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20th Century U.S. Women Ambassadors, 1960-1989: Themes in Oral Histories

by

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List of Abbreviations

DOS	Department of State
FS	Foreign Service
FSO	Foreign Service Officer
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NGO	Non-governmental organization
UN	United Nations
USIA	United States Information Agency
WOA	Women's Action Organization

20th Century U.S. Women Ambassadors, 1960-1989: Themes in Oral Histories

Thesis Abstract—Idaho State University (2021)

Women in diplomacy have received attention from historians and scholars of international relations and political science, yet the characteristics and personal stories of women ambassadors 1960-1989 are still largely neglected. The movement of women into critical, senior-level roles in the U.S. Foreign Service (FS) accelerated by 1960, and more than half of the 20th century women appointments were made to countries with significant Muslim populations. These women adapted to Muslim-influenced societies, developed relationships with key foreign statesmen, and navigated gender bias. To understand who these women were, how gender discrimination impacted their FS careers, and how they shaped conditions for future FS women, this research explores the ambassadors' professional backgrounds and their oral history narratives. This work contributes to women's history in the FS by describing how women at a critical period of advancement navigated adverse policies and attitudes as their own beliefs about women and gender evolved.

Key Words: ambassadors, diplomacy, Foreign Service, gender, oral histories, women

Chapter 1

Introduction

Women's opening into senior Foreign Service positions is partly attributed to the massive growth of the Foreign Service corps after World War II. In 1945 there were only 792 Foreign Service officers and by 1963 there were 3,710.¹ Their participation as ambassadors, though, remained low throughout the 20th century. As of 2016, a total of 4,633 ambassador appointments were made throughout U.S. history, but only nine percent of those appointments were women.² Regionally, in Europe and Eurasia, the Middle East, and the Western Hemisphere women held just six percent of total appointments. In South and Central Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and East Asia and Pacific countries they represented 14-17% of the total, respectively. Analysts and scholars note that women's appointments seem to be directed towards countries considered of least strategic importance or where development and aid are the primary policy objectives.³

A handful of women were made chiefs of mission by political appointment of the president between 1930-1949, but prior to 1949 no woman had served in the Foreign Service under the title U.S. ambassador. The environment in 1949 in which Eugenie Anderson was appointed the first woman ambassador represented the culminating impacts of an old movement and contemporary events. Before World War II, the Foreign Service did not usually accept women Foreign Service officers, but during the war out of necessity women were able to normalize working arrangements that were previously unacceptable. Women were provided an

¹ Asep Wiria Djumena, *The Foreign Service: Problems of Recruitment, Selection and Training*, PhD thesis for Indiana University Department of Government, 1964, iii.

² Hani Zainulbhai, "Few American women have broken the glass ceiling of diplomacy," Pew Research Center, Research Topics: Gender and Leadership, July 22, 2016.

³ Laura Schiemichen, "Madam Ambassador: A Statistical Comparison of Female Ambassadors across the U.S., German, and EU Foreign Services," *EU Diplomacy Papers 3/2019*, College of Europe, Department of EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies; Zainulbhai, "Few American women," 2016.

opening during the war because the draft impacted the number of men in the workforce, and hiring a man came with added risk because he could be drafted at any time.⁴ Further, the women's suffrage movement expanded women's political power in 1920 through the 19th amendment that established women's right to vote. It was still many more decades, though, before women of color could exercise this right and women were substantively included in government's powerful decision-making positions.⁵

The women ambassador subjects studied here grew up in an environment during or just prior to the "women's liberation" movement that dominated a resurgence of U.S. feminist organization also known as the second wave. This movement was the successor to the women's suffrage movement, or first wave feminism. Multiple women's liberation groups such as the National Organization for Women (NOW) and Chicago Women's Liberation Union (CWLU) were founded in the late 1960's, and small local organizations like Chicago's The Westside Group and New York Radical Women further radicalized women's liberation in the 1970's. Sara Evans described the movement as radical, multiracial, and highly influenced by the New Left, civil rights, antiwar, and other freedom movements of the 1960's.⁶ Importantly, "as an expression of the New Left, women's liberation was inspired by models of anticolonial revolutions and by Black Power, models that often had different meanings for white women and

⁴ Ambassador Caroline Clendening Laise, interview by Ann Miller Morin, May 8, 1986. *Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, Women Ambassadors Series*, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Arlington, Virginia, 13-14. Scholars note, though, that the degree to which WWII was an opening for women workers is more limited than previously thought. Claudia D. Goldin, "The role of World War II in the rise of women's employment," *The American Economic Review* (1991): 741-756; Sherrie A. Kossoudji and Laura J. Dresser, "Working class roses: Women industrial workers during World War II." *The Journal of Economic History* 52, no. 2 (1992): 431-446.

⁵ Willie J. Epps Jr and Jonathan M. Warren, "Sheroes: The Struggles of Black Suffragists," *The Judges' Journal* 59, no. 3 (2020): 10-15.

⁶ Sara M. Evans, "Women's Liberation: Seeing the Revolution Clearly," *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (2015): 138.

women of color.”⁷ These organizations contributed to the women’s liberation movement that forced political entities like the president to recommit to the expansion of women’s participation in public life and decision-making. The movement also generated intellectual spaces in which feminists of color illuminated the inadequacies of feminist ideas and leadership that received the heaviest media coverage, a swelling critique and conceptualization of white feminism. Although second wave feminism did not soundly resolve its exclusionary tendencies, it was in the second wave that feminists sought to define intersectionality and construct feminist language capable of communicating the layers and varieties of female experiences beyond just the experiences of educated housewives.

The re-energized feminism of the 1960’s and 70’s inspired women of the Foreign Service in 1970 to form an Ad Hoc Committee to Improve the Status of Women in the Foreign Service, later renamed the Women’s Action Organization (WAO). Future ambassador Mary Olmsted, the first president of the organization, led the group in addressing a broad range of discrimination against women in the Foreign Service. It was the WAO that lobbied for the end of the marriage-retirement requirement for women, more equitable assignment opportunities and specializations for women outside of consular and administrative work, and for women to be members of the selection board for FSOs.⁸ The group also pressured the State Department on behalf of Foreign Service wives, demanding that there be a function in the Foreign Service and sub-agencies to direct the placement of qualified FS spouses in employment relevant to their education and experience while accompanying their husbands abroad.⁹

⁷ Evans, “Women’s Liberation,” 144.

⁸ Nancy E. McGlen and Meredith Reid Sarkees, *The Status of Women in Foreign Policy*, (New York: Foreign Policy Association, 1995), 19-20.

⁹ “WAS Committee Studies Career Options of F.S. Spouses,” *Foreign Service Journal*, December 1975, 37.

The attention and support of presidents also helped codify women's rights and provide them with legal protections. Presidents endorsed reforms specific to the Foreign Service including the Foreign Service Act of 1946, which required the Foreign Service corps to be roughly representative of the American people. Under President Kennedy's leadership in 1961, the President's Commission on the Status of Women was established under Executive Order 10980. President Johnson sponsored and passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, prohibiting discrimination based on color, religion, race, national origin, and sex. These measures pressured the State Department and Foreign Service to seriously discuss inequities as problems that required action, and to address them through policy changes particularly in hiring and promotion practices.

Written records of women's discrimination from senior positions at federal agencies began to materialize in the late 1970's. As documented by federal oversight bodies and external academic publications, the Foreign Service's particularly severe exclusion of women in senior positions continued. An early work was written by Homer Calkin, who was commissioned by the Equal Employment Opportunity Office in 1976 to compile a history of women's contributions in the State Department, the department that houses the Foreign Service. Calkin's work resulted in a thirteen-chapter installment published in 1978 entitled *Women in the Department of State: Their Role in American Foreign Affairs*. The book revealed coordinated efforts by senior Foreign Service members to undermine the participation of women and minorities in foreign policy. It was not uncommon for women to be staff aides and clerks, but very unusual for women to be Foreign Service officers. In a 16-year period between 1923-1941, just five women were accepted

as Foreign Service officers.¹⁰ It was not for the lack of trying- many women attempted the Foreign Service exam in this period. On average, 14 women each year attempted the Foreign Service Officer written exam but never more than four women each year passed. All of them save five were eliminated by the following oral exam. One exceptional year was 1931 when 16 women passed the written exam, only for each one to be eliminated at the oral exam stage.¹¹ Later scholarship revealed that the Foreign Service exam was suggested by senior Foreign Service officers like director of Consular Service Wilbur J. Carr for precisely the purpose of preventing women and black men from serving.¹²

Calkin's book also detailed anti-woman sentiments from Foreign Service leadership that questioned women's ability to execute the roles of various Foreign Service positions, including clerks and Foreign Service officers. When Lucille Atcherson became the first woman U.S. Foreign Service officer in 1922, current Ambassador to Switzerland Joseph Grew commented that it was "a very unfortunate precedent."¹³ Grew later served in the second-highest State Department position as Under Secretary to the Secretary of State.

Oversight bodies also reported on the persisting inequities in the State Department. In 1989 Director of Security and International Relations Issues Joseph Kelley made a statement before the Subcommittee on Civil Service which concluded that minorities and women were still underrepresented despite increased representation between 1981-1987. The State Department

¹⁰ Homer I. Calkin, *Women in the Department of State: Their Role in American Foreign Affairs*, (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Deputy Under Secretary for Management and Department of State, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978), 82.

¹¹ Calkin, 1978, *Women in the Department...*, 82.

¹² Beatrice Loftus McKenzie, "The Problem of Women in the Department: Sex and Gender Discrimination in the 1960s United States Diplomatic Foreign Service," *European Journal of Foreign Service*, 10-1, Special Issue: Women in the USA (2015): 2; McGlen and Sarkees, *The Status of Women in Foreign Policy*, 19.

¹³ Calkin, 1978, 74-77.

had also not fulfilled its obligation to review and revise discriminatory aspects of its personnel processes and lacked an effective affirmative action plan or program.¹⁴

The U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board published in 1992 a study of gender discrimination against women in federal civil service agencies, *A Question of Equity: Women and the Glass Ceiling in the Federal Government*. Based on a large survey of mid-level federal employees from a sample of agencies including the State Department, the study concluded that the promotion rate of women compared to men was lower at grade levels and occupations that were “important gateways to advancement.”¹⁵ The disparity was attributed to inequitable barriers confronted by women that “take the form of subtle assumptions, attitudes, and stereotypes which affect how managers sometimes view women’s potential for advancement, in some cases, their effectiveness on the job,” to which minority women “face a double disadvantage.”¹⁶

A couple of years later, diversity researchers Cornwell and Kellough used econometrics to analyze the issue of women and minorities’ lack of integration in senior positions across 30 U.S. federal agencies between 1984-1988. They concluded that “agency characteristics, such as size, rate of hiring, and union strength had no significant impact on female and minority representation in the federal government workforce during the 1980’s,” although “an organization’s mission on diversity” did.¹⁷ Specifically the agencies with large budget commitments related to the redress of social and economic inequality tended to show greater

¹⁴ Statement of Joseph E. Kelley, “Underrepresentation of Minorities and Women in the Foreign Service,” before the Subcommittee on Civil Service in the US House of Representatives, United States General Accounting Office, September 22, 1989.

¹⁵ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, *A Question of Equity: Women and the Glass Ceiling in Federal Government*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1992), x.

¹⁶ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, *A Question of Equity*, x.

¹⁷ Christopher Cornwell and J. Edwards Kellough, “Women and Minorities in Federal Government Agencies: Examining New Evidence from Panel Data,” *Public Administration Review*, May-Jun. 1994, Vol. 54, No. 3, 269.

integration progress.¹⁸ Based on the statistical significance of this trend, the Foreign Service and its lack of inclusion of women and minorities showed that the agency did not prioritize the redress of social and economic inequalities.

Literature Review

The “domestic domain” of women, according to Emily Rosenberg, bears a double meaning.¹⁹ Since the Industrial Revolution, women’s expected duties were confined to the home and familial circles, hence the assumption that “domestic work” is women’s work.²⁰ The “domestication” of women’s roles, though, is dually the restriction of women to matters of the national home and exclusion from foreign affairs. Undoubtedly, women have been excluded from the creating and agenda-setting of foreign policy and representing national interests abroad. No clearer is the distinction between male and female roles in the domestic versus foreign than in times of war where men are uprooted and conscripted while women manage their families and the economy in the homeland.

Despite limitations, women found ways to participate in foreign policy indirectly, as missionaries, nurses, peace activists, or through conducting other “women’s work” on an international scale. Other indirect means such as woman-to-woman dialogue as a strategy of diplomacy was catalogued by letters between women royals in 18th century Spain and was also a strategy observed during modern conflicts in Myanmar and Georgia.²¹ Women were present

¹⁸ Cornwell and Kellough, “Women and Minorities in Federal Government Agencies,” 269.

¹⁹ Emily S. Rosenberg, ““Foreign Affairs” after World War II: Connecting Sexual and International Politics.” *Diplomatic History* 18, no. 1 (1994): 59-70.

²⁰ Joan Hoff and Christie Farnham, “Editors’ Note: Sexist and Racist: The Post-Cold War World’s Emphasis on Family Values,” *Journal of Women’s History, Volume 4, No. 2, Fall 1992*: 6-9.

²¹ Corina Bastian, “Paper Negotiations’: Women and diplomacy in the early eighteenth century,” *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics since 1500* (2015): 107-119; Magda Lorena Cárdenas, “Women-to-women diplomacy in Georgia: a peacebuilding strategy in frozen conflict,” *Civil Wars* 21, no. 3 (2019): 385-409; Magda

throughout the Crusades as auxiliaries and pilgrims but women were also known to capitalize on unconventional opportunities to wield power and influence, such as when Margaret of Provence took command of her husband's crusaders while negotiating his ransom with Egyptian captors.²² Medieval women, usually royals or aristocrats, were crisis mediators and negotiated resolutions between powerful state actors.²³

While women are typically excluded from creating foreign policy, establishing what is “a woman's place” in family and public life has long been a function of foreign policy. In the 20th century the role of U.S. women as wives within nuclear families became particularly important to U.S. Cold War foreign policy.²⁴ Women also had a role in promoting gendered ideologies and executing projects of empire during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, such as the participation of Western women in empire building as wives, teachers, philanthropists and expatriates.²⁵ This role, as Ann-Laura Stoler described, made Western women “subordinates in colonial hierarchies” at the same time they were “agents of empire.”²⁶

Past scholarship on women in the U.S. Foreign Service has focused heavily on women's statuses before the 20th century as supporting wives or unofficial employees. An oral history

Lorena Cárdenas, and Elisabeth Olivius, "Building Peace in the Shadow of War: Women-to-Women Diplomacy as Alternative Peacebuilding Practice in Myanmar," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* (2021): 1-20.

²² Gordon M. Reynolds, "Opportunism & Duty: Gendered Perceptions of Women's Involvement in Crusade Negotiation and Mediation (1147-1254)," In *Medieval Feminist Forum: A Journal of Gender and Sexuality*, vol. 54, no. 2, pp. 5-27.

²³ Alison Creber, "Women at Canossa. The role of royal and aristocratic women in the reconciliation between Pope Gregory VII and Henry IV of Germany." *Storicamente* 13 (2018); Michelle L. Beer, "Between Kings and Emperors: Catherine of Aragon as Counsellor and Mediator." In *Queenship and Counsel in Early Modern Europe*, pp. 35-58. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2018.

²⁴ Murphy, John. "Shaping the Cold War family: Politics, domesticity and policy interventions in the 1950s." *Australian Historical Studies* 26, no. 105 (1995): 544-567.

²⁵ Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel, eds., *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*, (Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1992); Eliza Riedi, "Women, gender, and the promotion of empire: the Victoria League, 1901–1914." *The Historical Journal* 45, no. 3 (2002): 569-599.

²⁶ Ann-Laura Stoler, "Gender and Morality in the Making of Race." *Actuel Marx* 2 (2005): 75-101.

study of Foreign Service wives conducted by Fenzi and Nelson collected interviews of diplomatic wives, whose stories confirmed that wives were an essential part of a diplomat's career in the early and mid-20th century. A Foreign Service wife, Lucy Briggs, stated that "in those days [1947-1963] when a man's efficiency report was written, his wife was also commented on."²⁷ Diplomatic wives were essential partners in their husbands' careers even as they were confined to largely "domestic" concerns. In diplomacy, the functioning of the domestic realm, including organizing and hosting dinner parties and social events, was extremely important in gaining respect and access to foreign policymakers and bureaucrats.

Molly M. Wood contributed extensive research on Foreign Service wives and working women in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. One of Wood's many papers on the topic described the role Foreign Service wives played between 1905-1941 as similar to the wives of British officials in India in the late nineteenth-early twentieth centuries and the American military wives of the post-World War II era. Wood portrayed the role of American Foreign Service wives as an example of how "gender helped to create and maintain a positive American presence all over the world, and helped define the conduct of American diplomacy."²⁸ Further, she provides brief descriptions of the typical background of a Foreign Service wife. These women were usually upper-class, college educated and did not identify as feminists or social activists.²⁹ Most of the women considered the Foreign Service wife role as their own career.³⁰

²⁷ Jewell Fenzi with Carl L. Nelson, *Married to the Foreign Service: An Oral History of the American Diplomatic Spouse*, (Twayne Publishers: New York, 1994), 137-138.

²⁸ Molly M. Wood, "Diplomatic Wives: The Politics of Domesticity and the "Social Game" in the US Foreign Service, 1905-1941," *Journal of Women's History* 17, no. 2 (2005), 144.

²⁹ Wood, "Diplomatic Wives," 146.

³⁰ Wood, "Diplomatic Wives," 142, 146.

These contributions were significant advances in gendered diplomatic history as they were among the first to characterize how gender roles assigned to women were significant but largely unacknowledged contributions to U.S. foreign policy during and prior to the early 20th century. Their depictions of women in U.S. foreign policy, though, do not question foreign policy objectives and how women's gendered participation in these agendas may have enhanced America's promotion of hegemonic masculinity. Studies that do explore this dynamic, such as Frank Costigliola's "The Nuclear Family: Tropes of Gender and Pathology in the Western Alliance," establish the setting in which a burgeoning class of women Foreign Service officers and ambassadors enter as inherent challengers to the strictly supporting roles women were expected to play in foreign policy.³¹

This is to note that an endeavor to analyze women's history with gendered lenses can easily become a history of women that affirms male-defined and male-oriented agendas.³² These definitions are a part of women's collective story but may silence women who did not fit into the acceptable definitions and agendas set by men. Acknowledging gendered aspects doesn't quite go far enough in deconstructing how those aspects impacted women. Often inadequate attention is paid to how the ideology, identity, and temporal context interact with the gender of individuals contributing to archival records. Critical consideration of how the historical speakers were groomed by and feed into a particular narrative or agenda is required. An important question that remains is how women interacted with the gendered expectations put upon them

³¹ Frank Costigliola, "The Nuclear Family: Tropes of Gender and Pathology in the Cold War," *Diplomatic History*, Spring 1997, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Spring 1997): 163-183.

³² Gerda Lerner, "Placing Women in History: Definitions and Challenges," *Feminist Studies*, Autumn 1975, Vol.3, No. 1/2, 5, 7.

and how they exercised their agency over those expectations by adapting, modifying, or influencing them to suit their preferences and needs.

Other studies that have explored gender as a theme of women in the U.S. Foreign Service often work with biographical-narrative sources.³³ One such study is McKenzie's "The Problem of Women in the Department: Sex and Gender Discrimination in the 1960s United States Foreign Diplomatic Service," that sources the Alison Palmer papers, oral history, and State Department and court records to argue that women officers in the 1960s were sexualized in a way that degraded gender equality.³⁴ Through exploring the experiences of women Foreign Service officers relayed in complaints and court filings, McKenzie identifies and characterizes sexualization as a mode of discrimination prevalent in the 1960's that undermined careers like that of Alison Palmer. McKenzie's work contributed to the body of literature seeking to explain why women's collective journey in attaining prestigious senior Foreign Service positions, including ambassador positions, has remained tenuous and even at certain points regressive due to gender prejudices.

There is also autobiographical material from women who served in various Foreign Service capacities. Foreign Service wife Lydia Kirk provided the narrative for her memoir *Distinguished Service: Lydia Chapin Kirk, Partner in Diplomacy, 1896-1984*, which was published in 2007 under her husband and editor's name, Roger Kirk.³⁵ Kirk considered herself an

³³ Also Philip Nash, *Breaking Protocol: America's First Female Ambassadors, 1933-1964*. (University Press of Kentucky, 2020).

³⁴ McKenzie, "The Problem of Women in the Department," 2.

³⁵ Katherine A.S. Sibley, "Review: Diplomacy While Distaff: Profiling Women's Lives in the Foreign Service," works reviewed Roger Kirk, ed. *Distinguished Service: Lydia Chapin Kirk, Partner in Diplomacy, 1869-1984*, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2007 and Jean M. Wilkowski, *Abroad for Her Country: Tales of a Pioneer Woman Ambassador in the U.S. Foreign Service*, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007, in *Diplomatic History*, June 2009, Vol. 33, No. 3, Special Forum: Modernization as a Global Project (June 2009), 526.

“ambadress” as spouse and companion to her husband who served in multiple ambassador appointments. Foreign Service women relayed first-hand knowledge and personal reflections on their service through publications in the *Foreign Service Journal*. Recent articles relating to the status of women are usually of the consensus that representation improves through time but is continuously problematic at senior-level positions.³⁶

Studies of women in other foreign service corps also contribute and confirm that resistance to women taking a direct role in foreign policy was present in many countries. Ireland’s Department of Foreign Affairs upheld the same policy as the U.S. Foreign Service in which married women were forced to resign and Irish women foreign service officers, like U.S. women FSO’s, were not well represented at “prestigious” locations.³⁷ Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs was known to primarily recruit officers from an elite university dominated by Japan’s “elite society” members, similar to the U.S. FS’s practice of hiring from mainly elite universities.³⁸ Among the foreign service corps of Ireland, Japan, and the U.S., women were only recently, in the early 20th century, allowed to become officers and remained underrepresented in the entry and senior levels. Work from Conley Tyler et al, that explored the lack of women in Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of Defense, and academia offered the legacy of direct discrimination, continued indirect discrimination, anemic support for

³⁶ Andrea Strano, “Foreign Service Women Today: The Palmer Case and Beyond,” *The Foreign Service Journal*, March, (2016).

³⁷ Anne Barrington, “From marriage bar towards gender equality: the experience of women in Ireland Department of Foreign Affairs, 1970-2000,” *Gender and Diplomacy*, ed. Jennifer A. Cassidy.

³⁸ Petrice R. Flowers, “Women in Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” *Gendering Diplomacy and International Negotiations*, eds. Karin Aggestam, Ann E. Towns, Springer, 2017.

women to balance work and family life, and social gender norms as imminent causes for women's underrepresentation in government's foreign affairs.³⁹

Multiple statistics-driven studies, usually prepared for international relations (IR) theory audiences, have also contributed to a larger body of research about women's status and representation in Foreign Service leadership. Schiemichen's "Madame Ambassador," and Towns and Niklasson's "Gender, International Status, and Ambassador Appointments," take similar comparative approaches focusing on women's representation in large samples of ambassadors across multiple governments. Schiemichen found disparities in the number of women ambassadors appointments between 1990-2018 in U.S., EU, and German governments compared to men ambassadors, and deficiencies in the diversity and prestige of women's most-frequently assigned locations.⁴⁰ Towns and Niklasson confirmed these results in a sample of 7,000 ambassadors in fifty countries.⁴¹

Study Design

My focus is on two generations of U.S. women ambassadors who were appointed to Muslim-influenced countries between 1960-1989.⁴² This period is characterized by Foreign Service policies and norms contributing to a working environment that acutely disadvantaged women. By the 1990's several changes in policy and awareness culminated in a still challenging but more equitable work environment. The oral histories focus on 1960-1989 to capture the

³⁹ Melissa H. Conley Tyler, Emily Blizzard, and Bridget Crane, "Is international affairs too 'hard' for women? Explaining the missing women in Australia's international affairs," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 68, no. 2 (2014): 156-176.

⁴⁰ Schiemichen, "Madam Ambassador," 3.

⁴¹ Ann Towns and Birgitta Niklasson, "Gender, International Status, and Ambassador Appointments," *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 13, (2017): 521.

⁴² The minimum Muslim persons in a country to be included in the study is 10 percent of the population or 1 million persons. Data of Muslim populations by country was taken from Pew Research Center's "World Muslim Population by Country," November 17, 2017. These countries are listed in Appendix A.

intersection between the previous period of women in the FS when discrimination and exclusion was the severest, and the new era of women's participation, advancement, and opportunity evidenced by an accelerating growth in the number of women ambassadors. Data of the 1990's are included in two oral histories and in descriptive data of women ambassadors because it confirms and strengthens the conclusions of the earlier women ambassadors. Women ambassadors are profiled with descriptive data, which is paired with qualitative data from the oral histories of women ambassadors. This small sample size allowed for additional time in the data collection step for gathering detailed information on the women's demographic and biographic qualities.

The descriptive dataset was created to generalize the women ambassadors' representation in numbers, assignment locations, personal qualifications, and individual demographics.⁴³ This descriptive information is introduced and discussed in chapter two, serving as a backdrop to the analysis of personal narratives introduced in subsequent chapters relating to the attitudes and impacts of these early U.S. women ambassadors. The analysis and brief biographical descriptions of chapter two answer the question of which women ambassadors were promoted, focusing on demographic and biographic data as major factors in their opportunities, career choices, experience gained, and subsequent advancement.

The women ambassadors were chosen by their appointment date and their ambassador assignment locations in Muslim or Muslim-influenced countries of Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe. The purpose of seeking out women appointed to countries that host Muslim majorities or

⁴³ Demographic information is provided to characterize a segment of early women ambassadors and to compare to the demography of the Foreign Service corps as described in Garnham's 1975, not to establish a demography of women ambassadors from this period. The sample utilized is not adequate for this purpose as demography is meant to characterize classes of people, and the sample is not large enough nor randomized.

significant minorities was to draw out examples of how women FS officers were received and if their ability to conduct foreign policy was impacted. This sample is of particular significance because although a major concern cited by Foreign Service leaders was that women would not be received well in Muslim societies, approximately half of 20th century women ambassadors were sent to locations with large Muslim communities.⁴⁴ For the earliest part of the 20th century (pre-1950), women were also excluded from serving in “hardship” postings, where women were thought to not adapt well to very different cultures and locations with low amenities. Examining these women ambassadors in particular has the potential to explain how women adapted to these societies and how their lived experiences compared to what Foreign Service advisors and colleagues told them to expect.

Very few women ambassadors in 1960-1990 were assigned to Muslim-majority countries, so the sample was expanded to include countries with significant Muslim minorities.⁴⁵ While the sample was intended to focus on women working in these Muslim-influenced contexts, it was found that most of the gender-related obstacles women experienced came from within the Foreign Service. The resulting analysis explores these trends as they appeared but doing so weakened the rationale for selecting these particular women rather than a random sample of women ambassadors regardless of assignment location. Therefore, the product focuses on aspects of the Foreign Service that may be broadly true of the experiences among all women ambassadors, but due to the sample’s biased selection based on a preliminary hypothesis, the

⁴⁴ Calkin, 105. By Vorschek’s calculations, there were 93 total women ambassadors between 1949-1997. Forty-eight of those women ambassadors in this period were sent to Islamic or Islamic-influenced countries; Diana Vorschek, *Madame Ambassador: A Contemporary Study of U.S. Female Ambassadors*, Master’s thesis for the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies at California State University, Long Beach, August 1997.

⁴⁵ See footnote 31.

conclusions made from this sample cannot necessarily be inferred onto the population of all women ambassadors.

Chapter two looks at U.S. women ambassadors that served between 1949-1999 in 84 select countries of Asian, African, and Southeast European subregions.⁴⁶ To establish the setting, the chapter also briefly describes the status of women in general and their contributions in the U.S. Foreign Service prior to 1949 and gives reference to previous contributions of U.S. women in the Foreign Service throughout the 20th century. The women's assignment location, years of tenure, and career status are also discussed chronologically.

Chapter three thematically presents a qualitative analysis relying on narrative-style sources such as oral histories, interviews, and autobiographies, focusing on women ambassadors between 1960-1989. Derived from these sources are the behaviors and attitudes of women ambassadors related to their roles as ambassadors, their status as women, and the gender-based challenges these women faced during the formative years of women in the Foreign Service when women ambassadors were rare.

Descriptive data analysis of appointments alongside interview anecdotes is not innovative, but my utilization of the two data types to study Foreign Service women is unique. The most important function of the descriptive data is not to characterize all women ambassadors of the 20th-century, but to improve the context and understanding of the themes found in the qualitative narrative data. This approach captures their personal attributes, like qualifications and identities, and their actions and attitudes that proved successful for women in the early stages of their participation at the ambassador level. While past approaches have considered these personal factors individually to further interpret oral histories, studies of Foreign Service women have not

⁴⁶ See Appendix A for the list of countries included in this sample.

used aggregate descriptive data about their subjects as a measure of objectivity with which to compare with oral history narratives. Of particular interest is how qualifications and identities assisted personal advancement and what mechanisms were utilized to overcome stereotypes and barriers.

The purpose of these two analyses is to construct a historical narrative about women ambassadors over a period of critical change for women in the Foreign Service. The narrative draws on themes of 20th century women's advancement in the Foreign Service evidenced by increased representation in ambassador positions, and flaws in the representation evident during this period like the roles of elitism versus merit, the negotiation between collective advancement and individual advancement, the archival erasure of discrimination to circumvent self-victimization, and the influence patriarchal attitudes.

Exploring women ambassador appointments in the U.S. during the last half of the 20th century tells an important story about the inclusion of women during a period when women's right to employment was a novel concept. Patriarchal concepts of a male primary-earner were still the established norm. Women given a chance to work in the Foreign Service at all were considered extremely fortunate, meaning initially there was no demand for women's presence at senior levels. Such an environment produced a culture that impacted what types of women had a chance to be ambassadors and how women in the Foreign Service perceived themselves and their potential.

The matter of who becomes an ambassador and how remains of scholarly interest because these key diplomats represent the American working class and American interests to the world. Women were and continue to be nearly half of the working class, yet so few were ambassadors in this period. What sorts of strategies, merits, and privileges helped 20th century

women ambassadors to overcome the Foreign Service's stigma against women workers? What role did the women's liberation movement play in improving opportunities and conditions for women Foreign Service officers? Most importantly, how did these women become committed to their careers, and find success, within an institution that frequently undermined them?

Periodization

Women's participation in the U.S. Foreign Service spans more than two centuries and can be divided into major phases. In the first era between 1789-1920, women served as the wives of officers, where their diplomatic contributions were expected and valuable but uncompensated. McKenzie proposed three subsequent eras, where 1921-39 consisted of elite men and practically no women, 1939-47 was a period that included women only at low clerical and staff positions without many women ever passing the Foreign Service Exam, and 1947-75 when "women began to pass the exam but faced daunting obstacles to service."⁴⁷

For my purposes, 1949-69 is an elitist era, a period in which the first woman ambassador was appointed but achieving this level was still not possible for women Foreign Service officers. Frequently women serving during this time were tokenized and their participation upheld as evidence of inclusivity. Yet in many cases, these women transcended the lower echelons only through social status or political connections. Following the elitist era was a formative period between 1970-89 became a formative period marked by women's advances in junior ranks and challenges to gender bias.

Sources, Limitations and Selection Bias

The body of primary sources used to create the descriptive data of U.S. ambassadors synthesizes interviews, biographies, oral histories, Congressional nominations, autobiographical

⁴⁷ McKenzie, "The Problem of Women," 2.

publications, newspapers, and similar material. These sources document the women's origins, upbringing and environment, post-secondary education, early career occupations, years in the Foreign Service and their subsequent rise in leadership throughout their Foreign Service careers. Despite the mindful construction of data, the analysis does bear inherent limitations.

Notable gender scholars Gerda Lerner and Emily Rosenberg have both lent criticisms to the field that led to broad reevaluations of methods and guided scholars in writing women's history. Lerner's 1975 critique underscored that simply writing about women in history does little to separate women's stories from male-defined contexts. This was evidenced in the various ways that women's history fixated on women's oppression, equated prescriptive literature aimed at women with the way women actually behaved, situated women as merely "contributors" to male institutions, or separated women's work and activities from that of men even when they were essentially connected.⁴⁸ Further, Lerner argued, women's history could not be so comfortably nestled in a social history of the marginalized and oppressed masses because women have always existed in some capacity within the ruling elite and have always been approximately half of all human beings. Women are not a minority, and as a class have much more complex and varied relationships to power, often even playing the role of oppressor. Lerner urged women's historians to accept that women are in fact a majority group, requiring scholars to reject old methodological tools and have the initiative to create new tools that are better suited for finding the answers to new and better questions.

Rosenberg's critique fifteen years later endeavored to do just that by identifying the limitations of writing women's history through the eyes of notable women. Notable women were

⁴⁸ Gerda Lerner, "Placing Women in History: Definitions and Challenges," *Feminist Studies*, Autum 1975, Vol.3, No. ½, 5-14.

exceptional by virtue of their achievements that elevated their status above the “typical” woman, but still lacked recognition. The method emphasizes women as outsiders and she concluded, “in absence of some larger and historically nuanced analytical framework, the exceptional women approach may convey the impression that biology (being born a woman) rather than culture (gender systems constructed to contain and limit women’s social roles) sufficiently explains women’s marginality.”⁴⁹ Rosenberg’s qualms were valid among many historians who also agreed that characterizing “typical” women and classes of women should be viewed as just as important, if not more important, than profiling exceptional women.⁵⁰ These scholars pursue one of three alternatives proposed by Rosenberg, by researching “women’s work” in roles such as missionaries, nurses, and peace movement activists, the evolution and impacts of gendered discourse and ideologies, or women in international development (WID) and how they generated value in global production markets. Each alternative method related new information about how women shaped foreign relations and global movements.

Historians such as Philip Nash have pushed back on this critique, arguing that the neglect of women in history is so significant that blowing past exceptional women may be skipping a step in the basic development of women’s history. Nash raises the concern that “most of the scholars” contributing to the subfield of women in foreign relations were premature in their enthusiasm exclusively for Rosenberg’s alternative approaches and consequently neglected exceptional women.⁵¹ Echoing the observation of Joan Hoff, Nash asserted that “we cannot yet

⁴⁹ Emily Rosenberg, “Gender,” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 77, No. 1 (Jun.1990), 116-124.

⁵⁰ Kristin Hoganson, “What’s Gender Got to Do with It? Women and Foreign Relations History,” reprinted in *OAH Magazine of History*, from *Explaining the History of U.S. Foreign Relations*, ed. Michael Hogan and Thomas G. Patterson (2nd ed., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004); Kathryn Ward, ed., *Women Workers and Global Restructuring* (Ithaca, NY: ILR Press, School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University, 1990); Eileen Boris and Elisabeth Priig, eds., *Homeworkers in Global Perspective: Invisible No More* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

⁵¹ Philip Nash, “America’s First Female Chief of Mission,” 57-58.

even begin to generalize properly about the history of women in foreign relations without the biographies of these women ministers and ambassadors.”⁵²

Both methodological perspectives were considered. While women ambassadors and their experiences in this critical period are not adequately explored, it is possible to assess their narratives in relation to “typical” women in the Foreign Service by considering the impacts their behaviors and attitudes had on Foreign Service women as a class. The elevation of women ambassadors always impacted other women of the field, especially their ability to explore new roles and challenge discrimination. This approach gives insight into how women’s proximity to centers of power, through their elitist backgrounds or through the power granted to them as ambassadors, both benefitted and hindered the progression of “typical” women. It does not necessarily replace, though, the continuing need for studies devoted to the narratives expressed by “typical” women.

Gaining a holistic understanding of women’s status in the Foreign Service requires the knowledge of women Foreign Service officers and not just women ambassadors.⁵³ It requires more than consideration of the evidence and prevalence of gender bias relating to high-ranking women of the Foreign Service, but also the accounts of junior women officers and women in clerical or staffing capacities. Sources available with demographic data on junior Foreign Service officers (FSO’s) are very limited in most cases. Often the availability of demographic data is relative to the seniority of the position because significant appointments like ambassadors undergo a more publicized and stringent approval process. As such, the nomination

⁵² Nash, “America’s First,” 58; J. Hoff-Wilson, “Conclusion: Of mice and men,” in E.P. Crapol (ed.), *Women and American foreign policy: Lobbyists, critics, and insiders* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2nd ed., 1992), pp. 177-79.

⁵³ For example, Nancy McGlen and Meredith Reid Sarkees’s *Women in Foreign Policy: The Insiders* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

announcement from the president's office includes a written record of the appointees' birth, education, and professional qualifications.

Comparable biographic details are not as readily available for junior officers and entry-level women workers. The Foreign Service List, a State Department publication dating back to the early 1930's that listed every Foreign Service employee, gives the names, roles, and missions where women served, but it provides far less data than what is available about ambassadors. Lower-level women workers were less likely to be selected for oral history interviews or to have biographic publications. Consequently, there is less information available about the lives and experiences of entry and mid-level women workers.

Most women in the relevant timeframe began their careers at entry-level or lower, waiting to take a shot at the FS exam until they had served significant time as clerks or staff-members, and many never progressed past this level. These personal narratives, and those of junior Foreign Service officers, are not included. Their stories are an important facet of Foreign Service attitudes towards and treatment of women in the workforce because they potentially reveal the worst cases of discrimination. Women at the lowest operational levels most likely experienced the harshest discrimination with very little public knowledge of these occurrences and few if any consequences for perpetrators. However, women ambassadors were as likely to experience to this type of discrimination early in their careers, which are relayed in chapter three.

A second limitation that ought to be noted is the selection bias of women U.S. ambassadors. To balance the need for an adequate sample size with the desire for data-rich samples, and to increase the manageability of the project, those selected for the study are within a subgroup of U.S. women ambassadors. Women ambassadors who were not assigned ambassadorships in Middle Eastern countries and countries with significant Muslim populations

are excluded. One example of an ambassador that made major contributions to diversifying the ambassador corps and expanding the geography of women ambassador locations was Mari-Luci Jaramillo, U.S. ambassador to Honduras and the first Mexican American woman to serve as an ambassador. Her story and others would give great insight into the advancement of women minorities in the Foreign Service. The narratives of women ambassadors to Central and South America merit a future regional or comprehensive study that incorporates their autobiographical sources. The sample selection is purposeful, however, because it establishes a group with similar and comparable specializations and experiences.

Oral histories in some critical ways are contested as primary sources because they are products of memory, a post-hoc rationalizing process that favors teleology and lacks objectivity.⁵⁴ They can misrepresent past events by offering “partial truths” shaped by the memory and bias of the narrator and subject to the guidance of the interviewer. Although these limitations exist, awareness of limitations allows scholars to search oral histories for the representative qualities of both the individual and the collective, and to negotiate any discrepancies found between other sources. Some sources like censuses or passports can circumvent the distorting effects of memory while sources like oral histories, diaries, and memoirs cannot, the latter category provides a rare glimpse into the personalized individual and aspects of their experiences and consciousness.

A study of oral histories can comprise of an effort to contribute to the knowledge about events or conditions in a given timeframe and social and geographic context, but can never disengage from a simultaneous accounting of how experience is formed, or rather reconstructed,

⁵⁴ Barry S. Godfrey and Jane C. Richardson, “Loss, collective memory and transcribed oral histories,” *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 2004, Vol. 7, No. 2, 145-146.

through memory. Although the nuanced considerations needed to use oral histories make them distinguished and less straight-forward sources, just like other sources in historical studies such as censuses, reports, deeds, etc., their interpretation leads us to reconstructions which are limited in ways no mindful methodology can completely overcome. Ultimately the conclusions from all types of sources are merely reconstructions incapable of perfectly representing the past, but undoubtedly this does not render attempts to derive “truths” from them as fruitless or impotent. A primary hazard of working with oral histories is one shared with all historical endeavors, which is to continuously cling tightly to our carefully formed interpretations even in the face of contradicting new evidence.

The oral histories of U.S. women ambassadors individualize international diplomatic history and women’s history. The sources bring into focus the particular challenges attributed to gender the women ambassadors experienced and detail a number of methods the women employed to circumvent those challenges. The autobiographies and historiography of women in the Foreign Service provide an essential lens through which the descriptive data are to be interpreted. Analysis of these sources strengthens the conclusions derived from the descriptive report of ambassador backgrounds. Oral histories confirm that women ambassador assignments increased through time as a product of changing attitudes supported by women’s organizations, particular familial arrangements favored by the Foreign Service resulted in gender-biased policies and undue burdens on women workers, and discrimination was present but women ambassadors developed successful mitigation methods.

Chapter 2

Trends in Assignments, Qualifications, and Personal Qualities

There is early documentation of the exclusion of women from significant leadership positions and the overall minimization of their contributions in the Foreign Service. In Calkin's history of women in the State Department, chapter one contains the "Status of American Women During Two Centuries" because women's official and documented contributions to the State Department were limited.⁵⁵ Starting in 1866, women employees made appearances in the State Department and at international conferences. The earliest international appointees Mrs. Elijah Jones (1866), Ellen Tupper (1874), and others became members of U.S. delegations to international exhibitions through their skills as artists, journalists, and artisans.⁵⁶ A handful of women were employed leading up to and shortly after the turn of the 20th century, but they held supporting positions such as clerks or stenographers.

The Era of Diplomat-Wives (1789-1949)

The first approximately 100 years (1789-1900) of women's involvement in the diplomatic corps was present but largely unacknowledged and women held very few high-ranking roles. After more than 100 years of women's prohibition from serving as official employees of the Diplomatic Service, women increasingly gained access and acceptance in the 20th century while working primarily as clerks, secretaries, and nurses. The State Department roughly followed larger nation-wide trends of increased work opportunities for women but similarly limited women to low-skill, low-wage positions.⁵⁷ Although rare, managerial roles for

⁵⁵ Calkin, *Women in the State Department*, 1-10.

⁵⁶ Calkin, *Women in the State Department*, 31.

⁵⁷ Jane S. Jaquette, "Women in Power: From Tokenism to Critical Mass," *Foreign Policy*, Autumn 1997, No. 108, 26.

women became more acceptable. The first woman in a State Department managerial role was chief of the Correspondence Bureau, Margaret Hanna, in 1918.⁵⁸ A policy change in 1921 permitted women to take the (previously named) Diplomatic Service examination and in 1922 Lucille Atcherson became the first woman to pass and serve in the Diplomatic Service.⁵⁹ It was not until 1949 that the first woman ambassador, Eugenie Moore Anderson, was appointed by Harry Truman to serve in Denmark. Anderson's appointment helped facilitate a shift for women from technical and functional roles to managerial roles, but it was still two decades before more than just a couple of women ambassadors served at one time.

Women's work in the U.S. Foreign Service as wives who were essential counterparts to their diplomat husbands continued to be extremely important in the 20th century. Early on, diplomat wives acted on behalf of their husbands and "organized and managed social functions, packed and unpacked households, hired and fired servants, met new people, threw lavish dinner parties, volunteered in the local community, and learned new languages, customs, and rules of protocol all over the world."⁶⁰ Many wives also furthered their husband's careers by persuading the President and Secretary of State to approve of desired assignment transfers.⁶¹ In overseas assignments women commanded an even more fundamental status as indispensable partners to diplomats because Foreign Service officials believed marriage was the key to access important social communities abroad.⁶² Bachelor diplomats were deemed ineffective in comparison.

⁵⁸ Grunig, "Court-ordered relief," 86.

⁵⁹ Grunig, "Court-ordered relief," 87.

⁶⁰ Molly M. Wood, "Wives, Clerks, and 'Lady Diplomats': The Gendered Politics of Diplomacy and Representation in the U.S. Foreign Service, 1900-1940," *European Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 10, no.1 (2015): 2.

⁶¹ Molly M. Wood, "'Commanding Beauty' and 'Gentle Charm': American Women and Gender in the Early Twentieth-Century Foreign Service," *Diplomatic History*, June 2007, Vol. 31, no. 3 (2007): 506.

⁶² Wood, "'Commanding Beauty,'" 513.

The value diplomat wives contributed to the State Department did not merit them official appointments and the associated benefits. Foreign Service wives only benefited during this time from their contributions to the diplomatic missions vicariously through the promotions and compensation of their diplomat husbands. This unbalanced exchange normalized the practice of failing to compensate women for their contributions. When recognition was given to women, it centered around their supportive roles and underplayed their skills. Women were expected to present themselves as clever and competent but only for the purpose of demonstrating their husband's achievement in marrying them.⁶³ The diplomat wife role did help some women get their foot in the door of the Foreign Service's ranks. Mabel Murphy Smythe, for example, the first Black American woman ambassador (Cameroon 1977), was a non-career appointee who more than a decade before accompanied her husband, Ambassador Hugh H. Smythe, to Syria.⁶⁴ In kind, most of the Foreign Service wives in Wood's survey went on to long and successful careers in the Foreign Service."⁶⁵

It was in this period that the first woman chief of mission, Ruth Owen, was appointed to serve as envoy to Denmark in 1933.⁶⁶ Appointed by Franklin Roosevelt, Owen was a previous filmmaker, prohibitionist, and two-term Florida congressional representative.⁶⁷ She was forced to resign from her position as chief of mission after marrying a Danish man in 1936. Soon after, the Foreign Service codified their policy on marriage to foreigners.

⁶³ Willard Beaulac, *Career Ambassador*, (New York: Macmillan, 1951), 182.

⁶⁴ "Mabel Murphy Smythe (Haith)," interview by Ann Miller Morin, May, 2, 1986, *Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, Women Ambassadors Series*, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Collection, Arlington, Virginia.

⁶⁵ Wood, "Diplomatic Wives," 158.

⁶⁶ Ambassadors represent the head of state and envoys are representatives of the diplomatic corps. Both are chief of mission titles, as are charge d'affaires. For historical context a few envoy appointments are discussed, but the focus of this work is ambassadors.

⁶⁷ Philip Nash, 2005, "America's First Female Chief of Mission: Ruth Bryan Owen, Minister to Denmark, 1933–36." *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 16 (1): 57–72.

Ellery Stowell's article on "The Ban of Alien Marriages in the Foreign Service" provides evidence that as early as 1937 the idea that women in the Foreign Service had the right to demand treatment equal to their male peers was considered conceptually correct, however this concept of equality was still clearly defined and regulated by men. The Foreign Service's gender-neutral implementation of President Roosevelt's ban on alien marriages by Foreign Service employees convinced Stowell that the institution fully endorsed male and female equality in the workplace. Stowell explained that the neutral implementation of the policy, applying to men and women alike, did not stir opposition from "advocates of equal treatment for men and women."⁶⁸ He immediately undermined his stances by continuing, "in point of fact, the women in the Foreign Service who have married have found it either inconvenient or inappropriate to continue in the service and have resigned."⁶⁹ The statement alluded to another Foreign Service rule, although not codified law like the alien marriage ban, that women were required to resign once they married. To maintain the appearance that women were granted equal treatment upon becoming married, Stowell portrayed women as freely choosing to resign by their own determination of what was "convenient" and "appropriate". Whether women freely chose to resign or if this expectation was rather forced upon them, as personal stories later relayed by women in the 1960's and early 1970's suggest, it remained that their resulting circumstances were still disadvantaged by socially enforced patriarchal principles.

Women could not lack awareness of the beliefs held by peers and superiors that it was "inappropriate" to continue their careers as it would undermine the career of their husbands. It is impossible to conclude that the Foreign Service's treatment was equal because newly married

⁶⁸ Ellery C. Stowell, The Ban of Alien Marriages in the Foreign Service, *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 31, No. 1, Jan. 1937, Cambridge University Press, 91.

⁶⁹ Stowell, 1937, 91.

working men were not in kind considered hazards to the careers of their wives. A woman's own commitment to this patriarchal construct was immaterial to the outcome, as the impact of patriarchal beliefs of her employers would have weighed heavily in her decision regardless of her agreement with those principles. Whether a woman chose or was forced to resign was still a product of disparate treatment justified by a patriarchal system that gave preference to men's careers. Such was the beginning of the reformation process for FS women which primarily featured performative speech or behaviors instead of substantive change because the consciousness surrounding the women's issues were not fully developed.

Further, women were not given the latitude to express their disagreement with resignation and marriage until decades later. A 1966 complaint to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission showed that the alien marriage ban was not actually implemented equally as Stowell believed in 1937.⁷⁰ Aside from the fact that women were forced to resign even if their marriage was not to a foreigner while this was not the case for men, the resignations of men who married foreign women were not accepted until their wife had failed to pass a security check and secure U.S. citizenship.⁷¹ Women's resignations submitted for the same reason were accepted immediately.

An Elitist Era (1950-1969)

Senior State Department Foreign Service officials play a role in ambassador nominations of careerists by making their recommendations of career officers to the president, an internist approach. In contrast, most political ambassadors' appointments are based on the approval and recommendation of the president personally or his executive advisors. India Edwards, head of

⁷⁰ Calkin, 1978, 126.

⁷¹ Mackenzie, 2015, 2.

the Women's Division of the Democratic National Committee, lobbied for women to be appointed to President Truman's administration and played a critical role in President Truman's decision to promote a woman for ambassador much sooner than the State Department promoted women Foreign Service officers to ambassadorships.⁷² It was Edwards' "personal crusade [to] land government jobs for women."⁷³ Eugenie Anderson, the first woman ambassador, was successfully promoted by Edwards and benefited from an elitist appointment system that favored candidates with political connections over internal candidates serving in the Foreign Service and specially trained in diplomacy. Several of the first women chiefs of mission such as Perle Mesta, Eugenie Anderson, Shirley Temple Black, and Marquita Maytag had low or unrelated credentials but strong social connections, suggesting that in this elitist era women were not yet accepted as equal partners in foreign diplomacy. These women accessed the ambassador position by leveraging social and political allies like the president, Congress members, the State Department and senior Foreign Service officials.

Anderson became the first woman ambassador from the U.S. when she was appointed to Denmark in 1949, and she continued her diplomatic career with an envoy appointment from John F. Kennedy to Bulgaria in 1964. Nash attributed Anderson's remarkable foreign affairs career to a blend of "domesticity and cosmopolitan interests," bearing similarities to Calkin's recognition of women's abilities and contributions by highlighting their feminine qualities. Through her performance, Anderson proved she was not egregiously unqualified although she lacked international or diplomatic experience. Prior to her years in diplomacy, Anderson was a campaigner and chaired the Democratic Farmer-Labor party of Michigan in 1944. She was well-

⁷² M. Kathy Tyler, *The Most Influential Woman in the Truman Administration: India Edwards, 1944-1953*, Master's thesis for the Department of History, August 1, 1997, Emporia State University.

⁷³ Nash, "Ambassador Eugenie Anderson," 252-253.

stocked with politician-allies like Herbert Humphries, Evron M. Kirkpatrick, Arthur E. Naftalin, and Orville L. Freeman.⁷⁴ Ultimately, she could attribute her successful bid for an appointment to the tireless work of India Edwards, her political partners, her strong anti-Communist posturing, and her husband's flexible career as an artist.

In 1949 another non-careerist woman, Perle Mesta, was a chief of mission as the envoy to Luxembourg. The Washington socialite's prior qualifications came from her status as widow of Pittsburgh machine-tool magnate George Mesta and political donor to Truman's presidential campaign in 1948.⁷⁵ In the 1950's just two other women were appointed ambassadors, Ann Boothe Luce to Italy in 1953, and Frances Willis to Switzerland and Norway (1953 and 1957 respectively).

Anderson's appointment draws attention to a point of tension in the Foreign Service corps, the prevalence of political appointees or non-careerists as ambassadors. The U.S. Foreign Service is unique for allowing political appointee ambassadors. It is the only diplomatic corps that employs ambassadors who are not currently serving in a governmental foreign service. Schimiechen's comparative study acknowledged that political appointees benefitted from celebrity status and access to the president, but further designates that "at times, their primary distinguishing characteristic" was their sizable donations to the President's campaign.⁷⁶ The unofficial reward system was outlawed through the Foreign Service Act of 1980, but correlations between campaign contributors and ambassador appointments nevertheless continued. Instead of the Foreign Service adopting pro-women policies that created opportunities for women to become ambassadors, several women initially infiltrated the ambassador ranks through

⁷⁴ Philip Nash, "Ambassador Eugenie Anderson," *Minnesota History*, (Summer 2005): 251.

⁷⁵ Perle Mesta, with Robert Cahn, *Perle: My Story* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960).

⁷⁶ Schiemichen, "Madam Ambassador," 6.

relationships with allies of a single very powerful gatekeeper, the president of the United States. Although it improved women's representation at this critical operational level, that representation was wrought through privilege rather than merit.

As a retired Foreign Service career officer, Andrea Strano expressed reservations about lauding women non-career ambassadors as success stories for women in the Foreign Service corps in her 2016 article, "The Palmer Case and Beyond."⁷⁷ Political appointees compete for ambassador positions without having to commit to a career in the Foreign Service or frequently without possessing any experience in foreign affairs. Ambassadorships available to women are already limited in number, and on top of these slim chances women careerists can expect that one third of those positions will be filled by outside candidates. Careerists usually spend more than two decades in the Foreign Service in various officer appointments and training positions. Political appointees could be activists with decades of region-specific NGO experience, or they could be an ally of the U.S. president's administration appointed to reward political loyalty. Not always are non-careerists inexperienced, but their selection over career officers allows the override of the merit-based bureaucratic appointment system to which careerists are subjected.

Political appointees who lacked relevant experience fed into stereotypes about women as incompetent, which diminished the prospects of women Foreign Service officers becoming ambassadors and heightened biases against women's competence and capabilities. Their high positions contributed fodder to accusations that women as a class were frequently unqualified or incapable of their jobs. Regardless of their execution as ambassadors, perceptions about women leading missions simply because they were women in absence of solid credentials was a damaging perception for women Foreign Service officers.

⁷⁷ Strano, "Palmer Case and Beyond".

Including females and males the proportion of career to political appointments remained stable through the 20th century at approximately a 7:3 ratio.⁷⁸ Nash noted the prevalence of non-careerist political appointees in a biographic paper about Anderson by writing that the “appointment of envoys without diplomatic experience was common at this time; more than one-third of Truman’s chiefs of mission were not career diplomats.”⁷⁹ Although correct that one-third was the typical ratio for political appointees, this ratio was not unique to Anderson’s time and has remained stable to present day. Even during the presidency of George W. Bush, in office the year of Nash’s publication, the ratio of careerists to political appointees was 68:32.⁸⁰ The appointment of a non-careerist at any post-World War II time was common and about one-third of ambassadors. Acknowledging this fact is essential to establishing that the prevalence of political appointees remained an issue in the Foreign Service corps throughout the 20th century.

Schiemichen reported that after 1990 men were far more likely to be political appointees than women.⁸¹ Even so, political appointees were overrepresented among the women ambassadors serving between 1960-1989. During the elitist era the political appointee to careerist ratio remained much higher than the department-wide average of one-to-three. In the period between 1960-1989, forty-four percent of women ambassadors to Islam-influenced countries were political appointments. The high proportion of political appointees was significant because first, men still took the majority of ambassadorships and second, the prospects of career women FSOs were decreased by the high volume of women political ambassadors.⁸² For this

⁷⁸ See American Foreign Service Association, *Ambassador Tracker*, “History of Ambassador Appointments by Post,” 2019.

⁷⁹ Nash, “Ambassador Eugenie Anderson,” 251-262.

⁸⁰ American Foreign Service Association, *Ambassador Tracker*, “Appointments- by President”, 2019.

⁸¹ Schiemichen, “Madam Ambassador,” 7.

⁸² American Foreign Service Association, *Ambassador Tracker*, “U.S. Women Ambassadors,” 2016.

reason political appointments were and continue to be a point of contention between Foreign Service officers and the president.

High-profile, non-career women serving as ambassadors are not inherently bad for policy objectives. Enlisting professionals from a variety of backgrounds introduces new ideas and methods to roles influenced by rigid department culture. Aside from precluding the promotion of internal women candidates, the issue with pulling in outside talent in the 1970's was that most still shared previously elitist and exclusionary attributes- white, Christian, and elite educated.⁸³ Rather than the Foreign Service promoting their own women career Foreign Service officers, several of the first women ambassadors were political appointments justified by their celebrity, connections, or campaign contributions.

A Formative Period (1970-1999)

Garnham's paper reported the lack of women and minorities in the Foreign Service up to 1975. In Garnham's sample of Foreign Service officers, only two percent were women and only one percent were of minority groups, matching the State Department's reports that less than five percent of the FSO corps consisted of women.⁸⁴ Calkin's 1976 book, some of the subchapter headings, "Reasons For Not Hiring More Women," "Morale Among Clerks," and "A Decade of Decline in Numbers (1970)," allude to the trials of woman and working in the Foreign Service.⁸⁵ The section titles show knowledge of the demoralizing environments women operated in, yet the State Department was not inward-looking in diagnosing these problems. Despite a decade of

⁸³ David Garnham, "Foreign service elitism and US foreign affairs," *Public Administration Review* (1975): 44.

⁸⁴ Garnham, "Foreign Service Elitism," 45.

⁸⁵ Homer I. Calkin, 1978, *Women in the Department of State: Their Role in American Foreign Affairs*, Office of the Deputy Under Secretary for Management and Department of State, U.S. Government Printing Office (September 1978), 52, 102, 127.

declining numbers, Calkin's last chapter did not suggest that the lack of women and their dwindling willingness to work in the State Department was a continuing issue.

The severest limitations to women and their Foreign Service advancement between 1949 and 1989. When women first slowly began infiltrating the ambassador ranks, they required the assistance and connections of powerful gatekeepers to establish themselves. Post-1989 women gained more ambassador appointments than ever before thanks to Alison Palmer's successful class-action discrimination litigation, pressure from women organization groups, and support for women's appointments from the president. Women continued increasing among the ranks of ambassadors for twenty years. In 2010 they were approximately 40 percent of all Foreign Service officers, 30 percent of senior officers, and 33 percent of ambassadors.⁸⁶ Women's representation still fell short of parity in 2014 even in the junior ranks and is consistently anemic at senior levels.

Trends in Assignment Locations

Despite a history of prolonged gender discrimination, the modern percentage of total women ambassadors is actually higher in the U.S. Foreign Service than in other liberalized European countries. A 2019 study comparing the distribution of women ambassadors through 1990-2018 confirmed that concerning representation, the "...U.S. foreign service peaks at 40% women's representation in 2017, the EU at 22% in 2014, and Germany only at 14.5% in 2018."⁸⁷ Among all three governments these improvements in percentage representation were marred by limitations in the diversity and prestige of assignment locations.

⁸⁶ Andrea Strano, "Foreign Service Women Today: The Palmer Case and Beyond," *The Foreign Service Journal* (March 2016). Note: it is important to remember that the percentage of population does not infer the size of that group; for example, 10% of Russia is millions of citizens while in Bulgaria 10% represents tens of thousands.

⁸⁷ Laura Schiemichen, "Madam Ambassador: Statistical Comparison of Female Ambassadors across the U.S., German, and EU Foreign Services," *EU Diplomacy Papers*, 3/2019, 3.

Lack of women's representation as ambassadors between 1960-1999 was even more pronounced than in Schiemichen's study. Other trends in women's assignment locations post-1990, like lacking geographic diversity and prestige, also held true in the earlier decades.⁸⁸ In both the late 20th century and modern time periods, "...females disproportionately serve[d] in small African nations," with a "telling absence of prestigious postings."⁸⁹ The analyses from both eras confirm that not all ambassador posts were equally available to women, and their assignments tended to be less competitive locations considered "least-critical". The U.S. Foreign Service's lingering issues of women ambassador assignment diversity and prestige are rooted in a history of limiting women's opportunities to seek competitive location assignments and senior positions.

The geospatial report maps the presence of sixty women ambassadors across forty years and 84 missions to track geographical trends in placement and representation. The key information compiled from the State Department's Office of the Historian are the ambassador's *assignment location, date of appointment, and length of tenure*. This geospatial analysis informs a descriptive narrative of women ambassadors gradually expanding their presence in senior ranks and geographically diverse missions.

The timeline shows the geographic distribution of women's presence and reveals patterns in time and location. One pattern, for example, shows that once one woman was appointed to a new country for the first time, frequently other women ambassadors followed to that assignment. This trend could be explained as the women successfully establishing the confidence of their

⁸⁸ The minimum Muslim persons in a country in order to be considered "Islamic" for the analysis was 10 percent or 1 million persons. Data of Muslim populations by country was taken from Pew Research Center's "World Muslim Population by Country," November 17, 2017.

⁸⁹ Schiemichen, "Madam Ambassador," 7.

superiors that was previously absent, a confidence that women leaders could be successful at a particular mission. Alternatively, the high proportion of women's appointments to West Africa in comparison to other regions indicates that a high percentage of women were relegated to a small area of the globe.

Of the 84 countries, West Africa alone accounted for 45 percent of women ambassador assignments. South and Southeast Asia were the second and third most frequent assignment locations, with 12 and 10 percent, respectively. Other African regions combined (excluding the Maghreb) were 14 percent, and the MENA regions were 10 percent. Central Asia was 5 percent of appointments, and East Europe a mere 3 percent. Most missions saw between 2-3 women ambassadors, often fewer depending on the length of the diplomatic relationships with the host nation. The countries women ambassadors were most frequently sent to were Cameroon, the Gambia, Kenya, Togo, and Nepal. The average length of tenure as ambassador for these women was 3.5 years, as 4 years is the standard appointment length but this varied due to the needs of the mission and the willingness of the appointee. Patterns emerge where clusters of women served as ambassadors to the same mission, while in contrast many missions never saw a woman ambassador.

Russia is among eleven countries, out of 84, that have never had a U.S. woman ambassador. The Soviet Union and the U.S. shared a tenuous relationship post-World War II up until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. This period, the Cold War, spanned more than half of the years covered in the study. Their tense relationship based on ideological disagreements and the war on communism would justify the intervention of U.S. militants and military aid around the world. Vietnam, a Cold War battleground between the U.S. and the Communist-held government in North Vietnam, has also never had a woman ambassador.

Afghanistan, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, and Turkey were also involved in Cold War conflicts and did not have women ambassadors. Other countries which have never received a woman ambassador are Bahrain, Bhutan, and Saudi Arabia. Each of the missions have had 20-30 ambassadors, none of which were women. The lack of a woman ambassador in ten countries over seventy years, or approximately two and a half generations of Foreign Service officers, is an anomaly partially explained by post competitiveness and women's marginalization. As discussed later in chapter three, it was considered essential to one's career advancement to get posts in countries that were Soviet, Soviet-influenced, or strategic to the Cold War.

What about these countries made Foreign Service appointers believe women were unsuitable to serve as ambassadors? Three of the missions that women have been excluded from as ambassadors, missions to Afghanistan, Iran, and Vietnam, represent diplomacy efforts to countries with which the U.S. shares delicate or strained relations. Israel and Saudi Arabia, however, were regional footholds as American allies in the Middle East. The locations of exclusion represent prestigious, powerful, or strategically critical appointments.

Background and Credentials Summary

In 1975 Garnham identified the Foreign Service's biases towards particular qualifications and demographics. He reported that "the Foreign Service is condemned for overrepresenting the affluent, residents of Northeastern United States, Protestants, and graduates of a small number of prestigious Eastern colleges and universities."⁹⁰ While these biases are arbitrary and decrease the diversity of the Foreign Service corps, some biases in favor of particular backgrounds may be directly related to the preparedness of the candidates. Evidence of both forms of bias can manifest as demographic traits or credentials that re-appear frequently among ambassadors who

⁹⁰ Garnham, "Foreign Service Elitism," 44.

share similar assignment locations. For example, there may have been a preference towards ambassadors with security or intelligence experience in assignments to hostile or politically unstable countries, or there may be preference for ambassadors with USAID experience in assignments to industrializing countries. Degrees awarded from nationally acclaimed schools of international studies, such as John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies or Georgetown's School of Foreign Service, seemed to give ambassador candidates an edge. To navigate these potential biases, early women ambassadors are reviewed through descriptive data of their education and professional experience to determine how the biases of senior Foreign Service officers towards women officers' qualifications impacted who were nominated to be ambassadors.

Beyond qualifications, personal backgrounds were a very important consideration. The Foreign Service preferred women of a particular familial standing that discriminated against married women and single mothers. While discrimination based on elitism was common between men and women officers, the Foreign Service's expectations for men and women officers and their familial status were directly opposite. Married women were expected to forfeit their own careers in deference to the careers of their husbands. Simultaneously, single women fought the perception that they were unreliable keepers of state secrets or less capable of adapting to difficult postings.

The two types of data, quantitative data (women's qualifications and backgrounds, i.e. marriage status) and qualitative (personal narratives and oral histories) strike a balance at the data-collection level to preserve both the specificity of the individual narrative as well as the stronger conclusions justified by a sample of individuals with related experiences. This section describes the quantitative dataset compiled of 60 women ambassador's background and career

data. The variables collected on each woman was their assignment location, number of years in the Foreign Service, number of years as ambassador, rank (i.e. Counselor, Counselor-Minister), number of other appointments, number of foreign language competencies, and training or specializations. Additional personal and demographic variables were collected to investigate their association with qualification and potential bias, including birth date, birth place, marriage status, race and ethnicity and alma mater(s).

Seventy-nine percent were careerists who worked in the Foreign Service on average for 25 or more years before their appointments. European-American women made up more than half of the group (58 percent), while one-quarter were African-Americans, and just one woman ambassador was Asian-American.⁹¹ The youngest two ambassadors were 39 years old at the time of their appointment, and it was not unusual for women to be appointed in their early 60's, but the average age was 51 years.⁹² The majority of these women ambassadors were college-educated. Doctorate degrees were rare at only thirteen-percent, but 88 percent possessed bachelor degrees and 63 percent had master's degrees. Forty-eight percent of the ambassadors held at least one degree awarded from a top-25 rated university, most frequently Tufts, John Hopkins, Vassar, or Georgetown. Foreign language skills were not a strong requirement as just 43 percent of the women ambassadors had foreign language skills. Multiple assignment-related language skills such as Nepalese, Bengali, Malay, Albanian, Bulgarian, and Kazakh, were quite rare and for this reason only 28 percent possessed language skills that directly correlated to their ambassador assignments.

⁹¹ Ethnic/racial data were not available for fifteen percent of the sample.

⁹² Standard deviation is 5.8 years.

The “in high demand” languages listed in Delaney’s 1961 Foreign Service recruitment book show correlation to the major contemporary foreign policy focus, the Cold War. Delaney even lamented that 75 percent of incoming junior officers possessed no knowledge of any foreign language, in contrast to the robust Soviet Communist language-and-area programs that were effective in incentivizing young officers and producing fluency.⁹³ The anxiety of U.S. Foreign Service recruiters caused by the Services’ lack of language versatility, paired with competition with Soviet language programs, was evidently a primary motivator for intensive language training programs established during this period. Because language programs were motivated by this anxiety, languages spoken in Soviet-influenced or Cold-War related territories were considered most valuable. Thus, recruitment focused on speakers of eastern European languages Bulgarian, Czech, Hungarian, Serbo-Croatian, and Russian, on southeast Asian languages Vietnamese, Cambodian, Thai, Indonesian, and on the central or west Asian languages Turkish, Persian, Kurdish, and Hindu-Urdu. Chinese and Japanese, East Asian languages, were also deemed highly valuable. There was little interest in the local or rare languages found throughout African, Asian, and island countries. Even though Cold War competition with Soviet’s foreign influence motivated more extensive language training programs for junior Foreign Service officers, the Cold War heightened suspicions of immigrants which limited the range and strength of foreign language skills in the Foreign Service corps.

Marital status was of critical importance to chances of promotion for women Foreign Service officers, although expectations correlating work and marriage were quite different for women than for men. As discussed at length previously, men in the 20th century Foreign Service were incentivized to marry as the need for diplomats to present themselves as the head of a

⁹³ Robert Finley Delaney, *Your Future in the Foreign Service*, (Popular Library: New York, 1961), 52.

family unit was essential to establishing masculinity, stability, and leadership. For women it was quite the opposite; women who did choose to marry were pressured to resign, and women who became pregnant were forced to resign out of necessity given the lack of parental leave policies. It was rare for women to be active officers or ambassadors in the Foreign Service corps while raising young children, so many women who did become ambassadors were married without children or remained single throughout their careers. These circumstances bore out in descriptive data, where 44 percent of women ambassadors were married and an estimated 56 percent were unmarried.⁹⁴ Among the married women ambassadors, 40 percent were married to a fellow Foreign Service corps member. This type of arrangement was discouraged by the Foreign Service early on, according to Elinor Greer Constable's memory of working in the Foreign Service in the 1950's.⁹⁵ As time progressed resistance to Foreign Service married pairs diminished, however, and this familial structure actually seemed to make the gendered stigmas against Foreign Service women more manageable for the women with Foreign Service husbands. Although the couples were still not permitted to work too closely together, usually in different "cones" (administrative, political, economic, consular, or public diplomacy) or different missions entirely, they were unified by similar lifestyles and goals.

Privilege and Merit in Case Studies

In the 1960's three women were appointed chiefs of mission, among them Eugenie Anderson to Bulgaria. The other two were careerists Frances Willis to Sri Lanka and Caroline

⁹⁴ The percentage of "unmarried" women is biased towards inflation, as lack of evidence of marriage was considered unmarried. There may be a small number of women whose marriages were not publicized. Absence of an account of marriage in an oral history interview is a confident "unmarried" status, as oral histories were personal and highlighted major life events. The marital status of those who did not have oral history interviews were found through other means and are subject to higher error. Higher confidence is attributed to the accuracy of those in the "married" category, as it relied on positive identification of evidence rather than lack of evidence.

⁹⁵ Elinor Constable interview, 12.

Laise to Nepal. Child film-star Shirley Temple Black led a flush of first-time women ambassadors appointed in the early 1970's to posts mostly in West African countries, and the skewed proportion of women ambassador assignments to West Africa continued for several decades. Additional appointments aside from Black to Ghana in 1974 included Nancy Vivian Rawls to Togo (1974), Melissa Foelsch Wells to Guinea-Bissau in (1976), Patricia Mary Byrne to Mali in (1976), Mabel Murphy Smythe to Cameroon in (1977), and Marilyn Priscilla Johnson to Togo in 1978. Of these, the earliest eight women ambassadors in the sample, four were career FSOs and four were political appointees.

Shirley Temple Black's earliest interaction with a president occurred when she was just ten years old at the peak of her stardom in 1938.⁹⁶ Her transition from film to politics began after she retired from film at 22, became active in the California Republican unsuccessfully ran for office, and then into diplomacy. She ran an unsuccessful Senate bid when she aligned herself with pro-Vietnam war hawks in 1967.⁹⁷ Black remained involved in government matters and several years after her unsuccessful bid for Congress, she was appointed by president Gerald Ford to be ambassador to Ghana in 1974.⁹⁸ Temple Black served three years as ambassador to Ghana, followed by two years as the State Department's Chief of Protocol and another ambassadorship to Czechoslovakia.

There are few records about another early non-careerist and woman ambassador, Marquita Moseley Maytag, who served as ambassador to Nepal for a short period in 1976. Her

⁹⁶ Harris & Ewing, photographer, Shirley sees her old friend the president. Washington, D.C., June 24, 1938. Shirley Temple leaving the White House offices of the president today after a very important conference with the President, United States Washington D.C. District of Columbia Washington D.C, 1938. Photograph.

⁹⁷ "Shirley Temple Black Aligns Herself with Hawks in Vietnam Debate," *Nashua Telegraph*, The New York and Associated Press News Service, Oct. 9, 1967, 13.

⁹⁸ American Foreign Service Association, *Ambassador Tracker*, "Appointments- Gerald Ford," 2019.

name appeared in an oral history interview of one of her successors, Ambassador Alan Eastham. He recalled that Maytag was the former spouse of the chairman of Continental Airlines, which earned her a place in the U.S. delegation for the Nepalese king's wedding in 1972. From there she worked Republican circles to receive an ambassador appointment although her term was just one year. After her first year, Jimmy Carter entered the presidency and replaced Maytag with a career member of the Foreign Service.⁹⁹ Eastham's account showcases the problematic loophole of political ambassador appointments. Ultimate deciding power over ambassador appointments is granted to the presidency, an individual who in addition to leading foreign policy is also tasked with commanding the military and executing domestic policy. Because of the presidency's extensive formal powers, ambassadors have the potential to be appointed for reasons other than foreign policy goals. The significance of Marquita Moseley Maytag's work in the Foreign Service as a political appointee is that she landed the assignment with practically no qualifications, but was still subject to the executive authority that replaced her with a career official.

Mabel Murphy Smythe, a political appointee, did not have direct experience working in the Foreign Service, but had been a part of the diplomatic mission to Syria headed by her ambassador husband, Hugh Smythe. Mabel Murphy Smythe's appointment to Cameroon made her the first Black woman ambassador. Prior to the Cameroon appointment, in addition to having Arabic fluency, Murphy Smythe held a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Wisconsin.¹⁰⁰ Such a qualification was rare among ambassadors, although her husband and ambassador Hugh

⁹⁹ "Alan Eastman," interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, July 28, 2010, *Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, Ambassadors Series*, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Collection, Library of Congress, 16.

¹⁰⁰ Biographical Note in *Hugh H. and Mabel M. Smythe: A Register of Their Papers in the Library of Congress*, prepared by T. Michael Womack, Manuscript Division, Washington, D.C., 3-5.

Smythe also earned a doctorate. Later in Cameroon Murphy Smythe proved that her experiences in Syria served her well. Notably, she assisted in evacuating employees from the neighboring Chad embassy after the civil war made living conditions untenable.¹⁰¹ The Cameroon ambassador noted that her embassy staff were able to establish living arrangements for the evacuees a week in advance, crediting this preparedness to her experiences in Syria.

The careers of Mabel Smythe and Eugenie Anderson are examples of how political appointments could also play a positive role in advancing representation, but within a limited context. Political appointees overrode the Foreign Service institution's meritocracy, but in periods where women and Black women were not yet included, political appointments also served as a means to override the gender and racial biases that plagued the institution internally. The promotion of external candidates, it seems, was the only way that initially women were given the opportunity to be ambassadors and challenge those biases.

Nancy Rawls was born in Clearwater, Florida in 1926 and earned a bachelor's degree from Shorter College in 1947. Rawls began working, like many women had to at the beginning of their Foreign Service career, as a clerk. At this time, women had served as U.S. chiefs of mission, but not ambassadors. Over the next ten years, Rawls worked her way up to consular officer, serving in Vienna in 1957. She served in many other officer appointments prior to the ambassadorship to Togo, including foreign affairs officer at the State Department, economic officer in Hamburg, supervisory commercial officer in Monrovia, and economic and commercial officer in Nairobi. In Monrovia, Rawls demonstrated her writing and analysis abilities with the publication of a thorough commercial report, "Establishing a Business in Liberia," a seventeen-

¹⁰¹ "Mabel Murphy Smythe (Haith)," interview by Ann Miller Morin, 2 May 1986, *Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, Women Ambassadors Series*, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Collection, Library of Congress, 144.

page endeavor complete with a bibliography prepared for the Department of Commerce.¹⁰² After Togo, Rawls attended the National War College from 1970-1971. Rawls then served a second ambassadorship, this time to Ivory Coast, in 1980, and remained unmarried until her premature death from cancer in 1985.¹⁰³

Melissa Foelsch Wells was one of the earliest careerists, and one of the first women immigrants to become an ambassador. Born to a famous opera singer in Estonia in 1932, her family lived in Mexico before living in the U.S., where Wells graduated from Georgetown School of Foreign Service in 1956.¹⁰⁴ The success of Wells' career cannot be solely attributed to her advantages or privileges because her background and career have both elements of elitism and merit. While she was raised in an uncommon proximity to fame through her mother, she pursued a rigorous degree. She joined the FS on her own merits and worked her way to senior ranks. It was clear, however, that throughout her life Wells felt comfortable taking career risks because she had the safety net of a well-to-do family and connections.

Patricia M. Byrne, who served as ambassador to Mali in 1976, joined the Foreign Service in 1949 shortly after graduating with her Master's from John Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (1947). She served in various officer posts in Athens, Saigon, Izmir, Ankara, and the State Department. Byrne was a member of the U.S. delegation to the Geneva Conference on Laos, and she also held senior positions such as Chief for East Asia Personnel and Special Assistant to the Deputy Under Secretary for Administration. Byrne's life

¹⁰² Nancy V. Rawls, 1966, "Establishing a Business in Liberia," July 1966, Overseas Business Report 66-44, U.S. Department of Commerce.

¹⁰³ "Nancy V. Rawls Dies; A Former U.S. Envoy," *The New York Times*, April 13, 1985, Section 1, 29.

¹⁰⁴ Jimmy Carter, "United Nations Economic and Social Council Nomination of Melissa F. Wells To Be U.S. Representative," May 24, 1977, Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, University of California Santa Barbara.

bears similarities to another woman ambassador serving in the same time period, Nancy V. Rawls. Both women joined the FS in the 1940's when the FS corps was massively expanding and just a few women had ever been chiefs of mission, both attended the National War College near the end of their careers, and both were unmarried careerists that served more than one ambassadorship.

Byrne and Rawls are examples of the successful lives of career women in the 1970's Foreign Service, but it is clear that they are among a limited class of women with circumstances that allowed them to fulfill the ambassador role. Unmarried women that could manage without the support of a spouse and usually no children had far more mobility and independence than married women whose careers came second to their husbands'. Unconventional marriage arrangements also facilitated a woman's ability to serve as ambassador. In Anderson's telegram to India Edwards regarding her availability to accept an ambassador appointment, one of her first litmus tests prior to pursuing an ambassador appointment was the availability and eagerness of her husband to accompany her to Denmark.¹⁰⁵ These were two types of familial circumstances where the woman was the primary earner, which allowed them to be more career-oriented instead of assuming the traditional role as a family's primary caretaker and homemaker. A third type of "acceptable" and advantageous circumstance for Foreign Service women occurred when women FSOs married fellow (male) FSOs. In this circumstance, the couple's interests are aligned and both are prepared to relocate and face the rigors of Foreign Service environments. Further, in these family situations the Foreign Service demonstrated flexibility and willingness to coordinate the posting assignments of the two officers to minimize distance and time separated.

¹⁰⁵ Telegram from Eugenie Anderson to Mrs. India Edwards, Democratic National Committee, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives, 1959.

This structure was adopted by Melissa Foelsch Wells, Mabel Murphy Smythe, Caroline Laise, Jane Abell Coon, Elinor Constable, and Dorothy Meyers, among others.

Marilyn P. Johnson had the most diverse career history outside the Foreign Service than any of the other ambassadors. Born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1922, Johnson went on to claim two degrees, a Bachelor of Arts from Massachusetts's Radcliffe College and a Master of Arts from Middlebury College (1952).¹⁰⁶ Johnson was also the first woman ambassador to also be a veteran, as served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. She was a high school French instructor for seven years (1952-1959), and taught English in 1962 as a foreign language in Cameroon and Mali for two years. In the Foreign Service she expanded her language skills by learning Russian, and was among highly-favored senior officers that trained in the Foreign Service's Senior Seminar.

Marquita Moseley Maytag's acceptance of an ambassadorship to Nepal in 1976 seemed to set off a trend of women ambassador appointments to South and Southeast Asia in the early 1980's. In the first two years of the 1980's Anne Forrester Holloway became ambassador of Malaysia and Jane Abell Coon accepted the ambassadorship to Bangladesh. At the close of the decade, Julia Chang Bloch, a Chinese American immigrant, was appointed and accepted the ambassadorship to Nepal.

All four of the Black women ambassadors that were appointed before 1990 were political appointees, except for Frances Willis, Black women were the only women ambassadors of this period to have doctorate degrees. Each of them, Mabel Smythe, Barbara Watson, Anne Forrester Holloway, and Cynthia Perry, had very successful professional careers outside of the Foreign

¹⁰⁶ Jimmy Carter, "United States Ambassador to Togo Nomination of Marilyn P. Johnson," *The American Presidency Project*, University of California Santa Barbara, 1978.

Service. Prior to her appointment, Watson earned a J.D. from New York Law School and managed both a private law practice and her business, Barbara Watson Models.¹⁰⁷ Holloway was highly experienced in government and international affairs, and previously worked as the staff director of the House Foreign Affairs committee on Africa and as Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Program. She mothered two toddlers while pursuing her doctorate and working as an official observer at a UN conference before becoming ambassador to Mali in 1979.¹⁰⁸ Perry was a Peace Corps trainer, lecturer at University of Nairobi, USIA consultant, staff trainer at the United Nations Commission for Africa, among other international leadership roles.¹⁰⁹

Summary

While political appointees are negatively perceived by internal members of the Foreign Service, the impact of political appointees' prevalence on women's representation in the 1960's and 1970's was positive because it was a gateway for women to establish themselves in the highest ranks of the Foreign Service. Presidents are individuals who must concern themselves with re-election and have direct responsibilities to their constituency, the American people, where at least half of the constituents are women. As individuals and because of their re-election aspirations and obligation to constituents, presidents were more easily persuaded to appoint women as ambassadors than the Foreign Service as an institution with deeply ingrained biases against women. Albeit sometimes a president's motivation for appointing a woman was to

¹⁰⁷ Barbara Mae Watson papers (1918-1983), Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library.

¹⁰⁸ Patricia Sullivan, 2008, "Anne Forrester, Ambassador to Mali," obituaries, *The Washington Post*.

¹⁰⁹ Ronald Reagan, "Nomination of Cynthia Shepard Perry To Be United States Ambassador to Sierra Leone," May 14, 1986, Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, University of California Santa Barbara.

reward political loyalty or to appear sympathetic towards women's advancement, and not necessarily a reflection of a shift in his own attitudes about women's abilities and gender roles.

Because the president's motivations for appointing women were not always correlated to the woman's qualifications, unqualified political appointee women were an opportunity for biased Foreign Service officials to portray all women as incapable. Women were tokenized as ambassadors to justify "sufficient" inclusion of women despite that the level of representation was kept very low until 1990. Thus, these political appointees to a degree also further deprived women Foreign Service officers of their already limited opportunities to be ambassadors. There were representation issues among career and political ambassadors as a group, too. Women usually could only maintain a Foreign Service career if they remained unmarried and childless. Most were born in the eastern United States and attended a handful of elite schools, and even career ambassadors tended to have from elite social or political connections.

The largest geographic cluster of women ambassador appointments throughout the 20th century were to West Africa, which was also where the earliest women ambassadors were mostly sent. Women ambassadors were much more represented in sub-Saharan Africa than any other world region examined, but by the 1980's women ambassadors were also frequently assigned to South and Southeast Asia. A very limited number of women were appointed to the Middle East and East Europe. Women ambassadors' representation in all locations increased significantly in the 1990's, despite that growth actually declined slightly. When measuring representation growth per decade, because the starting point of just three women ambassadors was so low in the 1960's, an increase to seven women in the 1970's was a 133 percent increase. In the 1980's growth was 114 percent or 15 women ambassadors, and the 1990's saw growth of 133 percent or 35 women.

Since the 1990's representation, or the total number of women ambassadors, increased but growth continued to decrease at a rapid rate.

Another important aspect of the women ambassadors' lives was the family arrangements they cultivated to support their career ambitions. By far the most common arrangement for women ambassadors was to remain single. Among the minority that married, a significant number of them were married to fellow members of the Foreign Service. Many were also divorcees or widows during their Foreign Service career and tenure as ambassadors. The single marital status of most women ambassadors shows the impact of the resignation requirement for married women Foreign Service officers and the stigma that working mothers were less dedicated to their jobs than working fathers. This was especially discriminatory because male Foreign Service officers were expected to marry and have children, but women Foreign Service officers were punished for doing the same.

The factors of determining which women received ambassador appointments was a culmination of personal conditions or assets, the political climate and support of the president, and the internal policies of the State Department and Foreign Service. Careerist versus political appointee status and marital status were especially influential personal qualities. Careerists were subject to several discriminatory policies and stigmas preceding a potential appointment. While political appointees could more easily subvert these institutional biases, the likelihood of becoming a political appointee was partly dependent on a socio-economic status of substantial means enabling women to give significant campaign contributions. Political actors were not the only political appointees, however, because political appointees could also come with experience from other government or international agencies. Both options for advancement, the political and

career tracks, presented substantial barriers that the average American woman could not overcome just by possessing relevant qualifications or working hard.

Creating an acceptable familial situation prior to becoming an ambassador also involved personal sacrifice or privileged circumstances. Most women opted to overcome the challenges of discriminatory policies towards women, including requiring them to resign after marrying and not providing for parental leave, by staying single. Some women engineered other arrangements, but most did not raise young children while employed in the Foreign Service due to these circumstances. Without the special financial means that political appointees often had, for careerist women balancing a family and a career only became realistic after the Foreign Service reformed its policies in the 1970's and 80's.

Chapter 3

Oral Histories Analysis: Discrimination, Mitigation, and Consciousness

While 20th century women ambassadors' characteristics and qualifications establish the setting and conditions women ambassadors worked in, oral history interviews present insight into how women internalized their experiences. They provide the stories that shaped how women ambassadors perceived themselves, their Foreign Service supervisors, and other Foreign Service women. They add depth to the temporal trends discovered in chapter two, like how the growing number of women ambassadors was correlated to growing acceptance of women as supervisors overtime. The oral histories can go beyond confirming the trends in chapter two by contributing new themes, such as the way women became increasingly conscious of how gender bias impacted them.

Oral historians undertake the parsing of sources that are quite distinct from other archival sources. They must contend with issues of memory, bias, and the degree to which individual memory can represent collective memory and objective reality. Because oral histories may misrepresent the past, or exclude equally relevant narratives, oral historians must consult other types of sources to triangulate and verify what are objective truths. Attention is provided to the roles of the interviewer and the narrator that create the oral history event, an event which must be analyzed and deconstructed in its own right, from nonverbal cues to forms of "verbal hiding," which all distort the process of remembering and telling.¹¹⁰

Retzinger named five forms of "verbal hiding" that can present in oral histories, including mitigation or downplaying the importance or painfulness of an experience, abstraction or using passive language to remove agency, denial, defensiveness, distracting the discussion, or verbal

¹¹⁰ M.S. Retzinger *Violent emotions: shame and rage in marital quarrels*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1999: 64.

withdrawal indicated by shorter responses and longer pauses.¹¹¹ Antoinette Errante, in her career-long study of colonial and post-colonial education in Mozambique, found that “verbal hiding” manifested frequently alongside grief.¹¹² The tendency of narrators to employ “verbal hiding” compounds the challenge of persuading narrators to tell stories characterized by grief. For Errante, narrators demonstrated defensiveness, distraction, and verbal withdrawal when talking about Mozambique’s post-colonial era under an austere revolutionary government. Similarly, women ambassadors used “verbal hiding” through mitigation, denial, and passive language when asked to relate their experiences of gender discrimination in the Foreign Service.

Although oral histories bear inherent limitations and rely on narrators and interviewers that distort past events, historians continue to value oral histories as sources not for a reliable ability to convey information about events with objectivity, but for the way an oral history captures the expression of a human experience.¹¹³ Oral histories challenge historians to include in their descriptions of past events just how the events were internalized by people, which may in some ways be distinct from the events but nevertheless equally as important. The narrators’ characterizations of the past adds data points to how events shaped people’s beliefs and behaviors.

Many of the oral histories were conducted by Ann Morin, and her guidance of the interviews convey complex, frequently problematic, attitudes about women in the working class and leadership. Never having served in the Foreign Service herself, Morin was the wife of an officer who served in France, Japan, Iraq, and twice in Algeria. Her line of questioning was

¹¹¹ Retzinger 1991, 64.

¹¹² Antoinette Errante, “But Sometimes You’re Not Part of the Story: Oral Histories and Ways of Remembering and Telling,” *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 29, No. 2, 16-27.

¹¹³ Dominick LaCapra, *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2004: 3.

constructive in that she often directed the conversation towards “women’s issues,” yet she also expressed common-held biases towards women Foreign Service Officers and foreign peoples. Her focus on women’s experiences as they contrast men’s experiences encouraged the interviewees to reflect on their run-ins with sexism and to express their attitudes about this treatment. Through questions that reflect stigmatized perceptions about women, she provided interviewees the opportunity to express their ideas on controversial topics that may have impacted themselves and other women working in the Foreign Service.

Both types of revelations serve a purpose in answering the “how” and “why” questions of women ambassadors' success. Evidence from the oral histories shows that women ambassadors repeatedly expressed how they believed the Foreign Service’s hiring, promotion, and daily treatment of women was not inherently sexist or downplayed those instances. The women searched for rationalizations to support this belief while also conveying experiences that demonstrated biased treatment. Conforming to a dominant culture that assumed women were fortunate simply to work in any capacity at a prestigious and competitive government agency allowed women first to remain optimistic instead of disparaged about their current situations, and prevented them from appearing ungrateful or entitled. Adhering to the assumption that women’s inclusion was satisfactory merely for allowing their participation in the lowest-grade jobs was damaging to the careers of all other women in the Foreign Service though, because it invalidated their testimonies of discrimination and their argument supporting the ultimate unfairness that women ought to aspire for less. Such cases illustrate where personal achievement can be gained at the cost of advancement for women Foreign Service Officers as a collective.

The women who were confined to the junior or staff ranks, or who were perhaps besmirched as troublemakers for pointing out and pressing the issues of gender discrimination (a

category that women ambassadors from this time typically did not fall into) cannot be forgotten. Yet women ambassadors provide an opportunity to evaluate multiple aspects of women's advancement that are only understood through their privileged experiences. Exhibition of successful mitigation methods employed to overcome various forms of gender discrimination are one aspect of this. This evaluation characterizes the types of discrimination women experienced, who imposed the discrimination, and the mitigation methods utilized by women to overcome discriminatory practices. Another aspect is the attitudes held by successful women, who tended to be uncritical of Foreign Service policies and were desensitized to gender-related affronts. These attitudes benefitted the women individually but also allowed the Foreign Service to deny the conditions other women faced that excluded them from rising in the ranks.

Discrimination and Mitigation

The stigma against women in powerful positions such as ambassadors was still hanging over the careers of women Foreign Service officers fifteen years after Eugenie Anderson became the first U.S. women ambassador in 1949. Between Anderson's initial appointment to Denmark and her second to Bulgaria, only a handful of U.S. women also received ambassadorships. Eugenie Anderson expressed anxieties about her doubting colleagues while serving as ambassador to Bulgaria in 1962, saying that most were older and more experienced than she and were skeptical of her as a political appointee and her methods of communicating directly to everyday Bulgarians.¹¹⁴ Anderson sensed a bias against her womanhood, her lack of seniority and experience as a non-career appointment, and her unconventional diplomacy methods. Anderson recalled gaining the approval of the Bulgarians by establishing herself among

¹¹⁴ Eugenie (Helen) M. Anderson, interview by Larry J. Hackman, March 11, 1973, John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program, National Archives and Records Administration, 41.

Bulgarian officials and making them aware that although she was a woman and a non-careerist, she was not easily pushed around.¹¹⁵ Because this was Anderson's second ambassador appointment she held directly relevant experience, but the tensions and trials of the Bulgaria appointment were not resolved even after establishing herself locally. According to National Archives historian John Blair, while at the appointment to Bulgaria Anderson faced restrictions, isolation, and constant surveillance in addition to sexist media coverage in both the States and Bulgaria.¹¹⁶

Anderson's experience was typical in that there was lower confidence in her abilities because she was a woman and a political appointee. Unlike careerist women who became ambassadors, Anderson experienced the biases primarily while she was an ambassador. Career Foreign Service women usually relayed the worst of their discriminatory experiences as occurring early in their careers. In 1962 it was also unlikely for a married woman to be an ambassador because career women that married were forced to resign. Like many women ambassadors, both careerists and political appointees were doubted and minimized by individuals within the Foreign Service and the foreign officials in their assigned countries.

Themes found in women ambassadors' oral histories confirm the impact of discrimination by the Foreign Service against women as discussed in chapter two, taking the form of policies intended and implemented against women, excluding women from significant roles and assignments, and the expressed biases of senior Foreign Service officials and supervisors about women's inability to fulfill Foreign Service functions. The oral histories also provide a window into more subversive forms of discrimination often justified by flawed

¹¹⁵ Anderson, interview with Hackman, 1973, 51.

¹¹⁶ John P. Blair, 2018, "Eugenie Anderson's Firsts," *Pieces of History*, U.S. National Archives, 19 March 2018.

perceptions and inaccurate beliefs, such as assumptions about women's ability to work with other women and priming women early in their careers to believe they could not achieve ambassadorships.

Discrimination Denial

Women working in the Foreign Service between 1960-1999 confronted gender discrimination while trying to fulfill necessary job functions and pursue career advancement, but many women ambassadors were hesitant if not resistant even post-career to admit that this discrimination existed or affected them and their careers. When the women were asked point blank if their gender impacted how they were treated and how they perceived themselves, the most common answer was that it did not.¹¹⁷ Despite this hesitancy, such experiences could be coaxed out but only after the interviewee qualified that the experience was not discriminatory. The cognitive dissonance can be attributed to varying combinations of denial and ignorance. Denial featured heavily in the women's narratives, especially those who were truly convinced that the Foreign Service treated them fairly. Some women, as discussed later, experienced what was initially a discriminatory practice that was rectified shortly thereafter. This demonstrated to those women the State Department's willingness to adapt or eliminate discriminatory policies, which made it unfair and inaccurate in their eyes to characterize the Foreign Service as discriminatory against women. Denying discrimination against themselves was a means for these women to control their own narrative, curating it in such a way that discrimination could not

¹¹⁷ Ambassador Marilyn Johnson, interview by Ann Miller Morin, August 4, 1986, *Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, Women Ambassadors Series*, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Arlington, Virginia, 52; Ambassador Caroline Clendening Laise, interview by Ann Miller Morin, May 8, 1986, *Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, Women Ambassadors Series*, 70; Ambassador Theresa Healy, interview by Ann Miller Morin, May 10, 1985, *Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, Women Ambassadors Series*, 31-32; Nancy Vivian Rawls, interview by Larry C. Grahll, February 14, 1984, *Women in Federal Government Oral History Project*, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 23; Ambassador Elinor Constable, interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, May 30, 1996, *Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, Women Ambassadors Series*, 38.

define their career. To many of them this meant eliminating the possibility of discrimination from appearing even as a feature of their Foreign Service years.

Ignorance also likely played a role in the way women ambassadors recounted their experiences. During their time in the Foreign Service, equal treatment for women employees had been openly discussed and treated as a desirable outcome for decades but the conception of equality and how it was carried out in practice were still very much defined by powerful men in government. This being the case, the conditions women were living in and being told were equal were quite different from how equal treatment is defined today. The argument is easily made that women abided by the definitions of workplace equality provided to them by male supervisors because many women ambassadors interviewed did not admit they experienced discrimination, but provided many anecdotes that strongly suggested otherwise. Cognitive dissonance and denial were a major factor in this pattern, however based on current understandings of discrimination and knowing that ideas about gender equality evolved rapidly in the 20th century, the possibility that women ambassadors were ignorant to the variety of ways they experienced discrimination remains a relevant explanation. Outright denial, although it occurred often among the available sources, was not the only response. Some women ambassadors conceded that they had experienced sexism but tempered their criticisms.

Exclusion from Significant Roles

Several women ambassadors denied discriminatory behavior against them, but within the same interviews detailed circumstances that were unmistakably affected by gender bias. The majority of these events occurred early on in careers and the women's handling of them surely impacted their advancement. One type of occurrence that limited women's potential to be promoted was their exclusion from important roles at the junior levels. Melissa Wells had just

such an anecdote of her first assignment at the State Department headquarters in Washington, D.C., working as an intelligence analyst. Without her knowledge or consent, Wells' male colleagues determined that the task of reviewing and summarizing the daily cables to lead the morning briefings was too arduous a task for her. They decided amongst themselves to split her shift rotation on this assignment amongst themselves. The situation is best described in Wells' words:

“...the first assignment I had was in what we call Intelligence and Research, INR, as an analyst. We used to have [a] duty that would rotate. The most junior officers of the incoming class would take on the early morning briefing, which meant getting to the Department by six o'clock in the morning or something like that, reading the cables, and then having it all battened down to give a briefing at eight o'clock, eight-thirty. This meant, of course, being out on the streets by five-thirty, five-fifteen or so! Unbeknownst to me, my male colleagues of the same rank got together and said, “Let's spare Melissa this job.”¹¹⁸

A woman in another workplace and in another less-distant era might have been fuming at the liberties taken by her coworkers. These peers, not even the superiors responsible for determining the delegation of work, attempted to frame their exclusion of Wells as looking out for her despite going behind her back and not consulting her in a matter that impacted her. When pressed further about the incident, though, Wells was more than gracious in her assessment of her colleagues by amending the story by noting that her colleagues were only well-intended when they revealed that they had made arrangements with the boss and that her protests would

¹¹⁸ Ambassador Melissa Foelsch Wells, interview by Ann Miller Morin, March 27, 1984, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, Women Ambassadors Series, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Arlington, Virginia, 11.

have to be taken to the higher-ups.¹¹⁹ The “well-intended” exclusion removed Wells’ place among those first to receive the newest State Department updates and prevented her from contributing to writing the briefing summary. This role gave her power to weigh in on which news was significant enough for inclusion, and influence over how the news was framed.

If continued unchecked, it would have disempowered her role in a group responsibility meant to be shared equally and deprived her of opportunities to prove her competence before supervisors. Despite Wells’ defense of her colleagues, she was well aware of the fact that their actions excluded her from “a very interesting aspect of [her] job!”¹²⁰ Because she seemed able to acknowledge that their decision disadvantaged rather than benefitted her, her retelling of this discrimination relies most on her denial. It was difficult for her to appear accusatory towards her colleagues and she likely recognized that begrudging them did not profit her. Taking their words at face value and stopping short of categorizing the incident as discriminatory still allowed Wells to request a reversal of the decision without making herself appear a victim or a complainer. She assessed then that denial of discrimination was the most beneficial way to internalize her experience.

Another form of exclusion was the deficiency of women trained and promoted to senior positions. Each year the State Department recommended only a handful of senior Foreign Service officers to the nine-month Senior Seminar, established in 1958. According to the *State Magazine*, the Senior Seminar provided senior foreign policy specialists with opportunities to become acquainted with the conditions in the U.S. domestically, to consider the challenges facing foreign service professionals, and to evaluate their careers and opportunities by advancing

¹¹⁹ Melissa Foelsch Wells interview, 1984, 11.

¹²⁰ Melissa Foelsch Wells interview, 1984, 11.

in the Foreign Service even further.¹²¹ The primary utility of the seminar was to groom future ambassador candidates. Caroline Clendening Laise described the seminar as “designed for senior officers who were expected to go on to higher positions, to broaden their horizons....”¹²² Only about 30 senior officials from multiple civilian and military agencies were selected each year for participation.

In 1961 when Laise attended the seminar, there were very few women recommended for the program. She recalled that there was only one woman each year recommended for the Senior Seminar, but she did not believe that this was an issue of tokenization. Instead, she rationalized that this was the case because women were just not present in the higher ranks of the Foreign Service.¹²³ Laise’s explanation was that there were not many women participants in the Senior Seminar because those recommended for the program were senior officers and women senior officers were quite rare. While technically true such a fact does not eliminate the possibility that women were not given an equal opportunity to become senior foreign service officers.

Through internalization of patriarchal power structures, Laise uncritically accepts the “paucity...of women in higher ranks” rather than recognizing it as in itself a consequence of exclusionary practices. Her impression was that there were few women because only recently were women allowed to become Foreign Service officers, but this was because previously women’s roles were mostly limited to secretaries, clerk-typists, and nurses. Laise’s assessment that there were very few senior women officers was correct, however her assessment is flawed

¹²¹ Harry Gilmore, “The Senior Seminar,” *State Magazine*, March 1997, cover story.

¹²² Ambassador Caroline Clendening Laise (Bunker), interview by Ann Miller Morin, May 8, 1985, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, Women Ambassadors Series, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Arlington, Virginia, 34.

¹²³ Ambassador Caroline Clendening Laise interview, 34; “Token woman” was (unofficially) the practice of recommending just a single woman each year to the elite program to limit the participation of women without raising the ire of women’s advocates.

because she assumes that because the Senior Seminar selection process was not biased against eligible women, discrimination did not occur. The discrimination occurred at lower levels where a limit to the number of women internally promoted to senior Foreign Service positions by default limited the number of women who could become ambassadors. This regularity of this pattern was confirmed by an internal evaluation and report published by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board in 1992.¹²⁴

Women Supervisors and their Subordinates

Part of women's discrimination involved negative perceptions about relationships between women in the workplace. The dynamic was believed in circumstances between women supervisors and women subordinates. Specific examples cited in interviews were between officers and secretaries or ambassadors and deputy chiefs of mission. The times this topic arose, interviewees either disputed the claims or noted their awareness that the stereotype existed. There were no examples provided that verified these stereotypes.

When queried by Ann Morin, Caroline Laise clarified that she had never detected an issue of having a secretary who would have preferred to work for a man.¹²⁵ Ambassador Patricia Lynch soundly rejected when interviewer Charles Kennedy tried to claim that having a woman ambassador and woman deputy chief of mission was a "stumbling block" and "you really shouldn't have two women there."¹²⁶ Patricia Lynch proudly retorted that the working relationship between herself (as ambassador) and her woman deputy chief of mission effectively

¹²⁴ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, *A Question of Equity: Women and the Glass Ceiling in Federal Government*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1992).

¹²⁵ Caroline Clendening Laise interview, 1985, 24.

¹²⁶ Ambassador Patricia Gates Lynch, interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, February 26, 1992, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, Women Ambassador Series, National Foreign Affairs Training Center, Arlington, Virginia, 9.

“blasted” the theory that two women in the number one and number two positions at the same embassy could not be effective together. It was clear that Lynch held her deputy chief of mission in very high regard, considering her incredibly competent and capable. Deputy chief of mission Marilyn Hulbert was actually the first example that occurred to Lynch as she explained the importance of women helping other women to forge ahead in their careers and how Hulbert supported her in her ambassador role.¹²⁷

Jane Coon had memories of this “conventional wisdom” that women secretaries hated working for women and women officers were “poison for secretaries,” a position for which at the time only women were accepted.¹²⁸ Because of this rumor, Coon refrained from verbally dictating to secretaries. The concern this rumor caused Coon, a concern of somehow appearing to lord her seniority over junior women workers, prevented Coon from taking full advantage of her position’s resources. Her concern was so extreme that she told her secretaries she *could not* dictate. Quite the opposite scenario played out with a woman secretary, though, when Coon was assigned to Karachi. Coon’s secretary, Marie Martinez, routinely compelled Coon to dictate to her and Coon eventually learned the skill. In her interview, Coon expressed her gratitude to Martinez, saying that Martinez’s actions made a big difference in her career and taught her by example the significance of a woman helping another woman.¹²⁹ Interviews with the remaining women ambassadors also lacked evidence to support the rumor of animosity between secretaries and women senior officers. While it possibly occurred the women of this sample did not appear

¹²⁷ Patricia Gates Lynch interview, 1992, 9-10.

¹²⁸ Ambassador Jane Abell Coon, interview by Ann Miller Morin, November 4, 1986, *Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, Women Ambassador Series*, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Arlington, Virginia, 58; Delaney, *Your Future in the Foreign Service*.

¹²⁹ Jane Abell Coon interview, 1986, 58.

affected by this alleged dynamic. As for Jane Coon, she was more affected by the toxicity of the rumor itself than any actual negativity between women workers.

Exclusion from Significant Posts

Marilyn Johnson worked as a Foreign Service officer in various sub-Saharan posts in Africa before she challenged a discriminatory practice limiting women's assignment locations. Like other discrimination methods against women, such as the required resignation upon marriage, this practice was not official policy and was only upheld through verbal agreement of senior Foreign Service officials. These officials were spread across the embassies of relevant assignment locations as well as senior officials in Washington, D.C. responsible for coordinating assignments of junior officers.

While still working at her assignment in Mali, Johnson requested to a colleague that he put in an inquiry on her behalf about a potential posting to a Soviet country in Eastern Europe. They were mutually interested in this region, so Johnson asked that while he inquired about a position for himself, he also mention her interest as well. The response her colleague returned with was blunt; he conveyed that neither of them had a chance of landing an assignment in a Soviet country. The reason for the colleague's rejection was that he was going through a separation with his wife, and the reason they refused Johnson was explicitly because she was a woman.¹³⁰

Although by Johnson's memory the colleague did not elaborate on the nature of the rejection, the Department's past policies indicated a strong preference for married men over single men. In the 1963 recruitment handbook *A Definitive Study of Your Future in the Foreign*

¹³⁰ Ambassador Marilyn Johnson, interview by Ann Miller Morin, August 4, 1986, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, Women Ambassadors Series, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Arlington, Virginia, 66.

Service, there was a self-evaluation test intended to allow interested potential employees to evaluate their own fitness for a career in the Foreign Service. Some evaluation questions reveal much about the Foreign Service's expectations of the applicants' personal or familial situation. Question six asks, "Do you possess social grace, and, just as vital, does your wife or wife-to-be?"¹³¹ Implied in the question is that a wife is an essential asset to any successful career for male diplomats of the Foreign Service. The colleague's rejection indicated a rigid department standard that required diplomats to maintain a traditional family unit.

First, the standard was important in portraying the American diplomat as stable, which was cemented in their ability to fulfil a patriarchal role as the head of a family. Further, the addition of a wife (and thus usually children as well) were an essential gateway into important and powerful circles in many foreign cultures. The real business of diplomacy took place outside of business hours at luncheons, fundraisers, and private evening dinners, which required the domestic charm, grace, and generosity of the hostess.

This standard in itself bears gendered responsibilities for which only one party, the patriarch, is duly compensated. Wives of diplomats were expected to play their essential roles in diplomacy as homemakers, hostesses and diplomats in their own right. It was perhaps considered that because the patriarch was the financial administrator to the family unit, it was only appropriate to direct monetary compensation for the wife's contributions to him. There was never, however, a formal evaluation of the contributions of diplomat wives towards the goals of the mission despite that the indispensable roles these wives played was routinely emphasized.

The exact conversation that occurred between Johnson's colleague and the higher-ups is unknown. If his interpretation was accurate then the second half of the response, "they won't

¹³¹ Delaney, *Your Future in the Foreign Service*, 120.

take a woman,” was a straightforward expression of gender discrimination. The experience became relevant again when shortly after returning to Washington from Mali, Johnson substituted in an area director meeting for her absent area director. Presiding over the meeting was the United States Information Agency (USIA)¹³² director Frank Shakespeare. Mr. Shakespeare was on his way out as director and wanted to impress upon the area directors that the ““ideological battle”” of the Cold War would continue for at least ten more years and anyone with upward ambitions in the Foreign Service absolutely needed to serve a post to a Soviet country.¹³³

Motivated by her recently denied request to serve in the Eastern bloc, Johnson raised her hand at the conclusion of Shakespeare’s presentation to respond that at least two groups of people were not permitted to serve in Soviet posts.¹³⁴ Johnson shared her rejection from the Eastern bloc and according to her retelling, the exclusion of single men and women to Soviet-controlled locations was unknown to the USIA Director. Also in the meeting was Kempton Jenkins, serving as USIA Director for the USSR and Eastern Europe. Director Shakespeare referred to Jenkins to confirm Johnson’s statement about this particular exclusion. Jenkins explained that Johnson’s information was accurate, and that women were not assigned there because it was “a very difficult life for women.”¹³⁵

Johnson’s mitigation tactic was direct but non-accusatory. In a meeting for which she was substituting-in and where likely she was meeting the area directors and Mr. Shakespeare for the first time, Johnson boldly but politely put these senior officers on the spot. She expressed

¹³² The United States Information Agency was a bureaucratic body that worked with the State Department until 1999 when it was dissolved and its diplomatic responsibilities were transferred to the State Department.

¹³³ Marilyn Johnson interview, 1986, 67.

¹³⁴ Marilyn Johnson interview, 1986, 67.

¹³⁵ Marilyn Johnson interview, 1986, 67.

eagerness to serve and rather than emphasize the injustice of her circumstance. Her language was to query for a directive- to ask how she might proceed given her previous rejection. She navigated the situation delicately but by raising the issue in a high-level staff meeting among seniors and peers, she imposed a strong tactic that forced a response. Shortly after completing the Senior Seminar Johnson did receive a post to the Soviet Union.

The Protests of Men

Careers were also impacted when women as officers were sent to a particular mission and the receiving supervisor openly opposed the assignment of a woman. It is likely, especially among women who served as officers in the 1940's and 50's, that such objections occurred more frequently but the woman officer was not made aware. In the following known occurrences, the potential supervisor made the woman officer aware of his disapproval, sometimes also voicing his objection to relevant senior officials at the State Department. After an assignment to the University of Wisconsin ending in 1958, Foreign Service officer Nancy Rawls was notified that she was to be reassigned to a State Department sub-bureau in Washington.¹³⁶ She declined to name the bureau in her interview, but said that two weeks later she received a letter from the bureau's director stating that the office would not welcome another woman to work there, that the two or three women already assigned there were quite enough and even that number already had some men of the office up in arms. Although Rawls noted that this would be quite offensive and not tolerated by women in the Foreign Service anymore, her reaction was to forward this letter to the State Department's Personnel office and await direction from them. Consequently, she was reassigned as Executive Secretariat to the Secretary of State, which Rawls considered a "real break."

¹³⁶ Nancy Vivian Rawls interview, 1984, 31.

The experience confirms two important themes consistent with the accounts of other women ambassadors. First, that tolerance for discrimination was higher for women who served earlier than those that started their career in or after the 1970's. Prodded by women's advocacy groups including the WOA, policies were eliminated or modified to be more hospitable to women workers, and women's groups also built consciousness among women Foreign Service workers and Foreign Service wives. Teaching women about discriminatory behaviors empowered women officers to be aware of its presence and to be more vocal when it occurred. Rawls's acknowledgement that similar injustices were no longer tolerated by women in the 1980's confirmed that consciousness was broadly reconstructed and underwent transformative change in the 1960's and 1970's.

Secondly, Rawls's experience adds to a larger narrative provided by women ambassadors in which they constructed their experiences to show how their womanhood benefited them rather than disadvantaged them. In the above experience, Rawls concluded that the discrimination of the unnamed State Department bureau director worked in her favor, even though likely the State Department offered her the prestigious Executive Secretariat position out of fear of retribution if she were to file a complaint. Similarly, women believed that they were chosen for training or significant appointments because the State Department needed, for the sake of "diversity," even just one woman to be represented in typically male dominated activities. Rather than feel slighted at the tokenization, when Marilyn Johnson was the only woman of her class recommended for the Senior Seminar she met the opportunity with gratitude and optimism. Charles Kennedy, an officer at the time, pointed out that three of them were tokens- him as a consular corps member, Johnson as a woman, and Robbie (another colleague) as a Black. Johnson conceded that this might have been the case, but encouraged Kennedy to take the

opportunity at face value and enjoy the senior training, regardless of speculation about whether each class member did or did not deserve their spot there. In spite of Kennedy's commentary, Johnson fully believed that she was individually prepared for the senior training and deserved her spot there even if the FS would not have seriously considered her had she not fulfilled their agenda to appear "inclusive".¹³⁷

After transferring from the Bureau of Intelligence and Research and prior to her first assignment as a new FSO (circa 1957), Jane Coon like Nancy Rawls was informed rather indelicately by her future supervisor that she would not be welcome at her new assignment in Karachi, Pakistan. The consensus between the ambassador, the deputy chief of mission, and the political counselor in Karachi was that Coon's assignment was unreasonable because a woman could not do substantive work there.¹³⁸ The incident occurred again at her next transfer when Coon was sent to Bombay. Upon her arrival the new consul general informed her that because he had received a three-page letter from his predecessor informing him of all the reasons why a woman could not do consular work in Bombay, he had spent the day in communications with the State Department trying to "break" her assignment.¹³⁹ In both cases Coon remained at her position despite the protests of male supervisors and reported the assignments were stimulating, educational, and greatly beneficial to her career.

The State Department's handling of these incidents seemed inconsistent. In some cases the supervisor's protest was validated and the women officers were reassigned, in others their complaints were ignored and the women kept their initial assignments. In both circumstances,

¹³⁷ Marilyn Johnson interview, 1986, 88.

¹³⁸ Ambassador Jane Abell Coon, interview by Ann Miller Morin, November 4, 1986, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, Women Ambassador Series, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Arlington, Virginia, 35.

¹³⁹ Jane Abell Coon interview, 1986, 42.

the subjects reported that despite the opposition in those situations, the outcome was favorable to them. such (perhaps unwarranted) compliance and optimism appeared to be an attitude shared by future women ambassadors.

The Resignation Requirement

Another discriminatory policy was the requirement that newly-wed women Foreign Service officers retire from their posts. Elinor Greer Constable successfully exercised verbal opposition to this policy as a form of discrimination mitigation. Constable's challenge of the status quo was more confrontational because she was the first woman to refuse to resign following her engagement to be married. The confrontation occurred in 1957 when Constable was called into the office of Frances Wilson, Executive Director of the Foreign Service's Economic Bureau, after becoming recently engaged.¹⁴⁰ In the exchange, Constable remembered that she was quite terrified but stood her ground. Wilson pressured her to resign, telling her that this was a requirement, but Constable insisted that if she were to leave the Foreign Service they would have to fire her and if there was a regulation that dictated the requirement to resign, she would like to see it. To Constable's immense surprise there was in fact no regulation, it was merely a custom. The unofficial policy that forced women to resign was supported by what Constable called two practical limitations.¹⁴¹

The limitations she described were first, the lack of regulations guaranteeing maternity leave, which required women to choose between work and starting a family. The second was that family members were not permitted to work together at the same post. Constable even suggested

¹⁴⁰ Constable did not tell the exact date of this encounter, but she met Peter Constable in 1957 and they were married May 1958, so it would have occurred at some date between 1957-1958.

¹⁴¹ Ambassador Elinor Constable, interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, May 30, 1996, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, Women Ambassadors Series, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, 12-13.

that the Foreign Service would purposefully separate a couple to pressure the wife to resign. Constable maintained her position in the Foreign Service despite her marriage and shortly after but resigned within a year to start a family.

Melissa Wells also experienced this retirement requirement exclusively imposed on women much differently than her female contemporaries also working in the State Department in the 1960's. Despite that interviewer Ann Morin recalled many recently married women during the same time who were required to resign, Foelsch Wells was somehow able to circumvent the unwritten rule. Foelsch Wells attributed this to possible intervention by a male colleague on her behalf. Despite that the rule was not codified formally, upon Foelsch Wells' marriage to a fellow FSO, colleagues bombarded her with questions about when she intended to submit a formal resignation. Wells could only respond that her supervisor, Fritz, had allowed her to stay on and that was the end of it.¹⁴² In this circumstance, the unwritten but widely known and anticipated rule of required resignation provided the opportunity for supervisors to selectively apply the rule. Women that were bothersome or unwanted presences assumed they would be and were readily disposed of, but exceptions could easily be made to tolerate the few determined women who would not resign.

Reception in Islamic Societies

The role of Islam in their respective countries and how it influenced ways of life was not something heavily considered by diplomats in the 1960's, 70's, and 80's. There was instead a focus on the Cold War's ideological "battle" between American capitalists and Soviet socialists. To this end U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War tended to primarily consider countries of the "third world" in terms of their sympathies towards either side and overgeneralized their

¹⁴² Melissa Foelsch Wells interview, 1984, 18.

orientations to other matters of state, including the relationship between government and religion. Overlooking the significance of Islam was also more prone to occur in countries with mixed religious practices, for example Sierra Leone and Togo, compared to dominantly Muslim countries like Pakistan and Syria.

In 1944, a *New York Times* journalist reached out to State Department representative Nathaniel P. Davis to question if the Department meant to liberalize and provide more opportunities for women to become officers after the war. Davis replied that he was optimistic but also aware of obstacles unique to women, among them the prejudices against women in public life that existed in Muslim countries.¹⁴³ Women officers were warned in advance of potential hostilities towards them in Islamic countries, but adverse reactions of that nature were not expressed in interviews. Instead, women found that their representation of the U.S. government carried an authority that allowed them to be taken seriously.

Before her officer assignment in Tunisia, Marilyn Johnson was told by other Foreign Service workers that she would have troubles as a woman because Arabs preferred to deal with men.¹⁴⁴ After spending time in Tunisia, her experience was that she could effectively negotiate with Tunisians because they regarded her primarily as a professional rather than a woman. Jane Coon was confronted by similar concerns when she was assigned as an officer to Karachi, Pakistan. Despite the qualms of her supervisors that a woman officer would not be effective in Karachi, Coon claimed that she was received by Pakistanis as a “third sex” and their expectations of women did not apply to her.¹⁴⁵ Like other women ambassadors, Coon considered her womanhood to be a distinct advantage as it allowed her to befriend Pakistani families which was

¹⁴³ Calkin, *Women in the Department of State*, 105.

¹⁴⁴ Marilyn Johnson interview, 72.

¹⁴⁵ Jane Coon interview, 1986, 39.

nearly impossible for male diplomats in Karachi. Coon's interactions with Pakistani families enhanced her understanding of the power Pakistani women wielded within their family. Pakistani women were extremely influential in family decision making including arranging marriages and deciding issues of land and property. This understanding provided Coon a counternarrative to the typical Western perceptions of women in purdah as disempowered and subjugated to their husbands.

On occasion foreign officials attempted to marginalize women ambassadors, but they found support and acceptance from the heads of state. At a diplomatic reception held by the Bruneian Sultan at the palace, the guests were split into two groups- the wives of ministers and ambassadors were seated off to the right, and the ministers and ambassadors were seated in the central area of the reception room.¹⁴⁶ Theresa Tull was the newly appointed U.S. ambassador to Brunei and took her place in the center of the room with the other ambassadors. An older member of the Sultan's administration spent the evening pestering Tull to join the women on the other side of the room. The next year, Tull received the same treatment from a palace staffer and had to invoke the assistance of a Bruneian minister. Despite the slights, Tull conveyed that the Sultan always treated her with dignity and the respect granted by her title.

Cynthia Perry recalled that there was a poor relationship between herself, as ambassador, and Burundi's Foreign Minister. The Foreign Minister tried to have Perry recalled by accusing her of disliking his religion, Islam. Because she had never made any offensive claims regarding Islam, Perry perceived that her offense was that she was a woman in leadership. She explained, "it was fixed clearly in his mind that as a woman, I could not be Ambassador."¹⁴⁷ Again, though,

¹⁴⁶ Theresa Tull interview, 2004, 170-171.

¹⁴⁷ Cynthia Perry interview, 28.

a woman ambassador was supported by the head of state despite the disapproval of his other employees. Burundi President Momoh personally apologized to Ambassador Perry and took steps necessary to have the Foreign Minister removed from his position.

By their reporting, overall the experiences of women ambassadors and officers in Muslim countries were not greatly limited by being women as they were told to expect. In some cases, Muslim peoples were more adaptable to Foreign Service women than anticipated. When challenges did arise women ambassadors overcame them by utilizing their determination, the authority behind the U.S. government, and their friends in high places.

Experiences of Minority Women Ambassadors

When comparing awareness and exposure to the Civil Rights movement and the treatment of Blacks in America, there was a definite disparity between Mabel Smythe and other women working in the Foreign Service and women ambassadors appointed around the same time. Raised in Atlanta in a dominantly Black community, Smythe had a deep awareness of the abuses to Blacks prior to and during the 1960's and 70's. Smythe's family experienced deep segregation and witnessed lynchings of individuals from families with whom they were close.¹⁴⁸ Her awareness of America's failure to equalize racial disparities included her knowledge that there were sustained inequities in academia and government jobs.

Smythe, the first Black woman ambassador (1977), revealed that the State Department institution also lacked the initiative to make ambassador appointments more inclusive of minorities. African American ambassadors frequently held higher-than-average education credentials, as did Mabel Smythe and her husband Hugh Smythe. The NAACP tried to facilitate

¹⁴⁸ Ambassador Mabel Murphy Smythe, interview by Ann Miller Morin, May 2, 1986, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, Women Ambassadors Series, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, 33-36.

the ambassador appointments of Black professionals as early as the 1940's. The NAACP communicated to the State Department that it was high time they began appointing more diverse individuals to ambassadorships, specifically Blacks. The Department's initial response was that there were no suitable candidates, to which the NAACP representatives replied that they would source qualified candidates if the State Department only sent interviewers.¹⁴⁹ According to Mabel Smythe, Hugh's appointment in 1965 was not a product of NAACP efforts and the State Department was just filling an empty spot in Syria.¹⁵⁰

Terence Todman, a Black man who entered the U.S. Foreign Service in 1954 and became a six-time ambassador, confirmed that the methods through which the State Department discriminated against women were in some regards like the ways they discriminated against minorities. Similar to their statements on women assignments, the State Department stated that they could not send Black officers to Arab or Latin-American countries because they would not be accepted by the foreign peoples. Trained as an Arab specialist, Todman found this to be entirely false and accused the State Department of "concocting" the idea, because all of his experiences with racism were from people within the State Department, U.S. agencies, and other Americans.¹⁵¹ Todman also noticed, as Smythe had, that the Department would use the excuse that they could not diversify or make the FS corps more representative of the American people by hiring more Blacks and other minorities because qualified minorities did not exist.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Mabel Murphy Smythe interview, 1986, 86.

¹⁵⁰ Mabel Murphy Smythe, interview by Ruth Stutts Njiiri, June 2, 1981, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, Ralph J. Legacy: Minority Officers, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Arlington, Virginia, 87.

¹⁵¹ Terence Todman, interview by Michael Kren, June 13, 1995, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Arlington, Virginia, 13.

¹⁵² Terence Todman interview, 16.

Even currently the FS corps struggles to recruit and retain minority officers in part because of their hostility to change and the maintenance of an “in” group of Foreign Service elitists that prefer to maintain the status quo, which included the intentional exclusion of anyone that was perceived as different.¹⁵³ Minorities and minority women in particular must overcome the elitist inclinations in the Senior Foreign Service to advance, while also combatting microaggressions or purely racist encounters. While white women ambassadors claimed that the role of an American representative earned them respect and authority, minority officers and ambassadors recounted that they were repeatedly required to prove their identity as American representatives to visa applicants, security guards, and peers from other agencies.¹⁵⁴ Sometimes, those that questioned their authority were outright hostile. Current FS officer Kip Whittington shared that minority officers will internalize or ignore these delegitimizing encounters because the FS fails to provide avenues for the inequitable treatment to be addressed. Thus, inadequate recruitment consists of just one aspect of the representation issue. Retention of minority officers was and remains another key reason the FS lacks a representative number of minority officers in the junior and Senior Foreign Service corps.

In contrast, white women ambassadors did not discuss the racial injustices occurring in America as significant aspects of their private or work lives. In one instance Nancy Rawls recalled how troubled she was that her Christian school Shorter College would not permit a Black minister to lead a vesper service.¹⁵⁵ It was apparent that she was tangibly aware of racial

¹⁵³ Terence Todman interview, 16.

¹⁵⁴ Kip Whittington, “The Color of Diplomacy: A U.S. Diplomat on Race and the Foreign Service,” Texas National Security Review, July 30, 2020; Terence Todman interview, 6.

¹⁵⁵ Nancy Rawls interview, 1984, 14.

inequities only when such incidents intersected or impacted her life. As a white woman unlikely to be targeted for her skin color, this occurred infrequently.

Oral histories of Black American women ambassadors that served close to the time of Mabel Smythe's appointment, Barbara Watson (1980) and Anne Forrester Holloway (1980), were not accessible. If interviews with Watson and Holloway become available, these would be valuable in adding nuance to the shared experience of Black women ambassadors in the 1980's. One aspect shared by the three women was that they were each political appointees, speaking to the State Department's failure to internally promote Black women. All three held doctorate degrees, a higher-than-average education qualification compared to the other women ambassadors.

Minority women ambassadors had to contend with the fact that Blacks, Latinos, Asians, and other racial and ethnic minorities were underrepresented and marginalized in the Foreign Service, particularly at the recruitment level, in addition to the barriers placed before women like exclusion from assignments and policies against married women. The first Asian-American ambassador, Julia Chang Bloch, told of both types of restrictions to her career.¹⁵⁶ Like all FS women, Bloch had to make difficult decisions to maintain both a career and a marriage. The first time Bloch was offered an ambassadorship, she turned it down because she knew it would strain her marriage and her husband was not prepared to follow her abroad. After she accepted the next ambassador opportunity in 1989, Bloch felt immense pressure to be successful and gain credibility to disprove that women were less capable in diplomatic leadership roles, but also because she knew her performance as the first Asian American ambassador would impact the

¹⁵⁶ Ambassador Julia Chang Bloch, "Women and Diplomacy," speech delivered to the Foreign Policy Institute of Women Legislators, Center for Women Policy Studies, July 15, 2004.

future opportunities for Asian Americans in the FS. Because minority women experienced a double-barrier, minority women gained representation among ambassadors decades after the either minority men or white women and their representation at all levels of the FS lags behind their representation among the American population. Early stages of Black women's participation as ambassadors was only possible by political appointment and excessive qualifications, further demonstrating the brokenness of the State Department's meritocracy. Even after the first Black woman ambassador it was still decades before Latina and Asian women were appointed as ambassadors.

The Role of Consciousness

The previous sections describing discrimination and mitigation against discrimination allude to how the subjects' interpretations of events were influenced by their work environment. Women walked a fine line between addressing sexism as to minimize its impact without appearing to be complaining, ungrateful or "difficult", but they also minimized the significance of those occurrences. In the moment, they opted to refrain from accusing coworkers and Foreign Service policies of discriminating against them. Retrospectively they curated their stories to make it seem as if gender discrimination was not a major feature of their careers. This section delves deeper into the role of consciousness, that is, the manner in which women ambassadors processed their experiences and how these experiences were later retold.

Attitudes for Success

Intra-department gender discrimination during their Foreign Service years most frequently occurred while women served in junior and supporting positions. Not only were women disregarded or excluded from certain roles and duties, but becoming, as Nancy Rawls put it, a "squeaky wheel" was punishable. Women were far better off denying that they ever

experienced gender-related discrimination, or at the least that it did not affect them significantly, than attempting to bring attention to these issues. Denying gender discrimination meant quicker advancement, pointing it out was met with resistance and could derail an otherwise successful career. For this reason, most ambassador women interviewed strongly denied any victimhood on account of their gender and chose to characterize their experiences as privileged. For example, Caroline Laise remarked that she was very lucky to have only ever been encouraged and supported by her male supervisors.¹⁵⁷

Gender bias also manifested as the women modifying their behavior to appear less threatening to men. Mabel Smythe estimated that her sensitivity to not appearing more intelligent than those she spoke to helped her career as a Black woman. She explained that as she grew up, she learned to be mindful in conversations of not hurting people's feelings, to not make comparisons, and to appear not so bright herself but always impressed at even the most modest of intellects. She thought that this inclination was partly because of traditional Southern views on womanhood, that women ought to not outdo men.¹⁵⁸ Alternatively, women sometimes challenged gender discrimination by avoiding attributing behavior to gender bias. They were able to bring attention to behavior they identified as different treatment without explicitly calling out perpetrators for being gender-biased.

A common expression among early women ambassadors was their sense that they were actually provided more opportunities precisely because they were a woman, and not the reverse-discriminated or overlooked because of their gender. Because these women were clearly successful in their Foreign Service careers by virtue of their ambassador appointments, they were

¹⁵⁷ Caroline Clendening Laise interview, 1985, 12.

¹⁵⁸ Mabel Murphy Smythe interview, 1986, 47.

hesitant to be critical of the institution that promoted them. Careerists who would go on to become ambassadors frequently stated that they were more frequently selected for training or placement opportunities precisely because they were a woman. According to several women ambassadors, such preference occurred because under the direction of presidents like Johnson and Carter, the Department wished to appear more inclusive.¹⁵⁹

The careers of the careerist women ambassador, though, did not represent the average woman's experience. The majority of women struggled to rise in rank, obtain favorable assignments and receive advanced training. These future ambassadors were exemplary, but it is likely that their relevant capabilities were not the only factor in their advancement; the way in which they managed slights related to their gender seemed to indicate to superiors that they were up for a job where such slights may occur more frequently. Given that women were only very recently integrated into many new workspaces and manifestations of gender bias were not uncommon, these altercations took place early on in women's careers. The assessment of which women were too "soft" and which were "tough" and "capable" occurred very shortly after their State Department or Foreign Service work began.

In another dialogue, Nancy Rawls admits that her male colleagues arranged for her many breaks throughout her career and only recalled a couple times when she felt she was limited by her gender. Her semantics following this admission revealed that she either consciously or subconsciously accepted the male-domination of her field. Rawls attempted to draw conclusions about her status as a woman in the Foreign Service and used male pronouns to describe her own work. She recounted, "These breaks have all been arranged by male colleagues, male superiors. I

¹⁵⁹ Caroline Clendening Laise interview, 1985, 42-43; Marilyn P. Johnson interview, 1986, 111; Nancy V. Rawls interview, 1984, 23.

don't know what lesson that has for us now. It does have a lesson for me because, I think, each person has to respond to *his* situation according to *his* natural inclination. And my natural inclination is always to take a softer approach than some might take.”¹⁶⁰ Granted, there was a historical tendency to default to male pronouns when discussing hypotheticals, ungendered subjects, or mixed company.¹⁶¹ Just because this was the norm, though, does not mean that it did not carry with it the implicit understanding that men are the default, and in this case that working *men* were the norm and working *women* were special circumstances. The seemingly unaware utilization of these pronouns strongly supports the theory that ignorance of the various means in which discrimination manifests caused inconsistent retellings of discrimination occurrences.

Teaching Women to Aspire to Less

Another mechanism used to prevent women's advancement was fostering an organizational culture that psychologically influenced women's sense of self. Women who managed to pass the Foreign Service exam received continuous grooming of their expectations. Even as a senior officer, Marilyn Johnson considered the ultimate aspiration to become an ambassador as theoretically a chance but “pretty slim” because she was a woman.¹⁶²

Early on Jane Abell Coon knew that to compete with men, more was expected of women. She said, “what I'm really conscious of now, probably as a result of the feminist movement, was that, back in the '50s, you accepted the fact that you were a woman and therefore it was going to

¹⁶⁰ Nancy Vivian Rawls interview, 1984, 23. Emphasis added.

¹⁶¹ Although not the practice at the time, gender-neutral, plural pronouns “they,” “them,” “theirs,” were more recently adopted as gender-neutral singular pronouns in circumstances where the gender of the subject is unknown, undecided, or absent.

¹⁶² Marilyn Johnson interview, 1986, 108.

be more difficult to compete. I didn't particularly get upset by it. It was just part of the environment.”¹⁶³ She elaborated further,

“... I hate to say I accepted it, but I didn't have any tremendous sense of injustice. ...It was just the way things were. In later years, talking it over, for example, with my husband: every male officer in his A-100, his junior officer class, came in with a fixed notion that they were going to shoot for the top, that becoming an ambassador was the name of the game. I don't literally ever remember during my first period in the Foreign Service, my first sixteen years, ever dreaming that that could be possible. I did not aspire to it because it was not one of those things one aspired to. I'm not even sure I ever thought it would be possible to become a political counselor, because that implied supervising men, and women didn't supervise men very often in those days. ...There were certainly women in the Department who did, but it was not an expectation. For a young male officer at that time, there was an expectation of rising up that wonderful ladder. I realize, looking back on it, I really did not see that as a goal. I thought I would work on each successive assignment. I loved the work, I loved the Foreign Service, but it never occurred to me that I would ever be able. . . There was always an expectation there that there was a possibility of marrying and leaving the service, but I think there was also an equal expectation that this was a great and wonderful way to make a living. So probably both things operated at the same time. I think

¹⁶³ Jane Abell Coon interview, 1986, 34.

that young women now who come into the service find this absolutely inexplicable. Sometimes I find it inexplicable, too.”¹⁶⁴

Given that Coon lacked a sense of injustice over the fact that for her first 16 years the ambassador position was considered attainable for men but unattainable for women, her acceptance and lowered ambition support the conclusion that women were groomed to expect less promotion than men for performing the same work. In this passage she relates this hindered ambition to the unacceptability of women supervising men, the expectation put upon women to marry and leave the service, and the implication that despite the curtailments aimed at women this was still a “wonderful” job compared to other available options. At the time of the interview in 1986, Coon expressed bewilderment that she so readily accepted these conditions as such blatant and intentional disadvantages would not be accepted by Foreign Service women in 1986.

Teaching women through organizational culture to aspire to less was a tactic of manipulation that saved the senior Foreign Service officers reluctant to appoint women the trouble of personally and openly opposing women’s advancement. It was more streamlined and covert to foster a culture where women understood their participation even at the lowest organizational levels was generous, and to eliminate themselves from the competition for senior positions. The method served to maintain the patriarchal seniority system within the Foreign Service long after a woman broke the ambassador “glass ceiling.” For Coon, women’s representation at senior levels by itself was not enough to convince her that it was possible to become a senior officer because it was still uncommon and unconventional.

From Coon’s recollection there is evidence, though, that women’s expectations of their Foreign Service careers evolved from 1957 to 1986. She suggests that women in 1986 would not

¹⁶⁴ Jane Abell Coon interview, 1986, 34-35.

concede to the idea that marrying a Foreign Service officer was better than being a Foreign Service officer, or that settling in a low-grade position should be the end of a woman's ambitions. A shift of consciousness occurred in these twenty years that began with women questioning if their status and importantly, their potential, was in fact inherently inferior to that of men. Despite this early women were initially, and some continued to be, rather uncritical of their long-term employer because of the rare opportunities provided to them. Because each one achieved the title of ambassador at least once, by their own assessments the Foreign Service benefitted more than it limited them.

Evidence of a Transformation of Consciousness

One of the most significant products of the women's liberation movements was the evolving attitudes often facilitated by women's activist or education groups. While accompanying her FSO husband to his Kathmandu post in 1970-73, Jane Coon experienced just such an expansion of awareness. Coon participated in a women's consciousness group that met bi-weekly to read and discuss literature related to women's issues, and their discussions enabled her to acknowledge her own inherent biases against women.¹⁶⁵ She realized that previously at social events she sought out the conversation of mostly men and dismissed women offhand. After stepping out of this predetermined judgement, she was surprised to discover how many interesting women surrounded her.

A now infamous question that women were asked at their oral exams prior to entry into the Foreign Service was if they were interested in getting married. Theresa Tull recalled that when she was asked this in 1963 she thought it a perfectly legitimate question and, in typical woman ambassador fashion, put a positive spin on it by informing the examiners that if she were

¹⁶⁵ Jane Abell Coon interview, 1986, 56.

to marry another Foreign Service Officer, they would get two-for-one.¹⁶⁶ In the 2004 oral history interview, though, Tull considered this mindset evidence of how “brainwashed” and “unenlightened” she was at that time, and reflected that the inappropriateness of the question now was evidence of how much attitudes had since changed.

Mabel Smythe also believed that the women’s liberation movement should be credited for changing minds. “Chauvinistic attitudes” of women still dominated American society into the 1960’s and she experienced this first-hand from other Foreign Service women as the ambassador’s wife.¹⁶⁷ When her husband was appointed as ambassador to Syria, the Foreign Service thought it was fortunate that they would get a two-for-one deal as both her and her husband were professional scholars with doctorate degrees. When the Foreign Service wives at the Syrian embassy received the news, they later confessed to Smythe that they groaned at the idea of working with a “bluestocking” woman.¹⁶⁸ Smythe thought this a good example of how discriminatory attitudes towards professional women were widely held by Americans even as late as 1965. The transformation of consciousness wrought by women’s liberation ideology, Smythe theorized, really occurred in the 1970’s.

Attitudes about the Women’s Liberation Movement

Women ambassadors’ attitudes about the women’s liberation movement ranged from apathy to support to sympathy without participation. Oftentimes women ambassadors showed reservations about committing to blanket support of women’s activists and strived to distinguish themselves from those vocal groups. Ambassadors like Patricia Lynch agreed on the mission of

¹⁶⁶ Ambassador Theresa Tull, interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, November 9, 2004, *Foreign Affairs Oral History Project*, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Arlington, Virginia, 19.

¹⁶⁷ Mabel Murphy Smythe interview, 1986, 30.

¹⁶⁸ “Bluestocking” is an often derogatory term for an intellectual or scholarly woman. The term is derived from the Blue Stocking Society, an informal group of women scholars in 18th century England.

the women's liberation movement but believed there was a place for the "pushy" brand of progress as well as a patient one, opting for the latter. Lynch considered her work in the Foreign Service as a different kind of contribution to women's advancement, one that was slow and steady rather than loud, outspoken, and demanding.¹⁶⁹ She attributed this to other women trying to advance themselves in the Foreign Service, who worked within the flawed institution rather than attacking it from the outside, as did the women protestors or women who sued. Lynch still acknowledged that she owed these "loud" women a debt because she did benefit from their work, they just pursued a different method towards a similar goal.

Even when Marilyn Johnson joined the Women's Action Organization, she distanced herself from the women's movement by calling herself only a "sympathizer" but not an activist.¹⁷⁰ She believed that if anything, as a woman she was discriminated *for* rather than discriminated against. Johnson was a supporter who attended WAO meetings because she, in her words, recognized that other women were not as fortunate as her. She was still careful to clarify multiple times that she would not identify as an activist.

Lukewarm support was offered by Theresa Healy, who claimed that she was only peripherally aware of the women's movement while living in Washington and was more interested in a civil worker's movement to unionize the Foreign Service.¹⁷¹ While Healy did not go so far as to openly criticize second wave feminists, she personally did not believe that the women's liberation movement liberated her in any way.¹⁷² She considered the benefits of the movement to be negligible in her own life, showing a disconnect between herself and other

¹⁶⁹ Patricia Lynch interview, 1992, 9.

¹⁷⁰ Marilyn Johnson interview, 1986, 74.

¹⁷¹ Ambassador Theresa Healy, interview by Ann Miller Morin, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, Women Ambassadors Series, May 10, 1985, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Arlington, Virginia, 30.

¹⁷² Theresa Healy, 1985, 64.

working class women, even Foreign Service women, who did feel the impacts of gender-motivated injustices.

One enthusiastic supporter was Jane Coon, who stated that the women's liberation movement not only liberated women but men as well. She cited the changing circumstances in her own relationship with her husband, and how women's liberation made it more acceptable for him to do previously feminized activities like making breakfast and grocery shopping.¹⁷³ To Coon, this was undoubtedly a positive development and the retreat of strict gender roles between married couples improved the happiness and fulfillment in her relationship. Another strong advocate was Mabel Smythe, referenced in a previous story recounting how women's liberation made it more acceptable for women to be professionals and intellectuals.

Women's Unique Advantages in the Foreign Service

Women ambassadors expressed discomfort when asked to negatively associate their gender to their experiences in the Foreign Service but were very open about opportunities they believed were extended to them because of their gender and the unique advantages being a woman provided. Upon examining the history of women in foreign relations and finding that most studies could only report that "women's work" "has not existed in the higher circles of the diplomatic corps," Emily Rosenberg posed the question, "are there international tasks in which, for historical and cultural reasons, women tended to specialize?"¹⁷⁴ The results of qualitative analysis on women ambassador's oral histories, and the opinions of the subjects themselves, provide a resounding "yes" to this question. Most historians flocked to "women's work" in the

¹⁷³ Jane Coon interview, 1986, 58.

¹⁷⁴ Rosenberg, "Gender," 117.

form of missionaries, peace activists, or nurses- work deemed acceptable for women as dictated by male-defined norms.

Examples from 20th century women ambassadors' oral histories show that specialization occurred even within roles that were not traditionally acceptable for women to have, like the role of Foreign Service officer and ambassador. Some of these specialized functions occurred before the women were ambassadors and women's success in executing these functions contributed to their upward mobility. The women attributed these advantages to their disengagement or disassociation with masculinity, not their ability to adopt masculinity to gain respect and get ahead.

The lack of masculine ego or the need to prove their macho, Melissa Wells hypothesized, was one reason women handled themselves better in many intense situations. She recalled that while serving in Zaire she refused to bring along certain men officers on trips because they reacted badly when their car was stopped by the Zairian's armed roadblocks.¹⁷⁵ Experiences like these convinced Wells, who admitted that she also discussed this hypothesis with Shirley Black, that women were "biologically mission-oriented" and handled themselves better in continuing stressful situations, in part because they did not have to "prove themselves."¹⁷⁶ Similarly, other women ambassadors professed to employ a "softer," gentler approach to diplomacy.¹⁷⁷ Cynthia Perry in particular believed that this method allowed her to elicit information and better influence decisions.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Melissa Wells interview, 1984, 28.

¹⁷⁶ Melissa Wells interview, 1984, 28-29.

¹⁷⁷ Nancy Rawls interview, 1984, 23; Cynthia Perry, 1999, 28.

¹⁷⁸ Cynthia Perry interview, 1999, 28.

Several women substantiated that one such advantage was their ability to foster closer relationships with foreign leaders of state. Caroline Laise speculated this was possible because women were less competitive and ego-driven and thus less threatening to the male heads-of-state with whom they interacted.¹⁷⁹ Laise's own example was the King of Nepal's efforts, including changing the national anthem to include gender-neutral language and involving women more actively in panchayat (village council) systems, which occurred during her tenure as ambassador in Nepal.¹⁸⁰ The King let Laise know that his political opponents accused him that by adopting egalitarian pro-women policies he was caving to pressure from the American ambassador.¹⁸¹

At least three women diplomats in their pre-ambassador career connected with heads-of-state and policymakers by offering them regular English language lessons. Through this method Marilyn Johnson fostered a close relationship with the Niger President Diori. Their weekly English lessons gave Johnson significant access and established trust between the two governments they represented. As the lessons progressed, Diori eventually was comfortable enough to invite Johnson to his family farm.¹⁸² Johnson attributed her personal relationships with Niger government officials to the "small country" size, but her influence and access to the President undeniably also played a role. If Laise's hypothesis about the impact of ego on diplomatic relationships between two men held true, it would have been unlikely that a head-of-state would have consented to be the pupil of an American male diplomat.

Frances Cook was also an English tutor, but to Senegalese President Léopold Senghor. Naming President Senghor one of the closest friendships of her lifetime and a person she

¹⁷⁹ Caroline Laise interview, 1985, 66.

¹⁸⁰ Caroline Laise interview, 1985, 55.

¹⁸¹ Caroline Laise interview, 1985, 55-56.

¹⁸² Marilyn Johnson interview, 1986, 54.

venerated, Cook clearly admired President Senghor's intellect and academic accomplishments.¹⁸³ She marveled that somehow she became the grammarian and English instructor to an esteemed scholar, the first African ever to receive a doctorat d'etat in French.¹⁸⁴ Cook's humility and admiration for the President made her a suitable tutor for the very accomplished statesman. Ultimately Cook professed that her number of visits exceeded the number of visits even the current U.S. Ambassador to Senegal received, and the two shared a close friendship fed by discussions of politics and culture.¹⁸⁵

A third woman Foreign Service officer and future ambassador, Theresa Tull, played the part of English tutor for an important South Vietnam senator in Saigon circa 1968.¹⁸⁶ Through these English lessons with Senator Huyen, Tull monitored the progress of a land reform bill supported by the US. In exchange for discussions of current issues in the Vietnamese National Assembly, Tull provided the English lessons and a means to directly communicate to the American embassy.

The presence and nature of ego impacting diplomatic relationships played out for Patricia Lynch with President Ratsiraka when she served as U.S. Ambassador to Madagascar and Comoros. Lynch entered as ambassador in 1986 at a time when President Ratsiraka was heavily influenced by Soviet ideology and harbored resentment towards the U.S. diplomacy which had "corrupted his students" and practiced naval policies that negatively impacted the country, among other grievances.¹⁸⁷ Tasked with promoting capitalist ideology to a Soviet sympathizer, Lynch prefaced her relationship by informing the President that she may not agree with him but

¹⁸³ Frances Cook interview, 1986, 39.

¹⁸⁴ Frances Cook interview, 1986, 39.

¹⁸⁵ Frances Cook interview, 1986, 39.

¹⁸⁶ Theresa Tull interview, 2004, 43-44.

¹⁸⁷ Patricia Lynch interview, 1992, 16.

would respect him. Lynch believed that President Ratsiraka appreciated this attitude despite that he was “a very strong man with a big ego.”¹⁸⁸ Because Lynch was warned that Ratsiraka would look down on her as a woman, it is possible that Lynch’s dissenting opinions earned her the President’s respect and admiration rather than resentment because President Ratsiraka perceived her as non-threatening. She capitalized on this perception by pushing a U.S.-oriented economic policy without drawing the President’s ire and while maintaining a cordial personal relationship. To this end Lynch spoke frequently to the President about a new investment code to reverse policies that nationalized public assets and concluded that she was satisfied to have played a hand in improving the Americans’ relationship with the President and his ministers.¹⁸⁹

Summary

As born out in chapters two and three, the Foreign Service upheld explicitly discriminatory policies and attitudes towards women though most of the 20th century that in normal cases would have prevented women from advancing. Future women ambassadors, as FSOs, found ways to be the exceptions of these policies. In some cases, escaping the consequences of these policies gave them the rationale needed to claim that the Foreign Service was not discriminatory or to soften their criticism. Publicly denying or minimizing their confrontations with gender discrimination invalidated the similar experiences had by other women officers but allowed women ambassadors to define their careers in terms of their successes.

Women were excluded from significant posts, training, and roles, and were confronted with gender-biased policies and perceptions about their work ethic. Some aspects of

¹⁸⁸ Patricia Lynch interview, 1992, 16.

¹⁸⁹ Patricia Lynch interview, 1992, 15.

discrimination were more subversive, such as organizational culture in the 1950-1970's where women were expected to achieve and aspire to less than male counterparts and to remain optimistic and appreciative of opportunities despite the challenges they were expected to overcome simply because they were women. Through all of this, women ambassadors were frequently less than forthcoming about the discrimination they experienced and instead leaned into what they described as women's particular advantages in diplomacy.

The Foreign Service constructed their policies against women by treating marriage as a conflict of interest and eliminating women in oral history exams that admitted they were interested in marriage and starting a family soon. They required women officers to resign when they married until 1972, did not support maternity leave for working mothers, and assigned Foreign Service couples to distant posts in hopes that the woman officer would resign. They excluded women from training, like the Senior Seminar and the National War College, and from prestigious or significant posts like those to the Eastern bloc in the height of the Cold War. Both the training and important assignments were opportunities to accelerate a woman's personal advancement.

It was also difficult for women in the 1960-1980's to overcome perceptions that they, for various reasons, were not good diplomacy workers. There were accusations that women could not cope with the rigors of "hardship" posts like those to Soviet countries, or Muslim countries where restrictions on women were very different than the restrictions in Western societies. Foreign Service women were also aware of perceptions that women within the workspace did not cooperate well and fostered poor relations with other women, such as between ambassadors and chief deputy of missions, or Foreign Service officers and secretaries. And of course, women

were viewed as not viable workers because there was always the potential that they would marry and have children, making it impossible for them to prioritize or be successful in their careers.

The environment in the Foreign Service towards women impacted the way that women viewed their potential and their experiences. Many women shied away from accusing the Foreign Service as an institution of discriminating against them, although most women were comfortable discussing individual instances of gender-related injustices against them. They attempted to curate their experiences to minimize the discrimination they went through, and instead redirected attention to how women were actually advantaged as diplomats in ways that men were not. Women ambassadors believed that as a woman they could become more integrated into families in their post's community and have closer relationships with important statesmen. They further believed that women had overall better temperaments in highly stressful situations because they were not under the same pressure to engage with toxic masculine behaviors such as proving their machismo.

Attitudes about the women's liberation movement offer a rationale for the way women characterized their work experiences. While all women interviewed were touched in some way at some time by discrimination or bias while in the Foreign Service, women ambassadors expressed varying degrees of support for the women's liberation movement. None were opposed to the movement but some were uninspired or apathetic, with one admitting that labor organization was more important to her personally. Some women expressed sympathies but stopped short of naming themselves as advocates, but multiple women ambassadors credited the movement with expanding their knowledge of how patriarchal social structures impacted their lives.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

Twentieth century women ambassadors to Muslim countries were individuals of both merit and privilege. Careerist women ambassadors were college educated, served in the Foreign Service for decades, and usually knew at least one foreign language. In cases where qualifications were lacking, it was a product of the unique American appointment system that allows ambassadors to be selected from outside the Foreign Service. Political appointments were often rewards for campaign contributions or other forms of political loyalty, but the proportion of total women political appointees was lower than men political appointees, and within the study's sample, represented only twenty-one per cent. Both careerists and political appointees were mostly white, middle-aged, unmarried, from Eastern U.S. regions and possessed degrees from elite schools. Black women ambassadors in the 1960-80's were political appointees, yet (with one exception) they were the only women with doctorate degrees and Black women ambassadors overall held the majority of doctorate degrees. It was confirmed that political appointments disrupted the meritocracy, or in other words disrupted the promotion of internal Foreign Service career candidates. However, given that the Foreign Service's internal promotion was deeply biased against women and minorities, political appointments improved the representation of both groups in the short-term.

The distribution of these ambassador appointments were clustered in developing countries, and especially in West Africa. Women were more likely to be appointed to Islam-influenced countries of South and South East Asia than to Middle East countries. In ten countries, many of them strategic locations critical to the Cold War conflict, women were excluded from appointments. Oral histories confirmed that posts to the Eastern bloc were

considered an important experience for aspiring diplomats, and that women were excluded from those posts.

The fact that most women ambassadors were unmarried is very telling of the difficulties imposed by the Foreign Service on working married women. Policies like the resignation requirement played a role, as did beliefs widely-held in the Foreign Service. It was thought that married women ought to support the careers of their husband and that marriage was a conflict of interest for a woman but an asset for a man. The challenge of raising children while keeping a career was less impactful because it was marriage that was considered incompatible with a woman's Foreign Service career, which precluded the possibility of having children and a career.

In interviews, women ambassadors demonstrated how they were shaped by contemporary and often negative beliefs about women who work and women's place in diplomacy, but the ambassadors also exemplified important changes in perceptions and beliefs about women that occurred in the last half of the 20th century. This change was facilitated through women's activists and women's organizations, sometimes through lobbying and pressure but also through education provided particularly to women. Awareness of gender bias and discrimination among women increased after the women's liberation movement. For women ambassadors this knowledge may have been retrospective because their success blinded them from full acknowledgement of the adversity they experienced. Women expected to achieve less because they were women from the outset of their careers due to the attitudes of senior Foreign Service officials about women. Yet the women believed that adapting to the Foreign Service's organizational culture (despite that it was often hostile to women) for the purpose of personal achievement was itself a contribution to women's advancement.

Women ambassadors curated their experiences to reflect their optimism and unique advantages, rather than disadvantages, as women. Frequently, they minimized or outright denied the undue burdens put upon them from gender discrimination and focused on the ways that they believed being a woman benefitted them. These advantages came in many forms, like the ability to foster closer relationships with heads of state because they were not perceived as a competing ego, and the ease of befriending families as single women when single men could not. A few believed that women reacted better under trying and stressful circumstances and behaved as better guests in host countries because they were not driven to control challenging situations. Multiple women expressed that their approach to diplomacy was “softer” than that of men, and this allowed them to secure information, access, and trust.

The majority of women ambassadors from 1960-1989 were competent, qualified, and effective in their roles as FS officers and ambassadors but they did more for the Foreign Service than execute their responsibilities. With their unrelenting positivity and optimism, they improved the reputation of the Foreign Service, sometimes undeservingly, by casting their experiences in a flattering light and minimizing the significance of gender discrimination. In a challenging environment, they developed mitigation strategies of dealing with gender discrimination that included avoiding calling gender discrimination what it was. Instead, they framed their carefully measured oppositions as motivated by a desire to perform better and contribute more to their jobs.

Future Research

A limitation of this analysis that future research could improve is the descriptive dataset of 20th century ambassadors. The dataset could be expanded to include all women ambassadors instead of just a subset, and men. Including all women would enable a more robust

characterization of 20th century women ambassadors and may lend itself to the study of other subsets within the larger class. The addition of men or a sample of men ambassadors allows for differences and similarities between men and women to be clarified and grounded in data rather than on assumptions based on general knowledge. Such comparisons would be particularly useful when applied to variables such as age at time of appointment, years of prior work in the Foreign Service, and marriage status. In kind, expanding the analysis of oral history interviews could confirm or challenge these findings and expand the knowledge of themes in women's behaviors and attitudes related to gender.

As mentioned in the introduction, further research into women officers who did not become ambassadors would contribute to knowledge of women in the Foreign Service as a class in the 1960-90's and which attributes distinguished high-achieving FS members versus the officers whose careers stagnated. For example, knowing that women ambassadors shared common characteristics like eastern U.S. birthplace and schooling, white or European-American races, and unmarried status does not reveal if this filtering occurred at the recruitment or promotion level. Creating a similar dataset of women officers' personal attributes would clarify the ambiguity about whether the biases expressed towards particular backgrounds existed at the recruiting or promotion levels, or both, and if these biases were reduced or altered over time. This would be an arduous search for data that would begin with identifying the names of women officers from the annually published Foreign Service Lists, but that will require the collection of an expanded range of sources outside of biographies and oral histories, like phonebooks and censuses.

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Appendix A. Sample Countries

The minimum Muslim persons in a country in order for that U.S. diplomatic mission to be included in the study sample is 10 percent of the population or 1 million persons. Data of Muslim populations by country was taken from Pew Research Center's "World Muslim Population by Country."¹⁹⁰

MENA (Middle East and Northern Africa)

Maghreb/ Northern Africa (6)

Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia

Levant (5)

Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan

Persian and Arabian Gulf (8)

Iran, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Yemen

Asia

Central Asia (5)

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

South Asia (8)

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka/Maldives

Southeast Asia (9)

Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Cambodia, Myanmar
(Burma), Brunei (Laos and Timor-Leste excluded because <10% is Muslim)

Sub-Saharan Africa

¹⁹⁰ Pew Research Center, "World Muslim Population by Country," November 17, 2017.

West Africa (15)

Benin, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia,
Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo

Central Africa (4)

Central African Republic, Cameroon, Chad, Gabon

East Africa (8)

Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Somalia,
Sudan, Tanzania

Europe**East Europe and the Balkans (11)**

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Georgia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North
Macedonia, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Turkey