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The Inequality of Intersectionalities in Chicago's First-Wave Women's Movement

The Progressive Era—the wave of activism that peaked between 1890 and 1920—ushered in massive social and governmental changes in the United States. Muckrakers, settlement houses, civic clubs, and progressive politicians transformed urban spaces and government regulations to ease burdens on the growing population of the urban poor. The labor movement established local and national unions and won reforms around minimum pay, maximum working hours, and against child labor. The civil rights movement fought against Jim Crow laws, Negrophobia, discrimination in employment, and lynching. And the women's movement won reforms around education, property rights, child- and health-care reforms, the right to access birth control, and the vote. While many of the men involved in the Progressive Era movements focused on specific social or political issues, often developing and promoting themselves as national leaders on specific topics, women involved in these movements more often worked at the intersection of multiple issues and reforms, building robust coalitions to better meet the needs of all communities.[1]

There were two notable but at times conflicting dynamics within the coalitions that defined this era's women's movements. These coalitions formed around a general gender consciousness that united women from different class, ethnic, and racial backgrounds around similar issues and proposed solutions (Cott 1987; Flanagan 2002). At the same time, there were also deep divisions, driven by differences in the material and lived realities facing women from different backgrounds, leading to conflict and mistrust among women. Within these coalitions women thus also formed their own class- and race-specific organizations to ensure that their specific needs were addressed.[2]

Historians have simultaneously celebrated the collaborations and coalitions forged by different groups of women during this era while detailing the earnest debates, but also painful divisions and betrayals, among women active in this

[1] See Flanagan (2002), Hendricks (2013), Orleck (2015), and Jabour (2019, 4). On how these coalitions defined feminist movements in other periods, see Carroll (2017).

[2] See Orleck (1995), Tax (2000), Materson (2009), Cahill (2020), and Jones (2020).

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movement. This history has largely been told through the rhetoric and actions of individual women and organizations. This essay instead takes a bird's-eye perspective on connections among, and discourse produced by, organizations in the movement as a whole, moving beyond individual rhetoric to reexamine the twin dynamics of coalition and conflict in new empirical detail. More particularly, I combined the theoretical lens of intersectionality with methodological tools from network and text analysis to map the empirical contours of coalition and conflict within this movement. Was this movement primarily intersectional, or was it irreparably divided? Did middle-class women dominate the movement, or did they provide room for working-class organizations? Did segregation win the day, or were women able to overcome the dominant social pressure to divide by race? The answers to these questions are of course complex. By comparing the intersection of three different identities with gender—class, ethnicity, and race—I provide fresh historical evidence to explore them, describing precisely how and in what ways coalitions, conflict, and intersectionality shaped movement connections and discourse.

Reexaming the first-wave women's movement

Broadly, intersectionality is both a theory (Collins and Bilge 2016) and a research paradigm (Hancock 2007) for examining how social categories intersect with one another and with systems of power to produce unequal lived experiences. While the term *intersectionality* was not coined until 1989 (Crenshaw 1989), scholarly and activist attention to intersectional issues reaches back more than a century. Among the first published articulations of intersectionality were those from Black women who experienced slavery and/or reconstruction in the United States (see, e.g., Cooper 1892; Williams 2002; Hendricks 2013). Given the reality facing women during the Progressive Era, most women who were not white or middle class had no choice but to understand their experiences and their activism through an intersectional lens. White and middle-class women, on the other hand, sometimes willfully ignored intersectional issues or actively supported white supremacy as they pursued their own goals (see, e.g., Giddings 2009; Dudden 2011). Intersectionality thus provides a theoretical lens to understand the relationship between social identities and systems of power that led to both coalitions and conflict in the first-wave women's movement.

Previous research has described, in rich historical detail, narratives of both coalitions and conflict around intersectionality in the first-wave movement. Network and text analysis provide methodological tools to move beyond narrative accounts of these competing dynamics and to holistically map the empirical contours of intersectionality within this movement. I used two suites of

methods to undertake this mapping. Network analysis is a way to conceptualize and measure society as sets of people or groups linked to one another via specific relationships. I conceived of the women's movement in Chicago as sets of people and organizations that were linked via comembership in multiple organizations. Network analysis techniques provide ways to examine and measure connections between and among organizations, showing which organizations shared membership and which did not, the strength of the ties between organizations, and the overall relational structure resulting from these ties. Alternatively, text analysis methods access the discursive space, revealing both probable attention to, and specific content around, the multiple issues addressed within this movement. These analyses lend novel empirical evidence and a new analytical lens to historians' observations of both intersectionality and conflict within first-wave feminist organizations.

Empirically, I used the first-wave women's movement in Chicago as a rich case study of this history. Much of the work done during the first wave happened not on the national level but on the local level. In addition to New York City; Boston; Washington, DC; and Philadelphia, Chicago was one of the major hubs of the first-wave women's movement. Almost every major city in the US North, including Chicago, was shaped by similar sociopolitical dynamics: the growth of industrialization and urban sweatshops, the increasing concentration of urban poverty, a massive influx of immigrants from Europe in the 1890s–1910s, an influx of Black residents from the southern United States starting in the 1910s, and subsequent racial tensions and racist violence. While every city is distinct, as an industrial and cultural hub in the United States, Chicago experienced all of these sociopolitical dynamics. Chicago history thus exemplifies, and perhaps amplifies, the general dynamics of the Progressive Era and social movements in the United States. Because of its rich history, there is a large body of historical research and primary material about Chicago during this era, particularly about the women's movement. This type of rich data is necessary for a computational analytical approach to history, further justifying the use of Chicago as a case study.

Through an examination of both connections between organizations in Chicago and the discourse they produced, the analyses presented here tell a consistent story: Chicago's first-wave women's movement was fundamentally intersectional, composed of collaborations between organizations and members focused on the intersection of class, ethnicity, race, and gender. Within these intersectional coalitions, however, not all intersectional identities were treated equally. Class and ethnicity (specifically, nativity and immigration status) were integrated into and throughout this movement, both forming the organizational core and occupying more consistent public attention in the movement. While there were equal numbers of organizations and members focused on the

intersection of race and gender compared to those focused on class and gender, the intersection of race and gender was never fully integrated into the core of the movement, nor did race occupy the same amount of public discursive space, compared to class and ethnicity.

In sum, in reexamining the first-wave women's movement intersectionally by using network and text analysis methods, this article demonstrates what I call the "inequality of intersectionality": intersectional identities can be equally present in a social movement without being equally integrated into its core. We can use this perspective, I conclude, to recognize intersectionality within the first-wave movement but also to reflect critically on its practice, with implications for our current moment of heightened political activity. The history presented here confirms the argument that mere attention to the intersection of race and gender is insufficient; to be effective in movements today, these issues must be integrated into organizational networks and public discourse throughout the entirety of movement coalitions.

Intersectionality during the Progressive Era

Black women have long been at the center of theorizing and articulating intersectionality, well before the term was coined (Collins 2009; Nash 2018). In an early articulation of intersectionality, for example, Anna Julia Cooper described how gender and class mediated the experience of slavery and racial oppression in her book *A Voice From the South* (1892). While many continued to advance this perspective during the Progressive Era, in Chicago it was Black activist Fannie Barrier Williams who became the dominant public voice describing and theorizing the intersection of race, class, and gender. In a May 1894 edition of the newspaper *Woman's Era*, for example, the editorial board asked readers to weigh in on the question of whether there should be a national convention of what were then termed colored women's clubs. Williams's response, supporting the need for a national convention, garnered much attention. She argued from the perspective of intersectionality, claiming that, because of the "peculiar conditions" facing Black women, particularly in relationship to different centers of power in society, Black women's issues were fundamentally different than the issues facing Black men and white women. Crucially, she argued, Black women needed their own organizations, with distinct structures and functions, to effectively confront the power structures producing their condition (Hendricks 2013, 105). Her national prominence meant that she was often asked to speak at local and national conferences about the intersection of race, gender, and class (119). As I describe below, intersectionality went beyond race and gender in this era, including in particular class and ethnicity (Orleck 1995).

The material reality of the Progressive Era, including growing inequality and concentrated poverty combined with intense racist and anti-immigrant oppression, led virtually all large women's movement organizations from this period to form committees devoted to addressing the distinct experiences and needs of women of different classes, ethnicities, and, less often, races. Their programs included talks and reading groups devoted to understanding how different social identities combined and interacted with political, social, and economic power in US history, leading to profoundly unequal lives for different groups of women. Women's clubs and organizations, particularly in Chicago, launched extensive empirical studies documenting the unequal lived experiences of residents from different backgrounds. These women's organizations and activists, many of whom were professional social scientists, were some of the first to trace the causes of these observed differences to social and political roots, such as linking different rates of tuberculosis and other diseases in certain wards to the lack of access to sanitation, education, and jobs, as well as experiences with discrimination (Addams 1910; Jabour 2019). In these ways and more, while organizations during this period did not use the term, the first-wave women's movement was defined by its attention and concern with the core tenets of what we now call intersectionality. Thus, an intersectional lens is necessary to understand the dynamics of collaboration and conflict in the first-wave women's movement.

Intersectional coalitions in Chicago: Class and ethnicity

Like many cities in the United States, the women's movement in Chicago was, from its beginning, unquestionably centered around class.[3] The close relationship between the women's movement and working-class organizations in Chicago had its roots in the 1870s and 1880s, before and during the Haymarket years. The 1886 Haymarket riot and the resulting trial garnered international attention, deeply shaping the nature of the Progressive Era in Chicago (Green 2007). While a portion of Chicago middle-class intellectuals became entrenched in their own class politics following the Haymarket affair, turning staunchly antisocialist and probusiness, other reformers felt enlightened by this episode and believed that reform could be achieved only by surmounting class barriers. The Progressive Era proper was kicked off in Chicago in 1888, when Jesse and Henry Demarest Lloyd, two of these "enlightened" reformers, turned their suburban home into a "social mecca of transoceanic reform," a salon where reformers met with labor leaders and socialists, shaping the Left in Chicago for decades to come (Schneirov 1998, 266).

[3] See Orleck (1995), Tax (2000), Flanagan (2002), and Jabour (2019).

The class politics of Progressive Era Chicago were embodied in an early feminist organization in Chicago, the Illinois Woman's Alliance (IWA, founded in 1888), one of the first organizations in the nation to center the interests of working women. The IWA formed out of an alliance between the elite Chicago Woman's Club (CWC) and union activists from the Ladies' Federal Labor Union. Members came from more than fifty-six women's organizations, from elite clubwomen to the radical labor group the Knights of Labor (Flanagan 2002).[4] Though relatively short-lived (they disintegrated by 1894), their impact on Chicago activism was oversized. Their major campaigns during these six years included education, the rights of teachers as workers, reforming the justice system around prostitution and charges of prostitution (women during this time could be arrested for simply walking alone at night, something working-class women often had to do), and the establishment of public baths to enhance equal access to hygiene across class. As I describe in more detail below, the IWA, unlike most men's reforms groups of the time, not only allowed but actively sought Black members.

This emphasis on class and gender was repeated across other women's reform organizations in Chicago long after the IWA dissolved, including one of Chicago's most influential women's reform organizations: Hull House, founded in 1889 and by Ellen Gates Starr and Jane Addams. Addams's commitment to labor and the working class, piqued by her participation in the Lloyds' working-class salon, attracted other working-class reformers, including feminist Frances Kelley, who excitedly reported on the class organizing done by women in Chicago in her letters to Friedrich Engels (Schneirov 1998).

Many Hull House residents were cofounders of the main women's labor organization in Chicago, the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL), an organization that further exemplified the intersectional focus on class and gender in the first-wave movement. Founded in 1904, the Chicago branch was one of the most active in the national organization, holding meetings at Hull House from 1904 until 1908. Led by Margaret Dreier Robins, a white upper-class woman who devoted her life to labor organizing, the Chicago WTUL, unlike most elite Chicago organizations, promoted working-class women to leadership positions (Payne 1988). In addition to supporting strikes and labor legislation, they included settlement-like programs such as musical and dramatic clubs, and they played a key role in the important woman-led 1910–11 garment workers' strike in Chicago, which led to the formation of the

[4] Debates about whether the IWA should be classified as a working-class organization or as a women's movement organization (Flanagan 2002) reinforce the need for an intersectional lens. The IWA was, of course, both. There have been similar debates about how to categorize many organizations discussed here, including Hull House and the Immigrants' Protective League.

influential and radical Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America union. At a time when the labor unions were at best ignoring women, the WTUL, nationally and in Chicago, ensured that working women's needs were heard and promoted, and it helped raise the general standard of living for thousands of working women (Dye 1980).

In addition to class, the settlement house wing of the women's movement, including in particular Hull House, focused on the distinct needs of working-class immigrants and highlights the intersection of ethnicity and gender in Progressive Era women's activism. Attention to ethnicity during this period centered on newly arriving immigrants, primarily from Europe, and the distinct challenges facing immigrant populations. As is well known, Hull House and other settlement houses established themselves in immigrant neighborhoods, providing services tailored to immigrants and their families, and sought reforms specific to issues facing their communities. To better understand and advocate for immigrants in Chicago, members of Hull House founded the Immigrants' Protective League, which, under the leadership of activist and social scientist Sophonisba Breckinridge, conducted research on the conditions of Chicago's immigrants and provided services such as legal aid, reuniting families, referrals to social service agencies, and adult education classes (Jabour 2019).

Intersectional coalitions in Chicago: Race and gender

In addition to class and ethnicity, the Chicago women's movement was equally rooted in issues around race. For example, the first professional women's club in Chicago, Sorosis, formed in 1869, took an inclusive stance on the intersection of gender and race. In opposition to positions taken by national suffrage leaders at the time, Sorosis advocated for universal rights, including universal suffrage, arguing against imposing any sort of racial, education, or literacy restrictions on voting. Going still further, they held a debate on affirmative action, one of the first such conversations on record (Buechler 1986, 72).

The IWA brought this interracial perspective into the civic reform movement in Chicago. Fannie Barrier Williams, who would become a nationally known leader through her work in Chicago, established early leadership in the women's movement through her role as vice president of the IWA in 1889. There, Williams focused on establishing public baths for all, particularly in low-income and predominantly Black neighborhoods. Her work in the IWA introduced her to the elite reform scene in Chicago, leading to her national exposure via the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893 (Deegan 2002, xxix; Giddings 2009; Hendricks 2013).

The women's movement, including the Black club movement, rapidly expanded in Chicago following the Columbian Exposition. Typically excluded from predominantly white women's organizations, and often excluded from the leadership of Black and antiracist organizations led predominately by men, Black women leaders across the United States organized their own Black women's clubs to promote political issues, the well-being of the community, and their own intellectual development. They also provided services to the growing underclass of Black migrants, who began to arrive in Chicago starting in 1910 and struggled to find jobs and services in an increasingly segregated North. Between 1890 and 1920 there were over 150 Black women's clubs in Chicago. Like those in other cities, these clubs and organizations addressed a wide array of issues facing the Black community (Knupfer 1996; Giddings 2009; Materson 2009).

Chicago was a leader in the Black club movement, and the Chicago club movement was led in part by Williams and activist Ida B. Wells-Barnett. By the time Wells-Barnett moved to Chicago in 1894, she was known internationally for her antiracist and in particular her antilynching scholarship and activism. Wells-Barnett had a role in the formation of virtually every influential antiracist political organization of this era. Her centrality to the women's and antiracist movements extended to Chicago, where she founded the first-of-its-kind civic club for Black women, the Ida B. Wells Club; the first Black women's suffrage organization, the Alpha Suffrage Club; the Negro Fellowship League; and many more (Giddings 2009).

Like the IWA, Hull House, and the WTUL—organizations that brought together women from different classes and ethnicities to fight for working-class issues—there was also a lively, if beleaguered, interracial movement in Chicago. For example, after a fraught seven-month battle, white Unitarian minister and novelist Celia Parker Woolley convinced the CWC, one of the largest of the predominantly white women's clubs in Chicago, to integrate, inaugurating Williams as its first Black member. This position confirmed Williams's elite status in Chicago and the position of the CWC in the interracial women's movement. The CWC continued to be at the center of the integration of women's clubs nationally when, again after heated debate led by Williams, Woolley, and Wells-Barnett, the CWC came out in support of allowing the first Black women's club to affiliate with the predominantly white National Federation of Women's Clubs (Deegan 2002; Giddings 2009; Hendricks 2013).

In 1904, Chicago made another first with the founding of the Frederick Douglass Center (FDC), one of the first interracial civic clubs anywhere in the nation. Wells-Barnett and Woolley instigated the club, with Woolley as the initial president and Wells-Barnett as vice president. Williams was central to organizing the center throughout its existence. Club members were mostly

middle class, with a purpose to foster interracial cooperation (Williams 2002) and provide services to the growing predominantly Black neighborhoods in Chicago.

The center was immediately successful. It boasted between two hundred and three hundred members in its first two years, with much of the white and Black elite joining. Wells-Barnett remained peripherally involved in the FDC, particularly in its women's arm, the Frederick Douglass Woman's Club. The Woman's Club met weekly, hosting speakers and discussing political issues, including suffrage, and they were instrumental in integrating the Chicago Political Equality League (PEL)—the political reform wing of the CWC—and other women's clubs in Chicago.

Conflict within coalitions

At the same time that the women's movement was made powerful through the cross-class, cross-ethnic, and cross-race coalitions detailed above, the intersection of gender, class, ethnicity, and race in this movement was at best uneasy.

The disintegration of the IWA, for example, happened primarily because its middle-class and working-class membership could not agree on the direction of the organization. There were debates about whether to support the eight-hour day—a rallying reform for more radical organizations such as the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), whether to support labor candidates for the board of education, and who should control the IWA—its working- or middle-class members (Flanagan 2002). Fights around teachers' rights in the early 1900s also exemplify conflicts between working- and middle-class activists. Middle-class clubwomen often supported proposals for merit-based performance reviews, retention, and promotions, for example, that differed from those sought by teachers themselves. There were additional disagreements about teacher pensions, sought by teachers but sometimes opposed by middle-class clubwomen. In 1900, CWC member Lucy Flower, for example, submitted an antipension report to the large Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs, which was covered by the *Chicago Tribune* (Flanagan 2002, 47). The desire for power on school boards, one of the only municipal elections that allowed women to vote prior to 1913 (when statewide woman suffrage was passed in Illinois), often put middle-class clubwomen at odds with teachers (Flanagan 2002).[5]

[5] Maureen Flanagan (2002) recounts these tensions but is also critical of the way they have been discussed in historical scholarship.

Except for the IWA and Hull House, both of which organized directly with labor unions, middle-class clubwomen were virtually always antagonistic toward the pro-labor and anticapitalist perspective favored by many of the more radical class-based organizations in Chicago and nationally, and clubwomen were actively opposed to many of their demands, such as the eight-hour day. For example, while women as a whole tended to vote similarly following the passage of woman suffrage in Illinois in 1913, exhibiting a type of gender solidarity, very few women voted for any socialist women in any election (Flanagan 2002, 134). These tensions have led some historians to criticize white middle-class women for presuming to speak for everyone while not fully understanding the needs of different groups of women, particularly working-class women (Boris 1994; Gordon 1994).

There are even more examples of the sometimes uneasy, sometimes outright hostile, relationship between white and Black women in this movement. Despite the public antiracist stance of many individual white women and well-resourced organizations, the large, predominantly white organizations themselves were typically explicitly segregated (Lasch-Quinn 1993). Hull House, for example, exuded interracial good and made important nods toward the Black community. They hired Black employees to work in their Coffee Shop kitchen, and a Black man managed the kitchen for several years. They entertained Black leaders at Hull House, risking the dreaded accusation of promoting "social equality," and hosted speaking events for Black leaders, including W. E. B. Du Bois. They did not, however, allow Black children to attend their summer camps until 1938, a much-needed service for Black Chicago youth during the first-wave period. The members of Hull House additionally voted to keep the Hull House Jane Club segregated from its beginning in 1891 until it closed fifty years later, and they did not allow Black women to rent the Jane Club apartments, even as safe housing was a pressing issue for low-income Black women (Philpott 1978).

Many white leaders of the women's movement in Chicago were individually supportive of, and active in, antiracist and interracial organizing. A sometimes subtle, sometimes explicit, anti-Black racism weaved through the antiracist work done by white women reformers, however. Woolley made questionable comments equating Southern Black migrants to "hoards," refused to work in the Black "slums," and, according to the *Broad Ax*, had been heard to declare that Black women "lacked executive ability" regardless of education (Giddings 2009, 459). Addams, one of the only white women to directly address lynching in her article "Respect of Law," was nevertheless criticized by Wells-Barnett for reinforcing a dangerous defense of lynching that Wells-Barnett spent her career trying to dispel: that it was a result of Black men assaulting white women. Addams also published a report called "Social Control," which

purported to explain why Black families, unlike Italian immigrants, were unable to discipline the "behavior and morals" of their women (Giddings 2009, 479).

As historians have recognized, the active segregation and anti-Black policies instituted in the predominantly white women's movement organizations, and the subtle and explicit racism articulated by many white leaders who supported antiracist organizing work, reveal the underlying tension at the intersection of race and gender in the first-wave women's movement in Chicago, a dynamic also present at the intersection of class, ethnicity, and gender, where many middle- and upper-class women opposed reforms sought by working-class women. What is difficult to discern from these rich narrative-based histories, however, is the relative balance of coalition and conflict across the Chicago movement as a whole. Was the movement primarily intersectional or primarily divided? Were there differences in the balance of cooperation and conflict across different types of intersectionalities? Adding tools from network and text analysis methods to the theoretical lens of intersectionality provides an opportunity to reexamine these conflicting dynamics in new historical detail. Moving beyond the rhetoric of individual leaders and organizations, I explore what patterns within the connections between organizations, and in the discourse produced by organizations as a whole, tell us about the practice of intersectionality within Chicago's Progressive Era women's movement.

Networks of intersectionality

One of the ways the women's movement in Chicago addressed intersectional issues was via comembership in multiple organizations, leading to coalitions and cooperation around issues and reforms. Network analysis enables us to empirically map relationships between organizations in this movement by visually displaying the connections between them, quantitatively analyzing which organizations anchored the core of this collaborative movement (organizations that had many common members with one another), and which remained on the periphery (those that had fewer or no common members with those in the core).

Through an extensive search of secondary literature and archival material (see the appendix for a list of archives consulted), I identified every organization I could find that could be classified in the women's movement in Chicago between 1860 and 1920 and that also had enough data to construct membership lists (see table 1). Rather than drawing strict boundaries around what organizations could be classified within the women's movement (see, e.g., Orleck 2015), following the theory of intersectionality, the data set is broadly inclusive and includes any organization that might have been connected to the

Table 1. List of Women's Movement and Allied Organizations in Chicago between 1860 and 1920 and the Corresponding Eigenvector Centrality Measure

Organization Name	Type	Centrality Measure*
Hull House	Ethnicity and gender	.28
Political Equality League (PEL)	Gender	.27
Women's Trade Union League (WTUL)	Class and gender	.27
Woman's City Club of Chicago (WCC)	Gender	.26
League of Women Voters (LWV)	Gender	.26
Chicago Women's Club (CWC)	Gender	.25
Illinois Equal Suffrage Association (IESA)	Gender	.24
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)	Race and gender	.23
National Consumers League (NCL)	Class and gender	.23
Illinois Federation of Colored Women's Clubs (IFCWC)	Race and gender	.23
Frederick Douglass Center (FDC)	Race and gender	.22
Woman's Peace Party	Race and gender	.23
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)	Gender	.22
Juvenile Protective League	Class and gender	.21
Immigrants' Protective League	Ethnicity and gender	.20
Protective Agency for Women and Children (PAWC)	Gender	.20
Phyllis Wheatley Club	Race and gender	.17
Illinois Woman's Alliance (IWA)	Class and gender	.17
Ida B. Wells Club	Race and gender	.13
Alpha Suffrage Club	Race and gender	.12
Socialist Woman	Class and gender	.10
Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)	Class and gender	.10
Intercollegiate Socialist Society (ISS)	Class and gender	.09
Illinois Federation of Republican Colored Woman's Clubs (IFRCWC)	Race and gender	.07
West Side Club	Race and gender	.03
Little Review	Class and gender	.01
Women's Christian Temperance Union	Gender	.00
Sorosis	Gender	.00
Eleanor Club	Class and gender	.00

Note: The type was determined by the author and indicates the primary focus of the organization. Ties between organizations, used to calculate the centrality measure, were measured via comembership.
*Eigenvector centrality measure (Bonacich 1987).

women's movement. Most of the organizations I identified had memberships that were primarily or exclusively women, even if, as is the case with the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, their main issue was not exclusively about gender. A few, like the National Association for the Advancement

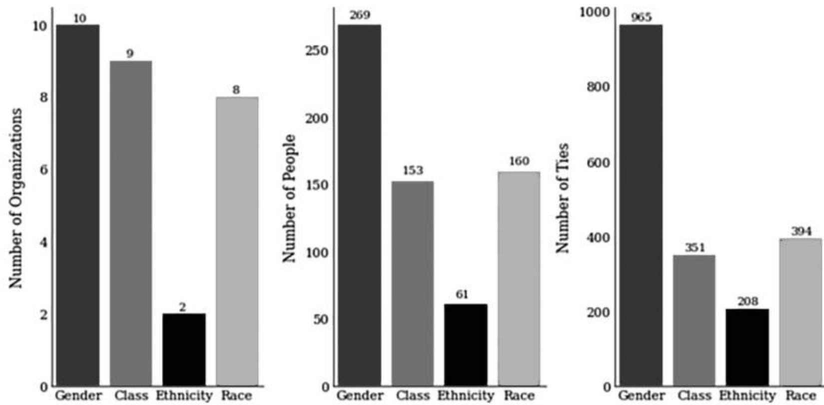

Figure 1 Count of women's movement and allied organizations, membership, and ties to other organization in Chicago between 1860 and 1920 by organization type. The organizational type was determined by the author and indicates the primary focus of the organization (see table 1). Ties between organizations were measured via comembership. A color version of this figure is available online.

of Colored People (NAACP), had mixed memberships but were either co-founded by leaders of the feminist movement or were involved in key campaigns spearheaded by the women's movement. I categorized the organizations according to whether they were focused entirely or almost entirely on the intersection of gender and class, gender and ethnicity, gender and race, or gender on its own.

Using the same primary and secondary sources, I established membership lists of each organization as comprehensively as possible. A few, like the CWC, published membership lists, but many, including the Black women's organizations, either did not list their members or their membership lists were not easily accessible. For these, I constructed membership lists from names mentioned in their publications and additional secondary sources. I recorded a connection, otherwise known as a tie or edge, between two organizations for every individual who was a member of both.

Table 1 lists the twenty-nine organizations, their type, and their resulting eigenvector centrality measure (Bonacich 1987), a measure used to understand influence in a network and constructed by measuring the number of ties an organization has to other organizations as well as the prestige of the connected organizations (measured again by the number of ties that organization has to other organizations).[6] Figure 1 shows the total number of people, organizations, and ties (number of members shared with another organization)

[6] While the network is thorough, given the difficulty in gathering full data on all of the relevant local organizations, it is also necessarily imperfect.

across the four types of organizations. This figure shows that organizations focused nearly exclusively on gender were, not surprisingly, the most frequent; they had the most members, and they had the largest number of ties to other organizations in this network. Organizations focused on the intersection of gender and class and those focused on gender and race followed, with similar numbers of organizations, members, and ties for both class and race. There were only two organizations focused on the intersection of gender and ethnicity, and this organizational type had the fewest number of members and ties to other organizations.

Figure 1 suggests that, by numbers alone, organizations focused on class and race were equally prevalent within this movement sector, with those focused on ethnicity a distant third. The structure of this movement network, however, includes not simply the presence of organizations and members but coalitions and connections among organizations. Examining this movement via these connections rather than presence suggests a different distribution of engagement with intersecting issues across this movement. Figure 2 is a visual representation of table 1, in network form. Network visualizations in general are meant to depict the frequency and structure of social connections. Each node in figure 2 is an organization, represented by the name of the organization, and the thickness of the ties, or edges, between nodes (represented as gray lines) indicates the number of members shared between the two organizations. The nodes (organization names) are colored according to the classification scheme introduced above: whether the organization focused on class and gender, race and gender, ethnicity and gender, or primarily gender. Shared membership can indicate direct lines of communication, sharing common ideas or beliefs, or the indirect sharing of norms and ideas; organizations and people centrally located in a network are more connected to other organizations and people in the network and thus have more influence in sharing and shaping ideas and norms within a social system (Wasserman and Faust 1994).

Figure 2 visualizes and confirms the highly connected and collaborative nature of the first-wave women's movement in Chicago. Women tended to be members of many different organizations across these four categories. This suggests that collaborations, ideas, beliefs, and, potentially, social norms flowed relatively freely within and across women's movement organizations from all four categories. Within this highly connected network, a few organizations served as bridging nodes, connecting organizations across the four categories. Based on comembership, Hull House (ethnicity and gender), the Political Equality League (gender), the Women's Trade Union League (class and gender), and the Woman's City Club (gender) formed the core of this network, representing the collaborative focus on issues related to gender,

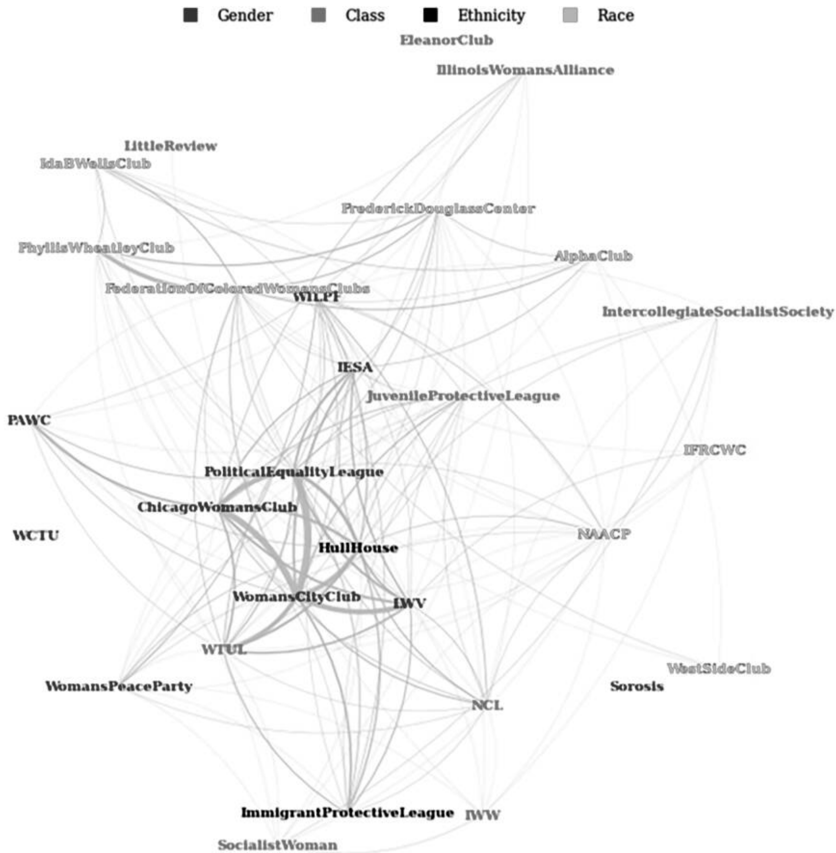

Figure 2 Network visualization of women's movement and allied organizations in Chicago, 1860–1920. Each node is a movement or allied organization (represented by the name of the organization). Ties or edges between nodes (gray lines) indicate that the organizations had a common member, weighted by the number of common members (shown by the thickness of the line). The network layout was developed using the spring layout, a force-directed graph drawing method, using Python's networkx package version 2.5. See table 1 for a list of organizations, associated acronyms, and eigenvector centrality measures. A color version of this figure is available online.

class, ethnicity, and immigration anchoring the Chicago first-wave women's movement. These core organizations were responsible for setting the agenda for the movement as a whole and are visually located in the center of this network, produced by the comparatively dense ties between them (see fig. 2). However, the attention to class issues among the core was structurally separate from the more radical, anticapitalist organizations such as *Socialist Woman* and the IWW. These organizations were at the very periphery of this network, even more peripheral than the organizations focused on race (discussed below), and with very low eigenvector centrality measures (see table 1). As historians

have noted, the class awareness at the core of the women's movement was thus likely not the same as the class consciousness promoted by these prolabor or anticapitalist organizations, as suggested by the lack of common membership in both women's clubs and labor organizations.

While both the PEL and the WCC were interracial, with a number of influential Black members, the organizations representing the intersection of race and gender occupied a comparatively more peripheral location, and, unlike ethnicity and class, none of the organizations focusing on race and gender were in the structural core of this movement. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given its broad appeal among activists, the antiracist organization with the highest centrality measure was not a women's movement organization but the NAACP. The Black *women's* group with the highest centrality measure was the Illinois Federation of Colored Women's Clubs (IFCWC), an umbrella organization connecting the Black women's clubs in Chicago and beyond. The IFCWC was followed closely by the Frederick Douglass Center. The remaining organizations focusing on race and gender, including the Phyllis Wheatley Club, the Ida B. Wells Club, and the Alpha Suffrage Club, were on the distant periphery of the network. As shown in figure 2, the organizations focused on race are visually not in the center of the network but are clustered to the top and the right of the central core, produced by their comparative paucity of ties to the core organizations. In short, while there were many Black women's organizations in this network that were highly connected to one another, they were more peripheral to the movement as a whole compared to the organizations that were focused on class, gender, and ethnicity.

Attention to intersectionality

The influence and impact of organizations within a movement comes not only from their connections to other organizations, of course, but also through what organizations say and do. To compare discursive attention to intersectional issues, I used text analysis methods to examine the public-facing literature produced by representative organizations from each of the four types: Hull House, representing the intersection of ethnicity and gender; the WTUL, representing the intersection of class and gender; the IFCWC, representing the intersection of race and gender; and the WCC, representing a primary focus on gender. The Woman's City Club was founded in 1910 to initiate and coordinate the participation of women in Chicago's civic affairs and to promote the welfare of the city. Unlike Hull House, which centered the intersectional concerns of class and nationality, the WCC was not explicitly intersectional but sought to coordinate political efforts around gender (at the time called "sex") equality.

During the Progressive Era, organizations almost always produced regular bulletins, yearbooks, and/or reports where they described their activities and the political justifications for their work. These publications were a way to communicate with their membership and the public at large and to promote their own work and recruit more members and resources. From the archives, I collected and then digitized the bulletins and yearbooks produced by Hull House from 1900 to 1917, the Chicago WTUL between 1907 and 1920, and one bulletin per year from the monthly WCC bulletin between 1914 and 1920.[7] Although versions of any bulletins or annual reports of Black women's clubs in Chicago are unavailable or difficult to find, I used the pamphlet *The Story of the Illinois Federation of Colored Women's Clubs: 1900–1922* to represent this perspective. Written by Black clubwoman Elizabeth Lindsey Davis in 1922, it described in detail the work of Black women's clubs and the political issues facing the community (Davis 1922).

I compared attention to intersectional issues in these publications by simply counting the number of times *immigration*, *immigrant*, or *immigrants* occurred to represent attention to immigration and ethnicity; *Negro*, *colored*, or *coloured* to represent attention to race; *vote* or *suffrage* to represent the primary gendered political issue at the center of first-wave feminism; and *worker* or *industrial* to represent attention to class.[8] As these documents varied in length and number, I calculated counts per one thousand words in the respective organization's literature.

Figure 3 shows the proportional attention to labor, ethnicity, race, and suffrage in each organization's documents. All four organizations mentioned labor more often than immigration, and Hull House and the IFCWC mentioned labor more often than suffrage, representing the general commitment of Chicago organizations to the working class. Hull House also mentioned immigration more frequently than suffrage, representing its commitment to the distinct issues facing immigrant populations. The WCC mentioned suffrage most often, followed by labor and then immigration. The IFCWC mentioned race more than any of the other categories, and far more than any of the other three organizations. Importantly, both Hull House and the WTUL mentioned issues related to immigration three times as often as they mentioned issues related to race, and the WCC never mentioned language around race.

[7] I collected these publications from the Hull House collection at the University of Illinois at Chicago Special Collections. This archive had a limited number of the bulletins and yearbooks. In this analysis I used publications from the years 1901, 1902, 1903, 1905, 1906, 1910, 1913, and 1916.

[8] The word *labor* was often used to describe the labor it takes to make an organization run and thus produced many false positives.

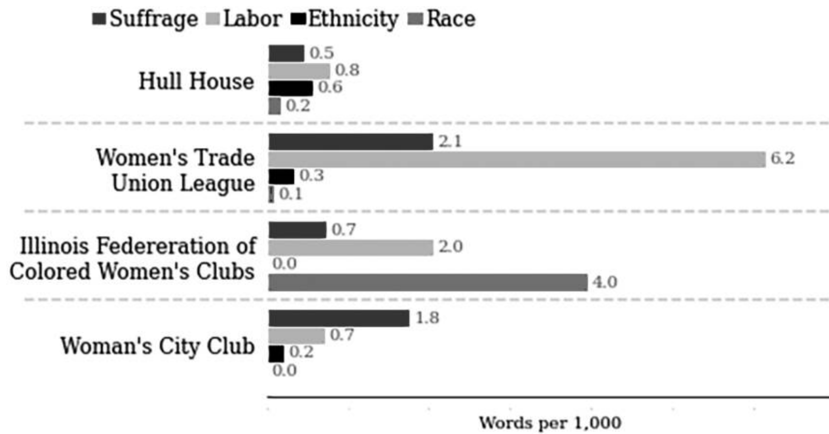

Figure 3 Number of words per one thousand related to suffrage, race, ethnicity, and labor in select documents from four leading women's movement organizations. Suffrage is a combined count of *vote* and *suffrage*; race the combined count of *Negro*, *colored*, and *coloured*; ethnicity the combined count of *immigration*, *immigrant*, and *immigrants*; and labor the combined count of *worker* and *industrial*. A color version of this figure is available online.

The content of the discourse reveals further details about intersectional dynamics within this movement. As historian Maureen Flanagan (2002) suggests, even if racism and segregation meant that white and Black women were not active in the same organizations and coalitions (confirmed by the network analysis above), they were at least concerned with similar issues and were thus working toward similar goals. To examine the similarity of the issues and ideas frequently discussed in these documents, I used a phrase extraction method called RAKE (rapid automatic keyword extraction). Phrase mining, a subfield in natural language processing, aims to extract quality phrases from text. Quality phrases include named entities—people, organizations, things—as well as ideas and concepts recognizable as important to human readers (Shang et al. 2017; Cao et al. 2020). The RAKE algorithm is a well-known statistical keyword extraction method that uses punctuation, stop words (words such as *the*, *an*, and *of*), and graph methods to delineate phrases (such as *woman suffrage*) that suggest important concepts (including named entities) in a text (Rose et al. 2010).

If the four organizations frequently mentioned the same phrases, this suggests they were indeed discussing similar people, organizations, and issues. If instead the phrases were unique to one organization, this suggests that the organizations discussed their own distinct concerns, topics, people, and/or organizations. Of the two thousand phrases most frequently mentioned by each organization, figure 4 shows the count of phrases that were

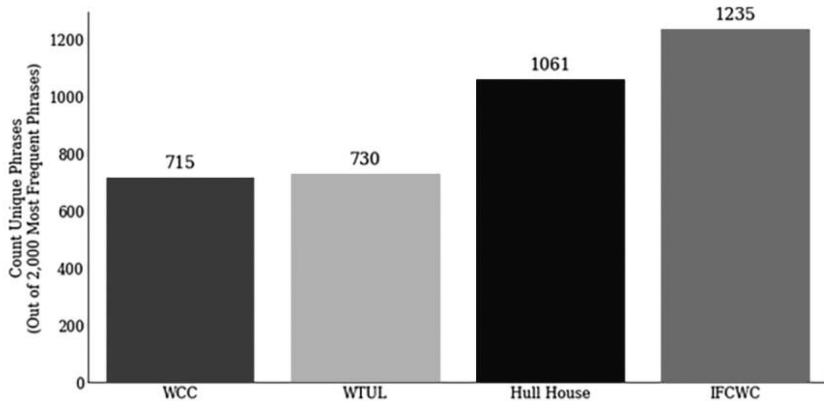

Figure 4 Number of unique phrases out of the two thousand most frequently used phrases by each of the four leading women's movement organizations, from select documents. Phrases were automatically extracted using the RAKE algorithm (Rose et al. 2010). This figure shows that ICFWC used the largest number of unique phrases, relative to other organizations. A color version of this figure is available online.

unique to each. Of the eight thousand frequent phrases (two thousand from each organization), just over half (4,259) were used by two or more organizations, representing a shared discourse. The number of unique phrases, however—those used exclusively by one organization—was not distributed evenly across organizations, suggesting that the shared discourse was not equally present across organizations. The IFCWC used the largest number of unique phrases (1,235 of the 2,000), followed by Hull House (1,061), the WTUL (730), and the WCC (715).

The content of these phrases hints at both the distinct and shared discourse across these four organizations. Table 2 lists a sample of the frequently used phrases unique to each organization (cols. 1–4) and those shared between at least two organizations (col. 5). The shared discourse (col. 5) suggests a common focus on education (*public schools*, *high schools*), the welfare of children (*juvenile court*, *child labor*, *child welfare*), and voting and city government (*women voters*, *city council*, *supreme court*, *health department*). The WCC focused more on election processes (*election commissioners*, *election laws*) and policing (*police stations*). Confirming complaints from working-class women, the WCC was the only organization that frequently mentioned the *merit system*. The WTUL distinctly mentioned issues related to working women (*working women*, *equal pay*, *minimum wage*, *eight-hour bill*), again suggesting a difference in reform efforts between labor unions (represented by the WTUL) and clubwomen (represented by the WCC). Hull House focused on social and cultural events (*music school*, *social clubs*, *crafts society*) and was the only organization to

Table 2. List of Frequently Used Unique and Shared Phrases in Select Documents from Four Leading Women's Movement Organizations

Unique Phrases				Shared Discourse
WCC	**WTUL**	**Hull House**	**IFCWC**	
Civil service	Working women	Labor museum	Colored women	Public schools
Sanitary district	Women workers	Music school	Club work	Women voters
Election commissioners	Labor movement	Social clubs	Colored people	Juvenile court
Merit system	Women trade unionists	Crafts society	Common schools	National defense
Police stations	Public speaking	Probation officers	Ideal woman	Child labor
Public health	Summer camp	Italian colony	Charitable work	Child welfare
Civic groups	Equal work	Moral energy	Improvement club	High schools
State legislature	Equal pay	Child labor law	Church work	City council
County jail	Minimum wage	Chronically ill	Old folk	Supreme court
Election laws	Eight-hour bill	Industrial processes	Social life	Health department

Note: This table shows frequently used unique and shared phrases out of the two thousand most frequently used phrases in select published documents, by organization. Shared phrases (col. 5) were phrases used by two or more organizations. Phrases were automatically extracted using the RAKE algorithm (Rose et al. 2010).

frequently mention ethnicity markers (e.g., *Italian colony*). The IFCWC was the only of these four organizations to frequently mention racial markers (*colored women*, *colored people*), affirming the findings from the word counts above. The IFCWC also focused on charitable work and self-improvement (*charitable work*, *improvement club*, *ideal woman*), supporting its central motto: "lifting as we climb."

The inequality of intersectionality

Using intersectionality as a theoretical lens and tools from network and text analysis, I moved beyond the rhetoric of individual leaders and organizations to holistically and empirically reexamine a central but conflicting dynamic of first-wave feminism: the coexistence of conflict and divisions with collaboration and cooperation. The evidence presented above tells a consistent story. The movement as a whole was foundationally intersectional, centrally concerned with the specific issues facing working-class, immigrant, and Black women. However, there was a notable and consistent pattern across different

intersectionalities within this movement. Organizations that focused on class, ethnicity, and gender were core to the movement in Chicago, responsible for the ideological direction of the movement as well as directing and sharing resources. Organizations focusing on race and gender, alternatively, while an important part of this movement remained relatively peripheral throughout, as measured via relational networks and attention in discourse. This, I argue, is the inequality of intersectionality.

More specifically, I found that there were almost the same number of organizations and members representing the intersection of race and gender compared to those representing the intersection of class and gender in the Chicago women's movement, and many more compared to those representing the intersection of ethnicity and gender. The organizations focused on gender and race, however, were on the periphery of the overall structure of this movement, and unlike class and ethnicity, none of the organizations that focused on race were in the organizational core of the network.

A distant view of the discourse produced by these organizations, including the word counts and a brief examination of the shared and unique phrases used by each of the four representative organizations, supports the story suggested by the network analysis. There were both shared and distinct discourses across these organizations (if we trust the phrase counts, there was about an equal 50/50 split between shared/distinct discourse). Yet public attention to the specific issues facing different groups of women was not equal. Aside from the representative organization focused on race (IFCWC), issues related to race were mentioned much less frequently compared to class or ethnicity in the public-facing literature of organizations representing the core of the Chicago movement. Additionally, while well over half of the two thousand phrases frequently used by the IFCWC were *unique* to the IFCWC, well over half of those used by the WCC and WTUL were *shared* with at least one other organization, suggesting that the IFCWC was articulating comparatively more issues not addressed by the other three organizations, and the WCC and WTUL, and to a lesser extent Hull House, shared more discourse with one another.

The findings presented here are compelling and suggest intersectional patterns that have implications for how we understand the first-wave movement and beyond. They cannot be automatically generalized beyond Chicago, however, as each city had different dynamics, politics, and organizations. Many of the major cities in the United States during this period had a similar mix of labor groups (the WTUL had branches in most major cities), settlement houses, and Black women's clubs, suggesting that these patterns are likely not distinct to Chicago. Given the strength of the Black community and Black women's activism in Chicago, in particular, I expect that other cities may exhibit even

more inequalities between the intersection of class and gender and race and gender. Future research could expand this analysis, including to cities in the South, to examine whether this pattern is repeated across different locations or if there were local women's movements that managed to incorporate race into the core of their first-wave movement network. Future research could also expand to other eras, including second-wave feminism, for a temporal analysis of intersectional practices in the women's movement (see, e.g., Breines 2007).

Conclusion

Every few years there is a renewed push from historians and others to recognize and celebrate the role of working-class women, immigrant women, and Black and other women of color in the first-wave women's movement broadly and in the suffrage movement in particular (Ware 2019; Cahill 2020). While we can and should celebrate this participation, this type of recognition still centers the national suffrage movement as *the* movement (cf. Orleck 2015), overlooking the fact that outside of the suffrage movement proper, first-wave feminism, via cross-issue coalitions, addressed multiple Progressive Era issues in movements that were, many others and I argue, foundationally intersectional. Participants in the movement not only recognized the distinct issues facing working-class, immigrant, and Black women and fought for reforms addressing these issues, the majority of these organizations centered at least one, and often many, of these intersectional issues.

At the same time, not all of these intersectional foci were equally central or visible in the movement. As many others have described, anti-Black racism in the United States is unlike any other form of racism or discrimination (Hollinger 2006; Fields and Fields 2014). So too was the intersection of race and gender in the women's movement distinct, and distinctly unequal, compared to other forms of intersectionality in this movement. We can celebrate the intersectionality of first-wave feminism while remaining critical of its blind spots, shortcomings, and, in particular, its distinct anti-Black racism.

In addition to reexamining the first-wave movement, recognizing and understanding the precise contours of these intersectional patterns allows us to reflect critically on the current moment of renewed coalitional activism (Carroll 2017). The analysis presented above points to the importance of feminist antiracist activism. Organizations today should reflect on whether their attention to antiracist issues and movements is equal to other issues, in time, attention, treatment, partnerships with other organizations, and resources across the movement as a whole (see, e.g., Kendall 2020; Schalk and Kim 2020). Publishing the occasional statement on race, or supporting one or two antiracist

organizations, is not equivalent to integrating race throughout one's activism and coalition work. When we consider the contemporary women's movement as a whole, we can and should reflect on whether Black organizations and concerns remain on the periphery of these movements, as they did in the first wave in Chicago, or if Black organizations and concerns are truly integrated, both structurally and discursively, into the movement as a whole.

Appendix

Archives and collections consulted

Chicago Historical Society Research Center
- Chicago Woman's Club Records
- Planned Parenthood Association of Chicago Area Records
- Women for Peace (Chicago, Ill.) Records

Columbia University Archival Collections, New York City
- League of Women Voters of New York State Records
- League of Women Voters of the City of New York Records

Hunter College, New York City
- Records of the Women's City Club of New York, Inc.

Newberry Library, Chicago
- May Walden Records
- Selma Walden Papers
- The Dill Pickle Club Records
- The Fortnightly of Chicago Records

New York University Tamiment Library
- Carole Turbin Women's Liberation Collection
- Greenwich House Records
- Women's Trade Union League of New York Records

University of Illinois at Chicago Special Collections
- Hull House Records
- Lea Damarest Taylor Collection
- League of Women Voters of Chicago Records
- National Women's Trade Union League Collection
- Sophonisba P. Breckenridge Collection
- Women's City Club of Chicago Records
- Women's Trade Union League of Chicago Collection

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