s University, 1994), p. 5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.48.

respectability and status within the community. In the process these revivalists inadvertently eroded the authority of women's organizations such as the YWHMS by encouraging men to undertake social service work, a realm which women had claimed for themselves and which was one of the few expressions of female authority in the public sphere. Although several members of the YWHMS were made charter members of the OBM when the male leadership assumed control over the mission's operations, their authority in the mission was much diminished. An unidentified observer noted that "[t]he Women transferred their activities to these new comfortable quarters, and started 'Mothers' Meetings', every Thursday from 2-5 p.m."³⁶ Women maintained their jurisdiction over domestic aspects of the mission dealing with food as well as over the spiritual and moral well-being of mothers, while men assumed control over the daily operations and, more important, over the glorious work of saving men's souls of which the main pitch to churches and private donors consisted. That the soup kitchen, restaurant, and mothers' meetings remained under the jurisdiction of the women with Mina Douglas in charge, while the work of saving souls had devolved upon the new male leadership, points to the gendered division of labour which developed with the new male administration. Indeed, the opening services of the new OBM building on Craig Street on April 2 and 3, 1892, were a distinctly masculine ritual at which only men, whose efforts "God has crowned [...] with success,"³⁷ took the platform. Recognition of the founding work initiated by women was necessarily compromised by their silence, and the successes of Mina and the YWHMS remained largely unrecognized.

³⁶ QUA, DFP, Box 2, "OBM," File 44, Histories, May 8, 1944.

³⁷ QUA, DFP, Box 2, "OBM," Clippings, File 46, "Montreal's New Mission," no publication, April 27, 1892.

As the work of the OBM expanded with a new male leadership drawn largely from Dominion Square Methodist Church, along with the change in gender representations came a shift in its primary public mandate: once concerned with providing material aid, since in the absence of state welfare programmes the English-speaking Protestant community was responsible for its own, the mission became more keenly focused on conversion. John R. McConica, the first superintendent of the mission who was engaged in 1891 to preside over its expanded mandate, provided an exemplary paradigm which poor, drunk, destitute men could follow in their quest to regain manliness. Speaking at the opening service for the new mission on Craig Street on April 2, 1892, he recounted the sad story of his own descent into immorality and unmanliness. As a young man, McConica had come under the influence of alcohol while he was studying medicine and was “a confirmed drunkard” one year after his studies began (indeed, many such stories depended heavily upon being able to identify the exact moment when a man became a drunk and the precise instant when he was saved). His parents, unable to save him from drink, “died just as he was attaining manhood, and his home was broken up, thus depriving him of their wise counsel and example.”³⁸ He became a professional gambler in 1870 when he moved to New York; according to press reports of his story, at this time he “rarely went to bed sober.”³⁹ On April 18, 1882, McConica had sunk to the depths of despair. Sitting in a Harlem bar, “a friendless, homeless, dying drunkard,” McConica had sold all his possessions for drink and was suffering from “delirium tremens”:

He stood up beside those who were drinking, and pounding the bar with his fist till the glasses rattled, vowed he would never take another drink if

³⁸ *Ibid.*, “The Old Brewery Mission: Its New Building Finally Opened,” The Montreal Daily Witness, no date (ca. April 2, 1892).

³⁹ *Ibid.*

he died in the street. Then summoning all his strength he walked to the nearest police station-house and gave himself up.⁴⁰

Once out of jail, McConica went to hear Jerry McAuley, “the apostle to the drunkard and outcast,” speak and heard “the story of his life and through it was led to a saving knowledge.”⁴¹ Another report, however, attributed his conversion back to manhood to female influence: “God had blessed him with a faithful, loving Christian wife, and to her love and patience and prayers, and those of a dear old mother he ascribes under God his reclamation.”⁴² Four years later, he was put in charge of Jerry McAuley’s New York City Mission, and on the strength of his work there the trustees of the OBM called him to Montreal in the fall of 1891.

Under its new management, the object of the mission became to convert broken men, while the initial aim of aiding the poor and destitute was subordinated to the larger object of restoring manliness to poor men.⁴³ This aim was realized through the same religious means, primarily evangelical services, which Mina Douglas had employed at the mission’s inception. Although McConica claimed that the mission carried out the New Testament mandate “to feed the hungry, cloth [*sic*] the naked, shelter the homeless, and visit those who are sick and in prison,”⁴⁴ helping men find religion was the overarching concern of the mission administrators and workers. The new leadership of the mission took a systematic and empirical approach to religion. In 1894-5, McConica boasted that 362 meetings had been held on the premises “at which 21, 971 people heard the Gospel, of

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, “Montreal’s New Mission,” no publication, April 27, 1892.

⁴³ QUA, DFP, Box 2, “OBM,” File 2-33, Annual Report, 1901-2, p. 6.

⁴⁴ QUA, DFP, Box 2, “OBM,” File 2-30, Annual Report, 1894-5, p. 6.

whom 544 indicated their purpose to lead a Christian life.”⁴⁵ In addition, fifty-four people were referred to local pastors, for although started by Methodist women, the mission was explicitly non-denominational. Open-air meetings in Victoria Square often drew four hundred listeners, after which “marked Testaments in English or French would be given to any man who would come manfully forward and take the same.”⁴⁶ McConica praised God “for manifold blessings vouchsafed to us during the past year,” arguing that the conversions were genuine, and that the mission could reclaim men no matter how low they had fallen:

Men from all parts of the country, and many from distant lands, in every stage of wretchedness and poverty, many of them reduced to this extremity through indulgence in strong drink, however, during the year, entered the Mission, and hearing the old, old story, have been induced to cry for mercy, their prayers have been heard, and God for Christ’s sake, has ‘enabled them to lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily besets them’.⁴⁷

Changing his physical environment was not enough to change a man. What was needed was a radical and permanent moral change through conversion. One annual report observed that,

Experience shows that a permanent, radical, moral change can only be made in any life through meeting Christ Jesus face to face. Education, change of environment, culture, all fail. They may refine sin, but they do not cause it to disappear. People rise morally only as they have a moral idea.⁴⁸

Integral to the moral uplift of poor men was temperance, a goal towards which Methodists throughout Canada worked with the utmost fervour and conviction. Perhaps

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ OBM, Annual Report, 1901-2, p. 11.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁴⁸ United Church of Canada, Montreal and Ottawa Conference Archives: Montreal and Area (UCCMOA), OBM, Annual Report, 1907-8, p. 8.

the largest coup for the mission was that two hundred and seventy men made pledges of total abstinence in 1894-5.⁴⁹ The irony that this took place in an institution bearing the name “Old Brewery”, however, was not lost on its administration. One newspaper article even suggested that adopting the “enemy’s” cloak might aid it in its temperance work:

What’s in a name! One hardly chooses to beat the name of a foe and yet what can be more the foe of the Mission than the Brewery, the great manufacturer of drunkards and the drunkards’ homes. But still there is a certain charm in the name of ‘Old Brewery Mission,’ for it seems to carry the flag of victory in the van and announce a force stronger than the strong, and mightier than the mighty.⁵⁰

Indeed temperance was one of the most pressing social issues for Canadian Methodists in the 1890s, particularly since it threatened the integrity of the domestic sphere which had become the foundation of Methodist piety. Methodists believed that alcohol weakened the moral and disciplinary bonds of the family since, according to the OBM, drinking “led to participation in unhealthy and immoral amusements, caused much of the desecration of the sabbath, was often accompanied by gambling, and diminished personal moral restraint.”⁵¹ The implications for gender were significant: drinking was not only the source of social disorder and irresponsibility, but also led to unfaithfulness to family, threatened Christian morals, and compromised the drunkard’s own manliness. Jan Noel argues that although the temperance movement responded to particular social problems, it also proposed a radical revision of family life in which men acted as breadwinners while women withdrew from labour outside their homes “in order to specialize in teaching the ABC’s of the new moral world to children.”⁵² The whole-hearted adoption of temperance by the Methodist

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵⁰ Clippings, “Montreal’s New Mission,” no publication, April 27, 1892.

⁵¹ Semple, *The Lord’s Dominion*, p. 359.

⁵² Jan Noel, *Canada Dry: Temperance Crusades Before Confederation* (Toronto, 1995), p. 226.

Church thus only reinforced the idea that the family and the domestic sphere was the dominant site of religiosity for many Methodists in the late nineteenth century.

The OBM promised to do “our best under God to bring any inebriate, or a victim of drugs, back to manhood”⁵³ through its powerful gospel meetings at eight o’clock every night which consisted of singing, prayer, Bible readings “with running comments by the leader,” testimonials, an invitation to the unconverted to come forward, and doxology and benediction.⁵⁴ The mission’s provision of material aid, through the furnishing of meals, a reading room, showers, and beds, therefore, was only secondary to its spiritual mandate. Mission workers directed even such tangible help towards religious and moral ends, and argued that “good food helps a man back to manhood.”⁵⁵ Its 1894-5 Annual Report claimed that men,

... who have been dragged down to the lower level through strong drink, men whose homes have been wrecked, who have been separated from their families, who have reached the very lowest condition of ‘trampdom’, have been redeemed by the grace of God, through the exercise of a simple Christian faith in Christ, lifted up out of the depths, freed from degrading appetites, cleansed from sin, and are now with restored manhood, reconstructed homes and union with loved ones, praising God for their wonderful deliverance.⁵⁶

The annual reports for these early years included many testimonials written by men who had been saved at the mission. They generally followed the same stylized paradigm whereby a man became alienated from family and friends through drink, reached the depths of material and spiritual despair, came to Christ through the gospel services of the mission, was reunited with family and home, and ultimately regained manliness through

⁵³ OBM, Annual Report, 1901-2, p. 6.

⁵⁴ OBM, Annual Report, 1894-5, p. 5.

⁵⁵ QUA, DFP, Box 2, “OBM”, File 2-38, Annual Report, 1909-10, p. 14.

⁵⁶ OBM, Annual Report, 1894-5, p. 5.

reintegration into a web of femininity and domesticity. The mission sought to reunite these men with the Christian community, but, invoking the individualistic language of nineteenth-century evangelicalism, resolved only “to help those who want to help themselves. We do not make paupers or parasites. No work—no food.”⁵⁷ Hand-outs would only encourage a man to shirk his masculine duties as the primary breadwinner to his family, and would allow him to live in dependence and further compromise his manhood. In this vein, the mission operated a restaurant separate from the soup kitchen where men could pay ten cents for a three-course feast, a more respectable alternative to the two-cent meal they obtained at the soup kitchen.⁵⁸ In this understanding of the close link between moral and spiritual change, the best way to help such men, therefore, was through the gospel since “converted men support themselves and their families, and become good citizens.”⁵⁹

Although the mission eagerly reported upon its successes through conversion, occasionally the worthiness of the mission for the support of Montreal Protestants was compromised. In 1891, reports became public that drunks and “roughs” regularly disrupted services at the mission, forcing “[t]he honest and decent people [...] to go away.”⁶⁰ In one particular instance, a man entered the mission whose “language was so filthy that all the ladies left immediately.”⁶¹ The article reported that starting immediately a policeman would be present at all services to keep the peace. The mission responded quickly to preserve its public image:

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵⁸ OBM, *Annual Report*, pp. 1894-5.

⁵⁹ OBM, *Annual Report*, 1902-3, p. 20.

⁶⁰ Clippings, “Disturbing Religious Services,” no publication, January 26, 1891.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

No young ladies left the meeting, nor was any bad language heard by those conducting the service. On the other hand, the work continues to grow in interest, and those attending manifest a deep desire to hear the Gospel. It is true that a man came into the meeting a little the worse for liquor, but he was soon quieted.⁶²

The mission's attempt to save face demonstrates the degree to which its financial viability and moral power depended upon its ability to convince the wealthy anglophone population that it could touch any heart with kindness, and induce men "to turn from lives of sin to lives of righteousness."⁶³ In fact, several annual reports contain letters of support from prominent local businessmen and clergy, and OBM President J.W. Palmer boasted that "our best citizens approve of the work."⁶⁴ The contemporary observer, Herbert Ames, testified that the OBM was "one of the most useful agencies in the city in caring for men who need temporary encouragement and help to get on their feet again," while Frank Dawson Adams, principal of McGill University, attested to the "strictest economy" with which the mission was conducted. Meanwhile, the Reverend J.W. Graham, pastor of Montreal's Methodist "cathedral", St. James Church, wrote, "There is no work dearer to the heart of Christ or more in accordance with his design for His church."⁶⁵

Apparent in the rhetoric of such annual reports was a strongly gendered understanding of male rescue work. The difficulty for organizations such as the OBM became how to reconcile men, particularly young single men, with Christianity, which from the mid-nineteenth century had been constructed as feminine in both doctrine and membership. The term "muscular Christianity" became a way of signifying that, in its emphasis on "physical strength, religious certainty, and the ability to shape and control the

⁶² Clippings. A.E. Sanderson, "The Brewery Mission," The Montreal Daily Witness, n.d.

⁶³ OBM, Annual Report, 1894-5, p. 4.

⁶⁴ OBM, Annual Report, 1902-3,

world around oneself,”⁶⁶ masculinity was not incompatible with religion. The version of muscular Christianity preached at the OBM posited a direct causal link between physical prowess and spiritual vigour, and reflected a general attempt within Protestantism to “virilize” a religious tradition which many men feared had been appropriated by women.⁶⁷ As E. Anthony Rotundo argues, “Using metaphors of fitness and body-building, Christian thinkers imagined a strong, forceful Jesus with a religion to match ... The key to Muscular Christianity was not the ideal of the spirit made flesh, but of the flesh made spirit.”⁶⁸

Thus, the mission stressed physical fitness as a means to morality and out of poverty. One of the most striking examples of muscular Christianity in the mission’s annual reports is contained in the frequent pictures. One shows a basketball net at the side of the mission hall over which a sign proclaims in bold letters, “JESUS ONLY”. As a man dribbled down the court, he could read John 3:16 on his approach to the net and, as he jumped up to take a shot, he would come face to face with a line from Psalm 37 which read, “COMMIT THY WAY UNTO THE LORD; TRUST ALSO IN HIM AND HE SHALL BRING IT TO PASS.” On either side of the backboard were signs which announced the penalties for sin and promised salvation for those who believed in Christ.⁶⁹ This rather odd visual mixture of Christian orthodoxy and sports speaks powerfully to the connections which mission workers drew between physical strength and a specifically Christian notion of morality. That one could praise God by playing basketball must have played no small role in reclaiming men for a church with which many men felt little

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-3.

⁶⁶ Donald E. Hall, ed., *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 7.

⁶⁷ Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, p. 17.

⁶⁸ E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York, 1993), p. 224.

affinity. For muscular Christianity was not contingent upon understanding complex theological ideas; rather, it required only that men subscribed to a notion of masculinity which stressed taking economic, moral, and physical responsibility for themselves and their families. Rotundo argues that manly reason “was not a capacity for deep, logical reflection but rather an absence of complex emotions—an absence which freed men to act boldly and decisively.”⁷⁰ This absence of complexity is evident in rhetoric which expressed the mission’s power of salvation coded in simple binaries. Captioned “Now they love what they once hated, and hate what they once loved,” a set of pictures shows rumped, poorly dressed men before they were saved, and these same men clean, wearing fashionable suits, and looking morally uplifted after their conversions.⁷¹

It should be noted, however, that the version of masculinity prescribed by the mission’s administrators for the destitute was different from that which they expected of themselves. Upon the death of long-time mission board member Samuel Finley, the annual report described him as “a Christian gentleman [...] kindly, genial, courteous, inflexible as regards to principles, but ever showing that sympathy for the feelings of others and the unfortunate which adds such a charm to the Christian life.”⁷² The author of the report constructed this kind of masculinity not on the binary, value-laden opposition of masculine as strong and feminine as weak which characterized the muscular Christianity preached to homeless men, but on a notion that proper Christian men could integrate aspects of the feminine, such as sensitivity to feelings, into their identity without compromising their manhood. Davidoff and Hall observe that although the archetypal “new man” of the

⁶⁹ OBM, Annual Report, 1912-13, p. 7.

⁷⁰ Rotundo, American Manhood, p. 225.

⁷¹ OBM, Annual Report, 1907-8, p. 9.

English middle class had to display attributes of piety and domesticity, he also had to maintain a suitable detachment from the home and develop “a proper sense of responsibility about business” so as not to be accused of being of weak character.⁷³ Nevertheless, feminine qualities necessarily enhanced the masculinity of middle-class Christian men and rendered them “gentlemen,” where the same characteristics were castigated as weak and effeminate in working-class men. That there was never any expectation that the destitute clients of the mission would become “Christian gentlemen” betrays the class assumptions of the mission’s understanding of masculinity. The OBM would settle for bringing destitute men back to manhood with “its brotherly kindness” and “[a] handshake with the heart behind it,”⁷⁴ but would presume to hope for no more.

Like the simplified version of Christianity proclaimed from the mission’s walls, the OBM’s concept of salvation rested upon a reductionist version of family reintegration based, ironically, upon the relationship between mother and son. This understanding of the mother-son bond was predicated upon the Methodist domestic ideal, and was rooted in the conviction of many prominent Methodists that, because of women’s affinity to the spiritual realm, mothers were particularly suited to the double task of providing moral training and religious socialization to their children.⁷⁵ That turning away from sin and coming back to “manhood” was contingent in the early years of the mission upon home and family becomes particularly clear in the often repeated injunction of mission workers to “write mother.” The childhood of these men and the influence of their mothers were

⁷² OBM, Annual Report, 1902-3, p. 19.

⁷³ Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, p. 113.

⁷⁴ OBM, Annual Report, 1902-3, p. 6.

⁷⁵ Marguerite Van Die, An Evangelical Mind: Nathanael Burwash and the Canadian Methodist Tradition (Montreal and Kingston, 1989), pp. 23-25. See also Van Die. “A Woman’s Awakening,” p. 63.

idealized in the rhetoric of the mission, while the words of the gospel softened the hard hearts of destitute men, and “seem to bring men back to the time when they stood at mother’s knee.”⁷⁶ OBM workers viewed destitution and drunkenness as the result of the radical alienation of these men from their families, especially from their mothers.

In 1904-5 in an interesting discursive turn, the annual report had the mission building itself “narrating” the entrance of such a man into its halls:

Here he comes. Thank God! Who is he? For me to tell his family connection would do no good. He is a lost, degraded soul. That is sufficient [...] His fine suit is covered with thistle. His face, into which a mother has thrown many a loving glance, is so besmeared with mud and filth that she could not recognize him.⁷⁷

That a mother might not recognize her own son seemed an affront to the idealized mother-son bond which is presented in the papers of the OBM. A picture of the mission hall filled to capacity with men stressed the permanent link with feminine influence which all men could claim, announcing that these were “some mothers’ boys.”⁷⁸ The men were encouraged to write to their mothers who fulfilled their role as “rulers of the world” by giving “the moral atmosphere to the family.”⁷⁹ Mission workers argued that “when a man comes to a city and is not successful, and gets ‘down on his luck,’ as he calls it, he becomes careless. He drifts to the ‘lower’ parts of the city, and is caught in the maelstrom of vice. Mother and home are neglected.”⁸⁰ The mission workers hoped that by writing to their mothers, men would return to their moral influence and subsequently make their way back into the world. One grateful mother wrote,

⁷⁶OBM, Annual Report, 1901-2, p. 15.

⁷⁷ QUA, DFP, Box 2, “OBM,” File 35, Annual Report, 1904-5, p. 9.

⁷⁸ OBM, Annual Report, 1911-12, p. 9.

⁷⁹ OBM, Annual Report, 1907-8, p. 10.

⁸⁰ OBM, Annual Report, 1904-5, p. 6.

I cannot express my thanks to you as I would like for your kindness to and interest in my wandering son. No doubt it was God sent him to you. I trust that he will keep praying for grace to help him in time of need. May the Lord prosper you in your labour of love.⁸¹

In another example, a picture in the 1907-8 annual report, entitled "Breaking Home Ties," presents a family gathered around a table next to the hearth. A young man, hat in hand, is standing as though he is getting ready to leave, while his mother straightens his collar with a concerned look. The implication is that this man, grounded in the bonds of family and Christian morality as transmitted by his mother, will lead an upstanding life as he goes out into the world. Nor will he deviate from the straight and narrow path prescribed by his mother and by God. Concluded the writer, "Could we reproduce such a picture as this in every household represented by our mothers, the world would not be worried by careless, sinful men."⁸²

Although a man's renewal of his relationship with his mother could restore his manliness, mothers could equally be the cause of a man's moral and physical destitution. Included in a list of men who were "down and out" were those who possessed "too much education of an indefinite kind—more brain than brawn—the man to be pitied, indeed."⁸³ Also noted were men who had "weakness thrust upon them" by "immoral parentage, or drunken fathers or mothers, or by cigarette-fiends." Such weakness and unmanliness, however, could equally be the result of "legacies from loving fathers and mothers."⁸⁴ Raising a son involved a delicate balance between nurturing and freedom, since men were prone to destitution through parental coddling and overprotection, as much as through the

⁸¹ OBM, Annual Report, 1901-2, p. 24.

⁸² OBM, Annual Report, 1907-8, p. 11.

⁸³ QUA, DFP, Box 2, "OBM," File 40, Annual Report, 1912-13, p. 8.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

immorality and bad example of their fathers and mothers. Coddling, as with too much education, would lead to unmanly and effeminate characteristics, while parental vice would encourage men's already strong tendencies towards immorality and result in socially dangerous masculinity.

Not surprisingly, the mission took an early interest in cultivating good mothers and happy homes in the interests of the coming generation of men. Once the administration of the mission had been appropriated by male leadership by 1892, Mina Douglas took charge of its domestic mandate, organizing the restaurant, the soup kitchen, and a weekly mothers' meeting held each Thursday afternoon. Weary from their daily toil, the mothers and their infants "wend their way here to be refreshed by sweet Gospel Songs, a message of love for tired hearts, and a cup of tea and cake."⁸⁵ The "little Company of Mothers" listened to lectures with titles such as "Domestic Hygiene" and "The Lost Sheep", and enjoyed music whose "soothing and elevating influence was observable."⁸⁶ By 1903, the mothers' meetings included a sewing department, a savings bank, clothing sails, excursions, and children's services. According to the annual reports, the mothers appreciated these times away from the drudgery of home, one claiming that as a result of the meetings, "I am a different woman," while another professed, "I found Jesus in the Mothers' Meetings."⁸⁷

The explicit aim of these meetings was to inculcate in these poor women Christian values with which they would develop a proper moral atmosphere in their homes for

⁸⁵ OBM, Annual Report, 1894-5, p. 8.

⁸⁶ OBM, Annual Report, 1901-2, p. 25.

⁸⁷ OBM, Annual Report, 1904-5, p. 13.

raising children “in the fear and admonition of the Lord.”⁸⁸ As an annual report proclaimed, “The world needs nothing so much as good mothers.”⁸⁹ Indeed, as “makers of history,” mothers had to be brought “into touch with the living Christ”⁹⁰ since the future men of Canada depended upon such religious influences for their morality and manliness:

Their humble homes are not many nests in which huddle little birdies sharing the good things or enduring the hardships—most often the latter. How necessary then, to have pure-high-principled, God-fearing homes where these embryo men and women are moulded for the future!⁹¹

OBM annual reports couched Mothers’ Meetings in imagery of light and dark, calling the regular meetings “Sunshine Laboratories.”⁹² Mariana Valverde argues that such uses of light as a metaphor for cleansing were typical of social purity discourse of the late nineteenth century, and represented “neither rhetorical flourishes nor stumbling blocks in rational arguments, but were rather, to the audience, the inconspicuous vehicles in which truths about moral and social reform were conveyed to the public.”⁹³ In this particular instance, sunshine represented the moral “light” which the meetings would cultivate in the mothers. These women would be morally and spiritually uplifted, and would, in turn, raise their sons to respect the pillars of late Victorian and early Edwardian society in Canada: family, home, work, and church. Mina Douglas herself used such imagery, arguing of her work with mothers that “from this meeting beams of brightness shall emanate, which shall kindle a spark of hope in many homes, hitherto shrouded in

⁸⁸ OBM, Annual Report, 1904-5, p. 12.

⁸⁹ OBM, Annual Report, 1907-8, p. 10.

⁹⁰ OBM, Annual Report, 1909-10, p. 12.

⁹¹ OBM, Annual Report, 1912-13, p. 12.

⁹² See, for example, OBM, Annual Report, 1907-8, p. 10.

gloom.”⁹⁴ The use of light as a sign of moral uplift was given weight in pseudo-scientific discourse by the use of the term “laboratory.” The mission hoped to convey that the inculcation of proper moral and religious values in these women was not a haphazard process. Much like the growth of a plant in a laboratory, Mothers’ Meetings members were instilled with Christian values of moral motherhood in a controlled and ideal environment in which the results were “scientifically” predictable and correlative to a decrease in drinking, destitution, and irresponsibility, and an increase in manliness among upcoming generations of men.

That the OBM’s conceptualization of family was grounded in an idealized version of middle-class home life is evident from the image of mothering presented in the annual reports. Despite frequent observations of poor women’s “toil,” the OBM couched references to mothers in terms of the moral and physical cleanliness of family and home. Mothers enveloped all within their reach in the warm embrace of domesticity, and the only way for destitute men to mend their ways was to place themselves once again within the loving realm of their mothers.

Not all accepted such an idealized image, however. OBM board member Herbert Ames recognized the fallacy of such imagery and included both women and children within his study of waged labour patterns in Griffintown, while at the same time relying upon a gendered notion of work for his analysis. Ames did not see women’s paid work as capable of diminishing the poverty in which many families found themselves, and in his study assigned women’s work only half the value of men’s. At the same time, this model

⁹³ Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto, 1991), pp. 34-5.

⁹⁴ OBM, *Annual Report*, 1894-5, p. 8.

of labour served prescriptive purposes; that a man represented a whole labour unit in Ames' pseudo-scientific analysis supports the notion of the male as "breadwinner," while the fact that women represented one-half of a "labour unit" and children one-quarter upheld a notion that their labour was incidental and superfluous.⁹⁵ Underlying Ames' definition of "labour unit" was also the assumption that labour is only that work which takes place outside the home and is remunerated with wages. Such a construction of labour, however, undermined the reality of "the family economy," a model of productive and reproductive relations in working-class Montreal whose efficacy Bettina Bradbury has successfully demonstrated. Striving to evoke the "totality of the working class,"⁹⁶ Bradbury argues that women developed economic strategies, such as tending gardens and raising livestock, which were just as crucial to standards of living and survival as the wage work which serves as the standard reference point for much working-class history.⁹⁷

The discrepancies between Bradbury's account of the working-class family as a locus of sexual conflict, Ames' grudging recognition of female and child labour, and the OBM's portrayal of warm hearths and loving mothers demonstrate the extent to which the mission subscribed to an idealized notion of family life. It also points to the middle-class version of domesticity to which the mission claimed to restore errant working-class men, presented for the benefit of its donors who might have been dismayed had they known the real conditions of the working-class family. At the same time, however, the mission's provision of activities for girls did recognize the imperative of women's work. The establishment of a building in Pointe St-Charles for work among young female factory

⁹⁵ Herbert Ames, The City Below the Hill, 1897 (Toronto and Buffalo, 1972), p. 14.

⁹⁶ Bettina Bradbury, Working Families: Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal (Toronto, 1993), p. 15.

workers pointed to the mission's awareness of the prevalence of women's waged labour, and catering to the practical needs of this group by offering dressmaking and literacy classes, as well as Bible studies.⁹⁸

The mission's work among younger girls, on the other hand, points to a more traditionally gendered programme which sought to instill skills of good motherhood in its charges. Unlike their middle-class sisters who learned "proper" housekeeping and mothering methods at home, these girls needed special training because of their poverty. The kitchen-garden department, which taught young girls domestic skills, took up the task of creating future wives and mothers. The primary aim of this work, however, was to train girls as domestic servants to assist middle-class women in their mothering:

The presence of the well-trained girl is like the presence of a flower. The one shows beauty, the other grace. What is more desirable in a household than to have the one employed soft-footed, soft-toned, and polite? Our girls always make good servants.⁹⁹

That the mission was in the business of making servants is evident in a publicity picture which shows a table surrounded by serious-looking young girls in starched white uniforms, complete with caps, under the surveillance of three austere women. More explicitly than other departments of the mission, the kitchen-garden department represented itself to the anglophone middle class as worthy of support not only because it was turning out more moral women who would raise more "manly" sons, but also because it spoke to the fears of its middle- and upper-class constituency that "good" servants were increasingly difficult to procure.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 163-7.

⁹⁸ OBM, Annual Report, 1909-10, p. 10.

⁹⁹ OBM, Annual Report, 1907-8, p. 24.

Although it was only grudgingly acceded by middle-class reformers that poor women often needed to take paid work outside the home in order to support their families, there were circumstances under which even middle-class women could properly perform work in the public sphere without compromising their own claims to domesticity and respectability. As the mission's mandate expanded, its primary agents of "light" among the poor were middle-class deaconesses whose work of bringing domesticity to the poor warranted a discrete section in the annual reports beginning at the turn of the century. "These scatterers of sunshine and practical Christianity"¹⁰⁰ ministered to the practical and spiritual needs of the poor by visiting people in their homes, taking care of the sick, distributing food, clothing, fuel, and, occasionally, money, and holding religious meetings in hospitals. Performing their work by applying "their 'feminine' aptitudes" to the broad social and evangelistic needs of the Canadian community,"¹⁰¹ deaconesses were not paid for their work, and were provided only with room and board. In the pages of the OBM annual reports, the deaconesses were idealized as self-sacrificing women whose sole purpose was to do God's work by seeking out the poor and cleansing them of physical and moral dirt:

Her field of helpfulness is unlimited, and requires sanctified thought [...]
Her smile at the door means a hearty welcome in the homes of the poor—who are often the 'truly rich'. Her prayers and words of encouragement leave an odor of a sweet smell for many a day.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ QUA, DFP, Box 2, "OBM," File 36, Annual Report, 1906-7.

¹⁰¹ Semple, The Lord's Dominion, p. 281. Semple notes that a Methodist residential training facility for women was not established in Montreal until 1906. The Old Brewery Mission's deaconesses may have received their training in the Deaconess school established in Toronto by prominent Methodist families such as the Masseys and the Flavelles in 1894.

¹⁰² OBM, Annual Report, 1907-8, p. 20.

That the deaconesses were described in terms of sweetness and purity demonstrates the degree to which these women were idealized as transmitters of domesticity and purity to poor families who, because of their class and almost necessarily lower moral standards, required uplifting. Indeed, the idea of “uncovering” the poor and bringing them into the moral potential of light clearly informed the work of the deaconesses whose visits to often destitute families were couched in terms of “finds.”¹⁰³ Accounts of deaconess visits were phrased in value-laden oppositions. In one instance, the father was unemployed, the mother was sick, their four young children were hungry and ill-clothed, and their house was in a deplorable state of dirt and disorder. The very presence of the deaconess cast light on the situation:

A fire was made in the little stove... the children were washed and dressed, and then breakfast. Um! Oh! Um! The mother having been washed and made comfortable, was given creamed-toast, which brought forth, ‘I never tasted anything so good before.’ Then the house was cleaned. Prayer to Him who loves the poor, and the never-forgotten talk about the Saviour finished the loving task here.¹⁰⁴

Certainly, deaconesses performed a vital function in attempts by the Methodist Church to extend its social service work. That the light which deaconesses shed was both physical, in the cleansing of house and children, and moral, in the prayers and preaching which followed, testifies to the power which women workers at the mission were seen to wield in the alleviation of poverty by the application of their distinctly female domestic skills and spiritual qualities to the uplift of poor households.

The most prominent work of the mission’s deaconesses was at the Fresh-Air Camp for women and children which was inaugurated in 1906 on *Île-Perrot* at the western shore

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

of the Island of Montreal. The next year it was moved sixty miles north of Montreal to the Laurentians where women and their young children could escape the heat and dirt of summer in the city and the drudgery of their daily lives on the idyllic shores of Lake Chapleau. Many women must have gladly accepted the mission's offer of a two week holiday in the country given the prevalence of disease which routinely affected children in the summer months in the industrial neighbourhoods of Montreal. Terry Copp argues that public health was indeed a very serious problem in Montreal; between 1897 and 1911, one-third of all babies born in the city died in their first year, most commonly from "disease of the digestive system."¹⁰⁵

Like the annual reports of the OBM, accounts of the camp were promotional in nature, and the rhetoric unabashedly aimed at eliciting concern and money from wealthy patrons. One of the first reports on the camp made a direct appeal to the culture of business, proclaiming that "SMILING, HAPPY CHILDREN growing fat and brown on good food, fresh air, and sunshine are good dividends on the capital invested."¹⁰⁶ A 1911 advertisement was directed at middle- and upper-class women who employed poor women in domestic service: "Would you like to send your English-speaking work-woman and her children? We will be glad to hear of any case in need."¹⁰⁷ The camp operated as an extension of the mission's mothers' meetings, claiming in its quest for physical and spiritual cleansing "[t]o teach mothers how to live and bring up their children wisely, [t]o give tired mothers a chance to rest," and to inculcate "true religion" in the campers. That this was an almost exclusively female space attests to the reality of the gendered division

¹⁰⁵ Terry Copp, The Anatomy of Poverty: The Condition of the Working Class in Montreal, 1897-1929 (Toronto, 1974), p. 93.

¹⁰⁶ OBM, Annual Report, 1906-7.

of work and the association of women with nature which kept men in the city and allowed women and children to go to the mountains for a holiday.

Although young children attended camp, promotional material stipulated that the camp could not accommodate boys over the age of eight. In its other work, the mission also treated older boys as a separate category from “children,” devising specific programmes for what it deemed to be a group in need of special attention. A child’s soul was “yet a white paper unwritten upon by the evil of the world,” and the mission took it upon itself to ensure that it remained “undefiled.”¹⁰⁸ Once classified as “boys,” however, male children took on the characteristics of nascent men, tending towards evil unless shown other paths. Yet the mission emphasized for its benefactors the success which it enjoyed in its work with these “embryo men.” The annual report for 1908 pronounced that,

The ‘gingeryest’ animal God has made is the boy. There is no curb to his energy, and no end to the tingling of his nerves. Both will be directed for good and evil. Only by cultivation can he be ransomed from the beastly.¹⁰⁹

In an attempt to save boys, the OBM held weekly meetings which integrated sports with a Gospel service, and at which talks were given on “gentlemanly conduct and honour, controlling the temper, thoughtfulness of others, faithfulness in little things, travels, care of the body, [and] camping-out.”¹¹⁰ Another report showed “before” and “after” pictures of its young charges, the captions of which betrayed the public purpose of gender

¹⁰⁷ QUA. DFP. Box 2, “OBM,” File 43, Promotional Literature. Fresh-Air Camp. 1911.

¹⁰⁸ OBM, Annual Report, 1907-8, p. 12.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹¹⁰ OBM, Annual Report, 1909-10, p. 12.

representation in the OBM's annual reports: "If such a change as this can be made in a boy, don't you think your money and the superintendent's time are profitably spent?"¹¹¹

That such a rough-looking boy could be transformed into a refined Christian gentleman attests to the mission's complex system of gender representation which enveloped men of all ages in a feminized Christianity which at the same time valued physical strength as a sign of manliness and spiritual vigour. The men who frequented the mission had compromised their masculinity by abandoning their breadwinning responsibilities to their families and transgressing notions of male strength and independence, becoming weak and effeminate in their poverty. The mission encouraged them to reestablish ties with their families, particularly their mothers, as a means of leaving their lives of destitution behind and becoming reintegrated into a community of respectable Christian men. Constructed as the moral centre of the family, mothers were charged with the formidable duty of keeping their sons within the folds of the family so that the next generation of men would not abandon their duties towards family and church. The seemingly contradictory implications of such gender intersections in the mission's rhetoric were that strong ties with their mothers, paragons of spiritual and domestic virtue, would help these men out of their unmanly behaviour and would allow them to regain their lost masculinity. That this paradigm of mother-son relations reflected a middle-class idealization of the domestic sphere, and represented the particular accommodations of the middle class to the exigencies of an industrial society, was not lost on the OBM's board. Although this model of rescue work mirrored the increasing connection between middle-class masculinity, domesticity, and religion within the Methodist Church, the OBM made

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

concessions to the particular requirements of working-class masculinity by incorporating a strong element of athletics into its daily programmes. For working-class men, whose physical strength often dictated their livelihoods and their authority within their families, acquiescence to feminine influences might further compromise their already uncertain lives in a newly industrialized society.

Yet Mina Douglas would not have envisioned that the mission would develop such a complex system of public gender representation when the YWHMS founded the soup kitchen in 1890. She and the other middle-class Methodist women who worked there found their impetus to action in the New Testament injunction to help the poor, and viewed the mission simply as a place where men down on their luck could obtain a free meal and experience spiritual uplift in their daily struggles. Mina wrote at the end of the mission's first year in 1890,

I do hope our Brewery Mission will be an Institution which will live for many years. It is so much needed. Poor, wasted, worn, disappointed [men] gather there day after day. Oh that their souls might be blessed as well as their bodies. With the New Year may rich blessings be poured down on this work in my prayer.¹¹²

While the later male administration loudly trumpeted its successes in converting men back to manhood, family, and God, Mina consistently represented herself as spiritually inadequate for the work of the soup kitchen, minimizing the accomplishments of her evangelical female community in its establishment of a mission which still serves English-speaking Montrealers over one hundred years later. With an amount of modesty and deference odd in light of the good work she had effected, but proper to a young woman

¹¹² Diary, December 31, 1890.

who expressed her evangelical Christian convictions in the public sphere, Mina lamented at the close of 1890, “the last Sunday gone and how little have I done this year.”¹¹³

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, December 28, 1890.

CHAPTER 2
MALE ABSENCE, POVERTY, AND THE SOCIAL GOSPEL IN ENGLISH
PROTESTANT MONTREAL, 1890s-1920s

If the Old Brewery Mission maintained its strong evangelical focus on conversion throughout the pre-World War I period, other Protestant social welfare institutions in Montreal began to express their reform zeal not as a desire to save souls, but as a conviction that society itself had to be reformed if the Kingdom of God on earth was to be realized. This new social vision had its origins in several movements. Alarmed by living conditions in the increasingly urban and industrial structure of Canadian society, leaders of many Protestant denominations became convinced that only by reforming society in general could the individual effects of poverty and “the problem of the city” be mitigated. Proponents of this new social gospel reformulated traditional Christianity by placing less emphasis upon individual conversion and asserting that Christianity was a social religion which was fundamentally concerned with the quality of life in the emerging capitalist order.¹ This reorientation of Protestant thought also occurred in response to the late-nineteenth century intellectual currents of Darwinism and biblical criticism which, in the view of many Protestant leaders, threatened the evangelical worldview of the Canadian churches. Such leaders became convinced that in order to maintain their cultural hegemony, Protestant churches would have to redirect the individual piety and evangelical ethos which had been hallmarks of nineteenth-century Canadian Protestantism into a broader, more relevant social vision which combined evangelicalism and social service in

¹ Richard Allen, The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada (Toronto, 1971), p. 4. See also Richard Allen, ed., The Social Gospel in Canada: Papers of the Inter-Disciplinary Conference on the Social Gospel in Canada, March 21-24 1973, at the University of Regina (Ottawa, 1975).

“the gospel of full-orbed development.”² This increasingly social ethic within the churches coincided with the adoption by leading professors at Protestant church colleges of organic philosophical systems such as British idealism which posited that the reform of society depended upon individuals subordinating their interests to the greater good of the community .³

With this shift in religious outlook among the Protestant churches from an emphasis on individual salvation to an increasingly social ethic came a concomitant change in the churches’ interpretation of and approach to poverty. Where the OBM continued to propose a direct causal link between poverty, immorality, and spiritual deprivation, and employed conversion and salvation as a means to lift the poor out of their economic conditions, in the early twentieth century Protestant denominations began to take a different approach. The Presbyterian and Methodist churches, in particular, appropriated and developed tenets of the social gospel which led them to focus their efforts upon the reform and Christianization of society as a whole in order to mitigate the effects of poverty in urban Canada.⁴ If the social gospel was “a religious expression, striving to embed ultimate human goals in the social, economic, and political order,”⁵ its impact upon the way in which English-speaking Protestants understood poverty was profound.

² Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, A Full-Orbed Christianity: The Protestant Churches and Social Welfare in Canada, 1900-1940 (Montreal and Kingston, 1996), p. 26. See also Michael Gauvreau, The Evangelical Century: College and Creed in English Canada from the Great Revival to the Great Depression (Montreal, 1991).

³ A.B. McKillop, “The Idealist Legacy,” Contours of Canadian Thought, (Toronto, 1987), p. 99

⁴ In her examination of the effects of the collapse of the nineteenth-century evangelical consensus on the Methodist Church in Canada, Phyllis Airhart argues that the evangelical idea of “saving souls” existed increasingly in tension with concern for the “social order”. She contends, however, that although Methodists became identified with the social gospel, in the denomination’s increasingly social emphasis there remained striking continuities with its evangelical past. See Phyllis Airhart, Serving the Present Age: Revivalism, Progressivism, and the Methodist Tradition in Canada (Montreal and Kingston, 1992).

⁵ Allen, The Social Passion, p. 3.

Although social gospel constructions of poverty still displayed the moralistic tones which were characteristic of evangelical modes of thought, those who assimilated the tenets of social Christianity began to consider the possibility that poverty could be as much a result of structural problems in the economy as a moral or spiritual failing.

As social gospel thought began to inflect the approach of English-speaking, Protestant churches and social welfare institutions to poverty between 1900 and 1930, gender remained an important lens through which Protestant leaders and reformers addressed the problem of poverty. As the churches shifted away from a belief in evangelical conversion as the sole means of moral regeneration and towards a conviction that individuals could experience spiritual and moral uplift only if society itself was reformed, the way in which poverty and gender intersected also changed. No longer was men's poverty understood primarily as a result of intemperance or unmanliness, nor was the orthodox solution to their poverty seen to be the reintegration of individual men into a web of domesticity and religion. Rather, poverty was seen as a religious problem which expressed itself through the absence of men and boys as a group from formal religious activities. In middle-class Methodist congregations the problem of male absence was expressed in the "big boy" problem, a fear that the absence of middle-class youths from churches would undermine the ideology of evangelical domesticity which had gained influence throughout the last decades of the nineteenth century. Linking the future economic and spiritual vitality of the churches to strong middle-class male membership, church leaders feared that the failure to win such men over for Christ during their

adolescence would threaten “the survival of both their church and their nation.”⁶ In the case of working-class boys and men, however, church leaders worried less about institutional decline than that such disinterest in formal religious activities would result in social deterioration, a much more serious and troublesome problem for social gospellers whose religious energies were directed at reforming society. In particular, they feared a visceral type of masculinity which would no longer be yoked in by the calming influences of Christianity and would disrupt the delicate social order in Montreal’s poorest neighbourhoods.

This chapter argues that, as with the earlier evangelical model, gender was integral to the Protestant churches’ social gospel approach to poverty in the early twentieth century. This gendered vision was particularly evident in attempts by Presbyterian, Methodist, and United churches in Montreal to attract working-class boys and young men to public forms of religion as an antidote to widespread poverty and perceived social disorder. Although in their campaign for male participation the churches employed strategies which were similar to those of the OBM, particularly athletic activities, the approach of middle-class churches, such as Erskine Presbyterian and Crescent Street Presbyterian, and of working-class institutions, such as the Montreal City Mission, the Griffintown Boys’ Club, and St. Columba House, was not aimed at individual rescue work but rather expressed a greater social concern for male absence from public religion. Although the role of gender in social gospel understandings of poverty is inescapable, as this chapter’s examination of church youth work will show, the historiography of the development of the social gospel in Canada has been largely oblivious to questions of

⁶ Patricia Dirks, “‘Getting a Grip on Harry’: Canada’s Methodists Respond to the ‘Big Boy’ Problem,

masculinity and femininity in its dogged pursuit of the holy grail of secularization. Thus, this chapter will secondarily explore the extent to which a lack of awareness of gender has tainted the secularization debate and tarnished current understandings of the social gospel in Canada.

Although some historians have perceived the specter of secularization looming large in the writings of Protestant clergymen in Canada from the 1870s onwards⁷, the example of Montreal provides evidence to the contrary and points instead to a theology and social ethic which remained vital throughout the supposed years of crisis. By the late nineteenth century, Protestant churches in Canada had focused their social gospel impulse on working-class neighbourhoods such as Griffintown in southwestern Montreal. At the annual meeting of the Montreal Conference of the Methodist Church in 1894, the members of the Committee on Workingmen confirmed their belief in this new social ethic and their conviction that the “problem of the city” was primarily economic, weighing in against “selfish capitalists,” proclaiming their support for prohibition, and declaring that every labourer should earn a “living wage.”⁸ The Committee assured readers that “you may depend on the hearty support of the Church we represent in every wise and honest effort to correct the wrongs that exist in our civilization, which necessarily fall most heavily on the poorer classes, and to promote an order of society that shall mean a Kingdom of God among men through the Kingship of Christ.”⁹ By 1914, however, the

1900-1925.” Canadian Methodist Historical Society Papers 7 (1990), 67.

⁷ David B. Marshall, Secularizing the Faith: Canadian Protestant Clergy and the Crisis of Belief, 1850-1940 (Toronto, 1992), p. 4.

⁸ Methodist Church of Canada, Minutes of the Proceedings of the Montreal Conference of the Methodist Church of Canada (Montreal, 1894), p. 93. A “living wage” was defined as “a remuneration as would enable a man with an average family to live in reasonable comfort, and have some measure of leisure for self-improvement.”

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

fear of failure had entered clerical discourse, and sympathy for the economic conditions of the poor had been replaced by bellicose threats which declared “war” on the “moral” problem of the slum as a danger to the church. Proclaiming that the existence of poverty in a Christian society was untenable, S.W. Dean, Superintendent of the Methodist Union in Toronto, proclaimed that “[e]ither the church must destroy the slum or the slum will destroy the church ... War is declared. The battle will wage by night and by day. The church that endures to the end will be saved.”¹⁰ Prominent Methodist J.S. Woodsworth took a less hostile approach, however, and in his 1911 work My Neighbour interpreted the city as both “a menace to our whole civilization” and an organic entity capable of “moulding our social and political life, creating new institutions and developing a new spirit.”¹¹ Organicism was integral to Woodsworth’s understanding of urban problems and the way in which they could be solved:

City life is like a spider’s web—pull one thread and you pull every thread. It is an immense and highly developed organism in which each minutest part has a distinct function.¹²

Woodsworth wrote that this “new spirit” of interconnectedness which came from people living in such close proximity to one another even had the potential to transform the individualistic evangelical religion of the nineteenth century into a faith which displayed a more advanced social ethic “as we come to recognize that we must not only ‘save our never dying soul,’ but also ‘serve the present age.’”¹³ Articulating the Protestant churches’ new emphasis on social salvation over individual redemption, Woodsworth

¹⁰ The Rev. S.W. Dean, “The Church and the Slum,” Social Service Congress: Report of Addresses and Proceedings (Ottawa, 1914), p. 127.

¹¹ J.S. Woodsworth, My Neighbour (Originally published in 1911: Toronto, 1972), pp. 23-4.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-4.

declared, “If the new civilization is to be mastered by Christ, the city must be taken for Him.”¹⁴

Taking the city for Christ became a matter of no small importance to the Protestant churches in Montreal. Founded in 1886 with the object “[t]o promote the social, literary and religious fellowship of its members... [and to] take united action—when deemed necessary in movements touching the moral and religious well-being of the Community,” the Protestant Ministerial Association of Montreal (PMAM) met twice per month for prayers, general business, and an address on a topical issue. The minute books of the Association offer a window into attempts by the Protestant clergy to address and adapt to challenges to traditional forms of theology from the 1890s to the 1920s.¹⁵ In the 1890s, the PMAM entertained speakers on a variety of topics: “The Pastor and His People,” “The Teaching of Jesus Regarding the Holy Spirit,” “Hosea, Amos, and Micah,” “Some Phases of Old Testament Morality,” and “The tendency of the liberal opinion among the French Roman Catholics of the Province of Quebec.”¹⁶ In social issues, the Association concerned itself with Sabbath desecration, the evils of prize fighting, and the possibility of organizing a Charitable Relief Association.¹⁷

By 1900, however, the Association had begun to express more interest in exploring the social responsibilities of the Protestant churches in the community. When the Programme Committee suggested a course of twelve papers on the history of the early church for the autumn of 1900, they were asked to consider including more “modern”

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

¹⁵ United Church of Canada, Montreal and Ottawa Conference Archives: Montreal and Area (UCCMOA), Protestant Ministerial Association of Montreal, “Minute Book of the Protestant Ministerial Association of Montreal,” Book 4, 1896-1911, p. 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, October 12, 1896, pp. 10-11, March 22, 1897, p. 30, and May 23, 1898, p. 58.

topics in their programme.¹⁸ The Committee obliged, and for the first thirty years of the century hardly a meeting went by without an address on a topic which expressed the increasingly social ethic of the churches. On April 23, 1900, W.D. Reid addressed the meeting on "What Faith in God through Jesus Christ has done for the bettering of conditions of life in this world," while at the following meeting members heard an address on "The Oppression of Labor by Capital."¹⁹ Throughout the war years, the Association remained preoccupied with concerns of traditional evangelicalism, such as prohibition and gambling, while at the same time exploring issues of social Christianity. In the last months of 1915, the Association heard two presentations from J.S. Woodsworth on "the needs of Canada, suggesting that the Church adopt a broader programme of service and stand behind those who are seeking to reconstruct the country on a truer and more Christian basis."²⁰ The Association's own members adopted a more radical stance by the end of the First World War; in November 1918, the Rev. E.I. Hart "submitted a full report of the result of the movement initiated by the Association for Dealing with Social Conditions within the City."²¹ Meanwhile in 1920 the Rev. J.W. Davidson asked the question "Can the Kingdom of God be fully realized through the present social order?", to which he answered yes: "...the secret of progress lay in a more complete application of Christianity to the present social order."²² The Reverend E. I. Hart perhaps most clearly enunciated the responsibility of the churches to address social problems. The minutes of the Methodist Ministers' Association reported,

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, February 27, 1897, p. 26, March 22, 1897, p. 29, and April 11, 1898, p. 54.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, May 14, 1900, p. 102.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, April 23, 1900, pp. 100-101.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, November 22, 1915, p. 93.

²¹ *Ibid.*, November 14, 1918, p. 163.

Dr. Hart treated the subject in a most comprehensive way, revealing in the general conditions existing throughout the world in antagonisms between Capital and Labor, Church and Laboring Classes, a very claimant appeal for the church to awaken to its responsibility, to give the Leadership and proclaim the gospel the occasion demands.²³

The Association also embraced methods of professionalized social work to a greater extent than before the war. At a meeting in 1923, a PMAM member commented favourably on the “Confidential Exchange” of the Montreal Council of Social Agencies, an umbrella organization for Protestant charities which, in tandem with the McGill Department of Social Service, pioneered methods of professional social work in Montreal.²⁴ In 1925, when it first expressed its position on social work, the nascent United Church of Canada staked its claim to legitimacy in this field on the basis of its spiritual authority, and saw no threat to its power from professional social workers. According to United Church leadership, there was a vital place for the church to play in social work in Canada, and social workers demanded the “active co-operation of the Church.” Just as the social worker needed to be trained in the spiritual needs of his or her clients, so church workers required training in scientific methods:

But for the Church to co-operate, its workers must be as well trained and efficient as the secular worker. There must be fostered within the Church the same scientific method of studying, diagnosing and treating a situation as now prevails in the professional social work. But the Church is more free to minister the definitely religious element through those scientific methods. The field worker needs the collaboration of the Church worker, while the Church worker needs the aid of the records kept by the professional secular agents ... [The Church] must be in the field with expert leadership, especially to sustain within the social workers' field that

²² *Ibid.*, March 8, 1920, p. 185.

²³ UCCMOA, Methodist Ministers' Association, P601, Localisation 11 0 001 01-02-001B-01, “Procès-Verbal, 1891-1925,” February 18, 1918, p. 40.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, December 10, 1923, p. 257.

free play of religious agency which the community organization is less free to make explicit or to apply directly in the several cases.²⁵

This relationship between the Protestant churches and social work throughout the interwar years brought into relief the continued interaction of evangelicalism and the social gospel in Canadian culture. Indeed, Gauvreau and Christie argue that because of the continued influence of the churches, “the belief that the solution of all social and economic problems lay in the moral as well as the scientific sphere remained in the mainstream of social policy debate until the onset of the World War II.”²⁶

As its members adopted the feminized ethic of “service, sacrifice, and love” which characterized the social gospel, ironically the PMAM expressed increasing interest in the plight of young men and boys in the city. Susan Curtis argues that this anxiety over the churches’ male constituency stemmed from attempts by social gospellers to reconcile the effeminacy of the churches’ social concern with notions of independence and self-reliance which characterized contemporary understandings of manliness in industrial society. This process of masculinization led to the endowment of the sentimentalized and decidedly feminine Jesus of the late nineteenth century with “muscles and a manlier beard,”²⁷ and in Montreal spawned a discourse surrounding a crisis in masculinity which first became evident in the municipal election campaign of 1906. The PMAM attacked the notorious corruption of Montreal’s municipal government, arguing that “[I]mmorality like a cancer is eating into the very heart of the city, and must be dealt with by a firm, vigilant hand, and

²⁵ “Why the Church is in Social Work.” The United Church Record and Missionary Review, I:1 (September 1925), p. 29.

²⁶ Christie and Gauvreau, A Full-Orbed Christianity, p. 164. For a detailed discussion of the deep relationship between Protestant churches and professionalized social work, see their chapter entitled “A ‘Uniting Social Aim’: The Protestant Churches and Social Work in Equipoise,” pp. 131-164.

the trafficking in human flesh and blood must be stopped, if our city is to hold the fairly respectable position that has hitherto been ours.”²⁸ This depravity induced the male voter “to sell his manhood and his city for a mere mess of pottage” and encouraged “one-sided individualism, which seems to be determined to exploit the whole city for the benefit of the selfish few.”²⁹ What was needed in government, argued the Association, were “men in our council of untarnished integrity—men who will guard the interests of citizens as zealously as they would their own. Men who cannot be bought or sold, who cannot be influenced from the path of rectitude, by either money or friendship, men who will stand four-square to every wind that blows and yet will never yield to what is wrong.”³⁰ Yet such men were becoming increasingly scarce, and the churches felt they needed to take action to retain their male membership and create the upstanding type of men who would fight corruption at its roots. In 1902, the Association had considered “asking the cooperation of the ministers in entertaining the boys on winter evenings by throwing open church rooms for that purpose.”³¹ The following year, it addressed the problem of waning religiosity among male students at McGill University, and considered a request by the McGill YMCA “asking this Association to cooperate with them in looking after the religious interests of young men coming to the City to attend the University.”³² The Association proposed a system of church registration among new students, already implemented at Queen’s University. The Methodist Ministers’ Association expressed

²⁷ Susan Curtis, “The Son of Man and God the Father: The Social Gospel and Victorian Masculinity,” in Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen, eds, Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America, (Chicago, 1990), pp. 72-74.

²⁸ UCCMOA, Protestant Ministerial Association of Montreal, “Minute Book of the Protestant Ministerial Association of Montreal,” Book 4, 1896-1911, January 22, 1906, p. 249.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, November 10, 1902, pp. 150-151.

similar concern for the plight of the church's boys. In 1912, the Reverend E.C. James gave an address on "Our boys and what to do for them," implying a general agreement that there existed a problem surrounding boys which threatened their well-being, and pointing to a discourse in which "the boy problem" jeopardized the stability of church and community.³³

Church leaders had reason to worry about the city's young men and boys. On November 21, 1921, the founder and superintendent of the Montreal City Mission was beaten savagely by a group of young men loitering outside the mission building on Cadieux Street³⁴ in one of Montreal's poorest neighbourhoods. William Bowman Tucker had attempted to attract the attention of a policeman to a large group of young men between the ages of twelve and eighteen years who "were for several hours infesting the streets in the vicinity of our Mission, and making disturbing noises." According to reports,

Two of the young fellows resented this, and unexpectedly attacked him, cutting his face with a 'knuckle', blacking his eyes, wounding his forehead and the back of his head, and knocking him down, and were assaulting him on the ground, when a policeman came running to the rescue from City Hall Ave.³⁵

In a letter written to Montreal's Chief of Police Pierre Bélanger requesting greater police surveillance of the area, mission official Alfred Price stressed the important work the mission was performing among the four hundred children enrolled in its programmes: "These children are Canadian born, of foreign parentage, and we are endeavouring to train

³² *Ibid.*, May 24, 1903, p. 170.

³³ UCCMOA, Methodist Ministerial Association, "Procès-Verbal, 1891-1925," May 6, 1912.

³⁴ Now *rue de Bullion*.

them to be good citizens. This is a work which should, and no doubt does, commend itself to you.”³⁶ That Price would invoke the work of the mission in moulding young citizens out of sometimes questionable material in his attempts to influence the police speaks to the high regard in which he felt work of this type was viewed by upstanding members of the Montreal community. Founded as a non-denominational institution in 1910, the Montreal City Mission had as its aim “to promote the knowledge of the Gospel among the inhabitants of Montreal and vicinity, more particularly the foreigners and the poor, without reference to denominational distinctions, and to conduct on their behalf Evangelistic, Educational, Social and Relief work, Sunday Schools and secular classes, a Labor Bureau, a Bureau of Advices, Rescue work, Free Bathrooms, Immigration Work, [t]he circulation of Religious Literature, and the Administration of the Ordinances of the Christian religion.”³⁷ In his letter of complaint, Price made a clear distinction between those children who participated in the mission’s activities and those, such as Tucker’s attackers, who had not been influenced by the uplifting force of the mission’s evangelical and educational programmes. These latter boys epitomized the fears of many leaders of Protestant institutions in Montreal, from the wealthy churches which lined Sherbrooke Street to struggling missions throughout the “city below the hill.” Here was a type of masculinity which, because it was unrestrained by forces of family and church, had erupted into dangerous and violent forms.

³⁵ UCCMOA, The Montreal City Mission. P610, Localisation 11-3-8-5-3B-1, “Minute Book of the Montreal City Mission, Vol. II, June 21, 1915-December 31, 1937,” November 22, 1921.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, November 22, 1921.

³⁷ UCCMOA, Montreal City Mission, Nathan H. Mair, “Montreal City Mission: The Idea and the Institution,” unpublished paper, February, 1984, p. 12.

Protestant church leaders in Montreal viewed such violent forms of male behaviour, however, as only the most extreme outcome of a problem which plagued their congregations: a general decline in interest in the churches among boys and young men. Although this discourse of male absence was expressed by leaders of wealthy and poor institutions alike, it had different implications for each. The well-to-do churches of Sherbrooke Street and Westmount expressed their alarm over diminishing male participation in terms of the future economic and spiritual health of the congregations, and the soundness of the cornerstone of their membership, the middle-class Christian male. Patricia Dirks argues that in middle-class Methodist congregations,

... the 'big boy' problem, a phrase that had been coined to describe the failure of Sunday schools to hold boys beyond puberty, threatened the survival of both their church and their nation. As the belief grew among Methodists that most church members would come from Sunday schools, the exodus of 'big boys' just as they were entering their decision-making years, became a crisis.³⁸

Middle-class youths, it was feared, would participate in commercial amusements, drinking, and gambling without the stability of the church to curb their natural tendencies to disorder. Linking the vitality of the churches to strong male membership, these leaders feared that if such young men were not won over for Christ during their adolescence, the churches would face a crisis from which they would be unable to recover. In the case of poor congregations and missions, ministers did not worry so much about the future leadership of their institutions, but feared the threat of dangerous forms of masculinity which would undermine the authority of family and church in Montreal's poorest areas.

In response to perceptions that male presence in Protestant churches was constantly declining, many churches established classes and clubs directed specifically at

young men. One of the Montreal churches which established such activities during the first thirty years of the twentieth century was Erskine Presbyterian, which in 1894 had moved from the corner of Ste-Catherine and Peel streets to a gracious new structure on Sherbrooke Street, a move which mirrored the geographic and economic upward mobility of its congregation. Reflecting this concern for status, the church attempted several times over this period to establish programmes for its errant male youth adherents. In 1903, the Sunday School initiated a Young Men's Bible Class under the suitable leadership of long-time Sunday School superintendent Mr. C.W. Davis. A boys' choir was also begun at the same time. The annual report for that year observed, "For a long time a great lack here has been felt in connection with the work of the School ... We feel that this new department of the School is a most important one."³⁹ This initiative appears to have failed, however, because 1907 saw the formation of a new Young Men's League (YML) under the leadership of assistant pastor E. McGougan. Erskine's minister enthusiastically endorsed this new endeavour in the annual report of that year:

Let us hope and pray that the league will prove a strong spiritual force in many directions, and that it will receive the hearty support of the young men of the congregation. This is the day for young men to come to the front with their enthusiasm and energy, and much is expected, by the blessing of God, of this new movement.⁴⁰

According to the report, it was generally felt that the YML's predecessor, the Literary Society, was not meeting the needs of the young men of the congregation, and that

... a reorganization which would return to the primary object of cultivating the art of public speaking among the young men of the Church would be beneficial ... It was felt that there should be some organization among the

³⁸ Dirks, "Getting a Grip on Harry," 67.

³⁹ UCCMOA, Erskine Presbyterian Church—Annual Reports, P603, Localisation 11 0 00302-04-002B-01. Annual Report, 1903, p. 24.

⁴⁰ UCCMOA, Erskine Presbyterian Church, Annual Report, 1907, p. 14.

young men of the Church which would tend to draw them more closely together and cultivate their interest in the general work of the Church.⁴¹

The Young Men's League had a "four-fold basis," founded on missionary activities, social functions, literary discussions and debating, and Bible study.⁴² In its first year of activities, the YML appeared to be fulfilling its stated mission to attract young men and interest them in the work of the church. By 1908, the group had begun to study such current topics as "The Challenge of the City," and was considering forming a boys' club in the downtown area.⁴³

The Young Men's League folded, however, when McGougan resigned as assistant pastor in 1909, leaving an acute gap in the church's work among its future male leadership. The following year, the long-standing Young Peoples' Society (YPS), which included both young women and men, tabled a similarly dismal report of ambivalence among the church's young people. Noting that from the ranks of the YPS had emerged "some of the worthiest pillars of our Church," this report lamented the church's difficulty in maintaining the interest of its young people "notwithstanding the strenuous efforts put forth."⁴⁴ Church leaders recognized the attraction which commercial amusements held for middle-class boys in particular, and argued that "the young people of our Church through their environment and social position are being drawn away from the Church into other far less edifying paths."⁴⁵ Yet for middle-class churches, the primary problem remained how to ensure the continued strength and vitality of congregations: "The young people of our

⁴¹ UCCMOA, Erskine Presbyterian Church, Annual Report, 1907, p. 35.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ UCCMOA, Erskine Presbyterian Church, Annual Report, 1908, p. 31.

⁴⁴ UCCMOA, Erskine Presbyterian Church, Annual Report, 1910, pp. 28-29.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Church are not interesting themselves in its work, and if we allow the young people to drift away, where is the Church of the near future to come from?"⁴⁶

It was physical activity and not spiritual pursuits which became the sustained tactic which Erskine adopted in its boys' work. The Sunday School superintendent reported in 1914 that an indoor baseball and hockey club "have served to hold the interest of the boys of the School in a splendid way..."⁴⁷ Among Sunday School teachers "it was a general thought ... that teaching the boys for one hour on Sunday was not sufficient, and our Club was organized in order to meet the boys' problem."⁴⁸ The Erskine Boys' Club was founded in 1925, and in its inaugural year its nine members between the ages of twelve and fifteen years held weekly meetings at which they engaged in various team sports, and were inculcated with the "Three C's—Clean Speech, Clean Sport and Clean Living."⁴⁹ The Boys' Club gradually expanded its mandate to cultivate the future leadership of the church by changing the structure of the club to a model of self-governance in which the boys elected their president, vice-president, and secretary-treasurer from within their membership. They also participated in a Boys' Work Board conference at St. James Methodist which was held in March 1927 to organize Methodist boys' groups in the central and southern parts of the city. The focus upon muscular Christianity never waned, however; by the late 1920s the club fielded a team in the Quebec Amateur Hockey Association, and in 1930 had organized themselves into the Erskine Trail Ranger Camp. In addition to playing basketball against boys at St. Columba House and entering a hockey

⁴⁶ UCCMOA, Erskine Presbyterian Church, Annual Report, 1910, pp. 28-29.

⁴⁷ UCCMOA, Erskine Presbyterian Church, Annual Report, 1914, p. 27.

⁴⁸ UCCMOA, Erskine Presbyterian Church, Annual Report, 1930, p. 32.

⁴⁹ UCCMOA, Erskine Presbyterian Church, Annual Report for the 15 Months Ending March 31, 1926, p. 46.

team in the Sunday School Hockey League, the Trail Rangers were instructed in boxing by a student from United Theological College, and were awarded badges for successfully completing tests in various areas, the most popular of which were “Swimming, Camping, Church School, Christian Heroes, Entertainer, Radio and School.”⁵⁰

Where the Erskine Boys’ Club stressed the tenets of muscular Christianity in order to mitigate the “boys’ problem” and hold boys’ attention through what were felt to be crucial years in their Christian development, there existed no such discourse around girls.⁵¹ From the example of the activities set up for girls and young women in Erskine Presbyterian Church, it appears that church leaders did not fear that girls were leaving the church, or, if they were leaving, church leaders did not fear that an imminent crisis in membership would result. Patricia Dirks suggests that even among Methodists who recognized the importance of training girls to fulfill their Christian roles “...work with boys was given the highest priority because their loss would be devastating in a world where leadership of church and state remained virtually a male preserve.”⁵² The churches’ girls’ work was generally aimed at inculcating values of proper Christian femininity in their young charges. The Christian socialization of girls was often carried out under the auspices of national organizations such as the Canadian Girls in Training (CGIT) which was founded in 1917 by the Young Women’s Christian Association and the Protestant churches and which, by 1925, counted 30,000 members in 3000 groups across the

⁵⁰ UCCMOA, Erskine Presbyterian Church, Annual Report, 1932, p. 28.

⁵¹ Although within the Protestant churches there was little discourse surrounding a “girl problem”, the Methodists, Presbyterian, and United churches all maintained homes for unwed mothers, the United Church homes coming under the auspices of the Board of Evangelism and Social Service. In addition, Montreal was the site of many institutions for delinquent girls and criminal women. For an excellent study of such institutions, see Tamara Myers, “Criminal Women and Bad Girls: Regulation and Punishment in Montreal, 1890-1930”, Ph.D. thesis, McGill University, 1996.

⁵² Dirks, “Getting a Grip on Harry”, 68.

country.⁵³ Leaders of the Erskine CGIT group reported that “[d]evotions have dealt with a variety of themes—themes which have a very real content for the life of a teen-age girl. Some of these have been the Joy of Living, Kindness, Beauty and Friendship.”⁵⁴ The CGIT claimed to aim in its activities for “the all-round development of the girl, physically, intellectually, spiritually and socially,” and held discussions on “Vocations for Women” and “Budgeting and its Practical Implications for a School Girl.” Unlike the “Three C’s” motto of the boys’ club which stressed cleanliness and sportsmanship in all things, particularly the physical, as a way into a masculine spiritual life, the motto of the CGIT stressed service to others and tended to diminish women’s physicality: “CHERISH HEALTH—SEEK TRUTH—KNOW GOD—SERVE OTHERS, and thus, with His help, become the girl God would have me be.”⁵⁵ Lacking a discourse which identified female absence as an undesirable possibility, the churches made few sustained attempts to expand their programmes to attract girls and young women as they had in their quest to retain and enlarge their young male membership.

In their wider missionary thrust into working-class areas of Montreal, middle-class Protestant churches, such as Erskine Presbyterian, altered this discourse of male absence to reflect their perceptions of and fears about the poor. In neighbourhoods such as Pointe St-Charles and Griffintown, the churches were less concerned with creating a new male leadership class than with maintaining social stability, for it was unlikely that any of these poor congregations or missions would ever become self-supporting. If strong family

⁵³ Alison Prentice, *et al.*, Canadian Women: A History (Toronto, 1988), p. 271. See also Margaret Prang, “‘The Girl God Would Have Me Be’: The Canadian Girls in Training, 1915-1939,” Canadian Historical Review 66:2 (1985): 154-84.

⁵⁴ UCCMOA, Erskine Presbyterian Church, Annual Report, 1929, p. 33.

⁵⁵ UCCMOA, Erskine Presbyterian Church, Annual Report, 1929, pp. 33-34.

structures were integral to the maintenance of the social equilibrium, then these missions sought to inculcate proper values of manliness, a strong work ethic, and respect for democracy into working-class boys, while providing an outlet for their “natural” tendencies towards disorder which were only exacerbated by their environment.

One of the churches which maintained a missionary congregation in the “city below the hill” was Crescent Street Presbyterian,⁵⁶ which founded the Nazareth Street Mission in Griffintown during the 1860s.⁵⁷ The growth of work among young men at middle-class Crescent Street and at the largely working-class Nazareth Street Mission ran closely parallel. In the first years of the twentieth century, a Young Men’s Association was formed at Crescent Street which, in 1906, the annual report commended to the congregation as “an organization that is loyal and aggressive in character and aim.”⁵⁸ In the following year, the annual report boasted that thirty-seven young men had been brought into the church, and made close connection between the success of the Young Men’s Association and this new male membership. In a clear enunciation of the dangers to the church and society in general of ignoring the plight of young men, church leaders argued:

In the YMA the church has an organization which touches in many ways the men of the congregation, as well as that large, floating, unattached body of youth, which in the absence of any definite church connection or influence, is in danger of drifting, with loss to themselves and the church.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ At the time the mission was founded, its parent congregation was the Free Church on Côte Street. This congregation became Crescent Street Presbyterian Church in 1878 after the union of Presbyterian denominations in Canada in 1875, and the erection of a new building.

⁵⁷ Presbyterian Church Archives (PCA), Crescent Street Presbyterian Church, Annual Report, 1889.

⁵⁸ PCA, Crescent Street Presbyterian Church, Annual Report, 1906, p. 45.

⁵⁹ PCA, Crescent Street Presbyterian Church, Annual Report, 1907, p. 52.

Out of this concern for the future manhood of the Presbyterian Church grew a desire to help the future men of the “sin-laden community”⁶⁰ of Griffintown. Plans for boys’ work at the Nazareth Street Mission came to fruition in 1908.

Constituted as a congregation in October 1873, the Nazareth Street Mission had from the beginning taken a strong interest in the young people of the mission district and soon expanded its mandate from weekly services to encompass an active Sunday School which was supported by the Montreal Sabbath School Association.⁶¹ By 1889, the Sunday School boasted 333 scholars and 26 teachers, and its pupils also participated in a Band of Hope and Missionary Society. The mission’s administrators praised the behaviour of the working-class congregations at Sunday and Thursday evening services as being “characterized by good order throughout, and the attention all that could be desired.”⁶² The mission also took as a sign of its success its ability to attract young people to its services:

A rather encouraging feature we should here refer to—the number of young men and women who attend our Sabbath evening service. We look upon this as a rather healthful sign in a district where so many adverse influences are at work.⁶³

The Sunday School teachers played no small role in the number of young people in attendance, and “have induced the most hopeless cases to attend our meetings, some of which appear now promising.”⁶⁴ As in the case of Erskine Presbyterian Church’s middle-class congregation, however, the leaders of Nazareth Street took their success in

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁶¹ PCA, Free Church, Cotc Street, Annual Report, 1873.

⁶² PCA, Crescent Street Presbyterian Church, Annual Report, 1889, p. 36.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

attracting men to their services as a sign of the vitality and success of the mission, and dismissed women's strong attendance as an assumed feature of mission work:

An encouraging feature is seen in the large number of men who attend. As a rule it is found that women are more susceptible to the influences of the gospel. It was women 'who were last at the cross and earliest at the grave', and ever since women have taken a prominent place in gospel work. The weekly meeting on Thursday evening, as a rule, is attended by few men, sometimes indeed none being present. During this winter, however, we were much encouraged by the large number of men who attended the Sunday evening services.⁶⁵

The following year, Crescent Street members in charge of the mission again noted the dearth of men in attendance and the persistence of female participation in the mission's services. In particular danger were young men of the district who

...are the most difficult to interest, and often it is a most trying experiment to secure their attention; the mission hall being on the corner of two streets, where in the summer evenings crowds of boys are shouting and playing, and when the street cars and cabs gallop over the stony pavement, amid all this to secure and hold the attention of an audience, especially when the hall is hot and uncomfortable, is no easy matter.⁶⁶

This same report, however, was quick to point out that "in regard to order, however, we have nothing to complain; those attending the services have due regard for the house of God, and as a rule are in behaviour most discreet."⁶⁷ That those who attended mission services and behaved in exemplary fashion were considered a tribute to the mission's work was clear from the description of Griffintown in the mission's annual reports. Of the work of the Band of Hope, mission workers reported,

There is no doubt that a good work is being done in this gospel temperance work; saloons are the curse of Griffintown. No other form of vice is so prevalent there as drunkenness, no other form of sin brings so much sorrow and poverty into the home. We believe that the surest step towards the

⁶⁵ PCA. Crescent Street Presbyterian Church, Annual Report, 1890, p. 33.

⁶⁶ PCA. Crescent Street Presbyterian Church, Annual Report, 1891, p. 32.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

reformation of an intemperate community, is wisely to educate and instruct the young. The Sabbath school work at Nazareth Street is the most excellent of all, and other branches are but offshoots from it.⁶⁸

By the early years of the twentieth century, however, mission workers began to enunciate a need for mission work directed more specifically at boys. Recalling the Nazareth Street Club's origins, Vice-President J. Stuart Jamieson articulated fears of many members of the middle class that disorder among boys and young men posed a threat to social order:

One Sunday evening a years ago last August I was conducting a service in the [Nazareth Street] Mission. Outside the open window a gang of boys were running an opposition meeting. Their mouth organs were attracting quite as much attention from those within as I could command, and I might say that my thoughts were largely with the boys too. Later I talked over with Mr. [Owen] Dawson the idea of a Boys' Club to reach that class of boy, and two nights later we met the gang on a street corner, and there began the organization of our present club.⁶⁹

The Crescent Street members who initiated the club established the difficulty of attracting these poor boys to mission services, arguing that “[t]he Mission at Nazareth Street has probably never done better work than during the past few years, and yet it is quite apparent to anyone who understands this particular class of boy that there is very little in its programme that interest him.”⁷⁰ As Erskine had done, the club focused its activities upon athletic activity in an attempt to instill in its young charges the fundamentals of “muscular” Christianity since “it will be understood that a good deal has to be made of athletics in order to interest the boys.”⁷¹ Indeed, the club's regular Friday evening meetings commenced with “a practical talk from someone who has been carefully selected

⁶⁸ PCA, Crescent Street Presbyterian Church, Annual Report, 1892, p. 37.

⁶⁹ Nazareth Street Club (NSC), First Annual Report, 1910.

⁷⁰ NSC, First Annual Report, 1910.

⁷¹ PCA, Crescent Street Presbyterian Church, Annual Report, 1908, p. 46.

as being competent and who understands boys thoroughly,” but the majority of the time was devoted to “gymnastic exercises on the bars, trapeze or punching bag. Boxing and wrestling, although lacking in science, are favourite pastimes.”⁷² In 1917, the hockey teams played once per week “and were encouraged to play a clean and manly game.”⁷³

In the first years of the club’s existence it retained its close ties to the mission which had spawned it, and held meetings in the mission’s quarters and encouraged club members to attend Sunday services faithfully: “The great meeting is that of the Sabbath morning, which is purely religious, and to which the boys come in a body.”⁷⁴ By 1910, however, the club’s leaders had abandoned any attempts to involve the boys in formal services and religious instruction and had turned to the more subtle task of moral influence:

Experience so far shows that few of the boys are members of church. The only feasible arrangement in a movement of this kind is to try and teach the spirit of religion by indirect methods. It is friendly influence and good advice which leave the most lasting impressions on the minds of these boys. Though fully conscious of many shortcomings, we believe that we are doing something towards helping these street boys to develop into good citizens.⁷⁵

By 1914, the club’s reliance upon sports as a means of inculcating certain moral values in club members had become entrenched. As club president Owen Dawson remarked, “We emphasize this part of the work very strongly, as sports of this kind which train the mind and body together are of great assistance to a boy growing up a manly and useful

⁷² NSC, Annual Report, 1911, p. 10.

⁷³ Griffintown Boys’ Club (GBC), Eighth Annual Report, 1917, p. 9.

⁷⁴ PCA, Crescent Street Presbyterian Church, Annual Report, 1908, p. 46.

⁷⁵ NSC, Annual Report, 1910, p. 8.

citizen.”⁷⁶ Superseding any concerns over male church membership, the club’s aim was to instill the tenets of good citizenship in its young members for whom “[t]heir temptations are so numerous and their surroundings so degrading that it is almost impossible for them to grow up honest and sober men.”⁷⁷

The club gained a certain exclusivity by limiting its membership to thirty boys and young men, and by providing each with a uniform, “a distinguishing costume to hold the boys together.”⁷⁸ Members also underwent an initiation ritual in which each pledged “to improve myself in every way ... to be steadily employed in some work ... to earn the reputation of being honest, trustworthy and industrious at my work and among my friends ... [to] be loyal to the Club and do my best to further its interests ... [and to] do the best I can to make our city and my home good and respectable.”⁷⁹ This second promise was particularly important given the absence of compulsory education laws in Quebec until the early 1940s, and “the natural disinclination of a slum boy towards enlightenment,”⁸⁰ since club administrators felt that the only other place for these lads was in gainful employment. Reporting that only three out of fifty boys were out of work in 1912, the annual report observed, “We feel that this shows the marked improvement in the lads morally...”⁸¹ The club also became partially self-governing: “... a president and committee of six were

⁷⁶ GBC, Fifth Annual Report, 1914, p. 3. The club’s name was changed, perhaps partly as a means of distancing itself from the religious work of the Nazareth Street Mission, in February 1914 when it was incorporated.

⁷⁷ NSC, First Annual Report, 1910, p. 4.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁷⁹ NSC, Second Annual Report, 1911, p. 13.

⁸⁰ NSC, Third Annual Report, 1912.

⁸¹ NSC, Third Annual Report, 1912.

chosen from among the elder boys, each committee man being responsible for the conduct of four other members.”⁸²

By 1914, the club had appropriated the term “gang” from the realm of disorderly and violent male culture, and incorporated the concept into its organizational structure, noting that “[a]nyone who is familiar with boys’ work will know that boys usually form themselves into gangs.” In this case, the younger members of the club were formed into gangs of about eight boys under the direction of volunteers, and complete with constitutions and passwords.⁸³ Yet at the basis of the club’s existence was the belief of its founders in the importance of personal influence. As Owen Dawson observed in 1910:

We find that the two most important factors in boys’ work are—first to get hold of the boy at an early age, before his ideas and character are formed; secondly, and more important, personal contact. Make each boy your friend, discover his weak and strong points, and act accordingly. You will soon find that he returns your affections, tells you his troubles, and looks up to you as one who can advise and help him in keeping straight. Thus by your own example and influence, you can assist him in growing up an honest and self-respecting man.⁸⁴

Secretary Hugh A. Peck articulated the aim of the club as being not just to provide leisure activities for working-class boys, but “to look after their physical, moral and intellectual well-being, and to afford a meeting ground between the boys, and men who have a deeper and wider outlook upon life.”⁸⁵ Perhaps as a defence against possible feminine influences, the club early repudiated any connection with a parallel club for girls, the Griffintown Girls’ Club.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, the expenses connected with the new club house in 1912

⁸² NSC, First Annual Report, 1910, p. 3.

⁸³ GBC, Fifth Annual Report, 1914, p. 6.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

⁸⁵ NSC, Second Annual Report, 1911, p. 9.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

forced the Boys' Club to rent a large room "with a separate entrance"⁸⁷ to the Girls' Club. Finally, the financial exigencies of post-WWI Montreal resulted in the amalgamation of the two clubs under the same administration in 1920. Leading up to this merger, the boys' club expanded to include a library, military drill, dances for the older boys and girls of the neighbourhood, and a savings bank, but its primary emphasis remained on sports as a means of inculcating "slum boys"⁸⁸ with values of good citizenship and honest employment.

As the years passed, the aims of the club remained constant but the means to these aims shifted to reflect trends in social service. In the early years, the club was run by male volunteers who were disturbed by conditions in Griffintown and wished to instill in boys, through personal contact, values of citizenship which would allow them to live morally upstanding lives amidst debased economic and social circumstances. In 1912, secretary Hugh A. Peck reported on the preventive nature of the club's enterprise:

We aim to help those boys who, through lack of a compulsory school law, and bad home conditions, spend most of their lives on the streets. There are a great many such boys in Montreal, and it is from their ranks that loafers, hooligans and criminals are mainly recruited. Social work which tends to cut off, or at any rate largely diminish the sources of demoralization in the city, is of greater permanent value than work which aims at the remedying and restricting of these evils after they have arisen, however necessary efforts of the latter kind may be.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ GBC, Fourth Annual Report, 1913, p. 3.

⁸⁸ NSC, Third Annual Report, 1912, p. 10.

⁸⁹ NSC, Third Annual Report, 1912, p. 8.

By 1920, this model of male voluntarism had shifted, and the amalgamated Griffintown Club made an appeal for funds for its newly appointed paid male and female Head Workers, a hallmark of university settlements.⁹⁰

This shift reflected developments which had begun to permeate the Montreal philanthropic community with the establishment of the McGill Department of Social Service in 1919 and the Montreal Council of Social Agencies (MCSA), an umbrella organization for all English Protestant welfare organizations in the city, in 1920: social service was moving from the realm of female church groups and the disinterested voluntarism of male university undergraduates, to a model of scientific and professionalized social work carried out by trained “experts”.⁹¹ Although the club did come under the auspices of the MCSA in 1922, the aims of its leaders remained to exert personal influence on the boys of the district and to inculcate values of good citizenship. Claiming to offer to its members “healthful and manly recreation,” the club attempted to develop “‘Four-square Men’—body fit, mind clean and clear, spirit elevating and progressive, social life wholesome,” and to “direct that [gang] spirit and its accompanying

⁹⁰ Griffintown Club (GC), Eleventh Annual Report, 1920, p. 3. This settlement model was not new to Montreal. In fact, the University Settlement of Montreal had been constituted in its first incarnation as a “Girls’ Club and Lunch Room” under the direction of the McGill University Alumnae Society in 1891, and had opened a residence for settlement workers, perhaps the defining characteristic of settlement work, on Bleury Street in 1895. The University Settlement was recognized as a constituent body of the Corporation of McGill University in 1910, its stated purpose being, “To establish a centre of social activities and neighbourly intercourse; to form a common meeting place where citizens of all races and creeds may exchange ideas and work together for the general good; to raise the standards of home life and civic responsibility, especially in all matters affecting the welfare of the young”. (Annual Report of the Governors, Principals, and Fellows of McGill University, Montreal, for the Year 1916-17 (Montreal, 1917), pp. 8-9.).

⁹¹ For a discussion of this tension between voluntary and professional models of social work in Toronto, see Sarah Z. Burke, Seeking the Highest Good: Social Service and Gender at the University of Toronto, 1888-1937 (Toronto, 1996).

energy into right channels.”⁹² The club’s organizers expressed a concern for inculcating in members a sense of the interconnectedness of the social whole, an idea which characterized the social gospel:

To witness the process of gradual transformation of a community, to see its standard of citizenship raised, its sense of mutual obligation deepened, and to feel that the institution with which one is connected is, in part, the inspiring and constructive cause of this betterment is to enjoy a sense of satisfaction which may be found in but few of life’s interests and activities. This is the reward which belongs to all who have laboured for the upbuilding and success of the Griffintown Club.⁹³

Although the club retained the social gospel’s stress on the importance of community, by the early 1920s it had abandoned the religious language which had connected it to the mission which had spawned it. This shift was only confirmed by the mid-1920s when the club assumed characteristics of an American-influenced settlement house, the object of which was to act as “[a] Community Centre for wholesome and supervised recreation for children whose playground would otherwise be the street, and to counteract the influences of dance and pool rooms for older sisters and brothers.”⁹⁴ Although the mandate of the club had shifted from the inculcation of citizenship to the provision of recreational activities, the club still retained its concern for the moral well-being of its constituency and for protecting working-class boys and girls from “influences which would surely destroy the simplicity and sweetness of their childhood.”⁹⁵

At the same time as the Griffintown Club abandoned its religious roots and adopted techniques of scientific social work, St. Columba House retained its strongly

⁹² GC. Report, 1923, in the Montreal Council of Social Agencies, Welfare Work in Montreal, 1923, pp. 200-201.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ GC. Report, 1928, in MCSA, Welfare Work in Montreal, 1928, p. 161.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

religious thrust in its attempt to keep boys within the church. Founded in 1916 in Pointe St-Charles by the Reverend W. R. Cruikshank, a local Presbyterian minister, St. Columba became a United Church settlement house in 1925 and soon after moved to new quarters which it still occupies today. Although it offered many of the same recreational activities as the Griffintown Club and the University Settlement,⁹⁶ unlike its non-sectarian counterparts St. Columba retained a strong religious focus, and maintained a large Sunday School, which in 1929 accommodated 446 pupils under the tutelage of thirty-one teachers, a Mothers' Bible Class of sixty members, and a Band of Hope. The settlement carried out the function of a mission church, and in the same year boasted that thirty people had joined the church and that there were 140 families under the pastoral care of St. Columba.⁹⁷ In addition to its religious work, St. Columba took up with vigour the social gospel mandate "to promote the physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual welfare of the community"⁹⁸ by offering the services of a child welfare nurse, establishing a dental clinic, and building a summer camp at l'Orignal, Ontario.

As with the wealthier churches, the prosperity of St. Columba, in the minds of its administration, was predicated upon its success in attracting boys to its programmes, and in particular interesting them in spiritual pursuits. The 1928 report noted that new regulations which stipulated that Wolf Cubs attend meetings in full uniform had "increased the interest in the program and has given our pack the proper standing among the other

⁹⁶ The 1929 Annual Report observed that there were nine girls' clubs, ten boys' clubs, a White Shield Women's Club with 168 members, and a Men's Brotherhood which attracted forty members.

⁹⁷ UCCMOA, St. Columba House, P611, Localisation 11-3-8-4-2B-1, "Reports, St. Columba House." Twelfth Annual Report, 1929.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

packs.”⁹⁹ The 1929 report brought evidence before St. Columba subscribers that the Bible had the power to reign in even the most dangerous of masculine outlets, the working-class street gang:

During the past winter five street gangs of boys, 15 and 16 years of age, have been brought into the life of the Settlement. The Head Worker reports ‘such a difference from a few months ago when they were creating all sorts of disturbances on the streets’ to the other evening when she happened to drop into their Club meeting and found the foremost leader of the most notorious street gang reading the lesson from the New Testament and holding the attention of the whole group.¹⁰⁰

That the female Head Worker had tamed the forces of a male gang points to the power which femininity and, by extension, domesticity were seen to wield over disorderly and often dangerous expressions of masculinity in the working-class neighbourhoods of Montreal. Although church settlements such as St. Columba were creations of a social gospel model of reform, they expressed continuities with an earlier evangelical idea by establishing a physical space for middle-class domesticity among the factories and slums of working-class Montreal.

In their commitment to the religious language of the social gospel, however, the churches were not particularly successful in their work with men and boys. St. Columba’s religious emphasis increasingly existed in tension with the professionalized model of social work which the Griffintown Club represented. Although several religious organizations, including St. Columba House, joined the MCSA in the council’s first years, St. Columba quickly withdrew and resumed its programmes under the sole auspices of the United

⁹⁹ UCCMOA, St. Columba House, P611, Localisation, 11-3-8-4-2B-1, “Report to St. Columba House Committee,” June 25, 1928.

¹⁰⁰ UCCMOA, St. Columba House, “Reports, St. Columba House,” Twelfth Annual Report, 1929.

Church of Canada.¹⁰¹ An article in Social Welfare warned that “[a] mild form of civil war is going on between some of the partisans of missions and social work, in many of our churches today,” but concluded that “[t]hey are differing aspects of a single task... There is a call to broaden our vision for no matter how narrow may be the specialized effort in which each of us finds a life work, it is part of a great totality which the hand of God is weaving into unity.”¹⁰² Thus, some in the churches began to view social work as part of the same project of city mission work which the churches had carried on since the late nineteenth century. That social work was becoming increasingly professionalized, however, did not necessarily remove it from the influence of Christianity. Rather the task of the professional social worker was always to keep in mind the example of Jesus even as she used scientific methods to better the conditions of the poor. The churches, meanwhile, increasingly used social work methodology in their efforts among the poor,¹⁰³ but in Montreal by the 1930s had begun to accede such work to non-religious organizations.¹⁰⁴ The instability of religious work was particularly evident in the case of St. Columba House which, recognizing that in its attempts to attract boys and young men to the church it could not match the resources of the better-equipped Griffintown Club,

¹⁰¹ It is unclear from St. Columba records why it withdrew from the Montreal Council of Social Agencies in the mid-1920s. Other religious social welfare institutions had a similarly brief association with the MCSA; the Old Brewery Mission and the Presbyterian-run settlement Chalmers House included annual reports in the MCSA's Welfare Work in Montreal during the early 1920s, but by the middle of the decade had broken off their relationship with the council.

¹⁰² F.N. Stapleford, “Social Work and Missions”, Social Welfare, IV:8 (May 1, 1922), 176.

¹⁰³ See for instance a 1937 survey of conditions of churches in the “city below the hill” entitled “Commission on Urban Problems: Montreal Preliminary Report”. UCCMOA, St. Columba House, P611, Localisation 11-3-8-4-2B-1.

¹⁰⁴ See Gauvreau and Christie, A Full-Orbed Christianity, pp. 224-243. In The Science of Social Redemption, Marlene Shore argues that McGill's University Settlement experienced increased difficulty in attracting McGill students to run its programmes, and observes that “[t]he sudden apathy on the part of McGill students may have had something to do with the fact that by 1928 the Protestant churches had by and large lost interest in practical social work, and sociologists no longer believed, as they initially had, that the settlements would provide them with data for their theories.” (p. 49)

eventually concluded that “the limited financial position does not permit us to go much further in the way of activities, but that we might stress the spiritual end of our work.”¹⁰⁵

The increasingly secular language used by the administration of the Griffintown Boys’ Club, when during this same period, St. Columba espoused an amalgam of evangelical and social reform, points to a reality generally overlooked by historians in Canada: the process of religious change does not fit into tidy analytical categories. What all of these historians have overlooked in their confident pronouncements on the advance of secularization is the matter of gender, a category of analysis which threatens the stability of the secularization thesis. If Montreal reformers often expressed their fears of religious decline in terms of gender in their attempts to keep men and boys within the church and to draw wayward males into the charmed middle-class world of domesticity, this concern has not been reflected in Canadian literature whose definition of secularization is predicated upon a decline in the predominantly male realm of formal theology. Establishing a paradigm for the social gospel which has attained the status of historical orthodoxy in Canada, Richard Allen was one of the first historians to argue that the social gospel undermined the authority of Protestantism in Canada by replacing the evangelical ethos of the nineteenth century with a worldly and immanent form of Christianity.¹⁰⁶ In his analysis of social criticism at the turn of the century, Ramsay Cook similarly argues that “the supreme irony of the regenerators was that the new birth to which they contributed was not, as they had hoped, the city of God on earth but rather the

¹⁰⁵ UCCMOA, St. Columba House, P611, Localisation 11-3-8-4-2B-1, “Minutes of the St. Columba House Committee,” February 5, 1940, p. 33.

¹⁰⁶ Allen, The Social Passion, p. 3.

secular city.”¹⁰⁷ David Marshall echoes Cook in his argument that “clergymen in Canada unwittingly contributed to the process of secularization in their quest to make religion conform to the needs and demands of the modern world,” but links the process of secularization to the increasing forces of consumerism which even by the 1870s had subordinated religion to the uncertainties of choice.¹⁰⁸ While Marshall argues that secularization involves a decline in “the essential or other-worldly aspects of the faith,” and that ministers contributed to this process by neglecting “the evangelical imperative to show the way to personal salvation,”¹⁰⁹ Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau reject the contention of Marshall and others that “any religious experience that diverges from a coherent system of theology constitutes a benchmark of spiritual decline.”¹¹⁰ Rather, they take a broader view of religion, and argue that popular forms of piety and an increasing social ethic prompted a renewal of Protestantism in English Canadian society which led, in the period from 1900 to 1940, to “the apogee of the cultural authority of the churches.”¹¹¹

If the “secularization thesis” has provided the dominant lens through which historians have interpreted the social gospel in Canada, few scholars have subjected its claims to truth to techniques of gender analysis. The concept of secularization, having at the kernel of its meaning a general decline in religiosity, is seemingly devoid of gendered presuppositions. Upon further analysis of the application of this thesis to the Canadian context, however, it becomes evident that arguments for secularization rely upon a paradigm of male absence, and make assumptions about masculinity and femininity which

¹⁰⁷ Ramsay Cook, The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada (Toronto, 1985), p. 4.

¹⁰⁸ David B. Marshall, Secularizing the Faith, p. 4 and 24.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-7.

¹¹⁰ Christie and Gauvreau, A Full-Orbed Christianity, p. xii.

place a higher value on men's participation in public forms of religion than on women's public and private religiosity.

Many proponents of the secularization thesis in Canada, most notably Marshall, base their arguments on the writings of Protestant clergymen and church college professors who offered a narrative of declension at a time when women in Protestant denominations expressed not a declining sense of piety, but an increase in religiosity in the public sphere which had been opened to them by the increasingly social ethos of Canadian Protestantism. According to historian Ann Braude, such lamentations over declension and secularization are for a loss of male piety and express "a nostalgia for a religious landscape [in which men were as involved as women in formal religious institutions] that never existed."¹¹² She argues that women have always attended church in larger numbers than men,¹¹³ and that, influenced by separate spheres ideology, secularization has come to mean "... a decline in religion's efficacy in a public realm associated with men's activities, concurrent with persistent or increased influence in a private realm associated with women and the family."¹¹⁴ Braude asserts that if the secularization thesis does not hold up under demographic analysis, it must reflect male anxieties over "advances in both the quality and quantity of women's participation in American Protestantism [and incorporates] a judgment that the health and integrity of a religious group are seriously threatened by any increase in the visibility or influence of its female members."¹¹⁵ In Braude's analysis, secularization is a profoundly gendered concept which offers a narrative of male absence

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. xii.

¹¹² Ann Braude, "Women's History *Is* American Religious History," in Thomas A. Tweed, ed., Retelling U.S. Religious History (Berkeley, 1997), p. 94.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

and ignores a constant or expanded female presence in both public and private forms of religion.¹¹⁶

The application of Braude's theory of secularization and gender to early-twentieth-century Montreal offers new insights into the way in which poverty and gender intersected as the city's Protestant churches adopted the social gospel. Historians should take seriously the concerns over male absence which were commonly expressed by Protestant clergy, since given conditions in working-class neighbourhoods the decision of many churches to establish a presence in "the city below the hill" in order to stem male social disorder seems reasonable. In light of Braude's observations about secularization and gender, however, the possibility must also be considered that in this discourse of male absence church leaders articulated fears that in their own middle-class congregations women had assumed too much power in the realm of social service and threatened male authority in the churches. If women were numerically dominant within the churches and Protestant theology had become feminized in the late nineteenth century, as many historians have argued, then church leaders' concerns over male absence and historians' elaboration of the theory of secularization refer to an increase in female power and "a judgment that the health and integrity of a religious group are seriously threatened by any increase in the visibility or influence of its female members."¹¹⁷ The evidence suggests that in early-twentieth-century Montreal church leaders took for granted women's participation in public forms of religion, but at the same time discounted the ongoing interest of women in the social gospel and their increasingly important role in professionalized social work.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

Rather, the discourse of male absence which many church leaders articulated in reference to both middle-class and poor congregations said as much about negative attitudes towards the increasing influence of women in religious institutions and in the larger community as it did about contemporary fears surrounding a type of masculinity which was unmoderated by the influence of the church.

CHAPTER 3
“TO SURVEY THE MANSIONS OF SORROW AND PAIN”:
ORGANIZED CHARITY AND CHANGING CONCEPTIONS OF POVERTY
IN MONTREAL, 1900-1920

If the Protestant churches in Montreal expressed concern about the “problem” of keeping boys and young men interested in church work, to many observers their efforts seemed concentrated upon a well-defined middle-class constituency which was their predominant source of financial support. This class bias was not lost on those inside the church. In his 1932 M.A. thesis written for McGill’s newly constituted Department of Sociology, former St. Columba House boys’ worker Herman R. Ross offered a damning critique of attempts by churches to stem juvenile delinquency in working-class neighbourhoods in Montreal. Asserting that in the area of boys’ work, and more generally in social service, church efforts were “spasmodic,” Ross argued that “the churches in this crescent area of delinquency are doing little for the betterment of conditions.”¹ From his own experiences at St. Columba, Ross claimed that even the church settlements, whose mandate was to meet the social, recreational, and spiritual needs of Montreal’s poor, had inadequate resources to provide the activities necessary to keep boys out of trouble in their spare time.² In condemning the wealthy churches for their abdication of responsibility for their poorer brethren, Ross echoed current sociological theories on urban decay³, observing the movement of wealthy churches to the suburbs as they followed their

¹ Herman R. Ross, “Juvenile Delinquency in Montreal.” (M.A. Thesis. McGill University, 1932). p. 35.

² *Ibid.*, p. 58.

³ For a discussion of contemporary views of urban development, particularly those originating at the University of Chicago, see Marlene Shore, Chapter 4, “Metropolis and Hinterland,” The Science of Social Redemption: McGill, the Chicago School, and the Origins of Social Research in Canada (Toronto, 1987), pp. 121-161.

middle-class memberships while the urban core of the city decayed along with the churches' downtown presence:

While each year sees new church buildings being erected at enormous cost in wealthy suburban sections of the city, the church settlement struggles along on a very meagre budget.⁴

Even those settlements which maintained an active programme in poor areas of the city were "more interested in their 'Mission' services... than in any real attempt to help the young of the neighbourhood."⁵

In reaction to the seemingly haphazard and piecemeal responses of Protestant churches to poverty in Montreal, several distinct movements towards "scientific" charity which sought to rationalize the community's treatment of the poor developed in the first decades of the twentieth century. The proponents of such movements aimed to expose the irrational nature of relief provided by the city's churches and other institutions which served Montreal's Protestant poor, particularly criticizing their lack of coordination and unnecessary duplication of services. Yet the version of organized charity first established in Montreal did not stray far from the ideological basis of many of the city's evangelical Protestant institutions. Similar to the Old Brewery Mission, champions of organized charity viewed poverty not as an economic or structural problem, but as the result of a moral deficiency which compromised and often undermined accepted Victorian notions of masculinity and femininity. The ways in which institutional expressions of the movement interpreted and responded to poverty, however, remained profoundly gendered even though they were couched in the "objective," and purportedly value-free and gender-neutral, language and methods of the new social sciences of human ecology and sociology.

⁴ Ross, "Juvenile Delinquency in Montreal," p. 58.

This chapter will assess these ideological changes in organized charity, and trace shifts in interpretations of poverty and gender in Montreal in the early years of the twentieth century. It will explore the increasingly pervasive tension between a notion of social service premised upon the tenets of British idealism and the duties of male citizenship, and the trend towards professionalized social work. It will use as a lens two bodies which sought to rationalize charity and study their human subjects in a “scientific” manner: the Montreal Charity Organization Society (MCOS), founded in 1899 in order to encourage “the prevention of pauperism and the economic and right direction of relief;”⁶ and the Montreal Branch of the Canadian Patriotic Fund (CPF), established in 1914 to organize aid to soldiers’ dependents. In the process, the gendered constructions of poverty presented by each of these institutions will be assessed, from the unmanly pauper of the MCOS, to the loose woman of the CPF.

In order to understand ideological changes in organized charity, we need to turn briefly to the British scene, where earlier developments would have an important impact on the delivery of charity adopted by such Montreal anglophone institutions as the MCOS and the CPF. The idea of organized charity had its origins in the mid-nineteenth century. British intellectuals, increasingly aware of the fragmentation which divided their newly industrialized society, developed theories of organicism by which to reintegrate the dispossessed back into the community. At the centre of the burgeoning Empire, London provided ample example of this breakdown in societal cohesion in the vastness of its urban sprawl. Here were crystallized the effects of several depressions in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the powerlessness of human actors in “a trade cycle of national and

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

international economic activity that appeared to be largely outside the scope of rational human control.”⁷ Behind the city’s regal facade and impressive wealth lay the “unregenerate,” “dangerous,” “casual” poor who, because of the extreme nature of their poverty, lived in the imaginations of wealthier Londoners as a class of degenerates who threatened the moral and economic basis of British society. Concentrated in the East End of the city, this “residuum” seemed beyond saving. Unlike the “respectable” working class which in the minds of the middle class were made up of “increasingly prosperous and cohesive communities bound together by the chapel, the friendly society, and the co-op,”⁸ the casual poor, according to Gareth Stedman Jones, were,

...indistinguishable to many contemporaries from criminals, apparently divorced from all forms of established religion, or ties with their social superiors, inhabiting unknown cities within the capital, constitut[ing] a disquieting alien presence in the midst of mid-Victorian plenty...⁹

This sense of the poor as “other” was only reinforced by the increasing geographic separation of rich and poor within the city, and the conviction that the East End was “a nursery of destitute poverty and thriftless, demoralized pauperism, [...] a community cast adrift from the salutary presence and leadership of men of wealth and culture.”¹⁰

If poverty was the main obstacle to community, the means by which the poor could be reintegrated into the community was by no means obvious. As Andrew Vincent and Raymond Plant observe, “... poverty involves the breaking down of the various ties of citizenship—the acquisition of skill, education, access to justice and organized religion—

⁶ Montreal Charity Organization Society (MCOS), *Fourth Annual Report* (Montreal, 1904), p. 7.

⁷ Jose Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: A Social History of Britain, 1870-1914* (Oxford, 1993), p. 225.

⁸ Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship between classes in Victorian Society* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 10-11.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

all of which are mediating links which integrate individuals into the state.”¹¹

Reconstituting citizenship by reestablishing such links, however, posed a serious problem, for it seemed inconsistent with the liberal philosophical and economic foundations of Britain to alleviate conditions of poverty in a society predicated upon the freedom of the individual and upon “natural economic laws”¹² which rendered inevitable inequalities in social status and wealth.¹³ Yet by the 1880s, popular understandings of poverty had shifted; no longer did it affect just an individual or a family, but the entire social body, and concern became couched in pseudo-scientific “*fin de siècle* Darwinian pessimism” which predicted Britain’s social, moral, and racial decline.¹⁴ Poverty undermined the moral health and economic vitality of the nation, and threatened even the seemingly unshakable foundations of the British empire.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, many institutions including the London Charity Organisation Society (COS) arose which sought to deal with the newly created “social problem” of poverty.¹⁵ Founded in 1869 as the Society for Organising Charitable Relief and Repressing Mendicity, the COS aimed to organize by “scientific” methods the complex web of charity that existed in London so as to eliminate abuse of the system by the poor. Reacting against “the deformation of the gift,”¹⁶ a notion that the idea of charity had been compromised by indiscriminate, unthinking, and impersonal giving, the

¹¹ Andrew Vincent and Raymond Plant, Philosophy, Politics and Citizenship: The Life and Thought of the British Idealists (Oxford, 1984), p. 94.

¹² Harris, Private Lives, Public Spirit, p. 237.

¹³ Vincent and Plant, Philosophy, Politics and Citizenship, p. 94.

¹⁴ Harris, Private Lives, Public Spirit, pp. 239 and 241.

¹⁵ Vincent and Plant, Philosophy, Politics and Citizenship, p. 95.

¹⁶ Jones, Outcast London, p. 257. See pp. 251-2 for a discussion of the social meaning of “the gift.” Jones argues that the act of giving involves three structural features: the idea of sacrifice, prestige, and social control.

COS sought to reestablish personal relationships between rich and poor and between giver and receiver by a system of casework and home visiting. In response to the popular notion that “the separation of the classes had led to a breakdown of social relationships and traditional methods of social control,”¹⁷ COS policies sought once again to inflect the charitable relationship with notions of obligation and personal responsibility, and to instill in its clients a sense of their own responsibility as citizens of an organic community.

Where the settlement movement proposed communitarian solutions to the problem of poverty, the COS response was contingent upon the moral culpability of each individual for his or her poverty, and for making his or her own way back to financial stability, independence, and, ultimately, citizenship. Although the philosophy and methods of the COS were formulated around a notion of the reintegration of the rehabilitated and remoralized individual into the community, this community did not require the same duties of, or offer the same rights to, all citizens. Rather, the COS’s understanding of community hinged upon the differentiation of the seemingly universal notion of citizenship according to gender, and upon the prescription of appropriate male and female roles within that “nursery of citizenship,”¹⁸ the working-class family.

Afoot in Great Britain since the 1860s, the movement for organized charity permeated the Canadian philanthropic community by the 1890s when the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) took up the cause with vigour at its annual conferences throughout the decade. Julia Drummond, a prominent Montreal philanthropist and first president of the Montreal Local Council of Women (MLCW), addressed the 1894 meeting

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

¹⁸ Bernard Bosanquet, “The Duties of Citizenship,” in Bernard Bosanquet, ed., Aspects of the Social Problem (London, 1895), p. 10.

of the national body on the subject of associated charities.¹⁹ Observing that since one of the founders of the movement was a woman, British housing reformer Octavia Hill, she argued that Canadian women had a special duty to promulgate the ideals of organized charity for the betterment of their country.²⁰ Drummond espoused the major principles of the British movement, arguing that a system of registration and investigation needed to be developed to avoid duplication of services to the poor. Furthermore, personal relationships had to be established between trained visitors and the objects of their attention if the poor were to be lifted out of their moral malaise. Unlike members of the British COS, which referred scornfully to the “sprinkling charity” of the churches,²¹ Drummond invoked as an ideal of charity and human relationships the New Testament example of social service, a love “that stoops to meet human need, that goes out to seek the helpless and the lost, that does not only relieve their distress, but raises and redeems them by association with itself.”²² In a concise statement of the meaning of charity organization, Drummond articulated the seemingly clear relationship between morals and poverty, and the imperative of contact between the classes if the threat of social disorder was to be combated:

True charity needs for its fulfilment all the forces of wise minds and gentle hearts. For its ultimate aims are nothing less than these—not only to

¹⁹ The idea of “associated charities” was most forcefully advanced by leaders of the British Charity Organisation Society who sought to prevent waste and overlap by creating umbrella organizations which would not give direct aid, but would serve as central information and organizing agencies for already existing charities.

²⁰ Julia Drummond, “Co-operation as Shown in Associated Charities,” Women Workers of Canada: Being a Report of the Proceedings of the First Annual Meeting and Conference of the National Council of Women of Canada (Ottawa, 1894), p. 55.

²¹ Helen Dendy Bosanquet, Rich and Poor (London, 1908), p. 199. Bosanquet and other British COS workers characterized attempts by churches to administer charity as irrational, and contrasted this with the “provident visiting” and acquisition of “expert knowledge” which characterized COS efforts. See Bosanquet, pp. 199 and 203.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 60.

relieve poverty, but to cure it, not only to redeem the feeble and the vicious, but to do away with the conditions that create them. We recognize that the moral shiftlessness of the pauper has much to do with his miseries, but behind and before this cause we see another, his dwarfed and debased social conditions, and with this recognition comes the knowledge that he can only be restored by the moral and spiritual force of personal influence, that the conditions which reproduce him must be altered by the re-adjustment of social relations.²³

The urgency of Drummond's appeal induced the NCWC to pass a motion advocating the establishment of associated charities in all cities which lacked such organizations.²⁴ A later observer, McGill botanist and prominent eugenicist Carrie M. Derrick, wrote that as a result of Drummond's speech, "[t]he interest created was great and delegates from all parts of Canada returned to their homes anxious to introduce better methods of dealing with the relief of poverty and of establishing better relations between the rich and the poor."²⁵ Only in 1899, after several failed attempts, was the Charity Organization Society founded in Montreal under the patronage of prominent businessmen, but through the efforts of members of the MLCW.

The organized charity movement was profoundly influenced by the maternalist ideology of the MLCW. In their endorsement of "household thrift and simplicity of life as opposed to the ignorant waste and culpable love of display so unhappily characteristic of all classes in our time," MLCW members articulated their conviction that their duty as women was "the building up of happier homes."²⁶ In an address to the annual meeting of

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

²⁴ Appendix, Women Workers of Canada (Ottawa, 1898), p. xi.

²⁵ National Archives of Canada (NAC), MG 28 I, 164, vol. 7, file 20, Microfilm 8709, "The Origin of the Charity Organization Society of Montreal (now The Family Welfare Association)," by Carrie M. Derrick, p. 1.

²⁶ Montreal Local Council of Women (MLCW), Second Annual Report (Montreal, 1896), p. 8.

the MLCW in 1896, President Julia Drummond expressed the duty members had towards the good of “common humanity” by virtue of their special feminine gifts:

Surely as home-makers for the *race*, we cannot limit our sympathies—in a broader sense this world is our Home, and nothing is indifferent to us. Unless we learn to merge merely personal considerations in the larger contemplation of the general good, unless we widen our knowledge of the social questions that are pressing for solution to-day, unless we women do our part in solving those moral problems which so vitally concern our sex, the sin and sorrow of that outer world which we have not learned to recognize as, in a wider sense our home, will creep into that little world so dear to us, that home which we have lived and would have died to shield.²⁷

That it was women’s special province to cure society’s ills points to the gendered view which members took of their social service work. Separate spheres ideology dictated that they express their reform zeal in terms of their roles as mothers and wives. Thus, while seen by early women’s historians as an oppressive construct, women’s appropriation of separate spheres ideology allowed them to claim power in the public sphere by reinterpreting their domesticity in the more public terms of “social housekeeping.”²⁸

Drummond’s call to arms against social problems betrays a sense of urgency in the programme of the MLCW. Society’s problems threatened to invade that bastion of femininity and domesticity, the upper middle-class home, and the women of Montreal stood poised to beat back the menace at their doorsteps. That they had first to gain the approval of “influential men”²⁹ points both to the inequalities of gender power which marked society, and to their business acumen. For although the MLCW was largely responsible for bringing the charity organization movement before the eyes of the Montreal public, the Charity Organization Society was formed in Montreal only after

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

representatives of the Council met with “a Committee of influential men, several of whom were clergymen,” and a public meeting was held at the Board of Trade Hall over which the Mayor presided.³⁰ In its early years, the society’s all-male board included some of the most powerful members of Montreal’s Anglo-Protestant political and economic elite: industrialist Lord Strathcona, senator and businessman George Drummond, railroad magnate Sir William Van Horne, and shoe manufacturer, social reformer, municipal, and later federal, politician Herbert Ames. By virtue of their membership on the boards of other philanthropic institutions in the city, these men assisted in bringing charities in Montreal under the scientific methods of the Charity Organization Society, the basis of the success of the movement.

The gendered division of labour was further evident in the way in which women subsequently participated in the organization once its operations had been appropriated by men. In keeping with the maternal feminism of the MCOS’s ideological framework, women assumed roles consonant with their duties as “home-makers of the race,” much like the Young Women’s Home Missionary Society had with the appropriation of power by an all-male board of directors at the Old Brewery Mission. Entering the homes of their less fortunate sisters and thus remaining within the web of domesticity which was their “proper” sphere, they acted as “friendly visitors,” ensuring that MCOS aid was being used with the utmost thrift and rationality by the women in their charge. Heavily influenced by the American brand of charity organization which placed strong emphasis “upon elevating

²⁹ MLCW, A Report of the Work of the Twenty-First Anniversary Report, 1893-1915 (Montreal, 1915), p. 19.

³⁰ MLCW, Sixth Annual Report (Montreal, 1900), pp. 9-10.

the social worker to professional status,”³¹ these women forged for themselves a strong role in the establishment and professionalization of social work in Canada.

Julia Drummond’s 1896 address, outlining the goals of the MCOS, bespoke a community on the brink of anarchy, “a society divided against itself and trembling for its downfall.”³² Despite Lady Drummond’s assertion that before the establishment of the MCOS Montreal had been known as “the Naples of Canada, and I remember thirteen men-beggars coming to my door in a single day!”³³ the widespread conditions of poverty which had prompted the formation of the COS in Britain were less severe, and occurred later, in Montreal. Furthermore, the idealist intellectual roots of charity organization were less developed in the Canadian movement,³⁴ permitting greater assimilation of burgeoning forms of social Christianity in the endeavour for organized charity.

Yet if the MCOS relied more heavily upon the American impulse towards professionalism than on the sense of duty and community which inspired the original British movement, as Terry Copp has argued,³⁵ its goals were remarkably similar to the London organization. Such similarities arose despite the Montreal society’s early

³¹ Shore, The Science of Social Redemption, p. 43.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 58.

³³ NAC, MG 28, I, 164, vol. 4, file 7, Microfilm 8705, MLCW, Julia Drummond, “Practical Idealism”, Annual Reports: A Report of the Work of the 21st Anniversary Report, 1893-1915, p. 3.

³⁴ The influence of British idealism has been hotly disputed by Canadian historians. A. B. McKillop attributes a great deal of influence to idealists such as Queen’s professor and Presbyterian clergyman John Watson (A. B. McKillop, A Disciplined Intelligence: Critical Inquiry and Canadian Thought in the Victorian Era (Montreal, 1979), chapters 6 and 7), and Sarah Z. Burke has argued that idealism permeated the “Toronto ideal” of social service at the University of Toronto until at least the 1920s (Sarah Z. Burke, Seeking the Highest Good (Toronto, 1996)). Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, however, have largely dismissed idealism as a force in social service in Canada, and have instead posited that social reform in Canada was driven until the 1930s by the forces of social evangelism, the evangelical ethos of the nineteenth century inflected by a new social ethic.

³⁵ Terry Copp, The Anatomy of Poverty: The Condition of the Working Class in Montreal, 1897-1929 (Toronto, 1974), pp. 114-115. Copp argues, “The Charity Organization Movement had begun in London in 1869 and had rapidly spread to the larger American cities. The C.O.S. came to Montreal from the United States and its organizers drew directly on American examples in planning their work.”

disavowal of any relationship with “the Organized Charities in the Mother Country,” a statement which carried with it an implicit rejection of the dogmatism and overzealous application of the principles of organized charity of which British COS officials were often accused by the early twentieth century.³⁶ Marlene Shore argues, however, that “[t]he objectives of the MCOS were identical to those of the original British movement: to restore every client who came to its doors to a state of independence and self-reliance by some means other than monetary.”³⁷ First and foremost, like its British counterpart the MCOS claimed that it did not intend to encroach on the territory of already established charitable organizations. Rather its mandate was to coordinate those charities which already existed, promoting “co-operation between charitable societies and charity workers, in order to prevent imposition and unwise duplication of relief.”³⁸ As such, the MCOS aimed not to give direct relief, but to aid other agencies which did dispense material aid in “the economic and right direction of relief.”³⁹ This goal was particularly ambitious since, in the absence of Poor Laws against which the British COS defined itself, there were no state provisions at any level of government in Canada for the organization of relief for the poor. Although the MCOS claimed to act as a coordinating agency for the social welfare organizations in Montreal, in practice the city’s linguistic and religious divisions made this goal untenable. In that vein, Terry Copp has argued that “the C.O.S.

³⁶ MCOS, The Third Annual Year Book Together With a Directory of Some of the Charities of the City, 1902-1903, p. 7. This annual report further rejected the policy dictates of the British society, and claimed its intention to “deal with the questions that arise from our unique position, from the standpoint of our city and country rather than by any hard and fast rules of organized charity.”

³⁷ Shore, The Science of Social Redemption, p. 44.

³⁸ MCOS, The Third Annual Report, 1902-1903, p. 2.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

was operated in English and its efforts to be the ‘Office Central de la Charité de Montréal’ had little practical consequences for French Canadian institutions.”⁴⁰

Even early in its existence, the MCOS had abandoned its original goals and administered direct relief to many of its clients through an Interim Relief Fund which was established to help “the most trying and difficult cases.”⁴¹ Admitting the difficulty which this fund posed for the orthodox view of organized charity, the MCOS took these circumstances not as a symbol of defeat but rather as a welcome test of its scientific methods. The MCOS’s third annual report stated that “if it is our bounden duty to teach people of our city the ways of scientific charity, what better method could we adopt than to take the very worst cases, even at a great cost, and try to find the good in them and to lift them out of their present degradation.”⁴² At the same time, arguing that “the dependent people need knowledge much more than they need alms,”⁴³ the MCOS discouraged the public, which it portrayed as being uneducated in methods of scientific charity, from giving money to beggars. Prominent charity worker Helen Reid asserted in 1898, the year before the MCOS was finally founded, that charity had to be directed into proper channels in order to prevent pauperism and fraud.⁴⁴ Once organized, the MCOS implored businessmen, therefore, neither to give money to “the beggar on the street or at the door” nor to “send him away unheeded,” but to give him a ticket of introduction which

⁴⁰ Copp, *The Anatomy of Poverty*, p. 115. The same reluctance to become part of the Protestant-dominated COS was evident in Montreal’s rapidly expanding Jewish community which grew from 2473 in 1891 to 28,807 by 1911. See John A. Dickinson and Brian Young, *A Short History of Quebec*, 2nd ed. (Toronto, 1993), p. 201.

⁴¹ MCOS, *The Third Annual Report*, p. 10.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

he could present at MCOS offices.⁴⁵ Claimed the MCOS, “**EVERY CASE INVESTIGATED, and NO GENUINE CASE sent away unrelieved.**”⁴⁶ The MCOS argued that education and personal contact, rather than unthinking almsgiving, would raise those who had any potential to be helped out of the mire of pauperism and into the realm of the respectable working poor.

Whether or not relief was required by an applicant was determined by a complex system of investigation which included detailed questionnaires, interviews, and home visits. If aid was deemed necessary, the MCOS aimed to give it “under conditions which will harm no man’s self-respect, and will teach the less fortunate how to help themselves as their strongest brothers do.”⁴⁷ In theory, the MCOS did not give material aid, but rather arranged for aid from a variety of private sources such as relatives, churches and other relief societies, and “from private persons charitably interested.”⁴⁸ More likely than not, however, the principles of organized charity dictated that material aid be withheld in deference to the moral influence exerted by female visitors upon the needy. The MCOS believed that such middle-class women would bring moral, and hence economic, uplift to the poor by their feminine influence, and would accomplish much more good in the lives of working-class families than the “pauperizing” effect of economic aid. The prominent role of these visitors was highlighted in the MCOS’s mission statement: “To promote thrift and health, and build up character by establishing continuous personal relations

⁴⁴ NAC, M.G. 28, I 164, vol. 10, Microfilm M-8713, Montreal Local Council of Women, Helen R. Y. Reid. “The Problem of the Unemployed”, reprinted from National Council of Women of Canada, Women Workers of Canada, 1898.

⁴⁵ MCOS, The Fourth Annual Year Book Together With a Directory of Some of the Charities of the City, 1903-1904 (Montreal, 1904), back cover.

⁴⁶ MCOS, The Fourth Annual Report..., back cover.

⁴⁷ MCOS, Annual Report, 1902-1903, inside cover.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

between friendly visitors and the needy.”⁴⁹ Only by reestablishing personal bonds between rich and poor could the needy be wisely assessed, treated in a way which fostered independence, and reintegrated into a community which rested upon the foundation of economic independence.

As with the British society, the category of “undeserving” found its most extreme expression in the notion of “the pauper” who figured prominently in the programme of the MCOS. Normally constructed as male, the pauper was one who was not merely unemployed, but who, through his own moral failings or through the newly discovered trope of heredity, was perpetually a burden to the social whole. The MCOS’s scientific method played a prominent role not only in the treatment of the pauper, but in his diagnosis:

...it is necessary to try at least to discover the cause of pauperism, not that we are keen to find a skeleton in each and every case, but that we are keen to know the rock which caused the shipwreck, and more keen to teach the family to avoid it in the future. The human organism is delicate, but the social organism is more delicate.⁵⁰

The MCOS, likening its “scientific” qualifications in the area of social work to those of a physician, deemed itself uniquely qualified for the job of “diagnosing” the moral and social problems of its “patients.” Using much the same categorizations as its British parent, the organization differentiated between temporary dependency due to circumstances such as illness, and intractable dependency caused by the moral disease of pauperism. In the former, the case was treated as merely an unavoidable lapse in independence which could be remedied by treating the physical causes of the dependence. In such a case, argued the

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* For a discussion of the discursive significance of the “lady visitor”, see also Judith Walkowitz, City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London.

⁵⁰ MCOS, Annual Report, 1903-1904 (Montreal, 1904), p. 7.

MCOS, treatment “by a skilled physician will bring him back to his own position, in fact as well as in name, to be the head of the family...”⁵¹ Moral failings, however, could only be addressed by “long, tedious and careful attention by some spiritual adviser or some friends before the person can be brought back to a more normal life.”⁵² Not unthinking almsgiving, but rational charity would point the way back to independence for the dependent poor.

The line between “deserving” and “undeserving,” however, remained unsettlingly ambiguous and easily transgressed. MLCW member and prominent Montreal social worker Helen Reid described in distinctly moral terms the process by which a man lapsed into dependence and eventually pauperism: “Intermittent work breeds irregular habits, carelessness and a host of other evils and a sure and oftentimes swift degeneration from casually employed to unemployable, unfit and superfluous follows.”⁵³ This “submerged tenth,”⁵⁴ according to Reid, represented the lowest of human life who,

...through some physical or moral defect...are economically worthless. They include all the vagrant class, the shiftless nomads of the lower strata of society, the tramps and paupers, vagabonds and rogues, all of whom live more or less by lying or begging. Each one of these represents a commercial deficit or dead loss to the community and in the mass constitutes one of the greatest social evils to present and future generations.⁵⁵

That the shift in economic status from independence to some form of reliance on charitable institutions was couched in the distinctly moral terms of “habit,” “carelessness,”

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Reid, “The Problem of the Unemployed,” p. 2.

⁵⁴ MCOS, Annual Report, 1902-1903, p. 12.

⁵⁵ Reid, “The Problem of the Unemployed,” p. 2.

and “evil,” points to a conceptual “slippage”⁵⁶ in which negative moral qualities were ascribed to the very poor. Those who relied on charity were inherently immoral because they could not support themselves by their own efforts, and were hence identified as “paupers.” This process of naming created a moral category in which could be placed all those who transgressed norms of economic independence. According to MCOS doctrine, only by assuming full economic (and hence moral) responsibility for himself and his family could a man fulfill his duties of citizenship to the larger organic community. The British COS went so far as to advocate that often families should not receive assistance in the hopes of forcing the husband to reassume his masculine responsibilities towards his wife and children. The British society justified this harsh stance by arguing that the family was the primary locus of citizenship, and in the name of social stability each member of the family was required to accept his or her role. Idealist philosopher and prominent British COS official Bernard Bosanquet argued that it rested particularly upon men to recognize,

...that the home is after all an element in the common good of the community; that the wife and children are not play-things, nor animals to be fed, nor instruments of social or industrial advancement, but are members of a great nation, that has a past and a future, and relations of duty and participation in a common good, binding together all its citizens... For thus our English homes will be nurseries of citizenship and the symbols of the social will, and become something more, no something less, than they are to-day.⁵⁷

Although the Montreal society did not take such an extreme position as to deny a family aid in the name of enforcing a husband’s responsibilities, for the Montreal COS the pauperization of a family nevertheless represented a blow to the community, for the

⁵⁶ See Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water*, pp. 13-14 for a discussion of linguistic slippage.

⁵⁷ Bernard Bosanquet, “The Duties of Citizenship,” in *Aspects of the Social Problem*, p. 10.

citizenship of family members might be fatally compromised by the moral and economic breakdown of this “nursery of citizenship.”

In the annual reports of the MCOS, pauperism was a distinctly male moral disease. Arguing that “pauperism, pure and simple, is a distinct evil in our civic life,”⁵⁸ the MCOS, in cooperation with city officials, initiated a campaign which aimed at “ridding the corners of our streets of unseemly beggars and the sending of paupers to their homes.”⁵⁹ The annual report for 1904 described in vivid language “[t]he great army of vagrants... [m]ost of whom do not intend to do an honest day’s work.”⁶⁰ That these “vagrants”, “akin to the criminal class and... a danger to the well-being of our city,”⁶¹ were male is evident from the position which the MCOS’s Labor Bureau, established to help the society’s clients find work, adopted on women working outside the sphere of the home: “In no instance is work given to women who are more needed in their own homes.”⁶² Women who remained at home were not tainted with the same sting of dependency and moral laxity as men since their proper place, according to expectations of female behaviour, lay within the realm of domesticity. The MCOS found widows particularly worthy of the organization’s aid since they could not rely upon a breadwinning husband.⁶³ Like the British COS, the Montreal organization did not expect women to work, at least not in the role of primary breadwinner, but rather constructed men as the sole economic support for the family. Thus, women could not have been included in the MCOS’s discussion of vagrancy since in most circumstances they were not expected to do “an honest day’s work.” Rather, the

⁵⁸ MCOS, Annual Report, 1902-1903 (Montreal, 1903), p. 8.

⁵⁹ MCOS, Annual Report, 1903-1904 (Montreal, 1904), p. 8.

⁶⁰ MCOS, Annual Report, 1903-1904, p. 13.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² MCOS, Annual Report, 1915-1916, p. 41.

Montreal organization sanctioned the establishment of an industrial agency specifically for men since “[w]e are not suffering in Montreal from unemployed, but we are suffering from unemployable,”⁶⁴ and advocated that the Dominion government establish a “farm colony” for men who most stubbornly shirked their duties to family and community.⁶⁵

Women were generally not placed within the lowest class of the “residuum,”⁶⁶ since the COS found a greater possibility of moral redemption in women than in men. In one case, illustrating both the need and possibility of redemption, a woman “left alone with a family of young children during the temporary absence of her husband” was brought to the attention of the MCOS. The woman’s income, drawn from a variety of sources, was larger than she had ever had before, and it was noted that her unwise financial management in conjunction with her association with “unscrupulous neighbors” had led to her undoing. Economic conditions had led swiftly to a decline in the moral fibre of the family, the mother taking to drinking, the children removed from school, and “the whole family...living in an indescribable condition of degradation and neglect.” Upon thorough investigation, the COS decided that since “previously the woman had lead [*sic*] a most respectable life; that she was not at all vicious at heart and loved her children,” the organization would undertake to supervise her, acting *in loco parentis* in the absence of her husband:

The spending of money was completely taken out of her hands, which helped to break with the undesirable friends; medical attention and suitable

⁶³ MCOS, Annual Report, 1915-1916, p. 24.

⁶⁴ MCOS, Annual Report, 1902-1903, p.12.

⁶⁵ MCOS, Annual Report, 1903-1904, p. 13.

⁶⁶ “Residuum” was employed by members of the British COS to differentiate from the “respectable” working class those who exhibited laziness, impulsiveness, and poor economic character which “accompanies a low order of intellect, and a degradation of the natural affections to something little better than animal instincts”. See Helen Bosanquet, “The Industrial Residuum”, in Aspects of the Social Problem, p. 88. The MCOS readily appropriated the definitions and distinctions of its British counterpart.

food were secured. We finally sent the whole family away to the country for a complete change of air and environment among people of their own nationality who knew nothing of their previous trouble. The woman seemed to regain her self-respect and since that time she has successfully conquered her desire for drink and is now regaining her self-respect.⁶⁷

Unlike women, men sinking to such depths would have been left to their own devices since any aid would have pauperized them and the assumption of financial responsibility by an outside body would have compromised their masculinity. This woman, however, was brought back to “self-respect” only after the MCOS had taken over her business affairs and arranged to supervise closely her activities and interactions. Measures which would have undermined manhood by their removal of independence instilled femininity in women by their very cultivation of dependence.

That MCOS officials perceived poverty more often as a moral and gender failing than as an economic problem points to the constructed nature of the concept. Lacking a constant referent, poverty had different meanings for different people at different times and could mean a moral failing or a structural problem within the economy, but always had gender implications. By the First World War the MCOS increasingly rejected its moralizing attitudes towards the poor and appropriated more certainly the tenets of science into its programme. In this new model of poverty, disease played a greater part in the society’s methods of diagnosis. The category of “unemployable” was constituted no longer by people having moral problems, but by those, both men and women, afflicted with “moral” diseases. In her report on the Central District of the MCOS, District Secretary Amy Prevost argued:

⁶⁷ MCOS, Annual Report, 1915-1916, p. 25.

In the more congested section of my district,⁶⁸ which lies South of St. Catherine Street, between St. Lawrence Street and Beaver Hall Hill “unemployable” almost always denotes confirmed alcoholism accompanied by mental deterioration, venereal disease or advanced tuberculosis. This particular community, made up for the most part of the lowest type of lodging-house, is a veritable back-water into which sooner or later the human driftwood of this big City seems to find its way.⁶⁹

This marriage of disease and poverty demonstrated a shift, albeit a subtle one, from poverty as moral problem to poverty as subject of scientific models of cure. The MCOS had begun to consider that the origins of poverty could lie in factors other than in the moral fibre of its clients.

Although at various points in its existence the MCOS counted among its members some of the most prominent social service and charitable agencies in Montreal, it never realized its ultimate goal of acting as a clearing house of information for English charities around the city. Rather, it became a charity among charities, offering material aid where it had promised only to organize existing resources. Like its British counterpart, however, the MCOS pioneered methods of casework in the city and promoted the professionalization of social work among men and women alike. By 1913, the society had begun to offer lecture courses through a Social Service Educational Department headed by Helen R. Y. Reid which attracted social workers not only from Montreal, but also from as far away as Prince Edward Island.⁷⁰ Housed at McGill University and taught by such prominent McGill professors as Carrie Derrick, these courses expressed dominant patterns of thought in contemporary social welfare discourse: “Eugenics and Social Service,” “The Feeble-minded, and Backward Children,” “Neglected and Delinquent Children,” “Business

⁶⁸ By the beginning of World War I, the MCOS had divided its work into four distinct geographic districts (St. Henry, North, East-Central, and Central), and had established a separate *Département Français*.

⁶⁹ MCOS, *Annual Report, 1915-1916*, p. 29.

Methods in Philanthropic Work,” and “Child Welfare Activities of the Protestant Church.”⁷¹ The MCOS also advocated the bureaucratization of social work, and in the fall of 1915 established a Confidential Exchange under the leadership of Laura Woodward, former registrar of the Boston Confidential Exchange. The Exchange housed a central registry of families receiving assistance from member agencies, the aim of which was “not only to prevent overlapping and duplication of effort but to promote co-operation and the working out of a uniform plan for families.”⁷² The MCOS’s introduction of formal teaching of social work methods in a university setting foreshadowed the displacement of social service from the realm of private duty to its inclusion as an academic and professional discipline in the founding of the McGill Department of Social Study in 1918. Meanwhile, the Confidential Exchange pointed to a vision of social welfare which would ultimately influence the gradual appropriation of social work from the realm of private philanthropy to the centralized and bureaucratized programmes of Canada’s nascent welfare state in the 1930s and 1940s.

Unlike its ideas, however, the MCOS itself was ultimately short-lived. With the founding of the Montreal Council of Social Agencies in 1920 as an umbrella organization for Montreal social welfare organizations, the MCOS was supplanted in its efforts to coordinate charity in the city. In 1921, the MCOS changed its name to the Family Welfare Association and turned itself to the work of “family rehabilitation.”⁷³ The following year, this new organization joined the MCSA, an ironic move given the MCOS’s former goals. Although its mandate had changed, its rhetoric still expressed shades of the MCOS’s

⁷⁰ MCOS, Annual Report, 1915-1916, p. 43.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

⁷² MCOS, Annual Report, 1915-1916, p. 34.

concern for raising families out of the depths of dependence by means of influence, not material aid:

An emergency overcome rarely terminates our efforts, and the long, steady pull with families is aimed to place them beyond the need of such service again, and to establish them in the normal state of independence so necessary to healthy civilian life. That the worth of professional social knowledge is being better understood and appreciated may be deduced from the fact that, of the total number of cases for the year, more than forty per cent came to the Association for advice and not for financial assistance.⁷⁴

If the MCOS failed to achieve its ultimate goal—to coordinate local social services and to act as a central clearing house of information on clients of member welfare agencies—its methods gained particular prominence in the crisis of World War I. In the absence of state welfare programmes, private agencies assumed the burden of caring for soldiers' dependents who, having lost their primary breadwinners to military service, often faced severe economic hardship. Although the MCOS continued to operate throughout the war, its efforts were overshadowed by a new organization which employed MCOS methods of casework and investigation and whose membership consisted of many MCOS administrators, but whose mandate reflected specific war-time circumstances.

Founded in the first weeks of the war, the Canadian Patriotic Fund (CPF) sought through a combination of allowances and social work to aid dependent relatives of soldiers serving overseas. Although heavily inflected by MCOS ideology, CPF policies reflected the altered family structure of a society at war: female-headed households and male absence. Like the MCOS, the CPF based its understanding of citizenship on idealist notions of responsibility towards the social whole, yet because of the absence of men

⁷³ "Family Welfare in Montreal," Social Welfare, IV:10, 219-220.

during war-time, the gender implications of CPF ideology were quite different. Where the MCOS placed the onus of responsibility for economic independence upon a male breadwinner and vilified as “unmanly” a man who proved unable to support his family, CPF policies of necessity displaced this economic burden onto women, rendering ambiguous the tenets of breadwinner and separate spheres ideologies which naturalized women’s financial dependence upon men. The war provided an arena in which gender and poverty intersected in new variations, particularly with the volatile variable of patriotism. In this process, the meaning of poverty shifted from being linked to men’s immorality, to an expression of female sexuality which challenged the integrity of the family, threatened the success of the war effort, and ultimately undermined the British Empire. As the crucible of such conflicting and competing gender meanings, the CPF also served as a bridge between private charity, predicated upon notions of duty and privilege, and the “scientific” methods and bureaucratic structures of professionalized social work .

On August 26, 1914, Governor General the Duke of Connaught inaugurated the Canadian Patriotic Fund as a means to mitigate “the tragedy of the soldier’s wife and the soldier’s children.”⁷⁵ This new Fund was granted by an Act of Parliament⁷⁶ the remaining funds of the Canadian Patriotic Fund Association, which had been formed in 1900 to aid dependents of Canadian soldiers serving in the South African War and still existed in a loose network. The new CPF, with its national organizing committee and closely affiliated branches, was deemed necessary in order to meet the needs of the families of the large

⁷⁴ Family Welfare Association of Montreal, “Annual Report,” in the MCSA, Welfare Work in Montreal (Montreal, 1922), p. 28.

⁷⁵ The Call to Arms: Montreal’s Roll of Honour, European War, 1914 (Montreal, 1914), p. 111.

⁷⁶ For the text of the Act of Incorporation see Philip H. Morris, ed., The Canadian Patriotic Fund: A Record of its Activities from 1914 to 1919 (Montreal, 1919), pp. 10-11.

number of soldiers who enlisted in the first weeks of the conflict. This new Fund had an additional mandate: to aid dependents of Canadian residents who elected to serve in the armies and navies of Great Britain's allies. Aimed primarily at soldiers' wives and children, the CPF administered its funds not to all applicants, but only to those deemed "worthy" by casework methods developed by the MCOS. The fund's administrators feared that using anything less than the latest scientific methods of social work and bureaucratic administration would betray the public's trust, and sought to "safeguard the Fund" from those who would undermine it.⁷⁷ Like the MCOS, the CPF had the utmost faith that its "scientific" principles of investigation, surveillance, and "treatment" would prevent pauperization, encourage independence, and instill moral rectitude in its clients, while "endow[ing] [recipients] with character, for becoming valuable citizens for the State."⁷⁸

Montreal was one of the first cities in the Dominion to establish an affiliated branch of the CPF, a development probably due in part to the fact that Montreal shoe manufacturer, philanthropist, and Member of Parliament for the St. Antoine riding, Herbert Ames, had been appointed Honorary Secretary of the national body.⁷⁹ The Montreal Branch of the CPF, founded in August 1914 upon the outbreak of war, sought to aid dependent relatives of soldiers serving overseas through a system of allowances. Within weeks, the Montreal branch had organized the first of three "whirlwind campaigns" held during the war, a fundraising technique which had recently been successfully employed by both the YMCA and McGill University. Prominent Montreal citizens

⁷⁷ Canadian Patriotic Fund (CPF), Montreal Relief Committee, First Annual Report, August 1914 to August 1915 (Montreal, 1915), pp. 39 and 48.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

organized teams which competed against each other to raise the most money during the five-day joint campaign for the CPF and the Red Cross. In later campaigns, male francophone teams and female teams from both linguistic groups were included in the competition, but the focus remained upon the competitive spirit of prominent Montreal businessmen. A "One Day's Pay" drive became increasingly successful with each campaign, and many large local firms encouraged employees to donate a day's wages to the cause. Ministers and bishops exhorted their congregations to give generously, while one Montreal woman, who signed her name "A Daughter of Loyalists," donated a ring given to her by her father which was subsequently auctioned for one thousand dollars.⁸⁰ The first week-long campaign galvanized the city, raising \$1,550,000 which far exceeded the goal of one million dollars set by the Montreal executive.⁸¹ Campaigns held in 1916 and 1917 brought total donations from Montrealers to \$7,365,667.64, or ten dollars per capita over the course of the war.⁸²

In contrast to the actively competitive spirit between male campaign team leaders such as Percy Molson and J.W. McConnell, 1917 saw the introduction of "Women's Self-Denial Week". During this week, middle-class and wealthy women went without some of their accustomed fineries and donated the proceeds to the CPF. The goal of this campaign aimed especially at women was "to observe some special form of self-denial during the week beginning February 9, and to give the result, be it great or small, to the campaign funds, through the society in which each woman is especially interested." That women were discouraged from canvassing actively local businesses and known philanthropists,

⁷⁹ *The Call to Arms*, p. 112.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

who were generally thought to be the province of men, speaks to the gendered nature of this fund-raising effort. Rather, women raised money through passive self-denial in order to avoid direct competition with men. Illustrating the consciousness within the community of this gendered divide and the primacy of male efforts, one newspaper article observed:

The spirit of self-sacrifice has already been shown in the decision of the women not to steal any of the plums already marked for the men, but to break new ground and to do all the difficult canvassing which the men have hitherto left untouched.⁸³

To this end, women of the CPF placed collection boxes in stores in the English section of Montreal west of Bleury Street “to evoke widespread interest in self denial to the end that the boxes will materially add to the receipts of the two funds.”⁸⁴ In addition, the Daughters of the Empire canvassed house to house in English-speaking neighbourhoods, targeting “the lady of each household and other household workers.”⁸⁵ Advertisements for Self-Denial Week equated the passive contributions of women in Canada with the active sacrifices of men at the front. Nevertheless, the role of women in the effort was, by the very nature of its passivity, inferior: “Our men are offering their *lives* for us. Let us make *some* offering of Self Denial, to help our Wounded Soldiers and our Soldiers’ Families.”⁸⁶ That women’s role in the war effort was primarily a passive one, was made clear by the Governor General the Duke of Devonshire, who noted in a speech to the Women’s Canadian Club in 1917:

⁸² The Canadian Patriotic Fund, p. 244.

⁸³ McCord Museum of Canadian History (MMCH), CPF, 1917, J.W. Ross Papers, P217-B/2, “Women Workers Sharing Burden of Big Campaign,” The Montreal Gazette, January 20, 1917.

⁸⁴ MMCH, CPF, 1917, J.W. Ross Papers, P217-B/2, “Self-Denial Week Inaugurated by Women Workers,” The Montreal Evening News, February 1, 1917.

⁸⁵ MMCH, CPF, 1917, J.W. Ross Papers, P217-B/2, “Women Prominent in Funds Campaign,” The Evening News, February 1, 1917.

⁸⁶ MMCH, CPF, 1917, J.W. Ross Papers, P217-B/2, Advertisement for Women’s Self Denial Week.

The part played by women in the tremendous struggle was a feature of the momentous time. It was not possible for them to take part in the actual fighting in the battle line. On them lay the heavy task to wait in patience, or the sad burden of mourning for those who had given their lives for country and home.⁸⁷

Just as they could not participate in the fighting overseas, women were not expected to engage actively in the fundraising efforts for the CPF. In keeping with their true “nature,” war-time prescriptions dictated that middle-class women were limited to passive roles as mourners and as self-denying housewives.

At the same time, one of the slogans of the Montreal campaigns, “Fight or Pay,” pointed to the duty of all citizens of Canada to participate in the war effort. As in fundraising, the requirements of citizenship during the war were, however, decidedly gendered:

The war is Canada’s war, not only because we are fighting for our King and Country, but because we are fighting in the cause of humanity for Right against Might! The men who cannot fight must pay and the women who cannot fight must pay; and those who stay at home must work for the welfare of the families of the brave men who have placed their bodies between us and the German bullets! (We must work for the welfare of their children who will be our future citizens and soldiers!)⁸⁸

All able-bodied men were obliged to serve in the armed forces, while men who could not fight formed a liminal class which, in league with women, was charged with supporting the war effort and maintaining the integrity of the family. A 1918 article in CPF Bulletin expressed the contractual nature of the duties which befell all citizens during the war, and again alluded to the CPF’s conviction that the war required different duties of different citizens:

⁸⁷ MMCH, CPF, 1917, J.W. Ross Papers, P217-B/2. “Victory Is Key Note of Women’s Mass Meeting,” The Montreal Gazette, no date.

There has been kept a compact which is unwritten, is binding in no legal sense, but which it would be eternal dishonour and eternal loss to break. Some shall fight and the rest shall work and pay. There is the division of labour which Canadians assumed and to which they undoubtedly will adhere.⁸⁹

This same conviction that a sense of duty towards fellow citizens had to be fostered in all Canadians also underwrote the debates surrounding whether or not the federal government should assume control of the CPF. Despite the fact that the Governor General served as the Fund's president, and the Prime Minister, provincial premiers, and many prominent Members of Parliament were listed as officers under the Fund's act of incorporation, opposition to proposed government control ran high. A primary objection to federal control expressed by the CPF, mirroring closely idealist philosophy, was that the Fund afforded Canadians an opportunity to serve their fellow citizens in an altruistic expression of patriotism and duty. This sense of community would be significantly diminished if the government assumed control of the project, for ordinary citizens would lose sight of their interconnectedness and abdicate responsibility for their fellow humans:

A great opportunity for serving the State will be removed. The Fund in its call on both the generosity and the industry of the individual, has done much to promote the well-being of Canada. Men and women, whose public-spirit has lain dormant for want of a vehicle through which to express it, have found in the work of the Fund scope for self-sacrifice and public service.⁹⁰

It was feared that government control would mean that the disbursement of funds would become mired in the impersonal administrative bureaucracy of government, and that "there would be no more of that friendly, personal, helpful relationship which now exists between

⁸⁸ *Bibliothèque Nationale du Québec*, Canadian Patriotic Fund, First Annual Report, August 1914 to August 1915 (Montreal, 1915), p. 10.

⁸⁹ CPF, Bulletin, (January, 1918), p. 1.

⁹⁰ CPF, Bulletin (September, 1916), p. 1.

the local administrators of the Fund and the families of the men who are fighting abroad.”⁹¹ The CPF remained a private corporation throughout its existence, in large part because this influence of idealism, and its emphasis on personal contact, duty and community, was still dominant in Canadian social service and tended to act against any impulse towards professionalization of social work or state control.⁹²

Although supporting the CPF was characterized as a duty incumbent upon those who did not go to the front, the disbursement of funds to soldiers’ dependents was premised upon a theory of privilege, not of right. The CPF mocked the audacity of “the canny woman from a neighboring township who wrote that, as she had heard so much good of the fund, she was coming to Montreal with her four children and would they please find her a house.”⁹³ This woman was clearly expressing her belief that she had a right, as the wife of a soldier serving overseas, to certain services from the Patriotic Fund. Indeed, the inaugural announcement of the Montreal Branch, which stated that the organization “guarantees that the wives and families and other dependents of those who go to the front from the Montreal district, will be, during their term of service, reasonably provided for,”⁹⁴ certainly gave the impression that all dependents would be supported unconditionally by the Fund. The Patriotic Fund, however, modeled itself upon the “scientific” methods of the Charity Organization Society, while insisting at the same time that, “[t]he Fund is not a charity. It is only given **where need is recognized** as a direct

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² For a discussion of the ethic of personal duty to serve others which permeated male undergraduate communities in Canada and acted against the impulse of women towards the professionalization of social work, see Sarah Z. Burke, Seeking the Highest Good: Social Service and Gender at the University of Toronto, 1888-1937 (Toronto, 1996).

⁹³ MMCH, CPF, Paul U. Kellogg, The Patriotic Fund of Canada, p. 35.

result of enlistment.”⁹⁵ Another advertisement, ominously entitled “To the Proud Wives and Mothers of the Men at the Front: A MESSAGE OF CONGRATULATION...AND A NOTE OF WARNING...,” reiterated the Fund’s dissimilarity to a charity and attached moral consequences to soldiers’ dependents being supported by charity: “The Fund is not a charity and you are surely above receiving such relief.”⁹⁶ In 1916, notwithstanding this self-definition by the CPF, Julia Drummond found herself lamenting the fact that “so many Canadian women are a charge on the charity of this country.”⁹⁷ As brave wives and mothers, women who were supported by the CPF were expected to live on the fund’s often meagre pensions in the name of patriotism, and were vilified as “unpatriotic” if they sought help from other agencies which were deemed “charities” by CPF administrators.

Such statements by the CPF on the disloyalty demonstrated by those who sought out “charity” also had a more insidious effect. By stigmatizing women who appealed to other organizations, deemed “charities” by the CPF, and arguing that “**It will be distinctly to your disadvantage**”⁹⁸ to seek help from other agencies, perhaps a veiled threat to diminish the allowances of such women, the CPF attempted to create a monopoly on war-time relief. Women who accepted the CPF’s relief were patriotic and noble, and an asset to their fighting husbands; by contrast, those who sought relief elsewhere were pauperized by unthinking charity, and by extension were disloyal to the war effort. This dichotomy between the patriotic duty of both giver and receiver, and the lack of patriotism and

⁹⁴ MMCH, CPF, J.W. Ross Papers, P217-C/6, “Canadian Patriotic Fund, Montreal Branch—Minutes of General and Executive Meetings, Oct. 1899-May 1915-Dec. 1919”, “Patriotic Fund Will Be Raised.” The Montreal Gazette, August 12, 1914.

⁹⁵ CPF, First Annual Report, p. 38.

⁹⁶ Kellogg, The Patriotic Fund of Canada, p. 13.

⁹⁷ CPF, The Bulletin (September, 1916), p. 2.

⁹⁸ Kellogg, The Patriotic Fund of Canada, p. 13.

pauperizing tendencies of “other” charities, allowed the CPF to exercise a great deal of control over the lives of its clients. If a woman could not participate in the war effort, she could at least receive relief in a way which would demonstrate her patriotism.

Because the help of the CPF was conceived of not as a right but a privilege⁹⁹ which expressed patriotic feeling and upstanding national character, the organization could justify its surveillance of its overwhelmingly female clients in the name of “safeguarding the fund.”¹⁰⁰ Under the directorship of Helen Reid, prominent MLCW and COS member, a Ladies’ Auxiliary Committee was formed to administer CPF relief using “the system which is generally recognized as the high-water mark not only of record-keeping but of case work.”¹⁰¹ Using the techniques of the MCOS, the Montreal Relief Committee implemented a system of interviews, investigation, and regular home visits to assess the continuing need of each family.

During the first year of operation, the Reception Room, where women were first interviewed to determine their eligibility for fund assistance, reported an average of 250-300 people attending per day, with a total of 5,014 applicants being interviewed over the course of the year.¹⁰² All applicants had to furnish an enlistment form signed by a military officer which confirmed their eligibility for CPF assistance. The applications were subsequently investigated by home visits and references. In keeping with the CPF’s emphasis on scientific methods, details of each case, including marriage and death certificates, were kept in card catalogues in the CPF’s offices, while a separate catalogue

⁹⁹ For a discussion of needs- vs. rights-based welfare in the American context, see Linda Gordon, Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of the Welfare State (Cambridge, Mass., 1994).

¹⁰⁰ The Call to Arms, p. 151.

¹⁰¹ Kellogg, The Patriotic Fund of Canada, p. 3.

¹⁰² CPF, First Annual Report, p. 32.

kept government lists, employers' lists of beneficiaries, and regimental lists.¹⁰³ Finally, a Social Statistics Committee kept track of maternity cases, employment opportunities suitable for women, and rooms for rent. The work of the CPF was complicated by the fact that dependents often had other sources of income: soldiers were encouraged to assign part of their pay to their wives; in addition, women received separation allowances, which varied according to rank, for husbands serving overseas; finally, some women received allowances from their husbands' employers, or, later in the war, themselves accepted employment. Thus, the CPF did not fix allowances, but made them contingent upon other sources of income, and often upon the woman's moral character. The CPF itself recognized the often ambiguous process of assigning allowances, stating, "Not only are the families on the Fund carefully investigated, re-investigated and visited, but the Budget Committee are constantly revising the claims."¹⁰⁴ In the name of "safeguard[ing] the Fund,"¹⁰⁵ the CPF implemented a system of investigation which, contrary to Fund discourse which painted its female recipients as noble and patriotic, reinforced the notion that these women were in need. Poverty had been feminized by the war, since so many women were poor as a result of their husbands' enlistment.¹⁰⁶ In the absence of government welfare programmes, the CPF exercised ultimate control over which of these women would live in modest comfort, and which would struggle through the war in abject poverty.

¹⁰³ CPF, First Annual Report, p. 35.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Linda Gordon argues that "[p]overty has long been 'feminized,' particularly because women alone with children have been exceptionally poor." Gordon, Pitied But Not Entitled, p. 6

Ironically, charged with making this determination of worthiness were volunteers of the CPF Ladies' Auxiliary, volunteers who themselves violated norms of femininity by working outside the realm of the home. In contrast to the "unscrupulous women"¹⁰⁷ who preyed on the Fund and against whom the Ladies' Auxiliary had to safeguard their public trust, the middle-class women who volunteered as Ward Heads and investigators were perceived almost without exception as self-sacrificing and valiant for leaving the confines of domestic harmony to interact with the poor. As the first annual report remarked, "The spirit of whole-souled service, the choice of the life of chivalry and not the life of ease, is strikingly evident in the results achieved by all these patriotic women during the past twelve months."¹⁰⁸ That same report further extolled the virtues of the female volunteers both in their work with individuals, and in their contribution to the development of social work in Montreal:

It is impossible to enumerate the lives saved, troubles averted and kindnesses extended by the Ward workers throughout the year. A new world of experiences has been opened up to them all, making them stronger, broader and more sympathetic. Their duty, conceived as patriotic service, has given them courage and perseverance in facing social problems, which is wholly admirable. It has also brought them, in the way of experience, to a knowledge of the value of social service which can never be forgotten, and which will be of use to our city, our country and humanity long after the war is over.¹⁰⁹

When poverty made the CPF's female clients suspect, middle-class status elevated woman volunteers as paragons of patriotic femininity. Of particular pride to the CPF was "the wife of a bank manager who does her own housework before she comes to the office,

¹⁰⁷ CPF, First Annual Report, p. 14.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

spends the entire day there every day, and goes home to cook the dinner at night.”¹¹⁰ This volunteer successfully fulfilled her role within the domestic sphere while at the same time expressing her maternalism within the public sphere, and provided an exemplary example of patriotic duty to all middle-class women. Speaking of similar American reform efforts, Linda Gordon argues perceptively that many of these women reformers lived outside gender norms, but “they ultimately put into place a welfare program that reinforced a conventional, even out-dated gender system and disrespected other women’s preference for such independence.”¹¹¹

In contrast to those who dispensed relief, women who relied upon the Fund for financial support were morally and sexually suspect. Because of the misgivings that poor women were constantly attempting to dupe CPF visitors and officials, the Ladies’ Auxiliary placed their clients under permanent scrutiny. When criticism from the Trades and Labour Congress arose, the CPF defended its practices by citing the necessity of eliminating the unworthy in order to safeguard the Fund as well as the public trust:

Without such an ‘indignity’ ... the worthless and undeserving among soldiers’ dependents would be supported by a public upon which they have no claim, while thousands of poor women would have never experienced the sympathy, comfort and practical aid in all their problems that the Fund has ever rendered them.¹¹²

The CPF argued that it was only a few savvy and unscrupulous women who made necessary such determined investigation, “[f]or while it is the exceptional case, which for better or worse, strikes public attention, fully two-thirds of the families are the unexceptional cases—the families in which, as Miss Reid says, the ‘women are making a

¹¹⁰ Kellogg, *The Patriotic Fund of Canada*, p. 15.

¹¹¹ Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled*, p. 67.

¹¹² CPF, *Bulletin*, (September, 1916), pp. 1-2.

huge, big, beautiful fight’.”¹¹³ As a result, all applicants were painted with the same brush and were subjected to the CPF’s invasive interrogations.

Such investigations took two forms: an emphasis on the proper physical maintenance of the home, as well as on budgeting and thrift; and close scrutiny of the moral conditions of each client. In a concise statement of the duties of women towards the Fund which supported them, the CPF connected both high physical and moral standards with patriotic duty:

The Fund not only gives out the money but is here to protect you and to befriend you with all counsel and advice and in this way to take the place of the soldier who has gone to the front. The Committee are proud to record the double service of most of our women who have not only given their dearest but are now giving themselves in ways of usefulness to their Country. It is expected of our women that they establish and encourage a high standard of living in their neighborhood. To do this, all care should be directed to **payment of just debts, careful spending and saving, health and cleanliness of home and children, regular attendance at church and school and a careful choice of friends and company** [original emphasis]. In this way you will add to your Country’s glory and your City’s fame and be a pride to the soldier upon his return from service.¹¹⁴

According to the CPF, women’s close adherence to gender norms and their faithful support of the social *status quo* expressed patriotism which paralleled and supported men’s actions on the battlefield.

Countering women’s “natural” tendencies, however, the CPF did not neglect to warn women against frivolous purchases such as “unnecessary furnishings, books and musical instruments,” threatening that “ALLOWANCES may at any time BE CHANGED TO SUIT THE NEEDS of the recipients, and extravagance will tend to lessen rather than

¹¹³ Kellogg, The Patriotic Fund of Canada, p. 22.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

increase the allowances of those who practise it.”¹¹⁵ The CPF was constantly on guard for women who spent their allowances recklessly, since this might diminish its ability to raise funds for “legitimate” recipients. The CPF always sought ways to stress the success of its work, and attempted to counteract the image of the soldier’s wife spending her allowance extravagantly by claiming to instill values of thrift in all of its recipients.¹¹⁶ CPF workers also argued that if these women set an example for their communities, “there will be fewer unkind remarks regarding the women on the Fund as your noble sacrifices become better known.”¹¹⁷ Such an ideal meant that in actual fact the CPF often represented the women it supported in the derogatory terms of frivolous wastefulness. Secretary of Relief Committee George W. Elliott observed, “We have argued with a woman for an hour... over the relative value of a new skirt and a policy on the life of her husband, who at the time was actually dodging German souvenirs in Flanders.”¹¹⁸ Indeed, the CPF envisioned its role as taking the place of the husband whose reasoned judgment normally checked the impulsive actions of his wife.¹¹⁹

Because of the gendered nature of its ideology, the CPF’s surveillance involved an explicitly moralistic component which, in her study of heterosexual relations in rural Ontario, Karen Dubinsky has identified as being part of a “powerful association of morality, gender and citizenship” which surrounded women.¹²⁰ Women who received

¹¹⁵ CPF, Bulletin, (November, 1916), p. 2.

¹¹⁶ CPF, First Annual Report, p. 12.

¹¹⁷ CPF, Bulletin, (March, 1917), p. 2.

¹¹⁸ Various reported in Kellogg, The Patriotic Fund of Canada, p. 19, and CPF, Report of the Work of the Canadian Patriotic Fund from August, 1914 to August, 1917 (Montreal, 1917), p. 31.

¹¹⁹ Kellogg, The Patriotic Fund of Canada, p. 26.

¹²⁰ Karen Dubinsky, Improper Advances: Rape and Heterosexual Conflict in Ontario, 1880-1929 (Chicago, 1993), p. 166. Carolyn Strange makes much the same argument about urban Canada in her study of the moral problem which was constructed around single, working women who lived

allowances from the CPF were expected to regulate their children's behaviour according to middle-class standards, attend church regularly, and keep "good" company. The 192 members of the Soldiers' Wives' Guild, organized in St. Denis Ward of Montreal, pledged themselves to be:

... a mutual benefit society to cheer and comfort one another, and always maintain and keep a high standard of morals, worthy of the wife, mother, sister or sweetheart of the gallant men defending our empire, and to do cheerfully our little bit to keep the home fires burning and the old flag flying.¹²¹

In contrast to the praise lavished upon these "patriotic" women, the CPF imposed financial sanctions on women who did not live up to its moral standards. In one case, a soldier's wife began to drink. Although the CPF made every effort to help her, "she arrives regularly at the office quite drunk and often accompanied by a man." The CPF suspended its allowances to this woman and warned the Department of Militia and Defence.

Meanwhile, the woman's relatives were warned but did not take action. Eventually, she drank herself to death using the Government Separation Allowance and assigned pay from her husband. According to the CPF, this case showed the dangers of giving women more money than they were accustomed to receiving, and granting allowances without thorough investigation and supervision.¹²² In this same case, the CPF recognized the problem of illegitimate children by attempting to identify the father of the child and hold him responsible for at least medical expenses. The CPF's plan also included, "notify[ing] the military authorities at Ottawa and get[ting] separation allowance and half pay put in the

independently of their families in Toronto. Carolyn Strange, Toronto's Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City, 1880-1930 (Toronto, 1995).

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹²² CPF, First Annual Report, p. 30.

hands of the fund as leverage for rehabilitating the household.”¹²³ If such “rehabilitation” was unsuccessful, however, dire consequences awaited the offending woman. If a woman were clearly confirmed in promiscuous living, steps were taken to separate mother and children.¹²⁴ The CPF clearly used the dependence of its female clients as a means to discourage sexual behaviour outside the bounds of marriage, and invoked a brand of patriotism which was particularly applied to women as a way to preserve the moral and sexual *status quo*.

Although the CPF recognized that men at the front were also engaging in extra-marital affairs as evidenced in the high rates of venereal disease in military hospitals, the organization did not apply the same moral standards to these men as it did to their wives. Rather, the CPF attributed men’s infidelity to the extraordinary circumstances of war which took them outside the normal web of family relations, and which placed them in situations “where monotony and loss of identity are coupled with unrestraint of men on leave, too far away to get back to their families.”¹²⁵ In keeping with the dominant norms of the time, the CPF condemned in women the same behaviour which it tacitly accepted in men. This sexual double standard meant that the figure of the spendthrift, morally and sexually “loose,” woman threatened the financial and moral success of the CPF public fundraising campaigns and, indeed, the course of the war. Meanwhile, a soldier infected with a venereal disease due to illicit sexual relations was a drain on the efficiency of the army but subjected Canada’s patriotic war effort to little embarrassment and no lasting moral effects.

¹²³ Kellogg, The Patriotic Fund of Canada, p. 31.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-2.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

As in matters of sexuality, in family economic relations the CPF sought to ensure that the gender *status quo* was not disrupted by the crisis of the war. The idea of the family wage was particularly crucial to familial and social stability. First and foremost, the CPF declared that “it would be wrong to give a family more than they may reasonably expect the husband or son to provide when he returns, we want to know of any cases where we may be doing this.”¹²⁶ By allowing women to become accustomed to a higher standard of living than their husbands were able to provide, the CPF feared that gender instability would result. As Linda Gordon argues about the development of government welfare programmes in the United States, with the undermining of the family wage,

... several essential principles of the social order would come unraveled; for example, men might lose their authority in families and households—and possibly, as a result, in the nation; women would be drawn into public employment and, as a result, greater public activity and independence; women’s time and energy for domestic labor would diminish; women would have an incentive to lower their fertility and some of the constraints on their sexual activity would be lost.¹²⁷

Indeed, the social implications of women’s employment deeply occupied CPF volunteers. At the outbreak of the war, official CPF policy was to discourage young mothers from working, leaving the scarce jobs “for poor women who are not on the Fund.”¹²⁸ Any exceptions were within clearly defined perimeters. In a letter to national secretary Herbert Ames in 1916, Helen Reid tacitly approved of women working within the confines of “women’s work.” Provided that a woman did part-time “woman’s work” such as charring and washing, she was not penalized by the CPF. By venturing into full-time factory work, however, women threatened the male breadwinner ideology upon

¹²⁶ CPF, Bulletin (March, 1916), p. 1.

¹²⁷ Gordon, Pitied But Not Entitled, p. 12.

¹²⁸ CPF, First Annual Report, p. 36.

which contemporary gender relations were based. Taking such work thus meant that women incurred financial penalties as the CPF reduced or cut completely their allowances. On the other hand, the CPF encouraged young, childless wives to work, and granted them an allowance of only five dollars per month in order to encourage self-support.¹²⁹ The CPF argued, however, that women with young children should invariably stay at home to take care of them.¹³⁰ Such policies ensured that women either remained at home and relied upon support from the CPF as a replacement for their breadwinner husbands, or that they took only menial labour which was considered to be within the realm of women's "proper" sphere. In either case, normative gender relations were safe from assault in a society in which the breadwinners were absent.

In 1919, as soldiers "doffed their uniforms and turned to the re-establishment of their homes, [and] the re-construction of their lives,"¹³¹ the CPF carried on its work. Although according to the CPF, the federal government had "correctly interpreted the wish of the Canadian people by providing liberal pensions and gratuities, and making other suitable and advantageous arrangements for men who served those people so faithfully," the CPF provided pensions to those whom the federal government did not support.¹³² Of particular concern to the CPF were wives whose husbands had abandoned them while overseas:

It has been said that the death or disablement of her breadwinner were not the only risks run by a woman who had given her consent to her husband's enlistment. She ran the further risk of his infidelity with its possible consequences of desertion. The truth of this statements is borne out by the

¹²⁹ Philip H. Morris, The Canadian Patriotic Fund: A Record of its Activities from 1914-1919, (Ottawa, 1919), p. 36.

¹³⁰ CPF, Bulletin, (July, 1918), p. 2.

¹³¹ Morris, The Canadian Patriotic Fund, p. 333.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 333.

case records of the Fund. In an army of over 600,000 men, living under abnormal and stimulating conditions, it would have been mere folly to expect complete fidelity. It is remarkable in fact, that more Canadian women do not find themselves bereft of their husbands, through the formation of other ties or restlessness induced by their experiences. Those that are so bereft are in that position solely as a result of the military service of their husbands, and in the opinion of many are as deserving of support as them woman whose husband died in the trenches.¹³³

Also deserving of continued CPF allowances were elderly parents whose sons had been their sole support, but who had married overseas and were no longer providing for their parents. The fund also offered allowances to families whose breadwinners had died after their discharge from the army, or who had contracted chronic illnesses subsequent to their military service. Finally, the fund administered allowances for unemployed ex-soldiers during the winter of 1919-1920 on behalf of the federal government, which lacked the necessary bureaucratic structure to distribute these allowances itself. This was, however, to be of limited duration. The CPF accepted these roles on a temporary basis, noting, "How long the Fund will be able to mitigate the sufferings of these people cannot definitely be stated. It is hoped, however, that the money available will last for several years, and that when its resources are exhausted, the need of assistance will no longer exist."¹³⁴ Fund offices in Montreal were finally closed in September, 1923, but 168 families in the city continued to receive allowances from the national level of the organization. The final hope of the Montreal branch was that "the fund will be able to carry its present beneficiaries under post-war regulations for eight or ten years longer,

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 333.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 334.

when many of the children will have reached earning age and will be able to assume most of the financial responsibility of the household.”¹³⁵

If by 1919 men had returned home and gender norms were reestablished within the family, notions of poverty and gender had been altered irrevocably by the work of the Canadian Patriotic Fund during World War I. Prior to the war, poverty had been framed by church groups and non-sectarian philanthropies alike as a male moral problem. Families were poor, these groups argued, because male breadwinners had abdicated their responsibility to support their families, a situation which betrayed the defective nature of masculinity among the poor. The war, however, introduced a new dynamic: female-headed families which were poor because their breadwinners had taken up their patriotic duty to serve overseas. Since such breadwinners were engaged in an activity which represented the apogee of manliness, serving their country and protecting their families from the menace of “the enemy,” the onus of responsibility for poverty shifted onto women. In the process of becoming feminized by the circumstances of war, poverty retained its moral dimensions. By this new association with women, however, poverty more particularly was linked with female sexuality. The coincidence of the feminization of poverty, the feminization and professionalization of social service, and the first time when “scientific” social work policies were attempted on a large scale in Canada speaks to the fluidity with which poverty was constructed as methods of social welfare shifted to reflect such changing constructions. This new association of poverty and femininity did not diminish with the return of male breadwinners from overseas, but persisted over subsequent decades as all levels of government assumed increasing responsibility for social

¹³⁵ E. Frances O’Neill, Summary of a Survey of the Protestant and Non-Sectarian Relief-Giving

programmes aimed specifically at either men or women, and Canada laid the foundations of its welfare state.

CONCLUSION

As Canada emerged from the crucible of World War I, the idealist-influenced model of social welfare which had provided a parallel system to church home mission work since the beginning of the century was deemed by many to be inadequate for Montreal's post-war needs. Although for several years the Protestant theological colleges affiliated with McGill had offered courses in sociology, those concerned with social welfare in Montreal became convinced that the exigencies of post-war Canada required university-trained social workers who could conduct scientific studies of social problems and apply bureaucratic techniques to resolve them. Ever aware of its rivalry with the University of Toronto, which had established Canada's first social service department in 1914, McGill University inaugurated its Department of Social Study and Training in August 1918 on a three-year trial. The department's first director, John Howard Toynbee Falk, was charged not only with ensuring the success of the new programme, but also with carrying out the plans of Montreal's anglophone charity leaders "to have McGill serve as the co-ordinating centre for the city's social-welfare efforts."¹

To that end, in 1919 Falk undertook a survey of all Protestant and non-sectarian social welfare organizations in Montreal.² The resulting report represented a significant shift from previous social service models in its departure, though hesitant, from the moralism which had characterized past methods of social work. Falk took the rather

¹ Shore, *The Science of Social Redemption*, p. 58.

² This survey was spawned by a suggestion of the Social Service Council of Canada that a branch of the council be formed in Montreal to address social work. Social workers, however, recognized the difficulty of organizing a council of social agencies under the auspices of an English Protestant group in a

unorthodox position that poverty resulted at least partially from environmental factors which were beyond the control of the poor. Falk clearly articulated the environmentalist bent of the McGill social work programme when he argued in his report that “upon those who organize to alleviate poverty, cure the sick, and reform the criminal devolves the definite responsibility of utilizing their experience to ascertain, reveal, and attempt to eliminate the social and economic conditions which bring clients to their doors.”³ He found particular fault with reformers who followed other models of social service which stressed the responsibility of the individual for his or her economic situation, and observed that “with a few exceptions, the social workers of Montreal through lack of courage or failure to realise their full responsibility have neither as individuals nor in unison done much to prevent a recurrence of the social diseases with which they are in daily contact.”⁴

Yet Falk’s report displayed characteristics of the very models of social welfare which it criticized. Reflecting the evangelical, social gospel, and organized charity approaches to poverty which had dominated the ideas of Montreal’s anglophone charity leaders since the turn of the century, Falk emphasized the importance of morality, character, and faith in God in preventing and alleviating poverty:

The work of cure and alleviation can most successfully be accomplished by bringing to bear upon the person in social mal-adjustment the personality of another person who has pre-eminently in his own character those qualities which are most lacking in the object of his attention. Courage, hope, ambition, perseverance, cleanliness, honesty, faith in humanity and belief in the ultimate coming of the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth are the qualities

linguistically and religiously diverse city such as Montreal, and so undertook to form a council independent of the Social Service Council. Shore, p. 59.

³ Report of the Montreal Council of Social Agencies: Being the Findings of a Social and Financial Survey of Protestant and Non-Sectarian Social Agencies of an Undenominational Character in the City of Montreal, Province of Quebec, Canada (Montreal, 1919), pp. 17-18.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

which are most commonly absent in individuals whom social and economic conditions have rendered subnormal to the healthy life of the community.⁵

The continuities between the models of poverty examined in this thesis and Falk's report extend further. Despite the "scientific" language in which Falk couched his analysis of Montreal's charities, his report betrayed a gendered understanding of poverty which mirrored the same concerns with manliness and women's sexual morality as earlier models of social welfare. Having left home for the first time or deserted his wife and children Falk's "Homeless Man" had broken his links with domesticity and had been "hurled into the common melting pot with the diseased, the delinquent, the intemperate, [and] the vicious."⁶ Saving such a man from the plight of the "common vagrant" required "a highly efficient and humane method of treatment and an appeal to his religious nature."⁷ Poor women became a concern to Falk only when they became pregnant as a result of deviant sexual activities, although he diminished women's agency by positing that unwed mothers were "more sinned against than sinning."⁸ This attitude only reinforced the connection which the CPF had made during the war between women's poverty and sexual immorality, a connection which would persist throughout the twentieth century as the state gradually assumed responsibility for social welfare.

That poverty, religion, masculinity, and femininity intersected in different ways as methods of social welfare shifted from 1890 to 1929 attests to the fluidity with which those charged with the social welfare of their communities constructed these concepts. The Old Brewery Mission understood the poverty of its homeless male clients as a failure

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

of their masculinity, and offered reintegration into their families and evangelical conversion as a means to regain their manliness. As Protestant churches in Montreal assimilated tenets of the social gospel in the first decades of the twentieth century, the discourse surrounding gender and poverty shifted. The “boy problem” and the perception that young men were leaving the churches *en masse* prompted concerted efforts by the churches to render their services and social programmes more appealing to men.

Although the churches wished to appeal to middle-class boys and men in order to preserve their future economic and social health, in the case of poor boys and men the motivations were distinctly different; the churches did wish to cultivate a male church leadership in the “city below the hill”, but their overriding concern was to rein in “dangerous” masculinities and preserve order in the city’s working-class districts. With the advent of the MCOS at the turn of the century, a movement which ran parallel to but often overlapped with church social reform efforts, idealist-inspired notions of “scientific” charity were introduced into Montreal’s social service community. Like the Old Brewery Mission, the MCOS located men’s responsibility for poverty in their defective masculinity, but unlike religious institutions placed heavy emphasis on methods of thorough investigation and personal influence to reintegrate poor families into the community. During the First World War, the Montreal branch of the CPF appropriated MCOS methods in its work, but the realities of war forced it to identify as the cause of poverty not men’s abdication of prescribed gender roles, but women’s immorality and sexuality. In the post-war years, Falk’s identification of poverty with environment lessened the moral and gendered implications of poverty, but understandings of morality and constructions of masculinity and femininity continued to inflect the development of social welfare policy in the McGill

Department of Social Study and Training and in the nascent Montreal Council of Social Agencies, an outcome of Falk's report.

This thesis has been fundamentally concerned with exploring links between gender and intellectual shifts which influenced the development of social welfare in Canada at the turn of the century. Although historians have studied connections between evangelicalism, the social gospel, idealism, and the rise of the social sciences, and the influence of each on social welfare, few scholars in Canada have done so using gender as their primary lens of interpretation. Such a focus on gender forces scholarly orthodoxies, such as the idea of secularization, to be questioned and often reformulated once gender is taken seriously as a method of interpretation, and points to the iconoclastic potential of theories of masculinity and femininity to unsettle historical truths. Indeed, my approach, which has been inspired by the work of American historians Linda Gordon and Joan Wallach Scott among others, implies new ways in which the development of the Canadian welfare state may be studied. Just as poverty has been shown in this thesis to be gendered, so state welfare programmes, from unemployment insurance, to old age pensions, to mothers' allowances should be subjected to the rigours of gender analysis. If a strong welfare state has been one of the hallmarks of Canada's national identity, the gendered codes which have inflected its formation and implementation, and its different implications for men and women, need to be explored fully in order to uncover links between masculinity, femininity, citizenship, and the state which still inflect current relationships between the poor and government welfare structures in Canada.

Although this thesis has dealt with perceptions of poverty and gender among middle class reformers in Montreal, my research trips to *Les Archives Nationales du*

Québec in Pointe St-Charles pointed to something which my sources and theoretical framework could not elucidate for a period one hundred years earlier: the agency of poor people to comment on their economic and social conditions. Throughout the summer of 1997, apartments, shop windows, and even the side-by-side Roman Catholic churches (one English, the other French) on *rue Center* displayed banners and stickers from the *Coalition Nationale sur l'Aide Sociale* which proclaimed "*Pauvreté Zéro*."⁹ The coalition also posted notices which stated that, according to 1991 Statistics Canada figures, the average income in Point St- Charles was \$26,000 while that in Westmount was \$197,000. These posters announced a public demonstration against poverty to take place in Westmount on June 7, 1997, and argued, "*Allons à Westmount exiger la redistribution de leur richesse*."¹⁰

That the organizers had chosen Westmount as the site of their protest was at once political and symbolic: political because these people had correctly identified Westmount, the home of many English doctors, lawyers, business leaders, and former prime ministers, as the locus of economic and political power in Montreal; symbolic because it entailed the incursion of the poor into space reserved for the rich and privileged in one of the wealthiest municipalities in Canada. The demonstration was not reported in any of the local newspapers, attesting to the obstacles which the poor face in claiming a voice for themselves. These difficulties are particularly pronounced given that studies have found that fifty per cent of the population of Pointe St-Charles is functionally illiterate even

⁹ "Zero Poverty"

¹⁰ "Let's go to Westmount to demand the redistribution of their wealth."

though it is a primarily non-immigrant community which has been educated in Quebec schools.¹¹

This absence of voice also characterized the poor of one hundred years ago. Even if there is limited evidence of how destitute men responded to the soul-saving message of the Old Brewery Mission, whether or not men and boys were in fact leaving Protestant churches in large numbers, or to what extent women who were supported by the Montreal Branch of the Canadian Patriotic Fund resented the controls placed upon their behaviour by lady visitors, the public records of these organizations speak strongly to the inextricable links made by middle-class reformers between masculinity, femininity, morality, and poverty. Although such links may be less obvious today than they once were, intersections between gender and poverty nonetheless persist in a society still struggling with inequalities between rich and poor.

Montreal's landscape still bears the marks of the chronic poverty which first came to the attention of churches and social reformers in the last decades of the nineteenth century. From the gardens of the Canadian Centre for Architecture perched at the top of an escarpment on René Lévesque Boulevard near Guy Street, the continuities between the present landscape and the geography of Herbert Ames' time become obvious. Above rise the palatial mansions of Westmount nestled on the green slopes of Mount Royal. Below are old factories, many of them now abandoned, and rows of tightly packed residential buildings whose uniformity is punctuated only by the many church steeples which indicate the continued church presence in the "city below the hill." This divide between rich and poor is further reinforced by the concrete barrier of the Ville-Marie Expressway which

¹¹ "Point Residents Want PSBGM to Find Funds for Adult Classes," The Montreal Gazette (June 25).

skirts the escarpment and cuts a grey swath between the two cities. In the “city below the hill,” Centraide¹² has assumed the role of coordinating the many private charities and social agencies which offer services to the poor. St. Columba House has strayed from its original mandate of providing a United Church presence in Point St-Charles, and serves as a centre of recreational activity and focus for community action in the community. And over one hundred years after its inception the Old Brewery Mission has an annual budget of \$700,000 and serves 1,200 meals per day to homeless people.¹³ Mina Douglas would neither have envisioned the longevity of her soup kitchen, nor have been pleased that, after a century of social reform efforts, such need still persisted.

1997), p. A5.

¹² The United Way

¹³ “Yule Fund Raising Vital for Many Charities,” The Globe and Mail (November 21, 1997).

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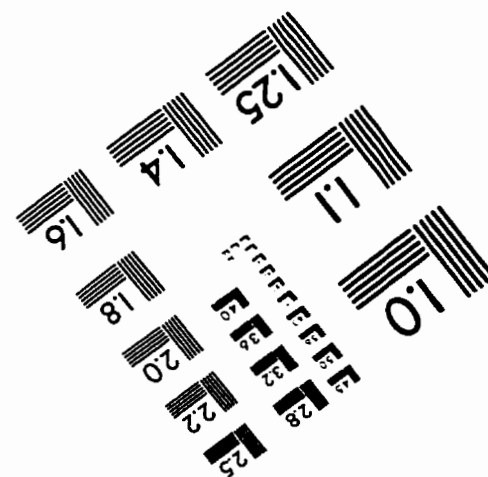
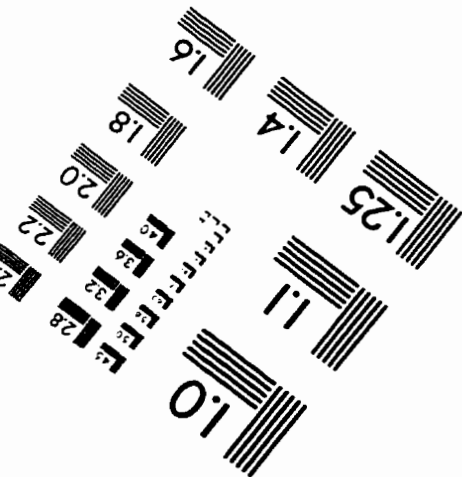
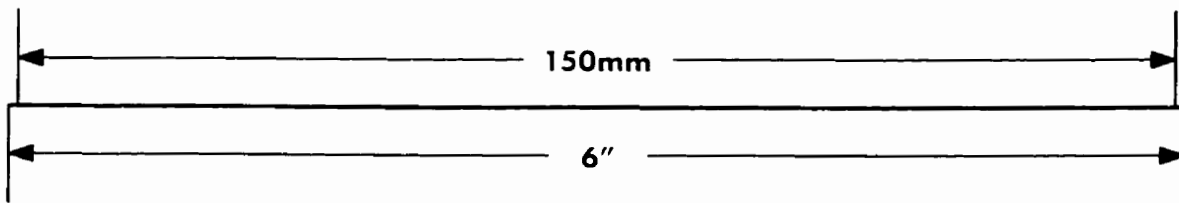
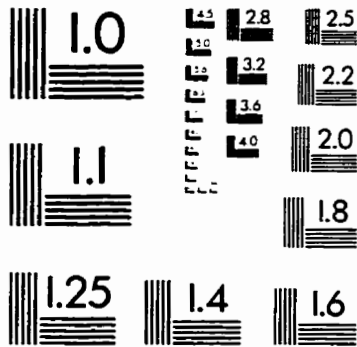
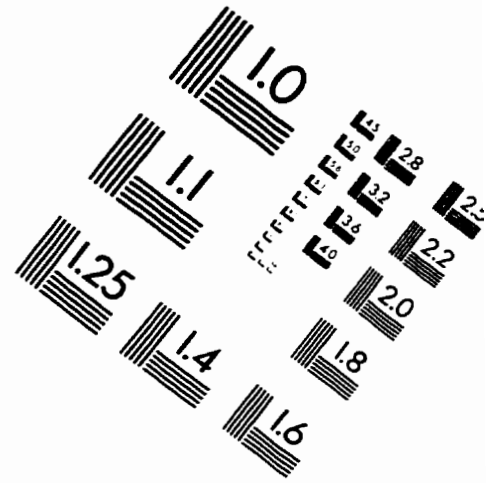
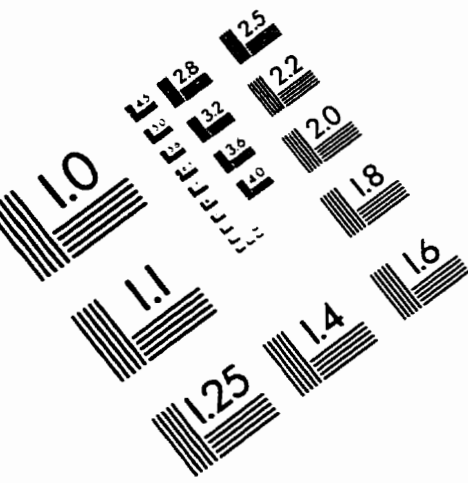
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