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Wives, Clerks, and 'Lady Diplomats': The Gendered Politics of Diplomacy and Representation in the U.S. Foreign Service, 1900-1940

Molly M. Wood

¹ In the first few decades of the twentieth century American women played important but mostly unacknowledged roles in the work of diplomacy within the existing U.S. Foreign Service structure. Wives accompanied their diplomat husbands abroad, as quasi-professional partners in the service, in order to aid in the work of representation at American missions all over the world. In addition, as these American missions grew in size and complexity during the period from 1900 to 1940, U.S. State Department officials relied increasingly on the work of women employees, clerks and stenographers. Yet during this same period, despite numerous other gains made by American women in the social and political realm, the U.S. Foreign Service remained adamantly convinced that women “were not fitted to discharge the exacting and peculiar duties of a Foreign Service Officer.”¹ The Foreign Service depended on the logistical, practical and representational work performed by wives, and on the clerical work performed by female typists and stenographers, to ensure the smooth operation of American missions abroad. However officials argued consistently and repeatedly that women could not be successful in either a representative or practical capacity in official professional diplomatic or consular positions.

² U.S. Foreign Service officers understood that marriage enhanced their diplomatic careers and generally considered their wives to be partners in the service. One career officer explained how a wife could “reinforce and add to the job her husband does,” and in doing so effectively would “cause people to think that her husband must be a smart man, indeed, to have married a woman like her,” although he quickly added that “she must never let anyone suspect that she believes that herself.”² Wives were expected to contribute positively to their husband’s career position, but they were also expected to

stay in the background. They were not supposed to take credit for their contributions to the operation of diplomacy. Although they held no official or paid positions in the Foreign Service, wives of American diplomats 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. An efficient and popular wife, one who entertained successfully and maintained an elegant home, would undoubtedly help her husband earn promotion in the service. She would of course share in the benefits of that promotion. Foreign Service wives, like military wives, assumed and shared their husbands' status or rank in the professional hierarchy. As one long-time diplomat explained, "I know of no field in which a wife can be more helpful" in her husband's career.³ Another American official wrote in 1914 to his wife, "You and I, as a team, are, I am confident, unexcelled in the Service."⁴ Diplomats' wives therefore possessed a quasi-official status, as informal representatives of the U.S. government. Tellingly, most American Foreign Service wives did in fact define their experiences in the Foreign Service as a "career" in itself. Foreign Service wives from the early twentieth century tend to describe themselves *not* as "helpmates" to their husbands, a term that was commonly used by State Department officials to describe the roles played by wives, but rather as highly visible associates or partners who "joined," rather than "married into," the Foreign Service. Naomi Matthews, for instance, admitted many years after her husband's retirement from the Service that she appreciated the fact he "always said 'we'" when he referred to their life and work in the Foreign Service.⁵ These wives reflect what Hanna Papanek has called the "two person single career."⁶ The U.S. government, in turn, relied on the wives to contribute to effective American diplomatic representation overseas.

³ By hosting dinners at her home, accompanying her husband to other social functions, and visiting other wives in the diplomatic corps in their homes, Foreign Service wives facilitated the exchange of information, both official and unofficial, that contributed to the maintenance of relationships within the diplomatic corps and between diplomats and other officials.⁷ As one former diplomat's wife explained, "the social aspect of diplomatic life is much maligned," but it is "serious business" because the social arena allowed diplomats to "create goodwill between countries" in a congenial atmosphere and to send and receive informal messages about specific issues.⁸

⁴ Wives were also well aware that State Department officials were evaluating them along with their husbands. As Lucy Briggs remembered, "In those days, when a man's record was written up, his wife was also commented on. And if she added to his social position in a pleasant way, or if she was helpful in other ways, that was always put down. Or if she was something of a handicap that was put down too."⁹ Wives understood that in everything they did they reflected on their husbands and their country, and that officials in the State Department were watching them. Serving in quasi-official positions while living abroad, they set an "example" through their domestic presence overseas, projecting a message of American goodwill, just as military wives or the wives of missionaries might serve as role models, or as "transmitters" of American culture. Laura Wexler, for instance, has analyzed the "salutary nature of American domesticity" as well as "the benign influence of the domestic woman" abroad. Donna Alvah, in her study of American military families, shows that military wives were expected to epitomize "what Americans considered the best aspects of their way of life" because the "behavior of service personnel" and their wives abroad "reflected on the U.S. as a whole."¹⁰ These

expectations, to serve as responsible representatives of the United States to the rest of the world, affected everything a diplomatic wife did while she was serving.

5 Representational work was of course crucial, but as the practical work of American embassies, legations and consulates overseas increased dramatically in the early twentieth century, especially after World War I, it became more apparent that these missions could not operate without an ever-increasing number and variety of clerical and miscellaneous support staff, including stenographers, code clerks, notarial clerks, shorthand typists, messengers, and chauffeurs, all employed by the U.S. State Department.¹¹ It was difficult to find clerks for these missions overseas. The pay was very low, with no reimbursement for travel, and the work was often uninspiring. Desperate for office help, some chiefs of mission simply began to hire their wives or daughters to keep the mission paperwork flowing.¹² Slowly, as need increased, more female clerks, usually college graduates who had already gained employment at the State Department, began to be moved into overseas posts, usually on temporary assignment, as needed. Some made themselves indispensable. In Lisbon, Portugal, in 1912, when new American Minister Cyrus Woods arrived, he depended on the American clerk Mary Kirk to explain the new filing system inaugurated under the last chief, to show him the mission correspondence, and even to give him the keys to the house he would occupy. Kirk had earned a degree at Swarthmore College in 1889, and taught at a private girls' school in Rio de Janeiro from 1893 to 1895, where she first started to learn Portuguese. She then worked for three years at the Brazilian Legation in Washington, D.C, before moving into a clerical position at the State Department in the Bureau of American Republics. She was on temporary assignment to Lisbon when Cyrus Woods arrived. After a few months on the job, he requested that her assignment be extended, both because she was performing her job well and because she was proving especially adept at her language study. Kirk lived with a Portuguese family, so she was immersed in the language, making her a particularly valuable asset to the American mission. She worked in Lisbon until 1915.¹³

6 The number of American women hired to serve overseas as clerks continued to increase through the 1920s and 1930s and the Department sent them to posts all over the world. But the challenge of finding and keeping efficient workers, even in highly accessible, non-hardship posts, persisted. When William Phillips arrived in Ottawa, Canada in 1927, he wrote almost immediately to the State Department to report that "the present clerical staff . . . is inadequate." Phillips had just one clerk, a woman, to serve as stenographer for himself and two additional officers and he needed an additional stenographer who could also do filing and "general office work." The one female clerk on staff "is overburdened," he wrote, "and has been obliged to work at night and on Sunday. If she should be ill or absent for any reason, the Mission would be at a standstill." The Department responded quickly, appointing another female clerk, but she lasted less than three months, moving from the Legation to "accept a business offer," presumably at higher pay.¹⁴

7 Subordinate staff in American missions were also, after 1924, subject to inspection by representatives sent out to the field by the State Department. In 1924, the Rogers Act reformed, modernized and partially reorganized the U.S. Foreign Service in numerous ways. One result of this legislation was that the formerly haphazard, incomplete and often perfunctory inspection of American missions abroad became more organized and structured. Through the remainder of the 1920s and into the 1930s, State Department inspectors regularly visited and reported on the operation of American missions,

including frank assessments of the professional staff (the foreign service officers themselves), their wives, and the clerical staff. On his grand inspection tour in 1936, J. Klahr Huddle visited Venice, where he completed a report on clerk Virginia Hall. On the positive side of the ledger, he found Hall to be “ladylike” and noted approvingly that she “conducts herself in a seemly manner.” Gendered expectations about behavior and outward perceptions dictated these somewhat vague observations which reveal nothing about Hall’s actual work performance. However Huddle concluded his report with far more negatives than positives. He found Hall to be “somewhat garrulous” and, even more troubling, noted that she “does not always exercise discretion in the persons with whom she may be talking.” This observation reflects widespread gendered fears about women’s inability to keep secrets, or their supposed tendency to gossip, as well as growing concerns in the turbulent 1930s about the dangers of sharing too much idle talk. After all, Americans would be reminded repeatedly during the wars years that “loose lips sink ships.” Huddle further described Hall as someone who was “somewhat impulsive, strong willed young woman of no more than average ability, who fails to recognize her own shortcomings.” Hall, he continued, was “obsessed with great ambition.” He claims that Hall had wanted to enter the career service. He provided no evidence or explanation for why she could have believed it was possible for her to move from a clerical position to a professional consular or diplomatic position without going through the examination process. The conclusion he could draw, however, was that her desire for such a move was further evidence of her inappropriate ambition, that is, ambition inappropriate for a woman.

⁸ Huddle further noted that Hall was “apt to neglect her work because of outside general interests,” though he does not indicate what interests kept her from her work, or what work she neglected. He concluded, finally, that the arrival of a new American counsel to take charge at the office might be able to solve “the problem,” but only if the new chief was able to initiate and enforce “new legation rules.” In other words, the implication here was that the current counsel in charge had allowed Hall to get away with inappropriate behavior. He had not only failed to control his subordinate clerical staff, but he had explicitly failed to control his subordinate female staff. A new chief would have the opportunity to enforce the proper workplace behavior, but only, he warned, if Hall’s “feminine ego” would allow her to “subordinate herself to him.”¹⁵ Similarly, in 1932 at the Peking Legation, an inspector found the American chief to be “ineffectual” and unable to handle “squabbles and differences of the sort he has to contend with.” As a result of this “weak administration,” the female clerical staff was not suitably respectful of their male boss.¹⁶

⁹ Some of the negative assessments of female clerks, as well as occasional complaints about wives who “overstepped their roles” in some way help to contextualize the continued resistance within the U.S. Foreign Service establishment to the entrée of women into professional diplomatic positions. Increasing pressure from women’s groups resulted in a protracted debate over the suitability of women as *official* representatives of the U.S. government, as opposed to their current positions as clerical staff. Under sustained pressure from women’s groups in the wake of the passage of the woman suffrage amendment, and seeking to avoid negative publicity or charges of discrimination against newly enfranchised women, the State Department reluctantly began to allow a limited number of women permission to take the Foreign Service examinations.¹⁷ Lucile Atcherson, a graduate of Smith College, was the first woman to pass the exams, in 1922.

¹⁰ The decision was unpopular within the State Department. Officials had consistently resisted the inclusion of women into the professional service, maintaining that as a group, even if women might possess the “technical qualifications” for the job, they would not be capable of performing the actual work of representation. One official wondered whether women would be able to exemplify “good standing in the communities where they” might be posted as Foreign Service officers.¹⁸ The head of the consular service, Wilbur J. Carr, wondered if women consular officers would be capable of “gathering commercial and political information,” because so much information was obtained by “mingling freely . . . either in club, general social or business circles.”¹⁹ The “club life” he referred to was of course exclusively male, the places where men gathered to drink and do business, and where “a woman would not be able to function in the time-honored way to which men are accustomed.”²⁰ There is here also the suggestion that the presence of a woman in the clubhouse would cause men to change their comfortable habits and the unarticulated fear that, at a time when women were breaking through previously solid gender barriers in many parts of the world, men would be losing yet another of their “male-only” bastions.

¹¹ Officials also tried to discourage women from applying to the Service by emphasizing that even highly qualified women, through no fault of their own, would be frustrated, even “hopelessly handicapped” in a diplomatic or consular career. Others suggested that women would be further challenged, more so than men, by the particular hardships of life abroad, especially at those places where women would face “many peculiar climactic, social and racial conditions.”²¹ No one explained exactly why they believed it would be more challenging for a woman than for a man to serve in “peculiar conditions,” and concern for women’s comfort at hardship posts is hardly a convincing argument given the fact that wives were encouraged to accompany their diplomat husbands to even “hardship” posts and that female clerks, in ever increasing numbers, were sent abroad. “Safety” was presumed to be a primary concern. Assistant Secretary of State J. Butler Wright had succeeded in dissuading a number of female applicants “by painting a lurid picture of some of the positions they might find themselves in.” First, he would assure the candidate that “there was no discrimination whatever against women on account of their sex,”²² but he would then ask the candidate to imagine a scenario in which “a young woman” serving as an official agent “should be obliged to call on some urgent matter on a bachelor colleague at night.” As another colleague noted, “all sorts of hypothetical situations of a most embarrassing nature can readily be imagined,” though no one publicly articulated the “embarrassing” sexual “situations” that might arise if a single woman was sent to a man’s apartment in the middle of the night.²³

¹² Officials also argued, appropriately, that there were posts at which women, as professionals, would not be “accepted” by those who already lived and worked there. Forcing other countries to recognize and work with American woman diplomats, officials believed, would undermine the practical work of diplomacy and the prestige of the United States. After all, the Department was expected to “bear in mind the state of opinion in the countries in which its officers are stationed,” when making appointments.²⁴ In other words, there was a tacit agreement among diplomatic officials around the world that each country would respect the others by not sending unsuitable representatives to fill their diplomatic posts abroad. In such cases, officials believed that women representatives “would fail to command . . . respect” in the foreign communities in which they served and would therefore not be able to perform the work of American

representation effectively.²⁵ Use of the term “respect” goes to the heart of the matter of concern about American prestige. On the micro level, of course, officials would expect men in the diplomatic corps, no matter where they were from, to be ‘respectful’ of women, specifically the wives of their colleagues in the diplomatic corps. However, expecting a male official from a Latin American country where it was widely observed that very few women held positions of formal power, to ‘respect’ a female official of similar diplomatic rank might call into ridicule the American government’s decision to place her in such a position in the first place. And any decision of such questionable merit might call into question the overall reputation, influence, even competence of the U.S. government. These were the “conditions” abroad which the U.S. government, officials insisted, could not change. American officials could therefore conveniently avoid responsibility for failing to appoint women as Foreign Service officers by simply citing the “custom and convention” with respect to “women in public positions . . . prevailing in many [other] countries,” where it would be “impossible to assign women.”²⁶

¹³ Officials in the State Department simply reflected the assumption that women could perform representative work only in their capacity as wives or clerks or stenographers, not as official diplomats, even though many of their technical and representative duties might be exactly the same. Furthermore, special treatment for women, by posting them only to selected European posts where the Board conceded that they *might* be “accepted” by the local community, would result in “unfairness” to men, who would then have to staff the less favorable posts in other parts of the world. Officials agreed that “there are very few posts in which women could serve successfully, and that we cannot undertake to set aside the very desirable posts for women. That would be unfair to the men.”²⁷ Wilbur J. Carr added more to the argument, presumably in order to demonstrate his awareness of some of the arguments being voiced by vocal women’s groups. “The women would not desire this favoritism,” he concluded.²⁸ True, probably, but “the women” also did not desire that “favoritism” about foreign assignments continue to be used as a primary argument against assigning them anywhere at all.

¹⁴ When Lucile Atcherson passed the Foreign Service exam in 1922, the Personnel Board did not know exactly what to do with her. After Senate confirmation, she was sent to work at the State Department. If officials had hoped she would be satisfied with State Department work, they were wrong. While she was left there for almost three years, she lobbied steadily on her own behalf for an overseas post. Finally, the department sent her to Bern, Switzerland. If women were to be accepted as diplomats, officials claimed, it would be imperative to find places to send them where they would go relatively unnoticed, or to places where there were already other examples of women in public positions.²⁹ The first suggestion from the Personnel Board was therefore to send her to a “quiet Scandinavian post,” where they believed “probably . . . women are most active outside the home.” In Switzerland, they hoped, Atcherson “might attract no particular notice.”

¹⁵ The American Minister at Bern, Hugh Gibson, strenuously objected to Atcherson’s new assignment. He argued against the appointment of women generally, emphasizing his concerns about whether women could do the work of representation. How, he wondered suggestively, would a woman handle the “personal contact” work of “diplomatic protocol” and the work that depended on “what they do when out of the office” rather than “what they do at their desks.” The questions Gibson raises reveal widely-held assumptions about gender roles and sex-segregated environments in the context of

diplomatic protocol, and also about the perception of women in "official" positions. Gibson never accepted Atcherson's presence in his mission. After three years' service in Bern, she was transferred to Panama City, Panama, but not promoted. She resigned shortly after the transfer, in order to get married, but also to protest her failure to receive a promotion despite no *official* complaints about her service. All of Gibson's criticisms of her were made in private correspondence, rather than on the public record.

¹⁶ To try to prepare Atcherson for the passive hostility he knew she would face from Gibson, Joseph Grew scheduled a personal meeting with her before she left for Bern. He warned her that she would face some difficult scenarios when "her sex would make it difficult and embarrassing for her to take part in all the official activities of the Diplomatic Corps on an equality with her male colleagues." Repeated use of the word "embarrassing" to describe the potential negative impact of women in a diplomatic setting reveals the abject worries officials had about the possible threats to American prestige due to the presence of women in positions of authority as representatives of the United States. Echoing Gibson, Grew outlined a scenario in which Atcherson would find herself at "dinners . . . at which she would be the only woman 'in a room with a hundred men smoking cigars and drinking beer.'" Surely this would be embarrassing for Atcherson, but, Grew implied, it would also be embarrassing for the United States. Atcherson gave Grew the answer she knew he needed to hear: "A temporary absence from Bern would come in very conveniently."³⁰ Grew was telling her that in certain circumstances, having no American representation at a social function would be preferable to representation by an American woman diplomat. Essentially, he presented her with two options in the Service. She could either "regard herself as on an exactly equal basis with her male colleagues," an option he clearly considered unviable, or she could follow the "line of least resistance in the face of possible embarrassments to herself or the Legation when circumstances arose such as the dinners." Again, knowing what Grew needed to hear, Atcherson replied that the second alternative "would be the only sensible attitude to take."³¹ Atcherson appeared determined not to challenge the status quo, though she remained very conscious of her status as "the first woman" in the Foreign Service.

¹⁷ When she arrived in Bern, Atcherson wrote home to her parents that she "could not have fallen into the hands of a pleasanter group of people" and gushed about how "the people at the Legation are just as kind to me as anyone could possibly be." She characterized Gibson as "pleasant, too" but did note that she did not see much of him or Mrs. Gibson since they were spending the summer away from Bern, at a summer resort town.³² Gibson's absences from Bern would be a recurring theme of Atcherson's years there. In May 1926, she wrote proudly to her parents back in Columbus, Ohio about the "considerable comment amongst the diplomatic corps and elsewhere" over the fact that she had been left in charge of the American Legation while the Minister, Hugh Gibson, was attending a conference in Geneva. For the first time, she explained, the State Department had been "willing to leave a woman in charge of its affairs" at an overseas mission, "even if only for a few weeks." Atcherson noted that "I haven't heard a word from the Minister since he left."³³ In June, when Gibson returned to the Legation, she reported that he "seemed to find everything in good shape and appeared not in the least to be worried about coming back soon."³⁴ She appreciated the confidence the Minister had shown in her by leaving her in charge of the Legation and by not checking up on her. In fact, she had made a concerted effort not to contact Gibson in Geneva with too much

Legation business because he had complained about her predecessor at the Legation, who had called Gibson “for instructions and advice all the time” and had “bothered” him “almost to death.”³⁵ Having received no complaints from Gibson about her performance while he was away, Atcherson assumed she was doing a good job. When Gibson and his second-in-command Alan Winslow left Bern again to return to Geneva later in the summer, she gained further confidence. “I like the Legation much better when they are away,” she admitted, because “I can run it as I please.”³⁶

¹⁸ As it turns out, Hugh Gibson was far from pleased. In a series of private letters to his colleagues at the State Department he complained that when he was away from the Legation, Atcherson had repeatedly telephoned and written to him “about matters of relatively little importance” even though he and Atcherson both agree that he had indeed told her that he did not want to be contacted about “the daily grind” and “unimportant details” when he was away from the Legation.³⁷ Then, after criticizing her for allegedly failing to take control of the Legation, he complained that she had acted on several “important matters” *without* consulting him.³⁸ While Atcherson believed she was succeeding in a pioneering professional position for women, her immediate supervisor was instead reporting, unofficially and through back channels, to his friends at the State Department that she was “totally unfit for the Service.”³⁹

¹⁹ Meanwhile, the State Department had admitted the second woman, Pattie H. Field, to the professional Service. Lucile Atcherson had been eagerly awaiting this development. When she heard about Field, she noted that it was “the best news I’ve had for a long time.” She admitted that it had been “discouraging” so far, since no other woman had passed the exam since her own success, “to think that after so much effort to open the door for women in a new field, none had proved herself qualified to enter.” She also accepted the possibility that “perhaps the door was not really opened” after all with her admission to the service, and that perhaps “the Department would take care to admit no others.” But with Field’s appointment she became optimistic again, overly so, when she concluded that the State Department was “really committed to equality for women as a policy” and that this second appointment would “encourage others.” She also drew from Field’s appointment the conclusion that her own work in Bern “must have been acceptable to the Department or they would not have been willing to try another woman.”⁴⁰

²⁰ In 1928, the State Department published a pamphlet entitled “Opportunities for Women as Officers in the Foreign Service,” but only four other women passed the exams and were assigned to foreign posts by 1930. Frances Elizabeth Williard, who received a B.A. and Ph.D from Stanford University and taught at Vassar College, was appointed to the Foreign Service in 1927 and received her first assignment, vice consul at Valparaiso, in February 1928. She stayed in the Foreign Service for over thirty-seven years, rising eventually to the position as Ambassador (Switzerland, Norway and Ceylon). In 1928, Margaret Warner, who had attended Radcliffe College before taking the exams, and Nelle Stogsdall, a graduate of Wellesley College (and M.A. from Columbia University) passed the exams. Warner served in Geneva from 1929 until her resignation in 1931. Stogsdall was assigned as vice consul in Beirut in 1929. She then married John Summerscale, a British vice consul at Beirut in June 1931 and resigned when he was transferred in October 1931. Finally, Constance Ray Harvey, educated Smith College, the Sorbonne, and Columbia University, was assigned as a vice consul at Ottawa in 1930. She served more than thirty years and became the first woman to hold the position of Consul General.⁴¹

²¹ Only seven additional women entered the Foreign Service, through a new lateral transfer, before World War II.⁴² The department continued to remind potential women applicants that they would have to be willing to serve at any of the 450 diplomatic and consular posts all over the world, including “a considerable number which are distinctively unhealthful and at which a woman would find living conditions much more difficult than a man.” The Department therefore had found a way to show women’s groups and the politicians who wanted to court them that they were not “excluding” women in an “arbitrary” way from the U.S. Foreign Service, and therefore could not be charged with “discrimination,” but they in practice retained the very policies that allowed them the leeway to restrict women’s career potential in the Service, therefore limiting interest from ambitious, career-oriented women.⁴³

²² General attitudes towards women in the Foreign Service only began to change dramatically because of unprecedented personnel needs during World War II, beginning in 1940. Through the 1920s and 1930s, State Department officials remained unconvinced that women could serve as effective, professional diplomatic representatives of the United States in the wider world. Women in a professional and official diplomatic capacity, they believed, would be unable to engage with others in the traditional practices of diplomacy. The U.S. Foreign Service establishment did not want the U.S. represented to the world as an agent of change regarding traditional gender roles.

NOTES

1. Quoted in Homer Calkin, *Women in the Department of State: Their Role in Foreign Affairs* (Washington, DC: Department of State, 1977), 69.
2. Willard Beaulac. *Career Ambassador*. (New York: Macmillan, 1951), 182.
3. *Ibid.*, 181.
4. Francis Keene to Florence Keene, 25 May 1914, Box 3, Francis Keene Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
5. Naomi Matthews, interview transcript, Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide, Special Collections, Lauinger Library, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., 4, 11 and 13, hereafter AAFSW. Beginning in 1986, the AAFSW, a non-profit organization founded in 1960 to represent American Foreign Service employees, spouses and retirees, conducted hundreds of interviews with Foreign Service spouses, mostly wives.
6. Hanna Papanek as quoted in Eliza Pavalko and Glen Elder, “Women Behind the Men,” *Gender and Society* 7, no. 4 (1993): 548 and 557.
7. Arlie Hochschild, “The Role of the Ambassador’s Wife: An Exploratory Study,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 31:1 (Feb 1969), 76.
8. See Beatrice Russell, *Living in State* (New York: D. McKay, 1959), 83-84; Hochschild, “The Role of the Ambassador’s Wife,” 85.
9. Lucy Briggs, AAFSW collection, 1-2.
10. Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 52; Donna Alvah, “Unofficial Ambassadors’: American

Military Families Overseas and Cold War Foreign Relations, 1945-1965," (PhD diss., University of California at Davis, 2000), 3 and 65.

11. William Barnes and John Heath Morgan, *The Foreign Service of the U.S.: Origins, Development, and Functions* (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, 1961), 129-131. In the 1880s, the most prominent posts were London, Paris, Rome and Berlin.

12. The first such example come in 1882, when the Department allowed the American Consul at Algiers, Alexander Jourdan, to hire his wife, Cecilia Jourdan, as a clerk in the office at a salary of \$400 per year. She remained in that position until her husband's death two years later. Calkin, *Women in the Department of State*, 52-53. In another example, In Bamberg, Germany in 1906, American Consul William Bardel hired one of his unmarried daughters, Hedwig Bardel, as clerk at \$500 per year.

13. *Biographic Register of the Department of State*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1912); *Biographic Register*, 1915; Franklin Mott Gunther to Cyrus Woods, 4 Sep 1912 and Cyrus Woods to John Barrett, 26 Nov 1912, Box 1, Cyrus Woods Papers, Lauinger Library, Manuscripts Division, Georgetown University.

14. William Phillips to Secretary of State, 19 September, 1927, Box 1831, Decimal File, 1910-1929, 124.423/1; Document file note, 11 October 1927, Box 1831, 124.423/2; Phillips to Secretary of State, 31 January 1928, Box 1831, 124.432/4, General Records of the U.S. Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD (hereafter NARA).

15. Inspection Records on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939, Box 2, Folder "V-Y," RG 59, NARA.

16. *Ibid*, Folder "P."

17. Calkin, *Women in the Department of State*, 70, 72-73; *Biographic Register*, 1923.

18. *Ibid.*, 72-73; *New York Times*, 11 Oct 1925, XX3.

19. *Ibid*.

20. *New York Times*, 11 Oct 1925, XX3.

21. Wilbur J. Carr to R.S. MacElwee, 1 May 1925, Decimal File 120.21/13, NARA.

22. Calkin, *Women in the Department of State*, 79.

23. Joseph Grew Diary, Volume 26 (1924), Joseph Clark Grew Papers (MS Am 1687), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, M.A., 326.

24. Quoted in Calkin, *Women in the Department of State*, 72-73; *New York Times*, 11 Oct 1925, XX3.

25. Calkin, 81a and 73.

26. Calkin, *Women in the Department of State*, 72-73 and Carr to R.S. MacElwee, 1 May 1925, Decimal File 120.31.13

27. Records of the Foreign Service Personnel Board, 1924-34, Minutes, Meeting of Foreign Service Personnel Board, 6 November 1924. Box 1. RG 59.

28. Minutes of Personnel Board, 1924-26, 6 November 1924, Box 1, RG 59, NARA; Calkin, *Women in the Department of State*, 83-84.

29. *New York Times*, 11 Oct 1925, XX3. Calkin, *Women in the Department of State*, 90-91; Joseph Grew to Hugh Gibson, 25 March 1925 and Hugh Gibson to Joseph Grew, 6 April 1925.

30. Quoted in Calkin, *Women in the Department of State*, 93.

31. *Ibid*.

32. Lucile Atcherson Curtis to family, 24 July 1925, Box 10, Folder 12, Lucile Atcherson Curtis Papers, Manuscripts Division, The Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University [hereafter LAC Papers.].

33. Lucile Atcherson Curtis to family, 25 May 1926 and 21 May 1926, Box 10, Folder 9, LAC Papers.

34. *Ibid.*, 28 June 1926.

35. *Ibid.*, 21 May 1926.

36. Ibid., 23 July 1926.
37. Hugh Gibson to Fred Dolbeare, 1 Aug 1926, Box 1, Folder "Atcherson," William Castle Papers, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, IA [hereafter Hoover Presidential Library.]
38. Ibid.
39. Hugh Gibson to William Castle, 23 Aug 1927, Castle Papers, Hoover Presidential Library.
40. Lucile Atcherson Curtis to family, n.d., Box 10, Folder 9, LAC Papers.
41. Calkin, *Women in the Department of State*, 99-101; See also *Biographic Registers, 1928-1931*; Cite also Beatrice Paper from conference.
42. A 1929 Executive Order allowed State Department employees, after five years of service, to become eligible for Foreign Service appointment if recommended by the Personnel Board and approved by the Secretary of State. Margaret Hanna, who started as a clerk in the State Department in 1895 and served in numerous temporary overseas assignments, was the first woman to benefit from this lateral transfer policy when she was appointed consul and secretary in the Diplomatic Service in July 1937. After Harvey's appointment in 1930, nine exams were given between the years 1930 to 1941. More than 200 women were designated as eligible to take the exams, and while several passed the written exams, none passed the oral exams. Calkin, *Women in the Department of State*, 85.
43. Ibid., 95 and 102.

ABSTRACTS

In the first few decades of the twentieth century, as the United States asserted itself on the world stage, American women played important roles in the work of diplomacy within the formal U.S. Foreign Service structure. They accompanied their diplomat husbands abroad, as wives and quasi-professional partners in the Service, primarily focusing on the critical social and domestic aspects of diplomatic life abroad. As these American missions grew in size and complexity during the period from 1900 to 1940, U.S. State Department officials saw the need for additional clerical assistance, and increasingly relied on the work of women, as clerks and stenographers. As employees of the U.S. State Department, these women also maintained the representative qualities associated with diplomatic work.

During this same time period, the U.S. State Department and the Foreign Service in particular remained rather adamantly convinced that American women were "not fitted to discharge the exacting and peculiar duties of a Foreign Service Officer." Increasing pressure from women's groups resulted in a protracted debate over the suitability of women to serve as *official* representatives of the U.S. government in overseas positions. This paper will analyze the debates, in the State Department and among American diplomats abroad, about the roles of women as wives, clerks and professional diplomats in the U.S. Foreign Service during the critical pre-World War II era.

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