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Multiple racial futures: Spatio-temporalities of race during World War I

Abstract:

Using the example of the WWI-US Commission on Training Camp Activities, I argue that racialized biopolitical projects entail multiple, specific spatio-temporalities that seek to enact different racial futures within and between racial categories. What I call ‘victorious whiteness’, ‘infinite whiteness’ and ‘static blackness’ assembled by the CTCA, and an ‘advancing blackness’ pursued by black elites in opposition, interacted in a complex topology of early 20th-century efforts to protect trainee soldiers from venereal disease, and efforts to prevent racial violence, both of which endangered the war effort and thus the future of the white nation. This counters a tendency in much current literature on racial biopolitics to assert a stark binary between and homogeneity within the facilitation of white futurity and black risk failure within individual biopolitical projects.

Keywords:

race, sexuality, biopolitics, spatiality, temporality, futurity

Introduction

The biopolitics of race become especially acute during war, when a nation’s existential future is perceived to be at stake (Puar, 2007; Saldaña-Portillo, 2016). Yet despite war’s immediacy, biopolitical time is long-term, and this imbricates racial futures with sexuality,

reproductive and otherwise. Consider this anti-venereal disease pamphlet produced by the US Public Health Service for trainee soldiers during World War I:

SEX IN LIFE

Sex—links the man who marries to the past and to the future in a great chain of human beings.

His only means of affecting the racial stock of his country is by his physical fitness. By one false step he may infect the stock, topple over the hopes of fathers and mothers reaching back for thousands of years—generations, patiently building up sound bodies and minds—and blight the lives of distinct individuals of generations to come. The spark of life is a sacred trust to be received reverently and transmitted undimmed to future generations.

Sex—uncontrolled is disaster and wreck. Sex in control for **men** means **Power**.¹

Such power may be productive, but it is also underpinned by hierarchy and violence.

Consider this circular forwarded to the Secretary of War by a South Carolina congressman. Its author was responding to an army commander's threat to court martial any white draftee who refused to salute a black officer:

Supposedly there to train patriotic and enthusiastic American boys for battle, he can think of nothing but the petty indignities due to 'insignia and regalia' and singles out the young men of southern birth of training and insists that they suffer a wanton humiliation, abase themselves upon every casual occasion and publicly disavow their people, do violence and treason to the principles which are the very foundation of southern social safety and offend the women who gave them life.²

Both of these calls to secure white futurity crossed the desk of Raymond Fosdick, head of the War Department's Commission on Training Camp Activities (CTCA). Charged with providing healthy recreation for new recruits as they trained for war in Europe, the CTCA was the frontline in a war at home, a war against venereal diseases spread through the 'vice' of prostitution.³ But as the CTCA's archive shows, it found itself embroiled in another, ongoing war, a war to reinforce white supremacy.

This archival project traces how the Commission problematized and acted upon this entanglement of the war on vice with the Jim Crow-era war on black people through the same governmental apparatus. Both threatened the immediate effort to win the war, as well as the longer-term effort to win the eventual peace in the international marketplace. Through this, I argue that that multiple racial futures were at stake. What I call victorious whiteness, infinite whiteness and static blackness assembled by the CTCA, and an advancing blackness pursued by black elites in opposition to white supremacy, were spatio-temporalities that mobilized different futures to materialize race in their here and now.

After briefly introducing Foucault's account of race in terms of biopolitics, I will turn to work on the biopolitical spaces of race, then shift to cultural grammars and temporalities of race in black and postcolonial studies. I will show how related geographical work approaches temporalities of race, and then shift to the relation of race to sexuality through reproduction, especially through biopolitics of eugenics, prostitution and venereal disease (VD). My reading will be necessarily selective given the burgeoning size of these literatures, but it raises the question of the multiplicity of racialized spatio-temporalities in the face of a tendency to treat futurity in the abstract, or racialized futures as singular logics. I will then offer a more detailed reading of records relating to the CTCA held by the National Archives in Maryland, including draft and published policy, correspondence between civilian,

government and military officials, politicians, philanthropists and the public, inspection reports on conditions in the camps and host communities, and educational and propaganda material.

I will first read these records for the ways spatio-temporalities of race were discursively framed in an expanding biopolitical program to protect soldiers and the white nation's future from the threat of venereal disease, while African-American leaders countered with demands for a corresponding commitment to black advancement. I will then read these archives for how this agenda for white futures was materialized inside and outside the training camps. I will show how this implicitly white 'vice problem' overlapped with the so-called Negro problem spatially and administratively, despite the CTCA's will not to know, and how the Commission's neglect and effective toleration of violence rendered black futurity purely supplemental to whiteness. With this argument, I briefly conclude with a question of how to frame the biopolitics of blackness beyond social death under conditions of white supremacy. Through this reading I show how understanding biopolitical projects require attending to multiple spatio-temporalities, including futures, at play within social categories such as race, as well as between them.

Biopolitics and race

Michel Foucault characterized race as a "break in the domain of life" wrought by modern population regulation (Foucault, 2003, pages 254–255). While he engaged little with other accounts of racialization, his reformulation of it in terms of biopolitics has offered a productive way of thinking of racialization as a distinct way of governing the biological health and life of the social body and of shaping its future. This break is made to separate those who pose a calculable risk to the health and productivity of those whose lives are

valued, and it is the biopolitical task of government, in Foucault's oft-quoted phrase, "to make live and let die" (Foucault, 2003, page 241). This notion of race as a break in a population begs a series of questions. How does this break manifest in space and time? What concrete characteristics define each side of the break, who gets to decide, and how is it produced? How do these materializations of the break imbricate race with Foucault's other putatively reproductive category, sexuality? And is this break always singular?

Space

Recent scholarship examining the biopolitical space of race has focused on the complex relation between violence and more indirect forms of power in flexibly racializing spaces. US violence may be exported to people of color outside the US border in the name of security (Fluri, 2014), even under the guise of humanitarianism (Sheller, 2013). Or it may target 'illegal' migrants domestically (Hiemstra, 2010), thus rendering the nation dangerous for its own citizens of color (Puar, 2007). Shifting national borders are complemented by enclosed carceral geographies separating racialized threats from the white population (Martin, 2012; Moran, 2015; Morin and Moran, 2015). More porous urban neighborhoods segregate while producing differentiated political agency and resistance (Draus et al., 2010; Oliver-Didier, 2016). Thus many of these biopolitical geographies are more complex spaces of "custody and care" (Minca and Ong, 2016), with multiple rationalities of power at work, producing multiple racializing effects.

These biopolitical accounts build on the legacy of more than a century of scholarly work on the racialization of space through segregation as a project for white supremacy, such as W.E.B Du Bois' *The Philadelphia Negro*, published in 1899. As Krupar and Ehlers note in this issue, Du Bois' take on the 'Negro problem', as it was known a century ago in the US,

can be read as a critique of biopolitical approaches that pathologize racialized groups and spaces. He was clear that the Negro problem was a white problem, epistemologically, politically and materially. In noting that “the slum is not a simple fact, it is a symptom” (Du Bois, 1967, page 6), Du Bois set out to show how the physical and ‘moral’ condition of Philadelphia’s black population, and the difficulties for ‘advancement’, was a spatial, relational product of white supremacy, a project he continued through World War I and after. This long tradition of spatially framing racism and ‘Negro advancement’ raises the question of how different temporal horizons condition biopolitics of race.

Time

Other recent scholars, especially black feminists, have focused more closely on the black body as a contested space, and in particular they have looked at the body’s conditions of legibility as a human subject (Sexton, 2011; Spillers, 2003). They diagnose a cultural grammar of race that only recognizes historical agency in the grammar of self-possessive subjectivity restricted to whiteness (Wilderson III, 2010). Postcolonial scholars have focused more specifically on the temporal grammars of race, especially the disqualification of the racialized “primitive” from “history” and its implied white future (Banerjee, 2006; Chakrabarty, 2000). Homi Bhabha (1994, pages 338-367) has critiqued the “time lag” of race in Foucault’s otherwise critical account as symptomatic of colonial modernity’s naturalization of race. In a more directly biopolitical register, Elizabeth Povinelli (2011) has outlined a grammatical ‘tense of late liberalism’ in government policy toward Indigenous Australians. In this future perfect tense, the depredations of particular neoliberal policies upon the racialized poor ‘will have been worth it’, someday. Withdrawing social welfare and healthcare from their territories, coupled with increasing policing, forces people to ‘improve’

by adapting to surviving in the market. This better ‘someday’ never quite comes, as it is sought through a deliberate policy of abandonment, in contrast to neoliberal forms of intensive state facilitation of white competitive flourishing. The tense of late liberalism is an ever-deferring rationality of government whose telos can never be fulfilled, for its project is racial subordination.

Race, time and space might seem to map onto each other in straightforward ways, but the break that race makes is never tidy on the ground, whether due to resistance on the part of the racialized and colonized, or the identifications and intimacies that everyday contact can bring (Stoler, 1995; Legg, 2010). Povinelli’s various case studies in Australia and the US make clear that a given biopolitical temporality can differ in its application according to the particular social relations of different places. Geographers inspired by Povinelli’s approach have focused on the never-ending everydayness of precarity and violence that vary in their particulars from place to place while rarely attracting public notice (Bhungalia, 2015; Bryan, 2015; Coleman and Stuesse, 2016; Coleman, 2016; Zeiderman, 2016). But Katharyne Mitchell (Mitchell, 2009) takes a more explicitly political economy approach to examining governmentalities of similarly racialized lives in terms of risk management. Those who successfully navigate uncertain futures, what she calls what if? risk scenarios, are racialized as white, while those who fail are racialized as black. But success or failure may itself be predicted as a when/then scenario, a certain future, and those who are predetermined risk failures are Pre-Black, “hence projected as outside of the enabling web of pastoral power—a surplus” (Mitchell, 2009, page 244). These authors’ attention to spatial specificity helps to underscore racialized temporalities as highly differentiated fields in terms of the totality of regulatory spaces. However, in common with earlier postcolonial accounts, the temporal logics of race, if not their effects, often remain binarized—one grammatical tense for whiteness, a different one for the racialized other—in any given biopolitical project. But

their unpacking of neoliberal temporal logic is suggestive, and I build on this to tie specific temporalities to particular racializations. With space and subjectivity so differentiated across multiple time-spaces, whether in Indigenous communities, colonial entrepôts, inner-city neighborhoods—or military training camps—might racialized temporal logics also multiply within any given racial category? And might a given governmental project take on board more than one as its aim?

Sexuality

Many of these accounts, whether black feminist, postcolonial and/or Foucauldian, recognize how race and sexuality fold into one another. A consistent refrain is that the modern regulation of sexuality cannot be disentangled from the regulation of race, especially its reproduction. From a biopolitical perspective, sexuality is reproductive, future-oriented sexuality, or else it is failed sexuality (Foucault, 1978), something underscored in more recent work on queer temporality (Edelman, 2004; Halberstam, 2005). This failure is also differentiated by race and space (Oswin, 2014). Povinelli (Povinelli, 2011, page 54) shows how a sexual abuse scandal in Indigenous Australian communities led to them being identified by government as perverse spaces from which people had to be driven by the withdrawal of welfare payments said to enable alcoholism and drug abuse. In the case of US anti-blackness, Spillers (Spillers, 2003, pages 203–229) shows how crossing the Atlantic through the Middle Passage severed enslaved Africans' kinship ties, a legacy robbing black subjectivity of both the past and the future, a reproductive failure that entailed a failure of gender.

In these racializing logics, white spaces and futures are heteronormative, while racialized spaces and temporalities are queered through their social reproductive failure. But as this

work makes clear, social and biological reproduction are inextricably linked, and more recent work on the history of eugenics in the US (discredited at the end of World War II and repackaged as the pro-family movement) underscores the point that sexual and racial pathologization worked in tandem in the early 20th century as many white Anglo-Saxon Protestant elites sought to secure an ever-improving future for whiteness in the face of Southern and Eastern European immigration and African American migration (Kline, 2001; McWhorter, 2009; Ordovery, 2003). Overlapping the eugenics movement was a perennial project to abolish prostitution, in part to eliminate venereal disease as one of the principle biological threats to white reproduction. Abolition (self-consciously named after the movement to end slavery) countered regulationist approaches that were either official, as in the British Empire (Howell, 2009; Legg, 2009; Levine, 2003), or de facto, as in many US cities (Clement, 2006; Donovan, 2006; Pivar, 2002), and relied upon managing prostitution as a necessary evil through measures such as spatial containment in red light districts or medical inspection of prostitutes.

Michael Brown and Larry Knopp have closely examined historical US sexual regulation, especially in Seattle. Brown (Brown, 2009, page 9) charts a series of binaries, starting with men at risk vs. women as reservoirs and vectors of disease. These binaries structured five “regimes of practice”—episteme, techne, visibilities, identities and ethos (Legg, 2005)—of VD prevention as a historically shifting urban politics of sexuality, race, gender, age and class, one with spatially differentiated ontologies of VD transmission (Brown and Knopp, 2010). The work of these geographers and historians offer rich spatializations of prostitution and venereal disease prevention. But they generally adhere to a singular temporality around “risk” to a generalized future of whiteness, if sometimes implicitly. How might we attend to the multiplicity of racialized spatio-temporalities that sexuality and space can make? What I call ‘victorious whiteness’, ‘infinite whiteness’, ‘static blackness’ and ‘advancing blackness’

are spatio-temporal logics that will emerge from a consideration of the discourses and practices of the CTCA's biopolitical project and those of the African-American soldiers and elites who alternately resisted and colluded with its mission.

The CTCA's context and mission

The US entered the war on 6 April 1917, and the War Department built training camps for the mass influx of new soldiers. The US had already been involved in military action on its border with Mexico, culminating in the 1916 expedition to capture the Mexican revolutionary Pancho Villa in retaliation for his paramilitary's attack on Columbus, New Mexico. Reports of high rates of venereal disease among US expeditionary troops, thanks to widespread drunkenness and prostitution in communities near their camps, raised the alarm for the wellbeing and effectiveness of the recruits who would soon be destined for France (Brandt, 1987; Bristow, 1996; Exner, 1917; Sandos, 1980). The public took notice, and for many, sending young men to the training camps seemed more of a vital threat than sending them to the front. According to Progressive social reformers, such vices were not inevitable problems of military life, but rather the effects of a lack of constructive alternatives for recreation (Bristow, 1996). As former progressive Democrat mayor of Cleveland, War Secretary Newton Baker agreed, but the military lacked the necessary expertise to reorient its approach away from either ignoring, or even more offensive to many Progressive reformers, actively tolerating by regulating prostitution around military camps as the British and other militaries did (Howell, 2009).

In a classic example of the governmentalization of the state, Baker turned to Raymond Fosdick, one of the inspectors of Mexican Expedition conditions. Fosdick was working for the Rockefeller Foundation's Bureau of Social Hygiene (BSH) researching US and foreign

police approaches to prostitution. Patron John D. Rockefeller Jr.'s interest in prostitution and social hygiene overlapped with his support for the eugenics movement, especially the social aspects of race and heredity (Kay, 1993, pages 27–28), and the foundation funded and/or cooperated with social hygiene organizations ranging from the American Social Hygiene Association (ASHA) in the US to the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene in the UK (Farley, 2004). Fosdick's training as a lawyer and practical experience rationalizing municipal government as New York City's Commissioner of Accounts, combined with his social approach to problems such as prostitution that others often framed as biological necessity, made him an ideal candidate to head the new Commission on Training Camp Activities. Its practical task was to coordinate the constructive efforts of civilian experts from the philanthropic sector with repressive efforts by local and military police across the country in preventing the spread of VD to soldiers.

Expanding geographies and temporalities

Two spatio-temporalities of whiteness would emerge in succession as the CTCA quickly discovered its mission could not be contained within the camp and the bodies within. At first, in official discourse such as publications and speeches, the CTCA's mission was "to rationalize, as far as it can be done, the bewildering environment of a war camp...[and] to prevent and suppress certain vicious conditions traditionally associated with armies and training camps" (US War Department, 1917). Baker echoed this in speeches, stating the CTCA's mission was "to promote the health and conserve the vitality of the men in the training camps".⁴ It was imperative that the men, "at that plastic and generous period of life," not "be surrounded by a vicious and demoralizing environment" that might threaten their survival of the war. For, as a local YMCA chapter made clear to donors, "A soldier can be

made or un-made by the character of the training camp environment”.⁵ Cooperating philanthropies were on message, and the CTCA served as a revolving door for propaganda as it came under Fosdick’s scrutiny and pen (much in evidence in the archive), and circulated between outside groups and government agencies such as George Creel’s Public Information Committee.

Given the concern for immediate survival and victory, biopolitical discourse was at first much more focused on sex education within the camps. The YMCA and the American Social Hygiene Association hosted lectures, mounted exhibits and distributed literature on the ‘facts’ of VD (Clarke, 1918) and argued ‘scientifically’ for abstinence (Carter, 2007, pages 118–152; Moran, 2000). Such abstinence from sex (and alcohol) was to instil a middle-class vision of masculine self-control (Terret and Mangan, 2012; Valverde, 1998). As the first-quoted ‘Sex in Life’ pamphlet and others made clear, a soldier’s health was his primary responsibility after obeying orders. Catching venereal disease was framed as a choice, and soldiers ill with syphilis or gonorrhoea were ‘slackers’ for impairing military efficiency and thus imperilling the race. Those refusing prophylaxis after an encounter with a ‘loose girl’ and later showing VD symptoms were subject to a court martial. “These men,” according to the Boston affiliate of the CTCA, “are the flower of the country. We must keep them strong and fit, morally, mentally and physically, both for their sake and for ours, if we are to play a worthy part in this great struggle”.⁶ These exhortations to curb the spread of VD for the sake of the war effort articulated victorious whiteness, a competitive biopolitical spatio-temporality oriented to surviving an immediate threat to the race. Victorious whiteness was intensively pastoral within the camps, as I will show later, but it was also quick to excise any soldier whose lack of sexual discipline endangered winning the war.

The limits of this contained horizon quickly became clear. Among new recruits, “the prevalence of venereal infections was so astounding as to attract the attention of the entire country to the necessity for taking measures for controlling these diseases”—5% of the first draft was infected with syphilis and 25% with gonorrhea.⁷ Officials realized that infections were mostly coming with new recruits from the general public, not the camp environs, and sex education quickly followed suit by going public, targeting civilians, both men and women (Bristow, 1996, 65). Eliminating vice everywhere, not just around training camps, was needed to ensure the health of soldiers in the short term, but also their families when they resumed their civilian lives. Thus in common with efforts at sexual regulation elsewhere (Howell, 2009; Legg, 2009), the anti-vice mission of the CTCA expanded spatially and temporally over the course of the war from an exclusive concern with soldier health to a more general concern for civilian health.⁸

Good health had a broader purpose, however. Toward the end of the war, as Baker continued his call to promote “health and vitality”, he added, “. . . of the men who are now to be absorbed back into the keen, industrial competition which awaits the nations of the world, ours foremost among the rest” (Bristow, 1996, page 182). Likewise ‘Sex in Life’ exhorted recruits to control their sexual appetites on pain of contaminating their wives and future generations and dishonoring their mothers and forebears. Here biopower spanned a continuum of manpower to racial power, and despite its reference to its hereditary past, its spatio-temporal horizon was an open future, beyond the immediacy of winning the war, beyond the confines of the camp and battle field. This expansive vision of infinite whiteness is a spatio-temporality that builds on a past legacy of white supremacy on both the national and global stages and projects it as ever-evolving, adapting and spreading in the future. War then, was not just a contest to be won in the short term by disciplined soldiers, but a way of biologically and socially strengthening the entire white race for continued competition and

flourishing in an indefinite future. Yet the color line dividing American society meant that white spatio-temporalities could not be the only ones at play in the war effort.

Preserving whose nation?

The CTCA had wide support across the country, including industry. Its Council of National Defense (CND) asked local citizens to assist in the effort, for, “If the soldier has no opportunity to have his baser instincts aroused, he will think on the wholesome side of life, of his patriotic duty to his Country and his Home”.⁹ But this easy elision of wholesome life, home and country was, as argued above, a distinctly white take on what was at stake in mobilizing for war. Jim Crow segregation laws and lynching—the machinery of black social and biological death that emerged in the late 19th century in the South in retaliation for the Civil War and Reconstruction—made such a chain of equivalence problematic at best for African Americans. The bracketed ‘white’ before ‘race’ in official discourse was all too clear, and this prompted sharp debates over whose democracy and whose future black Americans might be asked to die for. What did participation in the war mean for what was widely called ‘race progress’ or ‘Negro advancement’?

In fact the quota for black draftees was capped to fill only four combat regiments, and most who were accepted were relegated to labor battalions, as black lives were not even seen as worthwhile in death by white supremacists. This reluctance to accept black combat soldiers was reinforced as the government investigated rumors of German propaganda targeting black people for dissent, and the white press impeached black loyalty (Ellis, 2001; Kornweibel, 2002; Mjagkij, 2011; Williams, 2010). Given this nullification of black (male) productive life and sacrificial death, most black leaders felt they had no choice but rally to the flag and claim the US as a home worth dying for, but while also proclaiming their worth to do so.

W.E.B. Du Bois authored resolutions adopted at the May 1917 Negro Leadership Conference, the first being, “The right to serve our country on the battlefield and to receive training for such service” (The Crisis, 1917, page 60). They also demanded black officers for black troops, the end of lynching, universal suffrage, universal free education, equal civil rights and an end to segregation in all institutions and public accommodations. “Modern political and social rights are not rewards of merit. They are measures of protection and prerequisites to uplift”, for, the resolution continued, “The denial of them is death” (The Crisis, 1917, page 60). Black activists were clear that preserving life included providing the basic infrastructure of social agency and political participation denied black people by a supposedly liberal society, one that had set itself against the barbaric ‘Hun’ to preserve ‘democracy’.

In other words, ‘Negro advancement’ of the Progressive era entailed a spatio-temporality of advancing blackness, a social (rather than biological) evolutionary improvement based on a politics of respectability and led by Du Bois’ infamous ‘talented tenth’, but also a politics of productivity enabled in part by the proper training of black soldiers and officers. At this time, advancing blackness made a radical counter-claim to victorious and infinite whiteness’ insistence on occupying all US social space and its future. Such claims did not go unanswered, and tensions over whose lives mattered broke only days before the formal declaration of war. A riot in East St. Louis on 2 July 1917 saw a violent response to the migration of black laborers from the South to take up jobs in the industrial Midwest made available by mobilization. A few weeks later, black soldiers defended themselves from a racist police force during the 23-24 August 1917 Houston riot (or more precisely, rebellion) (Ellis, 2001). Both ‘riots’—one about black labor-power, the other about black self-defense—were frequently if obliquely mentioned in CTCA records, and the Commission would quickly find that the vice problem and the Negro problem coincided spatially and

temporally. As the Commission's biopolitical agenda materialized, so too would another spatio-temporality of blackness.

Implementing a constructive agenda

Arthur Spingarn, a white lawyer for the NAACP who served in the army sanitary corps, reviewed a year's worth of CTCA work in 1918. While he judiciously praised its in-camp efforts over the course of the war, he publicly expressed his frustration with the lack of action on venereal disease in the black community. "Nowhere, apparently, has there been in the past any disposition to take up the problems for colored troops until similar work for the protection of white soldiers had first been put on a firm basis" (Spingarn, 1918, page 340). This neglect was part of a more general erasure by white Progressives of black sexuality as a property of the person forming a basis of social and political subjectivity (Olund, 2013; Wilderson III, 2010, pages 133–134; 305–306). This erasure wasn't just discursive. It was practical, material and spatial, and it was a consistent feature in the CTCA's war effort as it sought to prepare for winning one abroad while suppressing one at home.

But sex education was only one aspect of the CTCA's efforts to eliminate vice, and like the colonial militaries of European countries, the Commission used race to divide the material environments of camp as well as town in its many practical programs to improve the health and productivity of recruits. Furthermore, it did so by quickly acceding to an 'alternative' spatio-temporality, static blackness, that actively stymied advancing blackness not only by neglecting black health, but also by suppressing black labor productivity, and black authority and dignity.

Inside the camps

The camp was first and foremost a regimented, disciplinary space for victorious whiteness, but the cultivation of soldiers' bodies quickly went beyond military efficiency by trying to create productive future civilians for a project of infinite whiteness. This was literally a pastoral project, as the YMCA, Knights of Columbus and Jewish Welfare Board were asked to build and run charitably-funded recreation halls open to all, regardless of creed (Mott, 1918, page 204). They offered singing, music, dancing, movies, dramatics, reading and other uplifting activities for the troops, alongside YMCA-hosted sex education. Sports were also central to camp life, not only to induce a competitive spirit, but also to expend excess energy that might be directed toward sexual contact. Finally, education for basic literacy and trade skills useful to the war effort was provided, offering the prospect of new economic opportunities for the soldiers after the war.

However, from the start, YMCA facilities were segregated in most camps, most of which were in the South. Military-built facilities such as hospitals, latrines and mess halls were also segregated, spatially, or temporally if space was short. The camps were of course gendered, and regulating the admission of women accompanied segregation by race. The YWCA was charged with building and staffing separate white and 'colored' hostess houses to reproduce the "normal relations of life" (US War Department, 1917, page 4) by facilitating supervised visits of wives, girlfriends and female relatives (Brandimarte, 2008, page 206). Women's respectable comportment within was a priority, especially for African-American women. Members of the Harriet Tubman Branch of the Red Cross in Washington visited Camp Meade to write letters for illiterate black soldiers. Their branch secretary wrote,

Any misconduct or lack of dignity on the part of the wearer of a Red Cross uniform reflects not only upon the individual but upon the Red Cross itself, and may be

punished by the withdrawal of the uniform permit. As representative women of the race, the wearing of this uniform would protect us from the danger of discredit from the actions of irresponsible persons who might visit the Camp at the same time.¹⁰

Women's reputations based on proper (i.e. middle-class) comportment were as key to advancing blackness in the camps as men's improving skills and claiming authority (Simmons, 1993).

This segregated geography was uneven, however. A handful of camps in the North were run by commanders insisting upon integrated facilities, while one, Fort Des Moines, was specifically for training black officers. But Fort Des Moines was closed after the first graduating class, as white officers there refused to take their job of training black officers seriously, and military officials took this as proof of its impossibility. Those black officers who did make it through were insulted in front of their men, undermining their authority. For the draftees, commanding officers and quartermasters were white, and overall the facilities for black recruits were inferior and usually belated, as white needs literally came first (Keene, 2011, page 83; Lentz-Smith, 2009). Despite efforts by the colored YWCA and other organizations, black soldiers' training in higher-value skills and literacy were more often discouraged through neglect by the CTCA, and resources actively withheld by the military as black soldiers were trained in only the most menial skills for labor battalion duty during war, and low-paid work afterward. If anything did threaten to advance blackness, some white officers resorted to sabotage, and the spite could be extraordinary. Some commanders drew a color line at the camp boundary by barring staff for African-American facilities—after they had been built and paid for, often by member subscriptions to colored YMCA and YWCA branches. These white officers were able to render black civilian investment in spaces of advancing blackness, which was considerable, an unproductive waste of space and time.

These actions produced a spatio-temporality of static blackness, and it was built into in the camps' material arrangements by the military and the CTCA. This was a white biopolitical project not to extinguish all black life, but to keep blackness—especially its productivity—in a purely supplementary relation to white futures. Like current neoliberal futures this spatio-temporality was racially segregated as reserve or surplus labor. Unlike today's attempts at sugar-coating racism as something else, the WWI-era racism of static blackness was either explicitly justified as racism, as by racist white officers, or it was explicitly accommodated, as by the CTCA, and whatever the intentions of individual white officials, advancing blackness was ultimately managed as a threat to whiteness.

Outside the camps

An unregulated 'sex instinct' was a threat to whiteness' future. But one "instinctive desire" accommodated by the CTCA was to escape the camp and "go to town",¹¹ as confining trainee soldiers on site was a non-starter in terms of morale. On the constructive side of community-based efforts, the Playground and Recreation Association of America trained community organizers to coordinate religious, charitable and civic groups through the War Camp Community Service (WCCS) to host the soldiers on leave that were to resemble in-camp diversions from sex. But given the War Department's strategy of repressing rather than regulating prostitution, the town, as a civilian space, also had to be militarized. The War Department enforced a five-mile exclusion zone around camps for alcohol, and one of ten miles for prostitution. Fosdick was clear that prostitution posed the greatest threat to soldiers' health, and enforcement priorities followed suit.¹²

Controlling soldiers' behavior outside the surveilled space of the camp had always been a challenge for any military that sought to do so, resulting in complex and variable regulatory

geographies (Howell, 2009) that linked soldier and civilian health by way of mobile bodies and viruses (Brown and Knopp, 2010; Legg, 2009, page 448). Fosdick faced several complications, not least that the US was a federal country where most regulation was a state and local matter. Given the still-frequent toleration of illegal prostitution by municipal governments, the CTCA and cooperating abolitionist organizations struggled with mixed results to persuade municipalities to wage a “war on vice” at home, with its “enemy lines” of red light district, clandestine hotel, and automobile.¹³ Also the country was undergoing a rapid increase in unaccompanied women’s access to public space. The war effort initially foregrounded protecting men from women. As one civic group claimed, “Some of our workers have seen soldiers, mere boys, literally pulled toward rooming-houses against their will; for men in uniform appear to be the special prey of these women”.¹⁴ But the more widespread civilian imperative to protect women from men still operated (Brown, 2009), especially by appointing women protective officers to look out for the “soldier-struck girl”, aka the “charity girl” (Alexander, 2006; Clement, 2006).¹⁵ The uneven and changing geographies of law, sexuality, gender and even technology made this war on vice outside the camp a complex challenge, one that the CTCA nonetheless adapted to and assiduously worked for on behalf of victorious whiteness across the country, and for the longer-term health of the white republic, as the cooperating civilian agencies would presumably keep up the reformist work after the war ended.

But as within the camp, outside it the regulation of sexuality in both its repressive and constructive phases was racialized. The Playground Association was clear on this point:

The whole spirit of the work is to provide wholesome leisure time activities for the colored troops in the same general way as we do for the white. These activities will be conducted by the colored people with such assistance from our committee of white

people as may be needed. The colored soldiers will be kept as far as possible in the colored sections and the white soldiers in the white sections. In other words the race segregation system will be carefully observed.¹⁶

‘In the same general way’, an implicit promise of advancing blackness, was of course a lie. As with facilities within the camp, amenities for black soldiers in town, if they existed at all, were inferior and belated. Inspection reports were explicit. One on conditions at Camp Sherman gave a mixed account of how black soldiers were treated in nearby Chillicothe, Ohio. The police chief and the townspeople compared the black soldiers’ conduct favorably to that of the white soldiers. “However, the soldiers were discriminated against in the town and were served only in a few places. They were segregated in all places of amusement”.¹⁷ This was a common pattern detailed in the reports, as black soldiers often had no recreational options in town, and the WCCSC was slow to respond. It took eight months to lease a building for a club in Rockford, Illinois.¹⁸ And when the WCCSC did act, it was with objectionable facilities, such as a former brothel situated behind the Chillicothe jail that was turned into a club for black officers.

These reports were requested by Emmett J. Scott, whom Baker had appointed as Special Advisor on Negro Affairs in October, 1917. Scott was secretary of the Tuskegee Institute and emphasized black economic development and self-sufficiency as means of black advancement. He had no executive authority and had to request investigations of black soldiers’ complaints through Baker’s office. To a letter asking a Tuskegee trustee about conditions at Camp Sheridan outside Montgomery, Alabama, he added revealingly, “I am now in full and complete touch with the War Community Service Bureau and the Commission on Training Camp Activities”, which promised “definite results” if he were clear on what needed doing.¹⁹ In other words, apparently it took until summer of 1918—the

better part of a year—for the officially appointed voice of ‘some ten million colored citizens’ and advocate of advancing blackness to get the ear of Fosdick and the CTCA.

A ‘community problem’

Scott was not only interested in equal facilities outside the camps. His concern was with the dignity and safety of black soldiers and townspeople, and the conduct of everyone—white and black—needed regulating outside the camps. But there was a problem of geography. As the previously mentioned re-use of the Chillicothe brothel suggests, a well-known but often implicit fact was that red light districts and black neighborhoods were often the same places (Mumford, 1997). For much of white America, vice and blackness belonged together, the latter effectively queered as sexually immoral and reproductively static through overlap with the former. Out of sight and out of mind, vice districts were holding cells for racialized subjects with no productive future of their own. For black America, this segregated geography materially hindered racial advancement, and it also brought racist violence from white customers.

Thus Scott was up against a CTCA that institutionally framed the Negro problem as a black problem by virtue of relying on this spatio-temporality in implementing its biopolitical project. As early as October 1917, the Houston riot confirmed widespread white fears about Northern black recruits being sent to Southern training camps, and the CTCA’s host-community coordinator, the Playground Association, raised the alarm with Fosdick. “The problem of the relation between the colored men and the community is quite largely a community problem.”²⁰ The proposed solution belied any possibility of reading his ‘community problem’ as a white problem. He attached details of a program in which Southern black professionals advised black soldiers newly arrived from the North. They

“counsel[ed] them to adapt themselves to Southern conditions and customs while in the South: in other words, ‘when in Rome do as the Romans do.’”²¹ He suggested the CTCA extend this program, “to help to avoid many unpleasant conflicts between the negroes and white folks in the South.” Deference rather than advancement: static blackness was the Playground Association official’s recommended approach.

The genteel term ‘community problem’ was a euphemism for interracial violence, and Scott’s inspectors did not shy away from details. While altercations between white and black soldiers were mentioned in reports to Fosdick, they came under the jurisdiction of commanding officers and courts martial. The most detailed accounts I found in the archive were in Scott’s files and concerned white soldiers’ violence toward black townswomen, and the need for protective work already afforded white townswomen to be extended to black women was a near-universal refrain.. One harrowing report that survives came from May Belcher, who inspected conditions in Alexandria, Louisiana, near Camp Beauregard. Fear of reprisal among the local black community hampered her investigation. But after repeated promises of anonymity, residents reported frequent sexual assaults on women by soldiers, including two gang rapes, one of which was fatal. While she expressed some middle-class equivocation over the “‘don’t care’ girl” as opposed to those trying to lead “clean lives”, Belcher was deeply aware of the structural inequalities leading to a lack of care for the future.²² After detailing wage and housing discrimination, she wrote, “The conditions among colored girls in Alexandria are alarming as well as deeply pitiful. This girl seems to be entirely at the mercy of the immoral and depraved soldier or civilian. It seems hard for one to believe that among American soldiers there could be found a group so debased or so close on the borderline of degeneracy as is found among men at Camp Beauregard”. The local judge had his own ideas of who to blame for white male violence against black women. It wasn’t the soldiers. As he further explained to her, “You are too hard on these girls; they are not to

blame for becoming bad. God made women attractive and gave men passion, so He is the only one to blame”.²³ But for Belcher, it was white soldiers who were degenerate, their threat to ‘good time girls’ indicating white racial decline. Deeming white abuse a regressive aberration troubled the routineness of gendered anti-black sexual violence (Sommerville, 2004).

Some of Scott’s inspectors were more ambivalent about whose problem was the Negro problem, however. The Camp Grant inspector cited above also pointed out the lack of amenities provided by the black community itself. But he qualified this by relaying the CTCA claim, “The colored population...is poor and non-progressive, and for that reason, it is said that cooperation has been difficult”.²⁴ The “it is said” was clearly sceptical and raised the question of why a local black community would be “non-progressive” alongside its white counterpart. The inspector was disappointed to find a community unable (and perhaps even unwilling) to advance. Scholars have explored how the Progressive reform movement was segregated, and how black communities engaged with it in different ways, whether by embracing it, or being sceptical of it due to ties with the white state, or due to being too poor to do anything but survive (Dittmer, 1980; Knupfer, 1996; Lasch-Quinn, 1993). Like Belcher, this inspector cited poverty as the primary explanation, but s/he left open other possibilities. But what was made clear to Scott was that black community buy-in to the war as an opportunity for advancing blackness was uneven on the ground, not least thanks to CTCA neglect.

Thus the CTCA coordinated another exclusion zone outside at least some of the camps. While they sought to keep black soldiers out of white neighborhoods, more remarkably, they sought to keep white soldiers out of black neighborhoods. These segregations were not equivalent, nor was the CTCA primarily concerned with the welfare of black citizens per se.

‘Order’ was paramount so that white soldiers’ health and effectiveness was not endangered either by violence or by disease. Black soldiers’ health and effectiveness were afterthoughts in the CTCA’s domestic war against vice. In this it mirrored the military’s relegation of black soldiers to labor battalions and its reluctance to train black officers. Despite the CTCA’s apparent indifference to black futures, they clearly saw themselves in an impossible bind. Segregationist whiteness held sway all the way up to the White House, yet they understood that affronts to black soldiers’ ‘dignity’, as white officials understood it, endangered the war effort, thus obliquely acknowledging a value to advancing blackness (Mennell, 1999). The CTCA sought to keep white and black soldiers apart in host communities for the sake of ‘order’, while military officials paid lip service to protecting black soldiers from the state of exception of local ‘justice’ by offering guarantees of due process within their own courts martial or by pressuring local jurisdictions to do the same. My point of course is not that they succeeded in levelling justice (or even particularly intended to), but that black social death was problematized in a piecemeal way. But crucially, it was so in relation to blackness’ static supporting role for white futures. Static blackness entailed a never-ending deferral of care for the advancement of black life as the victorious and infinite futures of white life took precedence.

Conclusion

The four spatio-temporalities informing CTCA biopolitics were governmental logics that were both cultural grammars (Sexton, 2011; Spillers, 2003) and structuring racializing assemblages (Puar, 2007; Saldanha, 2006). As should be apparent, they did not originate *sui generis* from CTCA activities, but instead reproduced already-existing racist discourse and practice in a particular, albeit extensive, biopolitical field defined by the circulation of VD

pathogens and racist emotions, practices and affective responses in soldiers' bodies. In this they reproduced a specific topology of power characteristic of the US' Progressive-era racial formation (Omi and Winant, 1986; Saldanha, 2010): victorious whiteness and static blackness in asymmetric service of infinite whiteness, with advancing blackness countering the other three. Soldiers' bodies were the spatial foundation, but were further territorialized through the establishment of pastoral-disciplinary camps, segregated facilities, militarized towns, and the migration of recruits across the nation. Bodies were the nexus of time as well. Ancestries and futures linked racialized bodies to each other and in opposition, sometimes to the point of extreme violence. All were regulated according to futurities that varied by immediacy vs. longevity, and ever-increasing productivity vs. a supplementary stasis that promised no progress.

Attending to the multiplicity of spatio-temporalities within and between racial categories prompts a larger question. The extreme violence meted out to black bodies stepping out of line, spatially or temporally, was uneven, and some value was ascribed to black lives insofar as they related to white futures. Put another way, we know that whiteness' dependence on the devaluation of black agency takes innumerable spatial forms (Anderson, 2007; Gilmore, 2007; McIntyre and Nast, 2011; Tyner and Houston, 2000; Wilson, 1992; Wright, 2006). This makes any reductive characterization of spaces such as the training camps problematic, whether as straightforward disciplinary or pastoral spaces or, especially, as spaces of exception, as racialization belies any pure notion of bare life (Moten, 2009, page 180; Sexton, 2011, page 12; Wilderson III, 2010, pages 35–36). Is it possible under white supremacy to understand what black life 'is', how it matters, what its futures are, without simply reducing it to its very real vulnerability to premature death?

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Endnotes

¹ US Public Health Service, ca. 1917, Manpower: V.D. Pamphlet no. 6, pg. 2. CTCA, RG165, entry 399, box 24, folder Hygiene Instructions.

² Copy of circular, ca. 1917; EJS, RG107, entry 96, box 2.

³ 2553, Bascom Johnson, ca. 1917, “Next Steps”; CTCA, RG165, entry 376, box 24: Venereal Disease.

⁴ Anonymous, 24 September 1917, “Memorandum on the Work of the CTCA”, pgs. 1-2; CTCA, RG165, entry 393, box 1: 5784.

⁵ War-Camp Community Recreation Fund, ca. 1917, Circular; CTCA RG165, entry 396, box 1, folder Miscellaneous Correspondence YMCA Arizona.

⁶ Boston CTCA, ca. 1917, untitled, pgs. 1-2; CTCA RG165, entry 393, box 1.

⁷ Anonymous, 28 February 1919, Memo to Moyle, pg. 2; CTCA RG90, box 1.

⁸ Margot Canaday shows how “perversion” came to the attention of the CTCA through vice reports, some from its own inspectors, but mostly through local vigilance committees (Canaday, 2009, pages 60–61). This deserves a paper of its own, yet for present purposes the overwhelming focus of the commission remained heterosexual prostitution in both substance and rationale.

⁹ The CND was established by Congress in 1916 to coordinate US industry for the upcoming war effort. CND, ca. 1917, “Letter to Influential Citizens of Communities within 50 Miles of Cantonments”; CTCA RG165, entry 393, box 1: 6171.

¹⁰ De Hellettz to Scott, 17 November 1917; Emmett J. Scott (EJS) papers, RG107, entry 96, box 2.

¹¹ Anonymous, “Memo on Work of CTCA”, pg. 2.

¹² Fosdick to Walter Clarke, 8 March 1918; CTCA RG165, entry 396, box 1.

¹³ 2553, Bascom Johnson, ca. 1917, “Next Steps”; CTCA, RG165, entry 376, box 24: Venereal Disease.

¹⁴ E.F Mills and Irwin Lowery to Fosdick, 7 September 1917; CTCA RG165, entry 393, box 1: 6232.

¹⁵ Eliot to Fosdick, ca. October 1917; CTCA RG165, entry 393, box 1: 6235; Fosdick, 8 Oct 1917, Memo; CTCA, RG165, entry 393, box 1: 6211.

¹⁶ Senlo to Fosdick, 6 Oct 1917, pg. 1; CTCA RG165, entry 393, box 1: 6383.

¹⁷ Anonymous, ca. 1918, “A Brief Report on Camp Sherman and Chillicothe, Ohio”; EJS RG107, entry 96, box 2.

¹⁸ Anonymous, ca. 1918, “A Brief Report on Camp Grant”, pg. 3; EJS RG107, entry 96, box 2.

¹⁹ Scott to Tulane, 6 August 1918; EJS RG107, entry 96, box 1.

²⁰ Braucher to Fosdick, 1 October 1917; CTCA, RG165, entry 393, box 1: 6193. Moton had succeeded Washington as principal of the Tuskegee Institute upon the latter’s death two years before. It was Moton who suggested to Baker that Scott be appointed special advisor.

²¹ Wallace to Braucher, 26 Sept 1917; CTCA, RG165, entry 393, box 1: 6193.

²² May Belcher, March 1918, “Report—Alexandria, Louisiana”; EJS RG107, entry 96, box 2.

²³ Belcher, “Report—Alexandria”, pg. 2.

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²⁴ Anonymous, "Brief Report on Camp Grant, pg. 2.