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“To interpret this world differently was, then to change it.”
To Mom and Dad, for believing that I can do the same.

And

To Professor Cynthia Lynn Lyerly, for helping me make sense of the “nonsensical.”
Acknowledgments

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K.M.L.
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Introduction

Doorway to Twentieth Century America

With the knowledge that thought and words, and right and deed influence men even more than their original physical endowment there has arisen the whole movement of social reform to inspire and arouse men, and to furnish by social heredity that which they otherwise lack.  

-- W.E.B. Du Bois, 1904

The philosopher Daniel Dennet argues, “Selves are not independently existing soul-pearls, but artifacts of the social process that create us, and, like other such artifacts, subject to sudden shifts in status.”  

A large part of social life is situating the self. History is driven by individuals and groups of people trying to negotiate their existence within social structures that are often in flux. This study is based on the premise that navigating boundaries of the self is a historical, ideological process. Up until the turn of the century, categories of race, class, and gender were seen as fixed constructions that grounded individual selves within non-negotiable spheres. The advent of modernity, however, witnessed a number of political, economic, and


social changes, which contributed to the growing chaos of society. In this shifting world of ideas and events, reformers renegotiated the structures of American public life, using education as their primary means. By combining accepted, unifying, pragmatic principles with more radical ideas of social revolution, twentieth-century reformers were able to rethink class, gender, and race and thereby attempt to mold anew the identity of American public life. In order to sufficiently and coherently argue this thesis, I will use a methodology of discourse analysis, and will analyze ideas and culture as agents of historical change. W.E.B. Du Bois, Jane Addams, and John Dewey each directly engaged what was thought to be the fragmentary nature of American culture at the turn of the century in a quest to redefine and restructure the boundaries separating them or others from inclusion in American public life. In doing so they created and operated in a middle ground, giving us a sense of the anxieties and drive of the emerging middle class, which remains important to our current modes of identification. Each of these reformers believed that knowledge would be the locus of power in the new century. They opened up a world of possibility by their example as educated members of society who could validate their elevated position in society and fight for others. Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois showed blacks, women, and the working class that they could free themselves from stereotypes and oppression by taking advantage of opportunities in education. In this position, they would be able to control the boundaries that structured American society and to position themselves according to standards of their own choosing. Through the dissemination of knowledge, the middle class and public life would, these reformers hoped, be opened up to previously excluded groups.

The political, social, and economic questions that arose at the beginning of the new century were complex, but allowed innovations in reform to take place. To begin with, in the
half century after the Civil War, the United States became an industrial nation – the leading one, in fact, in the world. America’s manufacturing output exceeded the combined output of its three main European rivals: England, Germany, and France. Rapid industrialization shattered age-old patterns of work habits, family relations, and culture. Many Americans viewed these changes with alarm. T. Jackson Lears perceptively notes, “it was a common view that urban artifice and mechanical convenience had transformed the apple-cheeked farm boy into the sallow ‘industrial man.’” Regardless of difficult working conditions, the chance for advancement gave the working class hope, binding them to the system yet also tempering their response to labor unions such as the National Labor Union, the Knights of Labor, and the American Federation of Labor. On one hand, industrialization meant progress, growth, and power. On the other hand, it meant change, social instability, exploitation, and a growing disparity of income between the rich and the poor. Industrialization also catalyzed the birth of a consumer culture. America went from production for supply and demand to production for consumption and as historian James Livingston argues, “this profusion of commodities complicated and enlarged the perceptible relation between the interior and the exterior of the self.” Individuals were defined less and less by their labor as boundaries between spheres of the industrial and the domestic became more porous. All in all, industrialization and consumer culture offered new spaces in which individuals could situate and define their selves. This space was especially evident in the city.

By 1920 the city had become the center of American political, economic, and cultural life.

The city – like the factory – became a symbol of a new America in which opportunity was purportedly available for anyone brave enough to grasp it. Interestingly enough, those who came to the cities in search of a new chance were mostly African Americans and foreign immigrants. In one of the most significant migrations in American history, thousands of African Americans moved from the rural South to the urban North beginning in the early 1880s. Historian Kevin Mumford notes, “premised on the propositions that the shift from rural to urban America, from southern agricultural economies to modern commercial infrastructures, from communal to modern anonymous social relations represented a historical watershed – that modernization reconstituted the meaning and regulation of black/white.”

Immigration from Europe changed as well as more individuals and families came from Southern and Eastern rather than Western and Central Europe. These new immigrants were mainly uneducated, unskilled, and either Catholic or Jewish. In response to this influx of foreigners, the existing middle class moved out of the cities and into the suburbs. Paul Boyer, in Urban Masses and Moral Order, argues that “old urban centers became the domain of newcomers divided by language, religion, and tradition, but often united in poverty and a pitiful lack of preparation for urban existence.” As cities grew in population and diversity the lines of moral responsibility became hopelessly confused as migration and industrialization began to challenge the structures of social values and order. Unfortunately, city and state governments to which people looked for guidance were equally unprepared in the late 1880s and early 1900s.

Local and national governments became increasingly complex bureaucracies with

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growing numbers of employees. The American public wanted new initiatives to stem the
burgeoning chaos brought on by an increasing number of labor strikes, most notably the Pullman
strike, and the economic depression of 1893, which at its height saw a total of three million
people unemployed.\textsuperscript{8}

\textsuperscript{8} Breen, et al., \textit{America: Past and Present}, 561.
As a result, Americans wanted the government to regulate the economy and safeguard individual welfare. Progressivism, populism, and a variety of other new political ideologies developed in response to the growing discussion of alternatives to the existing order. In addition, the 1890s witnessed the apex of power of political party machines, which operated by trading services for votes. Historian Daniel Rodgers argues, “This was the context within which maverick politicians could vault into office and ‘reform’ (and ‘anti-reform’) coalitions of all sorts could blossom.” Politicians and parties seemed greedy and selfish, which reinforced the public’s perception of a society on the brink of destruction.

Economically speaking, America was no more stable. The nature of American industry changed in this era. Instead of capital being dispersed among numerous, smaller entrepreneurs, monopolies and large corporations came to control America’s wealth. Livingston argues that, “the emergence of the large corporations coincided with the mechanization or ‘homogenization’ of the labor process and the eclipse of skilled workers’ control of machine production.”

Machines increasingly took the place of workers both in industry and in agriculture. The influx of immigrants and Americans moving to the cities searching for jobs created new tensions in a society already divided. Men like Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller amassed large fortunes by monopolizing the production of steel and oil. Huge firms, investment bankers, and professional managers dominated the economy, concentrating economic control into fewer and fewer hands. These giant businesses, maturing quickly, with interlocking ownership and management by a new professional class, dominated the economic landscape of the era. In addition, advertising agents developed a new science of marketing products. The advertising

10 Livingston, Pragmatism and the Political Economy of Cultural Revolution, 90.
industry flourished as chain stores across the country began to compete with one another. At the turn of the century, Americans had learned to make, want, and buy a diverse array of goods, catalyzing America’s shift to a consumer-based society.

Since the institutions guiding American society were under siege, the public shifted its focus to the family and its established ideals. The code of Victorian morality set the tone for the era. It was both obeyed and disobeyed, reflecting the tensions of a generation that was undergoing a change in moral standards. The middle class seemed entrenched in “old-fashioned” cultural traditions as economics and politics progressed into an era of modernity. Sociologist Mustafa Emirbayer writes, “the ‘sacred center’ of American society was in desperate need of revitalization; a ‘resacralization,’ in Durkheimian terms, of key aspects of public and domestic life would have to be achieved through social reform.” Reformers wanted to bridge the gap between rich and poor and to bring education, culture and hope to the slums that were largely comprised of new immigrants.

Settlement houses such as Hull House in Chicago and the Henry Street Settlement in New York were seen as “warm and comforting refuge[s] from the harsh world of business and the city.” These houses were revolutionary safe places for immigrants and the working class poor. Members of the middle class, mostly women, addressed their personal needs, fought for policy changes, and provided opportunities in education. In addition to serving the poor and foreign parts of American society, social reform also gave women a voice. Settlement houses were consciously organized like families and came to be seen as extensions of the domestic sphere.

As Jane Addams’s biographer J.O.C. Phillips argues, “the new social ethic was peculiarly feminine in character. It was the old ethic of altruism, of benevolent self-sacrifice.”13 Women were able to assert their importance to the well-being of the middle class. They became “public housekeepers,” extending their care of family and home to the public sphere.

Turn-of-the-century America witnessed a final shift crucial for understanding this thesis, a shift in ideas. Between 1880 and 1890 nearly 150 new colleges and universities opened their doors. In these new and established schools the curriculum moved away from classical, liberal arts education towards science and industrial training. Pragmatism and a renewed interest in science could be seen in the ideas of leading intellectuals such as William James, George Santayanna, and Josiah Royce. Ideas came to be validated by practice. Eric A. MacGilvray contends that pragmatism ushered in an era in which, “Intelligence is an active, not a passive phenomenon; reflection, far from being divorced from and set against action, is in fact a crucial aspect of it.”14 The shift from abstract ideas to concrete applications was also evident in the industrial education movement, which attempted to answer the demand for high-skilled workers. Historian Sol Cohen rightfully notes the condescension in the movement: “For the children of the masses the whole system of public education had to be reshaped along vocational lines to help them better adjust to the life they were destined to lead.”15 Industrial education flourished because educational reformers targeted working class immigrants and African Americans. The influx of African American men into the industrial system did not occur without debate and discussion. Social Darwinists believed there was a direct correlation between genetics and social

13 Ibid., 59.
hierarchy. This position threatened anyone who was not white, male, or Protestant and directly shaped the conversations among intellectuals on all fronts. Social Darwinism, the industrial education movement, and the greater emphasis on the sciences led to the questioning of the status quo and allowed “radical” people and ideas into the debates over America’s future.

Society, it is clear, experienced a crisis between 1870 and 1900. Together, the growth of cities and the rise of industrial capitalism brought immense change. In the course of a decade political patterns shifted, the government acquired fresh power, and public unrest prompted a desire for social change. Economic hardships posed questions of a most difficult sort about industrialization, urbanization, and the overall quality of American life. Americans shared a sense of excitement and discovery. Racism, repression, and labor conflict were present, but there was also talk of hope, progress, and change. Within this space of chaos and change, reformers such as Jane Addams, W.E.B. Du Bois, and John Dewey were able to contest the previously rigid ideologies of race, class, and gender, which had so far shaped society.

John Dewey, Jane Addams, and W.E.B. Du Bois worked to restructure society. These three reformers promoted reform through higher education for women, blacks, and all members of a class-divided society. In addition, Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois each lived exceptionally long lives, therefore, this study will concentrate on their work from 1880 until approximately 1930. Dewey will be considered in relation to class, Addams in relation to gender, and Du Bois in relation to race. There were important sites, however, in which the interests of Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois intersected. Dewey and Du Bois were both educated and heavily influenced by William James at Harvard University. The creation of Hull House brought Dewey and Du Bois both in contact with Addams in Chicago. Also, all three were instrumental in the
development of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. These points of contact are important to note because they reveal the intersecting concerns of American public life as a whole. Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois were working to build a society in which individuals or groups could position themselves according to their own merit, philosophy, and achievements. Their efforts hinged on the expansion of opportunities in education, for what one knew became as important as wealth and ethnicity, in some circles. Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois each worked to “unfix” the fixed ideologies of race, class, and gender, and thereby recreate American public life.

The work of John Dewey serves as a starting point for my analysis of the emergence of refined theories of education and class. Dewey’s philosophy and actions focused on the weakening of democracy and educational reform. According to Dewey, democracy was rooted in the world of subsistence farms and artisans. “American democratic polity was developed out of genuine community life,” he argued, “that is, association in the local and small centers where industry was mainly agricultural and where production was carried on mainly with hand tools.”16 Dewey contended that a genuine community of informed citizens discussing politics, economics, and social issues in town meetings was American democracy in action. The complexity and heterogeneity that came with industrialization and urbanization disrupted the conditions of that community life and thus of democracy. In The Public and Its Problems, Dewey wrote: “Not only the state but society itself has been pulverized into an aggregate of unrelated wants and wills.”17 Dewey believed that in order for America to become the democracy it upheld as an ideal, the American public needed to be educated and actively involved in public life. Since the natural

culture of democracy had been destroyed, Dewey called upon an *intentional* culture that promoted the dissemination of knowledge throughout American society. Dewey’s work in this respect showed a faith that the social problems of industry and labor could be solved with the help of educational reform.

John Dewey challenged social conceptions of an intellectual elite to which knowledge was restricted. Dewey firmly believed education should be available to the masses. The school would thus become the training ground for future citizenship, and a micro-environment of society. Dewey theorizes that, “What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely; acted upon it destroys our democracy ... Only by being true to the future growth of all the individuals who make it up, can society by any chance be true to itself.”\(^{18}\) The focus of education became the child and experience became education’s guiding method. Dewey’s works, *Experience and Nature* and *Democracy and Education*, represented a new direction in American philosophy that captured the pragmatist tendencies of the twentieth century. Dewey directly connected abstract concepts of philosophy to the problems of modern America. He argued, “If we are willing to conceive [of] education as the process of forming fundamental dispositions, intellectual and emotional, toward nature and fellow men, philosophy may even be defined as the general theory of education.”\(^{19}\) Philosophy was made practical through education. Dewey’s firm belief in this theory freed knowledge from the class of intellectual elites, making education a method of expanding American public life.

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19 John Dewey, “Philosophies of Freedom,” in Richard J. Bernstein’s *John Dewey* (New York:
Dewey’s firm belief in pragmatism and problem-to-solution theory manifested itself in his political and social affiliation with progressivism. This study will analyze Dewey’s life and work in relation to his concern for the masses and the Progressive Party’s reform platform. Progressivism sought cures for the problems of city, state, and nation. Progressivism drew on the expertise of the new social sciences and some of the newer schools of thought to which Dewey adhered. Dewey’s work embodied the Progressive principle that thought evolved in relation to the environment and hence, that education was directly related to everyday experience. New ideas in education, Dewey said, were “as much a product of the changed social situation, and as much an effort to meet the needs of the society that is forming, as are changes in modes of industry and commerce.” Dewey’s participation in this movement illustrates his desire to reconstruct society so that hard work and initiative were rewarded. People could take initiative in these changing times and situate themselves within desired circles of society and thereby define the American middle class according to their own standards, Dewey hoped.

Dewey’s theories of education and democracy all hinged on his belief that the individual could uplift him or herself with the understanding that knowledge was power. This study will use Dewey’s prescribed solutions to argue that culture and the middle class were not fixed sites of being but contested sites of change. Dewey firmly believed that ideas were the means by which humans were able to reconstruct the world according to their desired ends. Education became a requirement for the middle class. In some ways, John Dewey introduced new members into American public life by challenging definitions of class; however, his vision was clearly white and male. There remained areas of blindness, which Dewey did not address, but left to the

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20 Breen, et al., America, 560.
This study will next turn to the example and work of Jane Addams who also stressed the importance of education in modern America. An American pragmatist and progressive, Addams’s work centered on gender and class uplift. Addams founded Hull House in 1889 to provide a better civic and industrial life for the underprivileged of Chicago. Her philosophies and fight for the feminist cause, however, will be the focus of this thesis. Addams was heavily influenced by educational reform in the 1870s. She led the fight to transform Rockford Seminary into a college and became Rockford’s first B.A. In her autobiography, Twenty Years at Hull-House, Addams recalled: “The opportunity for our Alma Mater to take her place in the new movement of full college education for women filled us with enthusiasm, and it became the driving ambition with the undergraduates to share in this new and glorious undertaking.”

Addams came to see education as a means of reform and advancement. Her early fight for equality in education conditioned her for challenging the boundaries encompassing the “woman’s sphere” at the dawn of the twentieth century.

One of the most restrictive prejudices holding women back from equality in all areas of society was the cultural ideal that women embodied morality. Victorian notions of femininity and purity underscored society’s belief that women should not be subjected to the harsh realities of politics and economics. They were instead to remain protected in the domestic sphere. Addams used this ideal to argue that women would infuse society with a greater sense of moral responsibility. “The men of the city,” she wrote, “have been carelessly indifferent to much of

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this civic housekeeping, as they have always been indifferent to the details of the household.”

Thereby, women could retain their status as housekeepers by simply extending their work into the public sphere, becoming “public housekeepers.” Hull House was a perfect example of this new feminist line of thinking. The settlement house allowed Addams and other women opportunities to challenge the system while operating within the bounds of the “women’s sphere.”

Addams’s career in the fight for gender equality did not actively begin until the early twentieth century when she came to argue for women’s suffrage. She, like Dewey, was a pragmatist, a progressive, and much of her social and educational philosophy was grounded in scientific inquiry. Attempting to give scientific validity to her belief in the innate difference between men and women, Addams turned to the works of Paul Geddes and William Thomas, biologists who believed there existed different cell structures between the two sexes. Their studies provided scientific evidence for the common belief that there were innate characteristics of male aggressiveness and female pacifism. Their scientific theories formed the foundation for Addams’s vision of a woman’s role in society. In her attitude towards her role at Hull-House, in her position as part of the 1912 Progressive campaign, and her later stance in Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom during World War I, Addams adhered to this theory. The Long Role of Women’s Memory, Twenty Years at Hull-House, and On Education are select examples of Addams’s extensive contribution to reform at the turn of the century. She worked to influence the reshaping of society’s perception of gender, specifically women’s earned role in politics and economics, and fought for the advancement of all who were oppressed.

Addams believed that American ideals of democracy and equality would remain

unrealized until women were seen as separate but equal. Unfortunately, in Addams’s day women were largely excluded from American public life. Addams worked hard throughout her career to eradicate prejudices against women in politics, economics, and society. As Mary Jo Deegan contends, “She articulated the failed dreams of democracy, social equality, and economic viability reflected in the lives of black, the poor, immigrants, women, and delinquents.” Her efforts did not contest the boundaries restricting women, but they did widen women’s sphere to include politics, economics, and scientific reform, areas that previously had been exclusively the province of men. Addams, like Dewey and Du Bois, faced a world of challenges and worked hard to overcome the prejudices of American society.

The final figure to be discussed in this thesis is William Edward Burghardt Du Bois. During his life, which spanned nearly a century, Du Bois worked to expand opportunities for black and other oppressed people. Du Bois’s voice was one that reverberated throughout the world as he strove to free his people and firmly anchor them in the fabric of history. As more social reformers looked to education for solutions at the turn of the twentieth century, W.E.B. Du Bois was able to manipulate the language of black civil rights, which was largely ignored or repressed by the white, male majority, by basing it in already accepted American and European philosophy, predominantly in the works of the Georg Wilhelm Hegel, Karl Marx, and William James. While this method did not silence all critics, Du Bois was able to position the struggle of African Americans within the dominant western intellectual currents. In this way, Du Bois stands as both a symbol and an advocate for social uplift through education. This thesis will closely analyze Du Bois’s early intellectual life as an example of how education could promote

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In attempting to unify the black cultural elite with the black masses, Du Bois became part of the new black professional and managerial class. His efforts created a space in which the black intellectual served as an example of what the philosophy of education could do in terms of uplift and reform. Du Bois’s ideas about education for black people in America were centered largely on his theory of the “talented tenth,” a concept first introduced in a two-volume work, *The Philadelphia Negro*, which analyzed the devastating history of poverty and racism that afflicted African Americans in Philadelphia. The theory of the “talented tenth” revolved around Du Bois’s belief that a people should be judged by its most educated, most affluent, and most successful members. Black intellectuals would lead all African Americans into American public life. Their alliance would be characterized as “loving, reverent comradeship between the black lowly and black men emancipated by training and culture.”

The talented tenth used its educational achievement as a means for promoting the education of the rest of America’s black population. Du Bois’ talented tenth was to prove to America that African Americans had the capability to excel in and the right to equal opportunities in education. White Americans would, in turn, see in the talented tenth the promise for the whole race.

The protestations of Du Bois against the “industrial schools” of Booker T. Washington launched a debate within the African American community over the type of education black intellectual leaders felt would best suit the struggle for equality. Du Bois believed, “It was not enough that the teachers of teachers should be trained in technical normal methods; they must also, so far as possible, be broad-minded, cultured men and women, to scatter civilization among

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a people whose ignorance was not simply of letters, but of life itself.”25 As African Americans began to use education as a source of legitimacy, the black intellectual class came into closer contact with the black middle and working class. The concept of the talented tenth, which would later be called by Marxist theorists the “Professional-Managerial Class,” was the culmination of Du Bois’s early intellectual work. African Americans were finally secured in a past, present and future and could move towards widening the social, economic, and political circles of America on their own terms.

Du Bois’s life and work embodied the struggle of all African Americans at the turn of the century. In these various ways, Du Bois contested prevailing concepts of culture and middle class. Ultimately, Du Bois was able to devise methods that sought to eradicate many of the restrictions against the inclusion of educated African Americans into American public life. He proved that African Americans could excel and progress along with white Americans if given the proper education. He placed knowledge at the forefront of blacks’ fight for equality and freedom in modern American.

My work on the redefining class, gender, and race through education intervenes between two historiographical schools of literature on American public life and culture at the turn of the century. One of type scholarly literature on questions of public identity looks at this issue in terms of civilization, manliness, and professionalism. Gail Bederman, T. Jackson Lears, and James Livingston are some scholars of American public life and mass culture who use this approach. Bederman’s Manliness and Civilization traces a cultural revolution in which Victorian ideals of refined manliness are challenged by new formulations of aggressive masculinity and shows how two “opposite” notions came together in the discourse of

25 Ibid., 73.
“civilization.” Bederman argues, “Discourse is a set of ideas and practices, which taken together, organized both the way a society defines certain truths about itself and the way it deploys social power.”

While this study employs her methodology, it will also include class as a crucial category of analysis. Oppressed Americans at the turn of the century sought stability. Education offered an avenue of potential certainty and a venue in which the two extremes of the upper and lower classes could come into contact with each other and work for a better society.

The works of Livingston and Lears analyze 1880 to 1950 in terms, respectively, of economic and moral revolutions that altered concepts of selfhood and subjectivity. Both articulate alternatives to modern, possessive individualism. Livingston concentrates on the influence of economic factors on concepts of society and individualism at the turn of the century. He focuses on the effects of developments such as the emergence of consumer culture, the routinization of the labor process, and the breakdown of the household economy on society. Lears follow suit but does so in terms of moral and intellectual revolutions. He aims to “produce an analysis of culture that is sensitive not only to social class but also to the complexity and variety of individual human motives.”

Lears’s No Place of Grace believes culture and class structure to be a result of private actions and their public consequences. My study will mirror Livingston and Lears in their analysis of the effects on changes within society but differs in the obvious focus on specific areas and specific individuals.

Another perspective comes from those who believed culture and class to be fixed ideologies such as the philosopher G.W.F. Hegel. Hegel’s works The Philosophy of History and Phenomenology of the Mind explain concepts of history and the self in terms of a continuing

dialectic that works towards an absolute truth. Hegel postulated that history was the story of the development of the human spirit in time and space through the growth of its own self-consciousness. “Given this abstract definition,” Hegel argued, “we can say that world history is the record of the spirit’s efforts to attain knowledge of what it is in itself.”

History was seen to be a process of emancipation and enlightenment and reached its highest fulfillment and absolute end when reason and society were synthesized and when “the divine principle in the state is the Idea made manifest on earth.”

For Hegel, history was a progression of the development of reason and the self-consciousness in the individual will, in the actions of society, and finally into the aims of the state. Hegelian philosophy hinged on absolutes. Ideologies such as race, class, and gender could be contested and changed but only in relation to the progression of humanity towards an ideal state of existence.

My thesis offers a third perspective. The figures studied here viewed education as a means of transcending the limits of race, gender, and class. For them, identity was not fixed, but malleable. They did not want to “fix” the middle class and certainly were not trying to make popular culture static and rigid. Instead, these reformers were attempting to show that identity was negotiable and needed to be in order for humanity to progress. John Dewey, Jane Addams, and W.E.B. Du Bois each used education as a fulcrum for opening up American public life to marginal groups and for validating its existence. The relationship between these figures is emblematic of the Progressive era’s search for order.

All three of these reformers were able to cross boundaries of their specific interests to somehow include the plight and struggle of others. Their combined inquiry into the truth of class, gender, and race subsequently widened the “we” of American public life.

27 Lears, No Place of Grace, 3.
29 Ibid., 415.
30 My knowledge of Hegelian philosophy comes from discussions with Professor Epstein and studies with the philosophy department. Hegel’s epistemological vision of the transcendence of bondage appealed to intellectual society at the turn of the century and influenced the educations of Dewey and Du Bois. Therefore, a further and more detailed explanation of Hegelian philosophy will occur in subsequent chapters of this study in reference to specific sites of influence on the works and thoughts of these figures.
Chapter Two

John Dewey: “Philosopher of the Whole”
The role of intelligence becomes predominantly practical; its function is to guide the individual’s attempt to adjust to its physical, social, and cultural environment. Intelligence comes into play when there is a conflict of ends needing to be mediated. Ideas now become working hypotheses or plans with which the individual hopes to solve the problem confronting him; their verification consists in putting them into action and noting their ability to work, to organize facts. --John Dewey, 1900

John Dewey’s pivotal role in the shaping of the social and intellectual character of turn-of-the-century America, was not simply an extraordinary personal accomplishment, but an accomplishment with lasting consequences for countless others. Dewey developed a philosophical framework for social thought. Dewey’s early works fused social sciences with psychology and the natural sciences to form a new pattern of logic and empirical philosophy. The results elevated the role of the intellectual by proving the impact and importance of ideas to action, yet Dewey denounced the idea of an intellectual elite. Later in life, during Dewey’s tenures at the University of Chicago and Columbia University, his focus shifted to the philosophy of education. He confronted and sought to change administrative policies, teaching methods, and boundaries prohibiting marginal groups from higher education, specifically members of the lower classes and women. Dewey’s interests continued to evolve as specific conflicts in twentieth-century America surfaced. Politics, social reform, foreign policy, and the very essence of American democracy were all subjected to the scrutiny of Dewey’s sharp intellect. When the story of this philosopher’s life is told in detail, it makes the history of early twentieth-century America, and in some cases the Western world, more tangible. Dewey’s story shows how the theories of a philosopher who is in touch with his time can be an immediate force for reform.

The writings and actions of John Dewey were, and still are, numerous and consequential. On the occasion of Dewey’s ninetieth birthday, Dewey declared that no matter what else he had done he thought of himself as one who “first, last, and all the time, engaged in the vocation of philosophy.” His other interests, he said, were “specifically an outgrowth and manifestation of my primary interest in philosophy.” and his aim in life had always been to obtain “a moderately clear and distinct idea of what the problems are that underlie the

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difficulties and evils which we experience in fact; that is to say, in practical life.”32 Whatever was happening in the world, Dewey took as a fit subject for inquiry and comment.

In the context of this thesis, Dewey’s work with education and its effects on the structure of American society will be the primary focus. In the late nineteenth century, American public life was rather schizophrenic, self-interested, and trying to establish a locus of power for itself. Wealth, gender, and ethnicity made up the criteria of the day for an individual’s or group’s social position. Dewey’s philosophy of democracy and education sought to change these standards. Dewey firmly believed that ideas were the means by which humans were able to reconstruct the world according to their desired ends. As the world grew smaller with expansions in communication and transportation, knowledge grew in social importance. The intellectual community, consisting of experts and professional academics, began to exert influence over national and international affairs. As Harold Taylor argues, “The total influence they exerted had its origin in the fact that they were continually involved in analyzing and making public judgements about political, social, and cultural developments in their own societies and in the world at large. They were also ready to join with others in forming activist organizations, against war, on behalf of intellectual freedom and social justice, for educational and social change, and for the cause of liberalism in social institutions.” Ideas began to affect change, and knowledge increasingly became the standard for social validation. Dewey’s efforts to transform education in America thus had radical consequences.

Dewey challenged traditional concepts of a “learned class.” He wanted knowledge to break free from classrooms and academia and to flow to, from, and among ordinary Americas. Dewey rejected the developing class of intellectual elites on the grounds that the group was becoming increasingly removed from the common interests of American society. As Laura Westhoff contends, “Dewey’s concern about the development of a class of intellectual elites is an important point, for it has been tempting in the twentieth century to view intellectuals as disinterested observers outside of the class structure. He rejected this definition, not only because it ignored the class nature of expert policymakers, but also because it shut them off from knowledge of the needs which they were supposed to serve.” Dewey demanded free inquiry for every individual and group in American society. He emphasized community and demanded equal participation of all its members, introducing a middle ground in which those without wealth or position could work towards uplift and change. Dewey argued, “Learning has been put into circulation. While there still is, and probably always will be, a particular class having the special business of inquiry at hand, a

33 Ibid., xiv.
34 Laura M. Westhoff, “The Popularization of Knowledge: John Dewey on Experts and American Democracy,”
distinctly learned class is henceforth out of the question. It is an anachronism. Knowledge is no longer an immobile solid; it has been liquified. It is actively moving in all the currents of society itself.”35 Average Americans, thus, were able to claim knowledge as a locus of power for their rights as citizens of the United States of America. Dewey’s contention was that much like philosophy, education ought to determine the basic issues underlying social conflicts and to suggest ways to overcome them. In subsequent years, marginal groups, such as women and ethnic minorities, adapted Dewey’s theories of philosophy and education to their fight for social equality. Beginning with his own years in school and later efforts on behalf of pedagogical, political, and social reform, Dewey’s life and work revealed a fundamental faith in education’s role in the pursuit of equality and democracy.

On October 20, 1859, in Burlington, Vermont, John Dewey was born to Archibald Spencer Dewey and Lucina Rich Dewey. His father started out as a farm boy in northern Vermont, but quickly became a reasonably successful town grocer and later a tobacconist. A year after Dewey’s birth, Archibald answered Lincoln’s call for volunteers and enlisted as a quartermaster of the First Vermont Calvary. He remained on active duty for the entire war and after three years of separation, Lucina sold the family home and moved the children down to Virginia, where they remained until Archibald was discharged. Archibald’s absence led Lucina to rely on her own resources and perceptions and she became the foremost influence on Dewey’s young life. Her insistence on social consciousness, religion, and piety was demanding and made a lasting impression on her son. Biographer Neil Coughlan observes, “Until he was almost thirty years old, the greater part of Dewey’s intellectual life was concerned with mediating between that core of evangelicalism that his mother had given him and life as men lived it, particularly the intellectual life of the late nineteenth century.”36 Lucina brought her boys up in the traditional New England way. When the war ended, Archibald and Lucina moved back to Vermont and established themselves within the middle class there. Burlington’s population was distinctly different from that of the typical Vermont town. The community was a culturally mixed one, containing a cross section of “old Americans” and foreign-born immigrants from Ireland and Quebec. Historian George Dykhuizen reflects, “Though Dewey grew up a typical product of ‘old American’ culture, he had a breadth of social horizon and a depth of understanding for members of other cultural groups not

ordinarily encountered in a youth with a Vermont background." At an early age Dewey was given a culturally diverse vision of American society. Through his travels and school comrades, he perceived American public life as a mixture of cultures. Archibald worked among men of different backgrounds, both ethnic and economic. Lucina socialized with women of her class but devoted time and energy to those less fortunate. Thus, John Dewey was raised in a household that accepted differences as part of the American social fabric. This vision would remain with Dewey throughout his life and influence many of his later ideas.

When Dewey was fifteen years old, he graduated from the local high school and entered the University of Vermont. The university was very small; Dewey ended up graduating in a class of eighteen, which included his brother, Davis Dewey. He took the classical curriculum of Greek, Latin, ancient history, analytical geometry and calculus, yet the faculty believed in the sanctity of the human mind and the right to think freely and independently. The faculty also believed that a student’s character as well as his or her mind should experience growth and refinement while in college and they taught their classes with this theory in mind. Dewey’s studies at the University of Vermont laid the foundations for his later educational theories. His studies were oriented to the past, for example, a problem Dewey later highlighted in his attack on academic curricula. In Democracy and Education, Dewey later wrote, “A knowledge of the past and its heritage is of great significance when it enters into the present, but not otherwise. And the mistake of making the records and remains of the past the main material of education is that it cuts the vital connection of present and past, and tends to make the past a rival of the present and the present a more or less futile imitation of the past.” Dewey did not believe that one could study “the past for the past’s sake.” In later writings, Dewey made a convincing case that since the person studying the past is always in his own present, that person’s understanding and interest will be presentist and cause the past to be viewed accordingly. Put more broadly, Dewey, like other pragmatists, believed that we can never really remove ourselves from our own context, which includes our education and culture. Dewey’s exposure to philosophies that remained entrenched in the traditional method of studying the past for the past’s sake seemed out of step in relation to the real life problems affecting the contemporary world.

Press, 1975), 5.
After Dewey’s graduation from the University of Vermont, he accepted an offer to teach high school in Oil City, Pennsylvania. Oil City was a working class town founded around the oil industry. Dewey remained there for two years teaching Latin, algebra, and natural science. Though social issues had been his primary concern while an undergraduate, and despite the fact that Oil City provided a superb opportunity for him to observe the social problems arising from raw, uncontrolled industrialism, Dewey’s efforts remained focused on problems of metaphysics. Lewis Hahn contends, “During this time he read extensively in philosophy, and for some months during 1881-82 he received private tutoring in the philosophical classics and in learning to read philosophical German from his former professor, H.A.P. Torrey, who encouraged him to go on to graduate school and who probably was largely responsible for Dewey’s initial acceptance of institutionalism.”

Between the years of Dewey’s undergraduate and graduate education, he embarked upon his writing career. His two articles “The Metaphysical Assumptions of Materialism” and “The Pantheism of Spinoza,” produced during these years reflect Dewey’s own struggles with the inadequacies of philosophy.

In the first article, Dewey examined what he considered the unconsciously held assumptions of materialism and concluded that philosophy was self-contradicting. Dewey argued, “To prove a strict monism, materialism has to assume an original irresolvable dualism. To prove the mind a phenomenon of matter, it is obliged to assume a substance to give knowledge of that matter. To prove that it is an effect of matter, it is obliged to assume either an intuitional power of mind, or that mind is itself a cause, both equally destructive of materialism. We conclude, therefore, that as a philosophical theory materialism has proved itself a complete felo-de-se. To afford itself a thinkable basis, it assumes things which thoroughly destroy the theory.” Dewey effectively showed the self-destructive character of the metaphysical assumptions of materialism. Dewey submitted his first two articles to the Journal of Speculative Philosophy edited by W.T. Harris. Both

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40 Institutionalist philosophy maintained that the mind was endowed with certain “innate ideas” that were the primary presuppositions of all human knowledge of what was true, right, beautiful, and divine. The mind accepted these beliefs not on rational demonstrations but with the force of conviction that the mind is powerless to resist. This was branch of philosophy was based on intuition and blind belief more than reason. It also set up dualisms and provided a basis for moral and religious structures and beliefs. For more information on institutionalist philosophy see Joseph Torrey, A Theory of Fine Art (New York: Scribner & Co., 1874) or Noah Porter, The Elements of Intellectual Science: A Manual for Schools and Colleges (New York: Scribner & Co., 1886).

articles were well received and printed in April and July issues of the publication in 1882. Dewey’s absorbing interest in philosophy, the tutelage of Professor Torrey, and Harris’s favorable response all culminated in the decision to undertake graduate study in philosophy at The Johns Hopkins University.

At Johns Hopkins, Dewey finally found the materials needed for his subsequent development of a “practical” philosophy, one that triumphed over dualism and made abstract principles apply to common life. Dewey’s studies in graduate school centered on psychology with G. Stanley Hall, and philosophy with George Sylvester Morris. Under Morris’s influence, Dewey was introduced to the philosophy of G. W. F. Hegel and adopted it as his own. Hegel’s system abolished dualism. Mind and nature were not independent of each other but had an organic relation in a common ground - “spirit.” Dewey was also drawn to Hegelianism because it saw itself as a theism that could be completely explored and encompassed by reason. Coughlan notes that Morris’s and Dewey’s, “Hegelianism demonstrated that God is logically implied in reason and in nature; at its most adventurous it was on the way toward presenting God not as transcendent and utterly other but as the Absolute Idea implying its own complete intelligibility.”

The Hegelian system offered Dewey a way to keep religious faith while still embracing reason. Dewey embraced this new perspective on philosophy. He produced many articles and gave several speeches on the subject as he strived to understand how the system could be applied to actual human life. His classes with Hall and his firm belief in the relevance of psychology provided the next step in the evolution of Dewey’s thought from strict Hegelianism to pragmatism, the philosophy with which he would be most intimately connected.

Guided by G. Stanley Hall, John Dewey came to see psychology as a branch of philosophy. Modern experimental psychology had shown that the intellect, will, and emotions were completely interdependent. Dewey noted, “There is no knowledge of anything except as our interests are alive to the matter, and our will actively directed toward the end desired ... we know only what we most want to know.”

Psychology was capable of bridging the gap between science and philosophy. The discipline provided Dewey with proof of objective.

42 Coughlan, Young John Dewey, 59.
43 Dewey delivered the first paper after his acceptance of Hegelianism on April 10, 1883 to the Metaphysical Club. Entitled “Hegel and the Theory of Categories,” the paper has not survived and one can only speculate at its content. Dykhuiizen, however, theorizes that “it was an appreciative account of Hegel’s dialectical method that presents truth as an absolute and harmonious system of concepts arrived at through the union of opposites in a superior synthesis.” See Dykhuiizen, The Life and Mind of John Dewey, 35.
44 John Dewey, “The Obligation to Knowledge of God,” Student Christian Association Monthly Bulletin 6
universal knowledge. Psychology started with the lowest and simplest carnal responses and extended out to include human perception of the most advanced sort. As Dewey pointed out, “Does or does not the self-consciousness of man fall within the science of psychology? What reason can be given for excluding it? Certainly few would be found so thorough-going as to deny that perception is a matter which that science must treat; those however who admit perception would find themselves hard to put to it to give a reason for excluding memory, imagination, conception, judgement, reasoning.”\textsuperscript{45} Psychology, therefore, must study self-consciousness, creativity, and reason. Borrowing from the vocabulary of Hegel, Dewey came to the conclusion that since self-consciousness involved a realization of the world, psychology was the study of the world as the mind conceived it. Coughlan explains, “Self-consciousness at its fully developed stage is man’s realization that the world is objectified self. Psychology then is the study of the realization of the world in consciousness; but inasmuch as the universe has no other existence except as realized in consciousness, ... psychology is the study of the universe. The study of the universe or of all being, is of course philosophy; therefore psychology is philosophy.”\textsuperscript{46} Because everything comes to man through some sort of mental process, Dewey recognized the inherent similarities between the methods and content of psychology and philosophy as they both took as subjects the human mind. To Dewey, psychology was a kind of applied philosophy, and, conversely, philosophy was a form of theoretical psychology. Their relationship ended up providing Dewey with a foundation upon which he could build a new philosophical system, one based on a posteriori, or scientific methods. Philosophy was no longer restricted to the study of theoretical issues or absolute ideals. A new notion of philosophy was born that would address concrete, immediate problems of the modern world.

Dewey’s interest in psychology added one more important dimension to his developing system of philosophy. Philosophic arguments now rested in humanity’s experience of the world. Dewey’s philosophy became practical; it became pragmatic. Dewey realized that until philosophers understood their common humanity, they, as a profession, could not hope to perform any reforming or intelligent function for the modern world. Dewey’s new definition of philosophy made it a living thing, a progressive force in common life. Joseph Rather argues that Dewey worked towards “a philosophy which encompasses every important intellectual and cultural activity to end, as well

\textsuperscript{46} Coughlan, \textit{Young John Dewey}, 62.
as begin, with the world of everyday life." 47 Dewey's ideal was a philosophy completely devoid of pretentiousness. He saw his profession as one that could be used for the betterment of society. In 1900 Dewey delivered a presidential address to the American Psychological Association (APA) in which he urged his colleagues to adopt scientific methods as the foundation for their work. These methods would, he offered, "afford [them] insight into the conditions which control the formation and execution of aims, and thus enable human effort to expend itself sanely, rationally, and with assurance." 48 Dewey's speech predicted the acceptance of social scientific knowledge, a heading under which philosophy could now be classified, as the foundation of social reform.

Following his graduation, Dewey accepted a teaching position in the philosophy department of the University of Michigan and taught there from 1884 to 1894, apart from a year spent in Minnesota. As Dewey entered the world of the American university system, he came into contact with a rising class of professional intellectuals like himself who recognized the impact knowledge could have on contemporary society. Henry Demarest Lloyd, the group's leading spokesman, called it "the New Conscience." 49 This intellectual community at the turn of the century recognized that poverty, prejudice, political corruption, and many other forces negatively affecting America had social causes. These educated men and women joined together in organizations and parties that would lead them towards a greater society. George Herbert Mead, a close friend and co-worker of Dewey's, summed up the work of the "new radical intellectuals" in 1899 by stating: "Socialism in one form or another, lies back of the thought directing and inspiring reform ... The new philosophers go beyond the mere description of the phenomena of the social world to the attempt at reform." 50 Some of these men and women became social reformers. Others saw political parties as the means to social change. For Dewey, the answer lay in the dissemination of knowledge.

Dewey believed intelligence was an active instrument for reform and that reform, in turn, heightened intelligence. As a tool for the conscious mediation of problems in modern life, knowledge became an integral component in the array of tools available to reformers in their pursuits. By weaving the importance of knowledge into the fabric of social action, Dewey and his philosophies became associated with

pragmatism. Developed by William James, a Harvard professor and correspondent of Dewey’s, the pragmatist branch of philosophy was based on the importance of human experience. James believed that pragmatism rested on “the attitude of looking away from first things, fruits, consequences, facts.” In other words, for a pragmatist, as for Dewey, ideas were validated by practices and not the reverse. Eric MacGilvray gives an excellent interpretation of “Deweyian pragmatism” in his study of its consequences on democratic theory:

Having discredited traditional philosophical attempts to root moral and political norms in transcendental categories of reason, schedules of natural rights, or universally approved human goods, pragmatism demonstrates, it is said, that there is no authority to which we can appeal outside of our own experience and thus liberates the participatory and deliberative energies of the common citizen. In the absence of any uncontroversial higher ideal, we are faced with the necessity of constructing our own norms and institutions, and given that we have an interest in constructing them fairly and rationally, we are compelled to open the political process to as many perspectives and experiences as possible.

Dewey’s philosophy placed responsibility in human hands. Individuals were deemed capable of defining what was good, right, and true. Because there was no higher authority to which a person could appeal outside of his or her own experience, the common citizen was liberated to participate directly in progress and modernity. Education would provide the means. Dewey contended, “Education is essentially the ability to learn from experience; the power to retain from one experience something which is of avail in coping with the difficulties of a later situation. This means power to modify actions on the basis of results of prior experiences, the power to develop dispositions.” Dewey’s version of pragmatic philosophy showed that to talk of anything outside of experience was absurd. We have nothing but experience, which, for Dewey, provided both the method and the content of education and life.

To understand the way Dewey developed his pragmatism and the use he made of it, one can look to any of the major books of philosophy composed during this period of his life. The texts *Experience and Nature*, and *Democracy and Education*, however, are especially helpful in mapping out the progression of his ideas. Both texts exemplify Dewey’s belief that philosophy was applicable to immediate, human life and that it could be mandated as well as thought. Joseph Ratner argues that, for Dewey, “Philosophy is not to help perpetuate and justify

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the existing state and disorder of things, but, to the reach of its ability, to help find a way into a better order, an order in which there will be
social unity of mind as a consequence of achieving civilized integration of intelligent life.”

*Experience and Nature and Democracy and Education* proved how instrumentalism and experimentalism, the two terms Dewey used to designate his philosophy, destroyed the abyss
between the “natural” and the “social.” The books show how Dewey’s whole philosophy may be considered an expose of the danger of
believing that humans do not have some control over their environment. Dewey argued that education was a process of coming to an
understanding of human potential, a process necessary for the advancement of society.

In typical “Deweyan” fashion, *Experience and Nature* is unhurried and contemplative as he set about characterizing nature and its
relationship to humanity. Nature, he concluded, was a universe of chance and impermanence where objects and events come into being and
then pass away. Thus, the only way for man to assert his presence was “by the ability to control the changes that intervene between the
beginning and the end of a process. These intervening terms when brought under control are means in the literal and in the practical sense of
the word. When mastered in actual experience they constitute tools, techniques, mechanisms.”

It should be noted that, after a brief account
of nature, Dewey moved immediately into the realm of human conduct in such a universe. This quick transition reflected the rest of the book as
Dewey concentrated more on experience than nature. There was nothing outside of experience for Dewey, as already shown, and, therefore,
there was no reason for him to dwell on what simply did not exist in his mind.

Dewey continued to follow human experience as it encountered nature and came to value certain ends and resolutions. Experience
helped humans fashion instruments to attain those ends, to reflect on problematic situations, and to communicate with others. The resulting
social interaction would hopefully lead to the discovery of the meaning of human existence. Coughlan summarizes *Experience and Nature*
thus, “Man becomes thereby Homo sapiens, the creature who has intelligence, who can think in universals, think hypothetically, abstract from
the immediate situation and combine and recombine ideas, and then return to nature vastly more able to manipulate it and appreciate it.”

For Dewey, learning was a continuous process, for it grew out of human experience. As humans came together to make sense of their environment,

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they formed social institutions and norms. These public associations in turn grew and changed according to the progression of human experience within and without these institutions. In this way, not only did human experience give rise to an articulate, socially educated public, but it supported a continual process of learning, without which society could not progress. Dewey’s message in *Experience and Nature* was appealing because it was about life’s possibilities. It validated individual experience as important and necessary and showed that education took place in every aspect of life, not just in specific, academic settings.

Dewey’s writings on education included a wide range of articles and books, which addressed subjects ranging from industrial education to the teaching of science, from educational ideals in wartime to the effects of education on American culture. *Democracy and Education*, one of Dewey’s best known and most highly regarded books, was published in 1916 and described the kind of education from which modern American society would most likely benefit. The discussion also brought into focus Dewey’s belief in philosophy being applicable to daily life. It showed how knowledge, if woven into the social fabric of American culture at the turn of the century, would aid the progress towards a “Great Society.” Dewey remarked some years later, the book was “for many years that in which my philosophy, such as it is, was most fully expounded.”

As with *Experience and Nature*, *Democracy and Education* discussed the environment, but emphasized experience, this time between man and education. “Dewey undertook in *Democracy and Education* to state the kind of education required by a twentieth-century democratic society,” Dykhuizen argues, “as suggested by the findings of the biological and psychological sciences ... it is a book with not only insights for the progressive educator but also with ‘that wisdom which democracies need, the common wisdom which must lie beneath the diverse activities of all the professions.’” Dewey’s contention was that much like philosophy, education ought to determine the basic issues underlying social conflicts and to suggest ways to overcome them.

Dewey began his discussion of education by pointing out that it was how new meanings were discovered and old ones renewed or rejected, a theme previously discussed in *Experience and Nature*. Education was the communication of experience and expression between members of society. Dewey argued, “The continuity of any experience, through renewing of the social group, is a literal fact. Education, in its

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broadest sense, is the means of this social continuity of life.” 59 Education, therefore, could be defined in part as growth. Put in technical terms, Dewey defined education as “that reconstruction or reorganization of experience, which adds to the means of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience.” 60 Knowledge made sense of human experience and prompted the progress of society. Education occurred both in formal academic settings and in the every day lives of people interacting with one another. Dewey even entitled a section of his text, “Education as a Social Function.” He argued, “We never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment.” 61 Primary schools and universities were not the only places in which education took place, but merely served as a simplified environment for learning. After thus abstractly defining education, Dewey turned to a practical discussion of how schools should be run in order to achieve the best results.

For Dewey, the school had three primary functions, the first being that it offered an smaller environment that mirrored larger society. In the second place, schools should not replicate the unworthy features of the existing social environment, and here Dewey included gross inequalities of class and ethnicity. “We are never interested in changing the whole environment,” Dewey declared, “there is much that we take for granted and accept just as it already is.” Yet, he added, “Upon this background our activities focus at certain points in an endeavor to introduce needed changes.” 62 The school should emphasize the best aspects of society in hopes that the negative forces would one day be eliminated. The third function of the school was to balance the various elements of the social environment, and to see to it that each and every individual gets the opportunity to escape from the limitations of the social group in which he or she was born. The school should present its students with a broader environment than that in which they reside. Dewey argued, “Education can counteract the centrifugal forces set up by juxtaposition of different groups within one and the same political unit.” 63 In this sense, education in Dewey’s eyes was the great equalizing factor within society. Ellen Lagemann contends, in her study of educational research, “Dewey hoped through educational experimentation to work out means to overcome the divisions that had emerged between families and schools, nature and daily

59 Dewey, Democracy and Education, 2.
60 Ibid., 89-90.
61 Ibid., 19.
62 Ibid., 47.
63 Ibid., 21.
life, and, most important, different classes of people, especially those classified as ‘cultured’ and as ‘workers’.” Dewey believed that the school would be a community in two senses: it would be a place where teachers and students lived and worked together and it would be a place with corrective, utopian qualities, a place where the increasingly fixed and separated social classes of society would be irrelevant.

*Democracy and Education* revealed Dewey’s concerns about the future of American society. If taken advantage of, education and the school could become the social medium in which people could be exposed to an example of a “Great Society,” as Dewey envisioned it.

Dewey furthered his argument and concluded *Democracy and Education* with an attack on the dualism of “labor and leisure.”

From the perspective of a democratic society, this dualism was probably the most damaging to the progress towards a “Great Society.” Prior to the turn of the century and still existing was the notion that children of the cultured, leisured, upper classes would receive a liberal education, while those belonging to the working class would receive a vocational, or industrial education. Such an arrangement would establish and firmly fix class distinctions, striking at the heart of a democratic society. Dewey argued, “The problem of education in a democratic society is to do away with the dualism and to construct a course of studies which makes thought a guide of free practice for all and which makes leisure a reward for accepting responsibility for service, rather than a state of exemption from it.” Dewey’s philosophy of education engaged him in the ongoing debate about the gap between the rich and poor in America. For Dewey the pragmatist, education took place not only in schools, but also in daily life. First and foremost, knowledge had a practical function. MacGillvray explains, “The immediate implications of pragmatism’s naturalistic and teleological conception of intelligence is that the social locus of intelligent action is inverted: Intelligence is present most distinctively not in the contemplative life of the leisured elite, but in the workaday practicability of the masses.” Dewey’s philosophy of education as expounded in *Democracy and Education* was systematic and visionary, but it was the relation Dewey drew between education and democracy that drew the most attention.

Dewey firmly believed that every great philosophy was intimately related to the cultural environment from which it arose. A philosophy reflected the basic aspirations, perplexities, and conflicts of the culture and sought to give new order, coherence, and direction to...

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66 MacGillvray, “Experience as Experiment,” 551.
Dewey’s view of philosophy rose out of his view of democracy. He promulgated a vision of democracy that relied on the popularization of knowledge and the primacy of community in formulating social policy. According to Dewey, democracy was rooted in the world of subsistence farms and artisans. Dewey stressed the “pioneer conditions” under which American society developed to account for the stability of early American democracy. Historian Stanley Aronowitz observes, “These conditions ‘put high premium upon personal work, skills, ingenuity, initiative and adaptability, and upon neighborly sociability.’ Therefore, public institutions such as schools developed under local conditions and the appropriate form of governance of these institutions, given the ecological and economic basis of association, was direct participation among citizens, through the town meeting, in the decisions affecting these public goods.” American democracy was born of the necessity arising from the conditions of its early settlement. Pioneers were obliged to share social and political power and the state was constituted through face-to-face interaction of its members. This world had been disrupted by industrialization and urbanization in the past few decades, undermining America’s ideal and practice of democracy.

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Democracy and Education confronted the gap between America’s rhetoric of democracy and the inequalities in the nation. Dewey argues, “The philosophy stated in this book connects the growth of democracy with the development of experimental method in the sciences, evolutionary ideas in biological sciences, and industrial reorganization, and is concerned to point out the changes in subject matter and method of education indicated by these developments.” Dewey believed that community life was the essence of democracy and that America needed to return to its roots. American society had grown increasingly complex, resulting in political apathy, and ignorance. The dissemination of knowledge would lead to an informed public that could then confront the social questions of modernity. Sidney Hook observes, “Dewey’s educational theory calls for a dedication to the practical struggle for extending democracy by methods of intelligence in order that the methods of scientific inquiry win the authority to resolve human problems now exercised by dogma, holy or unholy, economic power, and physical force.”

For Dewey, the dominant American traditions were those that were embodied, even if incompletely, in distinctive American institutions. They also existed in national ideals, practices, and manners, which led Europeans to make the discovery, before Americans themselves, that we were a democracy. Dewey attempted to show how the ideals of American democracy, born in an agrarian economy, must be re-conceived in the era of corporate industry. In Dewey’s mind, this was the only way to preserve individual liberties and extend American security.

Once Dewey had identified the problem, he offered a solution. By educating all members of society, America could once again become a community of informed members engaged in an open discussion. On a larger scale, an educated American public could return to methods resembling those used in the town meeting. Dewey noted, “Since democracy stands in principle for free interchange for social continuity, it must develop a theory of knowledge which sees in knowledge the method by which one experience is made available in giving direction and meaning to another.” Dewey tried to redefine a radical, democratic vision for the future in which individuals were constituted as independent and articulate, and could stem the tide of totalitarianism. In Dewey’s democracy, schools were to be the instruments of self-formation where the individual, regardless of social standing, could choose to assimilate to the legacy of American public life. As Aronowitz points out, “The contract between a democratic state and its people was to be fulfilled, primarily, in terms of the educational system at a time

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69 Dewey, Democracy and Education, 8.
when distorted communication had become a normal means by which the population received information."  

Democracy and Education veritably made Dewey the American philosopher of education due to his insistence on education to be the condition for informed citizenship and the fulfillment of the dream of social equality. Dewey saw education as a leveler of class distinctions perpetuated by economic and political inequalities. Democracy and Education almost immediately became a best seller among professional educators. Before long it was held as a classic in the literature of philosophy of education and democratic theory.

For Dewey, education provided experience for life and was an ongoing process. His life modeled his philosophy, for he continued to grow intellectually and adapt to the dizzying changes of the era. For example, his wife, Alice Dewey, an extremely intelligent woman whom he met at the University of Michigan, was involved in the woman’s suffrage movement. Dewey’s belief that all people were intellectually capable and educable was not bound by gender. When the International ran a symposium on woman suffrage, Dewey was among those interviewed about their views. Dewey firmly advocated the higher education of women and believed that society would greatly benefit from their inclusion in political and economical debates. He declared, “as long as women are deprived of the right to vote they are shut out from the culmination and seal for full citizenship, the outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace which is liberty.”

His stance on the woman question reflected the philosophy of education espoused in his writings and teachings.

Dewey’s education also prepared him for his work with social reform. From 1894 to 1904, Dewey filled the position of head of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Chicago. The University at this time had strong links to Hull House and the work of Jane Addams. Addams shared Dewey’s views on the importance of education and invited him to speak often at the Hull House meetings. As Dykhuizen asserts, “The fighting qualities in Jane Addams and her coworkers undoubtedly sparked the same qualities in Dewey’s nature so that as the years passed he increasingly left the classroom to enter the world of practical affairs to fight for the causes he judged important.”

Dewey’s contacts with people with more radical and extreme views than his deepened and sharpened his own ideas. Dewey’s influence on American society, however, was not restricted solely to published texts, discussions, and lectures. He transformed his ideas into actions.

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71 Dewey, Democracy and Education, 345.
72 Aronowitz, “Is a Democracy Possible?,” 86.
Paralleling his written work in published texts and teachings was Dewey’s devotion to experimental movements that sought to popularize knowledge, eradicate class divisions, and reform education. Franklin Ford was the first to challenge Dewey to put his theories into effect. While Dewey was still at the University of Michigan, he developed a friendship with Ford, a disillusioned reporter. Ford at this point was dissatisfied with the way newspapers were informing the public. He believed that business interests had corrupted the press, in effect, censoring the news that could be reported. The facts in print were often contradictory and there was no attempt to discover and interpret deeper social trends of which the facts were merely the symptoms. Consequently, the public remained unenlightened, and had no basis for social or political action. As Feuer argues, Franklin Ford “sought to make the Slave ‘conscious of his slavery - of his hindered mental movement.’ [He and Dewey] were to promote neither a false socialism, nor ‘fiscal hocus pocus,’ but seek the road to social union through ‘the socializing of intelligence.’ The Intelligence Trust would guide the American people in reconstructing their constitution and society.”

Ford’s ideas spoke directly to Dewey’s own beliefs about the deterioration of democracy and community life. The two men proposed in the spring of 1892 to publish a periodical entitled Thought News, a magazine dedicated to using philosophy to interpret current life. Thought News was an attempt to apply philosophy to the social problems confronting modern America. As seen in Dewey’s writings, he firmly believed that philosophy had the power to affect change. Thought News would actually attempt to apply the abstract principles of the discipline to the chaos of modernity. Dewey believed that by educating people, through philosophical observations, about the changes taking place the public could then formulate its own resources, and thus shape the direction in which it wished to move. Dewey and Ford argued, “There is a new idea in journalism and in education. On the one hand the newspaper is to apply the historical method to the reporting of everyday life - to report not the happening, but the fact, the typical fact, the fact which illustrates the principle. On the other hand, if the student is to get his facts at first hand, he is to apply his principles to life.”

Thought News’s object was to show that philosophy had some use, that the discipline should not be relegated solely to classrooms and intellectual circles. Knowledge could be made available to all able-minded individuals, regardless of class or gender.

In the process, Dewey and Ford were about to alter the newspaper business. Instead of using the media to simply relate facts, the

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75 Feuer, “John Dewey and the Back to the People Movement,” 551-552.
76 Quoted in Coughlan, Young John Dewey, 103.
two men wanted to use their magazine as a way to disseminate knowledge. Dewey and Ford preemptively announced that their objective was not an attempt to change reporting. Dewey explained in the Detroit Tribune, "When philosophic ideas are not inculcated by themselves but used as tools to point out the meaning of phases of social life they begin to have some life and value. Instead of trying to change the newspaper business by introducing philosophy into it, the idea is to transform philosophy somewhat by introducing a little newspaper business into it."77 The article had for its title “He’s Planned No Revolution,” yet, it was exactly a revolution Dewey and Ford had been intending when they committed themselves to the project. Thought News would break new ground in how information was interpreted and relayed to and by the American public. Knowledge would take on increasing importance in current affairs and society would be engaged in a new, educational process.

Unfortunately, no issue of Thought News was ever published. Publication was postponed three separate times in April of 1892 until the idea was finally abandoned. Part of the paper’s failure can be attributed to the negative reaction from the press. As Feuer notes, “Dewey could scarcely have foreseen how much mockery his venture into journalism was to bring down upon him.”78 The project drew numerous sardonic comments, which were not quelled by Dewey and Ford’s subsequent interviews defending their enterprise. Newspapers were unappeased by the partners’ explanations and continued to mock them. Dewey further attributed the demise of the paper to his and Ford’s own faults. Later in life he reflected, “No issue was made: it was an overenthusiastic project which we had not the means nor the time and doubtless not the ability to carry through. In other words ... The idea was advanced in those days, but it was too advanced for the maturity of those who had the idea in mind.”79 Thought News may have failed, but it directed Dewey towards social questions and influenced the courses he taught at the Universities of Michigan and Chicago in the following years. In addition, the paper instilled in him a desire to implement his ideas in other experimental ways. The enterprise indicated how open Dewey was to radical ideas and how, behind his mild exterior, burned a rather romantic spirit. That spirit was always straining against conventional limits in the interest of a more complete, more egalitarian, and highly perfected community than the circumstances during his lifetime ever made feasible. Thought News prompted Dewey into thinking about

77 Detroit Tribune, 13 April 1892.
78 Feuer, “John Dewey and the Back to the People Movement,” 552.
educational reform, ideas he soon implemented in the creation of the Laboratory School in Chicago, his second active attempt to put his
philosophy in the service of society.

While employed by the University of Chicago, Dewey founded the Laboratory School, otherwise known as the University
Elementary School or the Dewey School, under the university’s Department of Pedagogy. The Department had opened as an independent unit
of the university in 1895, and one of its first undertakings was the experimental school. The school opened with sixteen regularly enrolled
students and two teachers. By 1902, it boasted one hundred and forty pupils, twenty-three instructors, and additional graduate student
assistants from the University Department of Pedagogy. The school was indeed experimental, for it abandoned traditional methods of
education. Dewey brought the insights of psychology and of his own instrumentalist theory of knowledge to the educational practices followed
by both the teachers and the students. Dewey considered the mind “a function of social life - as not capable of operating or developing by
itself, but as requiring continual stimulus from social agencies, and finding its nutrition in social supplies.” The school, therefore, was
organized as a micro-environment of society, modeling Dewey’s ideas put forth in Democracy and Education and other, subsequent works.

Children were given every opportunity to engage in group activities centering in a particular pastime to build their social and factual
intelligence, and challenged their abilities. In concrete terms this meant, as Dewey once put it, that the Laboratory School was established to
discover “how a school could become a cooperative community while developing in individuals their own capacities and satisfying their own
needs.” Dewey’s school was a miniature community, supplying opportunities for the development of the moral and social attitudes
necessary for a democratic society. It was Democracy and Education manifested in reality.

The success of the practices of the Laboratory School became evident at every level of instruction from kindergarten to university.
The Laboratory School’s teachers and administration formed the leading voices in the Progressive Education Movement. Though Dewey
emitted no fondness for the label as he saw it as misleading, Dewey’s school embodied the movement’s goals and objectives from the start.

Both believed education should be based on the interests, capacities, and range of life experiences of the developing generations. The subject

81 John Dewey, “The Psychology of the Elementary Curriculum,” Elementary School Record 9 (1900): 223; see also
matter and materials of education should be drawn from the present environment, and from resources of the past relevant to the present. As Dewey wrote, "The methods of education should evoke directed activity, experiment, and personal inquiry. And, finally, the spirit of the classroom should be that of a group of co-operating individuals rather than that of leaders and followers."83 Dewey’s progressive philosophy of education revealed the inadequacy of traditional education. Dewey declared in an article entitled “The School and the Life of a Child”: “I may have exaggerated somewhat in order to make plain the typical points of the old education: its passivity of attitude, its mechanical massing of children, its uniformity of curriculum and method. It may be summed up by stating that the center of gravity is outside the child.”84 The Laboratory School had shifted the focus to the child and eschewed rote memorization, non-interactive learning, and treating each child the same. Teachers had new roles to perform in and outside of the school. As Hook argues about the School’s innovations: “Since the conditions of effective teaching depend to a large extent upon what goes on outside the classroom, educators must vigorously oppose any measures which tend to restrict or proscribe their civic rights as members of the community.”85 For Dewey, educators needed to combat any material or method that would limit the content of instruction, especially those forces which appeared clothed in political, racial, or class “truths.” Progressive educators applauded Dewey’s “radical” ideas and adapted them in their own classrooms. Knowledge was no longer a higher attainment for the few, but available to all, and most critically, to the young.

Just as the Laboratory School had its range of supporters, so too did it have its range of critics. Christopher Lasch and Clarence Karier protested against Dewey’s progressive ideas on education, arguing that the Laboratory School as geared to adjusting children to their eventual cog-like existence in an industrial society run by external management.86 Progressivism, this line of thought disputed, was a means to exert social control over potentially fractious lower classes and minorities. Emirbayer notes, “One such perspective portrays public education as serving the function of reinforcing class domination. In one of its variants, schooling is said to provide ‘a method of disciplining

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85 Hook, John Dewey, 189.
children in the interest of producing a properly subordinate adult population;” its underlying purpose is deemed to be the reproduction of the social division of labor.”87 For his critics, Dewey educational theories had sinister implications for the deepening of class divisions. For his supporters, his ideas were all-encompassing and promotive. His efforts always favored the development of the individual. His concern about the community was that education should so fit the individual that he would be able effectively to deal with social forces, not submit to them. Thus, education to Dewey was a vehicle for social reform, not an assembly line turning out adaptable workers.

In Dewey’s philosophy, social theory, and educational methods as practiced by the Laboratory School, were seen as a unifying idea. Dewey was dedicated to the practical struggle of extending democracy by developing the intelligence of citizens. Dewey opposed the notion that the educational environment should be rarefied, structured, and regimented - or, in other words, divorced from real life. Dewey’s school was designed so as to achieve his ideal society, where the school and life were one and the same. Dewey affirmed, “I believe that education, therefore, is a process of living and not a preparation for future living. I believe that the school must represent present life - life as real and vital to the child as that which he carries on in the home, in the neighborhood, or on the playground.”88 Because the school and the community were irrevocably linked, Dewey knew that a good society could not come about without good education and vice versa. Therefore, the philosophy of education must be applied to all areas of American life from social reform to foreign policies. For Dewey, the school was the most effective means for improving and reforming society and the first step towards achieving equality and democracy in America.

Dewey’s participation in the Laboratory School ended with his resignation from the University of Chicago. Fortunately, he found other sites of educational experimentation, including the Teachers College, the Horace Mann School for Boys and the Horace Mann School for Girls, all affiliated with Columbia University. He also continued to write a variety of publications. Dewey’s contribution to A Cyclopedia of Education was of special note as the resource covered a variety of topics in philosophy, psychology and education, his chief passions. Edited by Paul Monroe of the Teachers College, the Cyclopedia was designed to speak to students of progressive education. Dewey’s articles on education lent credibility to the project and extended his reputation. In another facet of promoting education, Dewey had considerable influence on the development of the New York Teachers Union. His believeda union could protect the teaching profession’s economic interests.

87 Emirbayer, “Beyond Structuralism and Voluntarism,” 624.
It would resist efforts of those who would exploit the schools for private ends, and by joining the labor movement teachers could contribute ideas, gaining and expressing awareness of the harsh realities confronting working men and women in their everyday lives. Dewey chided the teachers who held back from joining a union because they did not want to be identified in the public mind with manual workers. Dykhuizen comments, “Such ‘academic snobbery,’ Dewey declared, ill becomes a profession that has had such gallant and loyal support from labor. He urged teachers to recognize that they belonged to the great mass of working men and women and to cooperate with them in advancing their own and the public interests.” Dewey’s participation in the labor movement reflected his sincere appreciation of the work done by teachers. Teachers needed protection and economic security as much as the factory worker and the investment banker. In supporting such measures, Dewey’s theories eventually began to make themselves heard in politics.

John Dewey’s involvement in political Progressivism developed out of his affiliation with Progressive social and educational reformers. The late nineteenth and early twentieth century witnessed a proliferation of political parties each fighting for social equality and civic justice on different fronts. It was a moment of extraordinary debate about the future of American society - a moment at which alternative principles of social organization and division of labor were viewed as realistic or practical. The Progressive Party wanted to restore the people’s confidence in their government, guarantee them a better living, and enact into law a host of social reforms, from food safety legislation to women suffrage. Dewey supported the Progressive platform, especially as it demanded the right of the people to rule. He believed that such a party would work to reverse the weakening of democracy and would engage the American public in debate. James Livingston argues, “Dewey’s progressivism was determined by this hopeful perspective on the metaphorical - that is, the social and epistemological - possibilities generated by the ongoing transformation of society. But his sense of these possibilities was neither utopian nor limited by bourgeois notions of political propriety. After all, the same sense of impending revolution characterized the works and lives of intellectuals and artists throughout the world.” Dewey found within the Progressive community the spirit of deliberation that would lead to democratically accountable institutions. Progressivism would employ the free and open deliberation of American citizens and the best methods of inquiry. Dewey believed that such a unity of democracy and inquiry would finally recognize and solve the social, economic, and political

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88 John Dewey, Essential John Dewey. 22.
89 Dykhuizen, The Life and Mind of John Dewey. 231.
problems that were blocking the progress of American society.

Dewey’s brief adherence to such a political party was in some ways unavoidable. The Progressive Party from 1912 to 1916 supported the measures advocated by Dewey and others. As William Jennings Bryan wrote in A Tale of Two Conventions, his report on the Progressive Party platform of 1912, “We wish to shape conditions so that a greater number of small men who are decent, industrious and energetic shall be able to succeed, and so that the big man who is dishonest shall not be allowed to succeed at all.”

90 Livingston, Pragmatism and the Political Economy of Cultural Revolution, 195.
The Progressive platform was extremely pragmatic in nature and sought new methods of addressing social problems since the traditional methods had failed. As a pragmatist, Dewey insisted that the results of inquiry must enter into social and political deliberation and debate.

The pragmatist concept of practical reason suggested a deliberate form of democracy. Dewey argued, “mere majority rule is foolish and irrational so long as the conditions and methods of discussion and persuasion remain as they do in most modern societies.”

The Progressive Party held a similar position, arguing that changes needed to be made in political and economic systems due to the rise of industry and capitalism. Dewey also found comfort in the similarity between the Progressive Party’s concept of human nature and his own. The Progressive Party displayed a fundamental optimism about human nature, the possibilities of progress, and the capacity of people to recognize problems and take action to follow them. The Party, like Dewey, believed in a better world and in the ability of people to achieve it.

Innovations in democracy and social organization, along with the necessary political and economic reforms, would further the progress of the American public.

The Progressive Party gave Dewey validation. His ideas on practical philosophy, educational reform, and labor issues were being supported by people outside of academia and social reform. Dewey constantly addressed controversial issues and the Progressive Party’s platform proved to him as well as others that his questioning America’s current state was necessary and welcomed. He refused to restrict his range of influence to his profession, just as the Progressive Party refused to adhere to one main agenda. Dykhuizen argues, “Throughout his life, Dewey’s mind had ranged and probed among various special fields, refusing to be bound by the narrowness of any. His more technical philosophical endeavors regarding the nature and function of sensations, ideas, knowledge, truth, value and experience earned him an outstanding place in the history of America.”

Dewey’s wide scope of interest gave his ideas and actions depth and breadth. He believed that as long as people were willing to open their minds to new ideas, a Great Society and individual human happiness was not unattainable.

In the years under study here, Dewey’s multiple interests and ideas all flowed from his innovative notion that knowledge must flow back to the people. He was a philosopher of the whole in that his ideas touched every aspect of public life. Dewey firmly believed that knowledge should not be reserved for a class of intellectual elites. He perceived the power of intelligence and wished to extend that energy to

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all members of society. To do so, Dewey called for the philosopher’s involvement in the practical problems of life. He suggested that “philosophy is henceforth a method and not an original fountainhead of truth, nor an ultimate standard of reference.” Dewey’s philosophy took “truth” out of the hands of experts. He promoted a sense of community that would overcome the social divisions existing in society. As Westhoff argues, “The complexity of modern society resulted in rule by elite experts. But instead of seeing this as positive, as did democratic realists, Dewey suggested that it led to the alienation of the public.” If the people were apathetic and confused by the complexity of issues, they would be unable to progress. Dewey maintained that all members of society must be responsible for determining policy. He demanded freer social inquiry and greater dissemination of knowledge. The time had come for new knowledge to seep into public awareness to spur social action. John Dewey believed that education - if revolutionized and adapted to democratic ends - would overcome these difficulties and make possible the systematic pursuit of a “Great Society.”

Chapter Three

Jane Addams: “Public Housekeeper”

We mean the change which has taken place during the last fifty years in the ambition and aspirations of woman; we see this change most markedly in her education. It has passed from accomplishments and the arts of pleasing, to the development of her intellectual force, and her capabilities for direct labor. She wishes not to be a man, nor like a man, but she claims the same right to independent thought and action. Whether this movement is tending toward the ballot box, or will gain simply equal intellectual advantages, no one can predict, but certain it is that woman has gained a new confidence in her possibilities, and a fresher hope in her steady progress.

— Jane Addams, 1880

93 Dykhuizen, The Life and Mind of John Dewey, 323.
95 Westhoff, “The Popularization of Knowledge,” 38.
96 Jane Addams, “Bread Givers,” Junior Class Oration, Daily Register (Rockford, 1880) in Jean Bethke Elshtain, ed.,
Jane Addams’s contribution to the expansion of American public life centered on the educated woman. In the context of today’s world, Jane Addams would most likely be classified as a “difference feminist” or a “social feminist.” Addams stressed the obvious differences between men and women that delegated them to different spheres. The unique and specific features of women in turn-of-the-century America were founded on the historic conceptions of females as mothers, wives, healers, nurturers, and builders of communities. Addams did not challenge the stereotypes of women. Instead, she used these prevailing notions in her conscious efforts to expand the woman’s sphere to include politics and economics. Addams insisted that to compel women to occupy the precise molds carved out by and for men would lead to the destruction of all. The experiences of women were vital to the progress of America.\(^\text{97}\) If their voices went unheeded the nation would suffer. Addams refused to accept the bifurcation of the world into a private, feminine sphere and a public, masculine one. She believed women could become proponents of change. The question thus became: how could women in nineteenth-century America break through the constrictive boundaries that the prevailing gender ideology had established for them? For Addams, the answer lay in education.

Jane Addams centered her work and philosophies on her belief in education as the means by which women would gain equality and freedom. Her own experiences provided the foundation for this belief. From her time at Rockford Seminary, to the classes she taught at the Hull House settlement, to the writings and speeches she made, Addams’s education validated her position and the ideas she espoused. The woman’s sphere had always included an economic component; women often managed the family finances. To enter into what was traditionally viewed as the male sphere, however, required a higher degree of education than many women could or were allowed to receive. Historian Mary Jo Deegan argues in her work on Chicago reform, “Addams thoroughly analyzed these multiple problems of social, financial, and political estrangement through her work. Her commitment included both ideas and practices that call for eliminating the process of marginality in a democratic

\(^\text{97}\) Addams’s fight for women was predominantly reserved for white women. Though she did support separate meetings of African American women at Hull House and served on the board of the NAACP, Addams’s rhetoric and ideas were predominantly focused on the advancement of white American women.

Jane Addams wanted to move women to the center of the public sphere. Her own life provided an excellent example for others to follow as she proved her right to be included in more than just domestic affairs. Through her own education, her creation of Hull House, her work with the International Congress of Women, and her position in the Progressive Party’s formation, Addams showed men and women alike that by including educated women into American public life, the world would become a better place. Addams’s work on behalf of woman’s rights did not challenge prevailing notions of women’s nature. Instead she argued that women, because of their nature, deserved a much wider role in public life, thus laying the groundwork for future feminist movements later in the century.

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Born in Illinois in 1860 to John Huy Addams and Sarah Weber Addams, Jane Addams’s education began before any formal schooling through her relationship with her father. John Addams was a miller who quickly became a prominent citizen in Cedarville. He founded the community’s church, school, library, and even established its first cemetery. Addams described her connection to her father in adulatory terms: “I centered upon him all that careful imitation which a little girl ordinarily gives to her mother’s ways and habits.” John Addams encouraged his daughter to study, which she did in order to “understand life as he did.” Though John remarried six years after the death of Sarah Addams, he remained the strongest role model for Jane. He encouraged his daughter to develop her mind and thoroughly believe in the importance of higher education for women.

In addition to intellectual habits, John Addams also imparted the importance of social consciousness. As biographer Ellen Condliffe Lageman argues, “Through open, matter-of-fact interchange, John Addams shared with her his beliefs about equality and freedom and the commonalities that could exist between people of different nations...and he trained her to see the importance of individual conduct to the realization of one’s espoused ideals.” Addams’s sympathies towards those less fortunate also stemmed from her self-perception as a misfit. She felt she was “an ugly, pigeon-toed little girl whose crooked back obliged her to walk with her head held very much to one side,” and was constantly afraid to be seen in public with her father for fear that she might be an embarrassment. This self-image remained with Addams throughout her life and provided the foundations for the bonds Addams felt with social outcasts including immigrants, women, African Americans, and the working class. Through conscious teachings from her father and personal experiences, Jane Addams received an early understanding of the harsh realities that marginalized members of society. The social consciousness that was formed in her youth subsequently influenced the focus of her life’s work.

When Jane Addams turned seventeen, she made the decision to attend Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. Smith was one of the early women’s colleges that awarded bachelor’s degrees and was believed by many to be a risky experiment. Unfortunately, John Addams

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100 Ibid., 7.
103 Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House*, 5.
did not agree with his daughter’s choice and insisted that she attend Rockford Seminary, where he was a trustee. Addams dutifully obeyed and enrolled as a freshman in the fall of 1877. During her studies at Rockford, Addams concentrated on a wide variety of subjects ranging from botany to civil government, from moral philosophy to astronomy. Though Rockford was a Protestant institution, Addams resisted the pressure to give her life to the church. Instead of reading the Bible, Addams based her religious convictions on the moral perfection she sought in others. As historian J.O.C. Phillips remarks on Addams’s religious inclinations, “Religion became not a matter of Christian dogma, but of ethics in the service of man. This humanistic conclusion was important. It closed off church missionary work as a career option, and, of more significance, it implied a challenge to the evangelical and narrowly Christian assumptions that lay behind the domestic piety tradition.”104 Rockford provided a place where Addams could assert her beliefs and express her independence of mind, the qualities most celebrated by her father.

Besides refusing to become a missionary, the career promoted for women at Rockford, Addams also began to articulate a stance on woman’s rights. This course of action meant subverting and challenging many of the ideals upheld by Rockford Seminary and its Headmistress, Anna P. Sill. In 1881, Addams formally began to declare her views on the place and purpose of women in modern day society in a speech debating Rockford’s transformation to a college:

While on the one hand, as young women of the 19th century, we gladly claim these privileges, and proudly assert our independence, on the other hand we still retain the old ideal of womanhood - the Saxon lady whose mission it was to give bread unto her household. So we have planned to be ‘Bread-givers’ throughout our lives; believing that in labor alone is happiness, and that the only true and honorable life is one filled with good works and honest toil, we have planned to idealize our labor, and thus happily fulfil Woman’s Noblest Mission.105

Addams’s speech both affirmed women’s domestic roles and acknowledged the need for women’s greater independence and suggested that women deserved a wider sphere for their achievements. This address revealed the stance to which Addams adhered for the rest of her career. As a women’s rights activist, Jane Addams later gravitated towards movements that were viewed as the natural

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105 Jane Addams, “Bread Givers,” Rockford Daily Register, April 21, 1880; reprinted in Jane Addams: A Centennial
outgrowth of maternal concern and domestic capabilities. Her education provided her with a strong argument for the elevation of the traditional, domestic sphere and gave her the background she needed for her future opposition into discrimination.

Jane Addams’s most permanent mark on Rockford Seminary occurred during the struggle to turn the school from a seminary into a college. Addams observed, “The opportunity for our Alma Mater to take her place in the new movement of full college education for women filled us with enthusiasm, and it became a driving ambition with the undergraduates to share in this new and glorious undertaking.”

Rockford’s transformation into a college took place in 1882 and Addams was granted the honor of receiving its first Bachelor of Arts Degree. As higher education became available to more and more women, it lost its power to separate men and women on an intellectual level. One must note that the movement for women’s education remained conservative and was in no way seen as an attack on the tradition of domestic piety. As Phillips contends, “It was merely believed that women would carry out their spiritual and cultural mission more effectively with the aid of a true college education.”

Addams never used her education to reject society’s preconceptions about women. She chose, rather, to argue that women’s special qualities, if allowed a wider influence, could be used to better the world.

The next period of Addams’s life, the years between her graduation and her founding of Hull House, were trying ones marked by illness and frustration. To begin with, John Addams passed away in the summer of 1881. For a brief moment, Addams enrolled herself at the Women’s Medical School in Philadelphia only to drop out after seven months due to illness. Though Addams knew that the male world was closed to some of her aspirations, it was a shock to learn

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106 Jane Addams, Twenty Years at Hull House, 34-35.
that the female world would be as well. After undergoing spinal surgery to correct a problem Addams had since childhood, she learned that she could never have children. Addams also decided to decline an offer of marriage from her stepbrother George Haldeman three years later. Some historians such as Lagemann take the position that Addams’s refusal was based on her awareness that “marriage would end all hopes for a life of more than traditional feminine concerns.” Addams’s intelligence found that the world prescribed for women offered no opportunity for their freedom of expression, especially if they did not marry and bear children. In addition, her desire for public involvement grew without finding relief in mere social engagements and cultural refinement. Biographer Merl Curti notes, “This desire for action to fulfill social obligation was so deep-seated a heritage that to deny its expression, Addams thought, was more fatal to well-being than anything save disease, indigence, and a sense of guilt.” It was during her second tour of Europe, while accompanied by her friend Ellen Gates Starr, that Jane Addams finalized an idea to help others less fortunate and satisfy her own ambitions of challenging traditional social stereotypes.

While in England, Addams paid a visit to Toynbee Hall in London’s East End. Toynbee Hall was a settlement house founded in 1881 in memory of the social reformer Arnold Toynbee. The idea upon its creation was to produce a place where students of Oxford University and Cambridge University could work among and improve the lives of the poor. Addams wrote of her visit to Toynbee Hall, “I was naturally much interested in the beginnings of a movement whose slogan was ‘Back to the People,’ and which could doubtless claim the Settlement as one of its manifestations ... I was gradually able to make a natural connection between this

intellectual penetration at Oxford and the moral perception which is always necessary for the
discovery of new methods by which to minister to human needs.”10 As a result of Addams’s
stay in London, she began to develop a plan to open a similar house in an underprivileged area of
Chicago. The creation of a settlement house would not only help to administer to the needs of
the lower classes of American society but would also give purpose to Addams’s directionless
life.

In the late nineteenth century Chicago was full of poor immigrants. It was also replete with well-
educated women who were searching for a vocation to satisfy their drives and ambitions.

Addams’s genius lay in her decision to bring the two together through the settlement house.

Addams came to see a connection between the poor immigrants and the privileged, educated
young women. Both were prevented from realizing their potential due to the laws and customs
upheld by society. The settlement house provided a place where women could escape the
structures of sexism and elitism by devoting themselves to the needs of the poor. Women such
as Florence Kelley and Doctor Alice Hamilton were often at Hull House giving lectures and
administering to other needs of the residents. Phillips contends, “Through its regular lectures and
public discussion, Hull House attracted to it many of the intellectuals of the Anglo-American
world.”11 Because those who worked in social reform were predominantly female, the woman’s
sphere became a resource for social change. Hull House would eventually help women become a
force for redefining women’s role in the public sphere.

Addams and Starr opened Hull House with the goal of sharing their literary and cultural
education with the people in the neighborhood. Fortunately for them, their offerings of “high”

110 Addams, Twenty Years at Hull House, 39-40.
culture were well-received and appreciated by the community. Classes on art and literature, lectures and readings were consistently well-attended and became permanent fixtures in the settlement’s regularly scheduled activities. From such a cultural base, Hull House branched out in two different directions. The first included an extension program with the University of Chicago. There, immigrants could take more advanced courses in history, social science, and literature. The second branch took on a more practical tone. Hull House also offered basic, practical classes in the English language, cooking, sewing, and crafts. Addams argued, “The settlements early founded their educational theories upon a conviction that in every social grade and class in the whole circle of genuine occupations there are mature men and women of moral purpose and specialized knowledge, who because they have become efficient unto life, may contribute an environment to the pattern of human culture.”

Throughout Addams’s work at Hull House there was never once a time when she attributed people’s behavior to inferior racial traits, sex differences, or innate immorality. With every chance, she tried to prove that the misfortunes of those with whom she worked were caused by the damaging social environment in which they lived. Addams believed everyone was born with the potential to succeed. Hull House was thus used to prove this belief to the larger public in order to institute measures of reform.

In order to improve the substandard conditions of the Nineteenth Ward of Chicago, Addams needed to educate the upper classes and political machines who had the power to make the changes needed. Addams used her talents at public speaking to address committees, many of which she joined or founded, and to petition local governments for resources. Curti remarks,

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112 Addams, The Second Twenty Years at Hull House: With a Record of a Growing World Consciousness (New
“Unable to find comfort in a definite ideology which ‘explained’ social chaos and pointed to a logical bettering of conditions, Jane Addams went at the matter differently. Without bitterness or self-righteousness she tried to help labor and management learn the lesson of cooperation.”¹¹³

One must note that all this work was done within the prescribed boundaries of the woman’s sphere. Addams’s own education and that of the women who assisted her validated their right to speak publicly about the problems they wished to see addressed. These did not, however, grant them direct access. Women reformers still had to lobby and convince the male politicians to make changes but the women’s efforts were slowly eroding formerly rigid boundaries. Addams politicized the role of women as homemakers, both by principle and example, by institutionalizing social responsibility through Hull House.

Because the men who lived in the Hull House community worked during the daytime hours, Addams was generally busy with work for the women and children. Addams was careful to stress that Hull House would not be primarily for the young and the records kept at the settlement proved that she adhered to this principle. The children of the community did, however, play an important role in expanding the settlement’s offerings to include more than just culture. Hull House provided all-day child care for working mothers, and thereby earned the trust of many women who had been skeptical. Addams taught women that their duties to house and home could become a public act of civic responsibility. The presence of children also inspired Addams to support the creation of playgrounds and parks. In 1894, Addams helped open the first public playground in Chicago on land adjoining Hull House. Addams also worked to provide dances and meeting space for social clubs in an effort to include the young adults in the community.

Addams argued: “It seems to us important that these children shall find themselves permanently attached to a House that offers them evening clubs and classes with their old companions, that merges as easily as possible the school life into the working life and does what it can to find places for the bewildered young things looking for work.” Hull House slowly won the loyalty of the neighborhood with the variety of its services. Younger members found a place for both guidance and leisure. Adults - male and female - found a place for support and assistance. The women who came to Hull House arrived with certain resources upon which Addams could draw as she strived to reveal their importance to society and reform. Most of the mothers and wives who attended to the everyday needs of the family were also its financial managers. They divided up their husbands’ paychecks to make immediate purchases, pay bills, and, in some cases, save whatever was left in order to bring the rest of their families to America. They took care of the home and the community and constantly hoped for better times to come. Addams reported, “Once could at least claim that women who dealt with living creatures, as over against industrial machines or commercial abstractions, had the best opportunity to acquire and to retain a direct approach to life itself.” Addams saw mothers and wives as being able to affect change from the inside out. Because women’s first instinct was supposedly directed toward the health and happiness of their families, they could argue that their opinions on the economic and political policies of the community were of value. Louise Young contends, “The motivation of Addams and those in her orbit was the ‘subjective necessity’ to express and institutionalize women’s deepest concerns for human welfare. Their activities touched the political process at innumerable points. They penetrated the neighborhood by policy-oriented investigations of

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114 Addams, Twenty Years at Hull House, 106.
115 Jane Addams, The Second Twenty Years at Hull House, 101.
social and economic conditions; organized community pressure to secure improved public services, and on state legislatures to secure ameliorative legislation; finally on the federal government to undertake inquiries into living and working conditions of women and children.”

On the local level, women could extend their reach to include portions of the male sphere. A perfect example of Addams’s method of reform was in her crusade to better the sanitary conditions of the neighborhoods surrounding Hull House.

The Hull House Women’s Club, which was founded as a mothers’ meeting, was one example of how women took initiative under Addams’s leadership. These meetings, in their earliest days, could be characterized as social gatherings. But after Addams devoted several of their meetings to discussions of the high rates of infant mortality found in the Nineteenth Ward, the women decided to act. After an investigation of the sanitary conditions of the tenements’ alleyways, the women reported violations of the law to the health department. Addams recounted, “For the club woman who had finished a long day’s work of washing or ironing followed by cooking a hot supper, it would have been much easier to sit on her doorstep during a summer evening than to go up and down ill-kept alleys and get into trouble with her neighbors over the condition of their garbage boxes. It required both civic enterprise and moral conviction to be willing to do this three evenings a week during the hottest and most uncomfortable months of the year.”

Eventually, the city responded by issuing contracts for garbage removal in Chicago’s Nineteenth Ward, appointing Addams garbage inspector of the ward. Some of the immigrant women were shocked by the “departure” of Addams and her peers from home into the male sphere of policy making. “While some of the women enthusiastically approved the slowly changing conditions

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and saw that their housewifely duties logically extended to the adjacent alleys and streets,"
Addams noted, “they were quite certain that ‘it was not a lady’s job.’”118 Though Addams firmly
believed in the power of the domestic sphere, her ideas were radical among both Americans and
foreign born immigrants. The Women’s Club and others like it would continue, however, to
attempt to better the conditions of the Nineteenth Ward through public policy. By appealing to
woman’s responsibility to the home, Addams was able to show that the boundaries of the
domestic sphere could extend beyond the walls and floors of apartments and houses to the wider
world of political and economic reform.
Addams’s investigations through Hull House would grow to include midwifery, narcotics
consumption, milk supplies, and poverty. The settlement house provided Addams with an
avenue for women to affect change by starting locally and eventually moving to include the
national community. “The settlement,” Addams argued, “is a protest against a restricted view of
education, and makes it possible for every educated man or woman with teaching faculty to find
out those who are ready to be taught.”119

117 Addams, Twenty Years at Hull House, 284-285.
118 Ibid., 287-288.
Through its innovative educational programs, Hull House provided a middle ground between local and national reform, between social classes, and between men and women. Addams was confident that she was bringing knowledge and culture to the people. They in turn gave her a home and the ability to be a mother. Phillips argues, “Just as the nineteenth-century home was seen as a warm and comforting refuge from the harsh world of business and of the city, so Jane Addams welcomed people to Hull House on exactly such terms. Indeed in its emotional demands on her, Hull House called forth all the values of the maternal and missionary spirit. Settlement work was a career of altruistic service, and as Jane Addams viewed it, it required qualities of sympathy and self-abnegation.” Hull House served Addams as much as it served others. Though her work would grow to include international problems in times of war and peace and the larger woman’s suffrage movement, Hull House would remain Addams’s home and the center of her work.

As Jane Addams’s reputation grew through the effects of Hull House on the extended community of Chicago, she was drawn into larger fields of civic responsibility. In 1905, Addams was nominated for Chicago’s Board of Education and subsequently was made chair of the School Management Committee. Addams participated in the 1908 founding of the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy and by 1909 had become the first woman president of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections. In 1910, Yale University awarded Addams the first honorary degree ever awarded to a woman. The new role of spokeswoman for reform suited Addams. Her family had grown from the Nineteenth Ward to the Chicago community to all of American society. Her desire for a new social ethic drove her ambitions. Included in that ethic were the more traditionally “feminine” qualities of altruism and self-sacrifice personified by the women of Hull House. The family remained the most precious social institution and as Addams

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moved into becoming an advocate for the woman’s movement, she founded her beliefs on the existing structure.

As a student at Rockford Seminary and in her immediate family life, Addams had few positive experiences with female social service. Her stepmother expressed a low opinion of women’s suffragists, claiming they campaigned too assertively for rights.\(^\text{121}\) Anna Sills, the headmistress at Rockford during Addams’s term, advocated feminized charity work as the only acceptable employment for woman, a choice from which Addams recoiled. It was in Chicago and through Hull House that Addams finally came into contact with a new breed of female activist. Victoria Brown contends, “These women represented a political amalgam of the antebellum female moral reformers and women’s rights activists; like the former, they believed that citizens in a democracy should consider the common good in all their individual actions, and like the latter, they believed that women should be given a voice in determining the common good.”\(^\text{122}\) Women such as the aforementioned Florence Kelley and Julia Lathrop represented the variety of individuals who introduced Addams to the wider world of women’s rights. They believed that poverty could not be eliminated through the salvation of individual souls. They did not believe that women could win political rights by simply adopting male opinions. They did not adhere to a belief in innate female moral superiority. They did, however, firmly claim that women’s domestic responsibilities and experiences gave them valuable insight into the social problems plaguing modern America. Johanna Brenner and Barbara Laslett argue in their exploration of women’s groups:

Middle-class white women’s political influence was accomplished through

\(^{121}\) Victoria Bissell Brown, “Introduction: Jane Addams Constructs Herself and Hull House,” in Jane Addams, Twenty Years at Hull House with Autobiographical Notes (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1999), 33.

\(^{122}\) Ibid., 33.
organized educational, research, and lobbying activities based in the women’s club movement, settlement house movement, and child welfare and mother’s groups - all organizations whose mandate for action was grounded in the nineteenth-century doctrine of separate spheres. The great irony of this period is that the same gender division of labor that marginalized white middle-class women from paid labor and mandated their economic dependence on men also provided them an institutional base from which to organize politically.  

The history of Chicago’s rapid urban development created the opportunity for women such as Jane Addams to play significant roles in public life through social reform. Addams drew her energy from associating with intelligent, wealthy, middle-class women like herself and they showed her a new path to affect change.

During the summer of 1913, Jane Addams attended a convention of the International Suffrage Alliance. For several years before this meeting of women from all nations, Addams had served as the vice president of the National American Woman’s Suffrage Association under its president, Doctor Anna Shaw, who was to deliver the congress’s sermon. At this point in time the suffrage movement was in different stages in different countries. While the earliest stages could be found in Asia, women who resided in New Zealand, and Australia had already been given the franchise.

In America, woman suffrage varied by state. Women in the West enjoyed much more power than women in the East. Gail Collins explains, “Western states, however, had always been more open to women’s rights and women’s votes than the rest of the country. Except for the South, the Northeast, where the suffrage movement was born, turned out to be the most resistant, due to the opposition of urban machine bosses, the liquor industry, and a distinct lack of enthusiasm in

the Catholic Church.”  

Part of the difference between statuses of the movement could be attributed to difference in tactics. American women were much more conservative than the suffragists in England. The day before the commencement of the International Suffrage Alliance, Emily Davison, a radical suffragist from England had died after being trampled to death at the English Derby in an effort to get her petition for women’s suffrage heard by King George. Addams noted, “To the friends of Emily Davison her death was a supreme illustration of their endeavor to bring the question of votes for women before the public in dramatic form. They believed that the news would travel around the world that a human life, for the sake of a great cause, had been given freely with such heroism.” The variety of activists found at the International Suffrage Alliance illustrated that the women’s movement was spontaneous and separate. It manifested itself in different groups within and among nations. The meeting in Budapest did not seek to challenge governments or develop a new creed or method of political action. Instead it was simply a free exchange of experiences and hopes upon which to build. One of the most fundamental divisions within the American suffrage movement was between those who argued for the vote based on equality with men versus those who argued that women should have the suffrage because they were different from men. Addams stood among the latter. Her reform agenda was based on the voluntary associations and institutions that had developed in the separate “female world.” Brenner and Laslett contend, “In the late nineteenth century and through the Progressive Era, the conditions under which white middle-class women carried out their responsibilities for social reproduction provided organizational resources and legitimation

125 Addams, The Second Twenty Years at Hull House, 83.
for their collective action.”¹²⁶ Women’s growing access to higher education and growing involvement in reform movements laid the groundwork for their claims for suffrage. In order to guard the health of the family and the larger community, women needed the vote. Addams claimed, “We had certainly convinced ourselves that there was a political connection between our desire for the vote and our work for social amelioration, and we constantly declared that much of the new demand for political enfranchisement arose from a desire to remedy the unsatisfactory social conditions which were responsible for so much wrongdoing and wretchedness.”¹²⁷ The increasingly professionalized lives of Addams and other female social workers helped affirm their centrality to American public life. Women were becoming a significant presence in politics and policy and wanted to be recognized as active participants. The vote would acknowledge the work and sacrifices of women for the well-being of the country. With women gaining strength in the politics of social reform, the American political system adjusted accordingly. Women were becoming an unavoidable presence as they lobbied for equal pay, the vote, and asserted their own humanity. In response to their increasing demands, the Progressive Party developed in full awareness of woman’s advancement and with their support. Beginning in the mid-1890s and continuing throughout World War I, the Progressive movement reflected the increasing calls for reform in American society. Founded on pragmatic principles, the political party itself developed out of the new discourse of “sacred” American ideals within the public sphere. These ideals sought to institutionalize a broadly egalitarian program with a vision of a “democratic” American future. They sought to end widespread “corruption,” a vocabulary drawn from the domestic sphere. Emirbayer declares, “It was the creative

¹²⁷ Addams, The Second Twenty Years at Hull House, 89.
achievement of the Progressive reformers to justify their own efforts to abolish patronage and other ‘corruption’ precisely in terms of normative standards derived from this ‘women’s realm.’ Progressivism, that is, represented an attempt to reorganize the public realm in terms of ideals such as community and ‘nonpartisanship,’ which until then had belonged only to domestic life.”128 The aim of Progressives, therefore, was an inclusive social order, one that valued ethnic, gender, regional, and socioeconomic differences within the population. As the intellectual crusade developed, it was transformed into a political ideology.

The resulting political party sought cures for the problems of city, state, and nation, issues that were rooted deeply in the concerns of Addams and her constituents in social reform and the woman’s movement. Addams noted, “More and more, social workers, with thousands of other persons throughout the nation, had increasingly felt the need for a new party which should represent ‘the action and passion of the times,’ which should make social reform a political issue of national dimensions.”129 The Progressive Party’s platform appealed to the expansion of American public life. The party hoped that the political organizations of the nation would never again ignore the everyday lives of the people, and to that end, advocated equal suffrage, direct primaries, industrial amelioration, and social justice. Women in particular began to identify themselves with the Progressive Party. Addams explained, “We said that when a great party pledges itself to the protection of children, to the care of the aged, to the relief of overworked girls, to the safeguarding of burdened men, it is inevitable that it should appeal to women and should seek to draw upon the great reservoir of their moral energy so long undesired and unutilized in practical politics - that one is the corollary of the other; a program of human

129 Addams, The Second Twenty Years at Hull House, 23.
wel lfare, the necessity for women’s participation.” While Addams’s support of the Progressive Party had much to do with her affiliation with the woman’s movement, it was based even more on issues that she was fighting for every day at Hull House. The party promoted education and equality as the fundamental characteristics of democracy and recognized that America at the time fell short. Education was still widely reserved for the sons of the upper class. Even though African American men could vote in theory, many could not in practice. Women were completely excluded and immigrants enjoyed few civil rights. Addams pledged her support to the Progressive Party in hopes that it would destroy the boundaries that separated her and others from American public life.

In 1912 Addams seconded the nomination for Theodore Roosevelt for President at the Progressive Party’s convention. No woman had ever held such a public political position and Addams’s presence was a historic moment in women’s history. Addams then began campaigning for the ticket. As Addams traveled throughout the western United States speaking on behalf of the campaign as a key member of the party, she proved by example that women had a place in politics. The Progressive Party’s platform, as shown, embodied the domestic sphere. Addams’s appearance furthered the conviction of the woman’s movement that the political scene would benefit from female participation. Biographer Alan Davis argues, “Jane Addams realized the symbolic importance of her support of the Progressives. She was perfectly aware of the drama she was acting out by seconding Roosevelt’s nomination, and convinced that no one could represent the cause of women and social justice better than she.” Addams’s presence was so effective on the campaign trail that other political parties appealed to high profile women to

130 Ibid., 33.
131 Allen F. Davis, American Heroine: The Life and Legend of Jane Addams (New York: Oxford University Press,
speak on their behalf. The Democratic party, in particular, urged Lillian Wald to come out publicly in favor of Woodrow Wilson to counteract some of Addams’s influence. Yet, just as there were those who admired Addams’s entry into politics, there were those who disagreed with her activism, not based on sex but on principle. For example, Mabel Boardman, President of the women’s advisory committee of the Republican Party, opposed Addams because she believed that any person affiliated with non-political work or organizations should not permit the use of his or her name in connection with a political party. Addams received criticism for her support of Theodore Roosevelt from many different fronts, but at no time because she was a woman. The enthusiasm of the campaign and her belief in the Progressive Party was a natural outgrowth of her work at Hull House and on behalf of women’s rights.

Despite the dauntless efforts of Addams and others, the Progressive Party went down to electoral defeat practically everywhere. Addams, however, did not measure the success of the party on ballot count alone. Instead, she believed that the campaign had been an exercise in political education. The Progressive Party showed politicians and voters that “domestic” issues were of wider importance. Addams reported, “Perhaps the Progressive Party once more demonstrated what political history has many times made evident, that new parties ultimately write the platforms for all parties; that a cause which a new party has the courage to espouse is later taken up by existing political organizations to whom direct appeal has previously proved fruitless.”

The Democratic Party began to institute many of the Progressives’ reforms, among them a federal reserve system, a tariff commission, and laws promoting the welfare of wage earners and prohibiting child labor. Many of Wilson’s first term policies induced members of Progressive

132 Ibid., 193.
Party to work and vote for his re-election, Addams included.

Addams’s involvement in politics during this time can be said to have solidified her interest in the woman’s movement. Addams had always supported the effort of the suffragists but was not identified with the cause until after the elections of 1912. Authorities such as Carrie Chapman Catt and Doctor Maude Royden confirmed that she was “not an active worker in the political woman’s movement” until that time. In 1913, for example, Jane Addams represented the United States at the International Congress for Women held in Budapest; she was the most famous figure present. World War I quickly followed and the modern world experienced one of the greatest upheavals in history.

The onset of the Great War greatly advanced the cause of votes for women but it proved detrimental to Addams’s reputation in respect to the movement and to society at large. For many women, World War I offered opportunities outside the domestic sphere. Long before America’s entrance into the war American women were crossing the Atlantic to work as nurses, ambulance drivers, switchboard operators and canteen hostesses. At home women took over the jobs deserted by fighting men. These jobs included both manual and managerial labor. Educated women replaced their male counterparts in business and local politics. During the war, women became vital to the economic sphere and proved to society that they were just as capable as men. In addition, the ideal for which America was fighting, the preservation of democracy, added to the urgency of equality for women. Suffragists asked how America could fight for democracy abroad when it did not exist at home. “Life is full of hidden remedial powers which society has not yet utilized,” Addams said, “but perhaps nowhere is the waste more flagrant than in the

133 Addams, The Second Twenty Years at Hull House, 46.
matured deductions and judgements of the women, who are constantly forced to share the social injustices which they have no recognized power to alter." Alice Paul and Carrie Catt petitioned Wilson and Congress to make domestic and foreign policy consistent. In 1916 Wilson and his second wife attended the annual convention of the National American Woman Suffrage Association during his reelection campaign. Wilson hinted broadly that he was coming round to the idea of women voting: “We feel the tide; we rejoice in the strength of it and we shall not quarrel in the long run as to the method of it.” World War I provided a much needed boost to the women’s suffrage movement for those who supported the war. For Addams, however, her pacifist stance damaged her popularity and thus her influence on political reform. American intellectuals were aware of Addams’s views on war before America’s entrance into the fray. In 1904 Addams attended the Universal Peace Congress and in 1907 published Newer Ideals of Peace further explaining her stance. Addams’s belief in cultural pluralism and her personal contact with the immigrants associated with Hull House made her naturally hostile to imperialism. She opposed American annexation of Hawaii, intervention in Cuba and Puerto Rico, and the Philippine War. Addams believed it was time for America to abandon “the eighteenth-century philosophy upon which so much of our present democratic theory and philanthropic activity depends.” Addams saw hope for a new moral order that respected every man, woman, and child. Deegan argues in defense of Addams’s stance against imperialism, “She articulated the failed dreams of democracy, social equality, and economic viability reflected in the lives of blacks, the poor, immigrants, women, and delinquents.” Addams’s personal


138 Deegan, Race, Hull House, and the University of Chicago, 4.
experiences at Hull House convinced her of the need to respect cultural differences. Tolerance
and understanding, she believed, would lead to reason and compromise rather than force and
violence.

Addams’s convictions about the role of women in society also contributed to her pacifist stance.
As Addams had asserted strongly her entire career, women’s natural work and instinct were
towards nurturing human life and relationships. The corollary, according to the ideology of
separate spheres, was that men’s traditional work was competition for individual and national
gain. Therefore, men were inclined to war while women were inclined towards peace. Historian
Linda Schott notes, “Addams did not believe, however, that this was a good system; rather, it
was one that glorified war and minimized women’s accomplishments. Thus she wanted to
integrate women, whom she believed understood the importance of nurturing others, into a
public world that she believed was currently dominated by the competition of men.”

Addams knew that women’s voices were no longer completely unheeded. She believed it was time for
America to acknowledge that the health and happiness of individuals should no longer be just the
work of women. Addams’s position as a woman and as a type of “social outcast” led her to
fight for her vision of an inclusive society. She used her understanding of women’s traditional
roles to validate her opinions as she strove to educate both America and the world in the ways of
a new social ethic.

Though Addams’s views met with considerable disagreement and censorship in America,
internationally there was a strong crusade for peace. In April of 1915 an International Congress
of Women convened at the Hague to discuss international relations and prospects of peace.

139 Linda Schott, “Jane Addams and William James on Alternatives to War,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 54:2
(April, 1993): 250.
Women from Hungary, Italy, Poland, Belgium, Denmark, America, Holland, Scandinavia and England were all represented. Their charter stipulated that “women could only become members of the Congress and they were required to express themselves in general agreement with the resolutions on the preliminary programme. This general agreement was interpreted to imply the conviction a. That international disputes should be settled by pacific means; b. That the parliamentary franchise should be extended to women.”

The conference lasted for approximately three days and then the attendees formed delegations to travel to the war capitals to deliver their mediation plans and to organize national groups of the International Women’s Committee for Permanent Peace. Jane Addams served as the Congress’s vice president and led the other forty-six delegates from the United States. Phillips posits, “Jane Addams was dispatched on a mission to convert the world’s leaders to peace and social altruism. In meetings with European cabinets, in a papal audience, in a conference with President Wilson, Jane Addams stood for the new international conscience. She was redeeming womanhood personified.”

Addams’s views on women’s rights and peace were both founded on the domestic sphere. Women could be equal to men as long as they remained separate. Addams accepted the boundaries between men and women, but advocated women’s importance to the progression of society. She believed primitive women had been responsible for the first steps towards civilization in their regulation of the change from nomadic, warring lifestyles to peaceful, agricultural settlements.

Addams, Newer Ideals of Peace, 206-207.


This belief is very reminiscent of Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s theories of the “ancient” human past. For further information on Gilman in relation to Addams see Gail Bederman, Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of
maternal instincts, this time for peace.

As the delegations moved from capital to capital they met with opposition on every front. The press proved to be the most formidable foe. In every nation the press controlled public opinion because it decided what information was released to the people. Addams argued, “The press everywhere tended to make an entire nation responsible for the crimes of individuals, a tendency which is certainly fraught with awful consequences, even though the crimes for which the nation is held responsible may have originated in the gross exaggeration of some trivial incident. The very size and extent of the contention acts like a madness.”144 Addams and her cohorts came to see the press as one of the primary factors in mobilizing public support for war and breeding fanatical patriotism. The delegation realized that if the press did not support options for peace, the public would never become aware of the option. “The people of the different countries could not secure the material upon which they might form a sound judgement of the situation,” Addams lamented, “because the press with the opportunity of determining opinion by selecting data, had assumed the power once exercised by the church when it gave to the people only such knowledge as it deemed fit for them to have.”145 Addams encountered pressures from the press in every country she and her delegation visited. The response from the countries’s leaders, however, varied.

The message carried to respected Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers, Presidents, and Kings was simple. The women presented these leaders with a plan for negotiations that would bring an end to the war and ensure the impossibility of violence in the future. Addams recalled, “We implied that if Europe is in disorder because of deep-rooted injustices because certain nations are


144 Addams, et al, Women at the Hague, 84.
deprived of commercial, political, or maritime opportunities, that the solution be discovered
much better by men who consider the situation on its merits than by those who approach it on the
basis of military victories or losses.” Part of the reason the delegations were received and
listened to with respect was the fact that they were comprised of women. According to the
prejudices of the time, men who were peace advocates were viewed as unnatural and effiminate.
One soldier wrote to Addams at the Woman’s Congress at The Hague, “Ever since I have been in
the trenches I have been wondering what is the matter with the women. They would not be
called cowards and they need not be afraid. Why are they holding back? It is clear why the men
are holding back, but why do not women make a statement so many of us are longing for?” It
seems ironic that women, whose voices had been stifled for so long, were now being urged to say
what men could not.

Addams’s pacifism fit the era’s stereotypes of women, yet was radical in that she and other pro-
peace women used their stance on war to justify the demand for woman suffrage. They rebelled
against the popular argument that women should have no say in matters of war because they did
not fight. Alice Hamilton, a delegate at the Congress and co-author, with Addams, of Women at
the Hague noted: “Because this primitive conception of the function of government and of the
obsolete division between the lives of men and women has obtained during the long months of
the European war, there is obviously great need at the end of the war that women should attempt,
in an organized capacity, to make their contribution to that governmental internationalism
already developed in so many directions among the people.” In Addams’s view, domestic

145 Ibid., 92.
146 Ibid., 94.
147 Addams, The Second Twenty Years at Hull House, 129.
piety and morality, if women had the franchise, would push the world towards an international system of social altruism. She embraced a version of feminism that ran counter to the war mentality. As she wrote in *The Long Road of Woman’s Memory*, “It would be absurd for women even to suggest equal rights in a world run solely by physical force, and feminism must necessarily assert the ultimate supremacy of moral agency.” Pacifism would not be a withdrawal but an engagement with a new international, social ethic. This moral principle would include equality, justice, and respect for all individuals regardless of gender or ethnicity.

Addams argued that women, because they were by nature lovers of peace, should have an equal role with men in shaping policy. Women, if heard, could shape human destiny.

Though the International Congress of Women for Peace and Freedom may have been a personal success for Addams, it was not viewed as such by the American public. At home Addams was called a traitor and at best, naive. She was denounced as a Bolshevik and was censured by the press. The criticism did not stifle Addams’s resolve but strengthened it. She asserted, “If I sometimes regretted having gone to the Woman’s Congress at The Hague in 1915, or having written a book on Newer Ideals of Peace in 1911 which had made my position so conspicuously clear, certainly far oftener I was devoutly grateful that I had used such unmistakable means of expression before the time came when any spoken or written word in the interests of Peace was forbidden.”

Though she returned to Hull House after the Congress, she continued to work for international peace and lent her support and skills to feeding the hungry in war-torn Europe. Elshtain indicates, “She called upon women to revert to an undertaking based on ‘primitive and compelling motives’ - those of feeding children. Perhaps, she hoped against hope, an

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international ethic might arise from the ‘humble beginnings’ of the woman feeding her tribe.”

Addams found an expression of her new, international ethic in Herbert Hoover’s Food Administration, which had been organized to feed the starving people of Europe at the war’s end. Addams endorsed the program and traveled around the nation speaking to women on its behalf. “I believe,” Addams later wrote, “that a genuine response to this world situation might afford an opportunity to lay over again the foundations for a wider, international morality, as woman’s concern for feeding her children had made the beginnings of an orderly domestic life.” Once again, Addams took a traditionally female task and used it to promote the inclusion of women in politics. Addams’s efforts on behalf of the Food Administration renewed America’s confidence in her character. Yet, she never again would be as prominent and respected a figure.

Addams lived her life as an example of the power of education. Her academic knowledge validated the arguments she made on behalf of the women of the world. References to literature and art pepper her writings and speeches. As a public figure, Addams showed women how they could use education to widen the woman’s sphere. Economically, women could acquire jobs to supplement the income of their husbands. Politically, education would ensure a degree of respect and perhaps a greater audience. Socially, those with education could help the community by responding to the needs of those less fortunate, thereby, improving the city, the nation, and the world. Most importantly, education allowed women to enter what had previously been defined

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152 Addams, The Long Road of Woman’s Memory, 81.
153 Addams received the Nobel Peace Prize on December 10, 1931 in recognition of her pacifist efforts during World War I. The decades after WWI issued in an era of disillusionment where nothing changed and many began to believe that humanity was destined to make the same mistakes. Addams’s alternative to war finally gained the respect and recognition it originally deserved. For more information see Linda Schott, “Jane Addams and William James on Alternatives to War,” Journal of the History of Ideas 54:2 (April, 1993).

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as the men’s sphere. Addams showed American women that through education they could be separate but equal.

Today, Jane Addams stands as a symbol of and an advocate for those at the bottom of America’s social structure, specifically women. Her ten books and over five hundred articles attested to the value of college education for women. One must remember, nonetheless, that all of her accomplishments occurred within the confines of the woman’s sphere of domestic piety.

Addams’s work, from the creation of Hull House to her efforts for the franchise, supported the institutional expression of the social separation of gender. Addams elevated the importance of women and helped motherhood and housework expand out of the home to the local community, to the city, to the nation, and finally to the world. Lagemann concludes, “Jane Addams’s writings assert the belief that abstract social values like justice, freedom, equality, and peace are concretely defined by daily actions and beliefs. They urge the possibility that progress toward greater justice, fuller freedom, more complete equality, and a lasting peace may be achieved, if, through social experimentation, study and discussion, men and women become ever more cognizant of the shared consequences and social aspects of their lives.”

For the women whose cause she so nobly espoused, Addams endeavored to create a society in which women were accepted as integral parts of progress. Whatever her limitations and shortcomings, Addams remains a vital character in the long road of woman’s fight for equality and justice.
Chapter Three


It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. 155

-- W. E. B. Du Bois, 1903

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois used education to bypass structural forms of oppression. He used knowledge to argue for the inclusion of African Americans within the American middle class. Du Bois’ own background at Fisk and Harvard University and the University of Berlin made him an example for his race and proved that education could validate the fight for equal rights and challenge the prejudices that shaped society. Race was not widely contested idea in turn-of-the-century America. Fixed notions of the American middle class were challenged by Social Darwinism, Reconstruction, and foreign immigration; reformers like John Dewey, Jane Addams, and Du Bois took advantage of this moment of flux to renegotiate social constructions of American public life. Du Bois used education, like Dewey and Addams before him, to validate his claim for African American equality. This method challenged wealth and birth as the determinants of an individual’s place in society. As Du Bois optimistically claimed, “Finally, with the knowledge that thought and words, and right and deed influence men even more than their original physical endowment there has arisen the whole movement of social reform to inspire and arouse men, and to furnish by social heredity that which they otherwise lack.”

Du Bois’ strategy can be seen in his courses at Wilberforce and Atlanta University, in his writings, such as The Souls of Black Folk and Black Reconstruction in America, in his theory of the “talented tenth,” and in his protest against industrial training for blacks. Education provided Du Bois with a means by which he could redefine constructions of race and place African Americans within the bounds of American public life.

Du Bois’s first encounter with education as a method for reform and uplift occurred in his

personal experiences in childhood. His life began in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, on February 23, 1868. Born to a single parent family on the edge of poverty, Du Bois’s early life taught him the values of education and undoubtedly shaped his adult views on its power to advance an individual in society. After graduating from high school in Great Barrington in 1881 with help from Frank Alvin Hosmer, Du Bois was admitted to Fisk University and then went on to graduate cum laude from Harvard University in 1890. From 1892 to 1894, Du Bois studied history and economics abroad at the University of Berlin. He completed his doctoral studies at Harvard in 1895, being, notably, the first African American to do so. Du Bois saw education as a means of personal advancement and pursued a career as a professor at Wilberforce University, the University of Pennsylvania, and, last, Atlanta University. The only time Du Bois was not teaching in the years under study here, occurred while he filled the position of Director of Publications and Research at the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in New York. Du Bois’s personal experiences with the people and ideas that shaped American academia during the late 1880s and 1890s presented him with the proper tools to challenge the prejudices preventing African Americans from entering into public life. Du Bois, early on, realized that white Americans were oppressing black Americans by withholding adequate education and validating their actions by arguing that blacks were not educable. Du Bois proved them wrong.

Du Bois’s higher education in both the United States and Germany took place under eminent scholars such as Josiah Royce, William James, and Gustav von Schmoller. These men formed the lenses through which Hegelian, Marxist, and pragmatist philosophies were refracted to formulate Du Bois’s early world view and herein provide a foundation for discussions of Du
Bois’s literary works, his theory of the “talented tenth,” and his concepts of “higher” education. Historian David Levering Lewis describes Du Bois’s years at Harvard as “his ego’s learning decade, the ten or more years when the life and destiny of Africans in America merged inseparably with his own.”157 Harvard indeed shaped Du Bois, yet his insights went far beyond what he learned in the university’s classrooms.

William James and Josiah Royce supervised Du Bois’s work during his first two years at Harvard and ultimately contributed to the ideas Du Bois put forth in The Souls of Black Folk and Black Reconstruction in America. William James, the father of pragmatism, reinforced Du Bois’s belief that history did not unfold along a predestined track. Instead, history reflected a practical realm of necessity and the force of determined wills. Du Bois himself notes, “It was James with his pragmatism…who turned me back from the lovely but sterile land of philosophic speculation to the social sciences as the field for gathering and interpreting that body of fact which would apply to my program for the Negro.”158 While DuBois’s first love was philosophy, his education pointed him towards a more practical field of concentration through which he could aid African Americans’ fight for equality. Therefore, Du Bois began to contemplate applying philosophy to an historical interpretation of race relations, a move that resulted in his interest in sociology.

After Du Bois completed his studies, he briefly taught Latin and Greek at Wilberforce University before transferring to the University of Pennsylvania as a professor of sociology. It was here that Du Bois took part in a sociological study that resulted in the publication of The

Philadelphia Negro. In the late 1890s, Philadelphia contained the largest black community in the North. The city’s leading politicians wanted a document analyzing the alarming moral and social conditions of the African American population in order to court the black vote for a more effective political campaign. Du Bois’s role in this endeavor was to explain in sociological terms the exact nature of “the virus among Philadelphia’s African Americans.”

Seeing this appointment as an opportunity to infuse the social sciences with new knowledge and improve race relation policies, Du Bois set about writing a study that affirmed, modified, and subverted the received sociological wisdom of the era. Those who commissioned the study believed that the city’s deplorable state was due to its large population of black workers. Du Bois set about “to put science into sociology through a study of the conditions and problems of my own group.”

The result was a document that argued that white prejudice towards African Americans resulted in unequal opportunities in education and work. Du Bois claimed that “the social environment of excuse, listless despair, careless indulgence and lack of inspiration to work is the growing force that turns black boys and girls into gamblers, prostitutes, and rascals.”

Other immigrants, such as the Irish and Italians, were privileged and ultimately accepted into the community because “they were men and brothers.” The Philadelphia Negro confronted white and elitist racism towards the working class in general and African Americans in particular.

Two aspects of class analysis that were spelled out in the study governed Du Bois’s thinking for many years ahead. First, Du Bois argued that the advancement of the race was driven by its best men. “In many respects it is right and proper to judge a people by its best

159 Lewis, Biography of a Race, 188.
classes,” he insisted, “rather than by its worst classes or middle ranks.” Du Bois predicted that this class would answer the question of whether blacks could assimilate to American culture.

The second aspect of class analysis appeared in Du Bois’s affirmation that the family structure, work ethic, and class behavior of African Americans was still deeply embedded in the experience and culture of slavery. Du Bois ascribed much of the blame for supposed black deviancy to the “lax moral habits of the slave regime [that] still show themselves in a large amount of cohabitation without marriage.” Though Du Bois’s research indicated that most black households were nuclear families headed by two parents, he nonetheless found that there were noticeable differences between other Philadelphia ethnic populations. When Du Bois finally concluded *The Philadelphia Negro*, the linkage of race and class to economics was unmistakable. This comprehensive work placed Du Bois at the center of social debates and garnered applause for his comprehensive analysis of the social conditions of Philadelphia.

Du Bois’s educational background provided him with the tools for conducting this study and validated some of his conclusions. Hence, *The Philadelphia Negro* stands as Du Bois’s first literary accomplishment that used education as a means of challenging white skepticism about the capabilities of an intelligent African American. As biographer Lewis notes, “because Du Bois wrote in a manner generally designed to disclose rather than volubly to underscore his unorthodox sociological theories, most reviewers would laud the thorough scholarship of *The Philadelphia Negro* but overlook its radical subtext completely.” Du Bois’s education allowed him to present his conclusions in a manner acceptable to American society at that point in time.

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162 Ibid., 387.
163 Ibid., 318.
164 Ibid., 67.
In addition, Du Bois became known within intellectual and reforming circles through this first work of racial scholarship. After the completion of *The Philadelphia Negro*, Du Bois was offered a job as a professor at Atlanta University where he worked from 1897 to 1910, taking responsibility for organizing the school’s conference on Negro issues, the Atlanta University Studies. He was able to prove to himself, to his race, and to the intellectual community that with education one could transcend structural forms of oppression and negotiate one’s own place in public life.

While at Atlanta University, Du Bois wrote a second monumental text that was based on his extensive education, this time in Hegelian and Marxist philosophy, in an attempt to redefine the terms of a three hundred year relationship between black and white people throughout America as well as on the continent of Africa. *The Souls of Black Folk* serves as an example of Du Bois’s goal of applying philosophy to historical interpretations of race relations in line with *The Philadelphia Negro*. Du Bois applied already accepted European philosophy to his more “radical” ideas of reform. As historian Richard Cullen Rath points out, “Du Bois took the Hegelian idea of history as a determinant of a race’s cultural traits, disengaged it from racist typologies, and used it to form his African racial identity.”166 While this method did not completely silence all his critics, it made him an intellect to be reckoned with and proved that education could be a source of uplift and reform.

Perhaps the most direct example of Du Bois’s adaptation of Hegelian philosophy to questions of race occurred in “Of Our Spiritual Striving,” the first essay in *The Souls of Black Folk*. In this piece, Du Bois articulated a poignant truth about the black experience in America:

“it is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others…one ever feels his two-ness, - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two un-reconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body.”¹⁶⁷ In this text, Du Bois reframed the “doubleness” of self-consciousness found in the Hegelian dialectic.¹⁶⁸ Hegel philosophized that there were two opposing entities, the in-itself the object, and the for -itself, the consciousness of the object, within an individual. Du Bois adapted Hegel’s ideas to fit the context of the race question in America. For black Americans, tension lay in the two-ness of their identities as both Africans and Americans. According to Du Bois, the desire of all American blacks was to see a reconciliation of their identity so that the in-itself and the for-itself became the in-and-for-itself, which Hegel had theorized as the pentultimate human state. Du Bois “simply wish[ed] to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American.”¹⁶⁹ Once this ideal was reached black folk and white folk would be able to understand each other fully by overcoming dualism. This move, in turn, would result in equality among the races. Du Bois’s appropriation of one of the most respected German philosophers gave his work credibility among American intellectuals.

In The Souls of Black Folk, Du Bois consciously situated the African American within the larger framework of history by placing black people directly in the center of the Hegelian struggle towards emancipation and enlightenment. He inserted the history of Negro into Hegel’s listing of civilizations. For Hegel, as Du Bois noted, “after the Egyptian and the Indian, the

¹⁶⁸ This interpretation is just one of the accepted readings of external influences that appear in Du Bois’s The Souls of Black Folk. While the “doubleness” of self-consciousness can be found in the Hegelian dialectic, it can also be found in other works of philosophy. For more information on this topic, see William Leo Hansberry, “W.E.B. Du Bois’ Influence on African History,” Freedomways 5 (1965) and Joseph C. Miller, “History and Africa/Africa and History,” The American Historical Review 104:1 (February, 1999).
Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son.”170 The Souls of Black Folk expressly reminded thinkers that philosophers like Hegel had found no use for Africans in history. Du Bois, however, realized that freedom could only begin with self-emancipation, for one could not truly be free in the larger world if one were not free in oneself. To free themselves completely, blacks would have to confront their previous historical neglect first by acknowledging it and then by correcting the deliberate negation.

The historian Thomas C. Holt argues of Souls of Black Folk that “such narratives link the succession of events, experiences, and persons that constitute any self in any time-present, which is to say in one’s consciousness. A self is knowable, then – even to itself – only in terms of history.”171 For this reason Du Bois realized that black historians had the special task of restoring blacks to history so that self-knowledge and hence, emancipation, could occur. Du Bois claimed, “the history of the American Negro was the history of strife – this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self.”172 Du Bois’s vision was clearly black and male; he did not include African American women. Du Bois appealed to the Hegelian model of philosophy to explain human progress through history, and corrected the process by putting Africans in their rightful place as members of the world’s civilizations. The Souls of Black Folk provided African Americans with a foundation upon which to build. Du Bois used his education to correct accepted learning that he believed to be wrong.

A second aspect of Hegelian philosophy that Du Bois found lacking rested in the word

170 Ibid., 103.
“double” of Hegel’s “double consciousness.” As Du Bois worked to place Africa in the context of world history, he knew that his education had provided him with no firsthand knowledge of Africa on which to base his notion of the African American soul. Rath argues that, “he only knew the descendants of Africans, but here he spoke with the authority of experience.” What Du Bois eventually came to believe in light of his study of African culture, inspired by the pluralistic teachings of William James at Harvard University, and his contact with Neo-Idealism in Germany, was that the individual spirit existed in an open, pluralistic universe. Instead of agreeing with the thinkers who posited human will as one entity, Du Bois saw that there were multiple wills in every individual. As Rath further contends in his critique of Du Bois’s concept of the soul, “Du Bois began to explore a mode of agency that drew on African as well as European precedents…in it souls were forces, and all forces had wills.”

By combining European streams of thought with African religious beliefs in the plurality of souls, Du Bois was able to strike a temporary balance in The Souls of Black Folk. Du Bois argued, “the idea of the soul offered the world, through the notion of distributed agency, affirmation of the ability of individuals or of aggregates constantly and freely to strive. Souls, fully capable of intent, caused rocks to fall or events to pass. Souls could also cause one to feel

174 Whereas Hegel avoided mind/body dualism by positing that the dialectic of the self creates a unified world, James believed that this closed system eliminated the possibility of individual free will. James’s views of Hegel in terms of an open universe also served as a model for how philosophy could be applied to critique, enforce, or change current issues affecting the world.
175 Neo-Idealism, rooted in critiques of Hegel in the 1830s and 1840s, was the most recent form of Absolute Idealism, and was characterized by an approach to the problem of knowledge through experience rather than by means of a priori speculations. Basically, this movement supported Du Bois’s understandings of the pragmatism of William James. Just as James taught Hegelian monism to be insufficient due to its narrow sphere of influence, so too did Neo-Idealism seek to broaden Hegelian philosophy to the more pressing, universal issues of the day. This movement coincided with Du Bois’s predominant studies in social science and economics, and ultimately influenced the methodology by which Du Bois adapted philosophy to race.
Du Bois’s concept of the soul thus belonged not just to the West and not just to Africa, but also to the entire world’s historical force and story. The Souls of Black Folk challenged accepted beliefs by pointing out their inherent inadequacies and prejudices. Du Bois transformed Hegel’s concept of a world spirit and re-crafted it as an affirmation of the existence of multiple spirits governing the world. Hence, by altering the unity of Hegelian philosophy to encompass possibilities from multiplicity, Du Bois proved that philosophy could be used to solve racial problems and could help create better footing for African Americans in their desire for a place in history.

A third revolutionary theory put forth by Du Bois in The Souls of Black Folk was the view of the African American as gifted with second sight. In Phenomenology of the Mind Hegel studied the master/slave dialectic, which for Hegel occurred within the individual but easily could be related to inter-personal relationships between oppressors and oppressed. Hegel depicted the relationship as one of mutual dependence. Hegel claimed that what the slave perceived the master to be and what the master actually was were inherently not one and the same. Hegel postulated, “It is clear, however, that this object [i.e. the slave’s recognition] does not match the master’s concept [of himself] but rather that the object wherein the master achieved his mastery has become something altogether different from an independent consciousness.”

The existence of the master can only come through the existence of the slave; without the slave the master is nothing. The master is, thus, per Hegel, actually subjugated by the slave, resulting in a transfer of power. Hegel concluded that “the truth of the independent

177 Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk, 152.
consciousness is, accordingly, the *slave consciousness.*" Masters were as dependent on slaves for their identity as slaves were on masters for theirs.

The paradox of the master being subjugated by the slave helped Du Bois prove that the African American’s double consciousness was not a burden, but a gift. Only black Americans had both self-consciousness and insight into the true essence of freedom due to their previous subjugation. Du Bois contended in *The Souls of Black Folk* that “actively we have woven ourselves into the very warp and woof of this nation…we fought their battles, shared their sorrow, mingled our blood with theirs and generation after generation have pleaded with a headstrong, careless people to despise not Justice, Mercy and Truth, lest the nation be smitten with a curse.” Only those enslaved could see the truth of freedom, for with affliction came the gift of insight. The historian Lawrie Balfour writes in his comparison of James Baldwin and W.E.B. Du Bois that “the sting of Du Bois’ double consciousness comes from an awareness that white Americans may never acknowledge the beauty of the souls of black folk and participate with their black neighbors in the merging of these two great streams of American culture.”

Without universal knowledge of freedom, the ideal state of emancipation and enlightenment would be even harder to reach. Both Du Bois and Hegel posited that the slave alone had access to truth. Unfortunately, Hegel’s argument never left the realm of the spirit and never entered into the material world of relationships. Du Bois’s choice of Hegelian philosophy as a basis for his theories was, therefore, a calculated one. He applied Hegelianism to concrete situations and coherently argued in *The Souls of Black Folk* that absolute truth could be known only by the 

179 Ibid., 28.
180 Ibid., 215.
enslaved and that therefore, black people could become independent agents in the drive for emancipation, and that black Americans had insights whites would never have.

Du Bois wrote in an era in which concepts of identity and freedom were contested. In an age of industrialization and globalization, identity and concepts of selfhood were at the forefront of American social thought. What it meant to be an American and what it meant to be a valued member of American society were both up for debate. African Americans needed an identity of their own so that they might carve out their own space within public life. Scholar Shamoon Zamir writes, “double consciousness becomes the description of the black self as it is shaped by history but also by its struggles and resistances within history.”182 The Souls of Black Folk represented the beginning of Du Bois’s fight for inclusion within the social stratification of twentieth-century America. His education provided both the means and, more importantly, the content of his revolutionary theories. This lesson he imparted to educated African Americans by linking it to the attainment of freedom not only in The Souls of Black Folk but also in Black Reconstruction in America, a work of history written nearly thirty-two years later.

Black Reconstruction in America is a study of history in its purest sense. One popular theory in Du Bois’s era about the birth of history was that the past was known through religious and philosophical faith in empirical data and its relevance for understanding the place of humans in the world.183 Regrettably, historians largely excluded most of Africa from the western cultural tradition and based their discussions of black Americans on the prevailing stereotypes of the time period. Du Bois took up the call to correct this blatant discrimination by writing Black

Reconstruction in America as an attempt to secure African Americans a time and place in world history and thereby providing his people with an identity and a sense of self. As Joseph Miller argues in defense of Du Bois’s work “one cannot explain human behavior and desire absent the social and historical contexts in which they are grounded.”\textsuperscript{184} Black Reconstruction in America was an explicit response to the Dunning school of thought and the then current writings about African Americans’ place in Reconstruction. During this time period, white scholars like William Archibald Dunning of Columbia University were depicting Reconstruction as a period of black “misrule,” crime, theft, and rape. These “facts” proved that white men had to be in charge to preserve civilization, and were used to justify white supremacy and racism in both high and low culture. Dunning’s writings and those guided by his interpretation followed a three-part argument, according to Du Bois: “first, endless sympathy with the white South; second ridicule, contempt or silence for the Negro; third, a judicial attitude towards the North, which concludes that the North under great misapprehension did a grievous wrong, but eventually saw its mistake and retreated.”\textsuperscript{185} The Dunning school prevailed steadily for more than three decades after 1900, with some sixteen published texts by William Archibald Dunning himself, and many others bearing his influence.\textsuperscript{186} Dunning and his graduate students were horribly wrong in their portrayal of African Americans and let racism blind them to historical truth. Thus Du Bois, to emancipate black Americans, had to attack this paradigm that was holding his people back. He had to show the world that parts of written and accepted history were blatant lies.

If Du Bois were going to fight prejudice and discrimination as a civil rights activist and

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\item \textsuperscript{184} Ibid., 9.
\item \textsuperscript{186} David Levering Lewis, \textit{W.E.B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963} (New
reformer, then he needed to ground his people in history. Against the backdrop of American racism Du Bois tested a whole range of approaches to the problem of integrating the African American into history. Following in the footsteps of previous thinkers like Hegel, Du Bois showed that history could be rewritten in light of truth and that by putting African Americans at the center of their own emancipation, the over-arching desire to reach equality and validation in American society could possibly be achieved.

Black Reconstruction in America was a massive tome, totaling 789 pages, that systematically challenged previous interpretations of this era in American history. Du Bois, to refute the lies of the Dunning school, laboriously detailed state by state the events of the era as they unfolded. While it is impossible to do this revisionist masterpiece justice in a short summary, by explaining in depth some of the critical sections of the text, we can appreciate how Du Bois used his philosophical training and professional expertise to put African Americans at the center of American history. The sections on “The Black Worker,” “The White Worker,” “The Planter,” and “The General Strike” are especially revealing. Each section offers a historical survey of each group from the pre-Civil War period through the beginning of Reconstruction and analyzes the immense changes that affected society, politics, and economics. Though these sections are each historically accurate, Du Bois developed his own opinions as to why the historical events leading up to and through Reconstruction occurred in the manner they did.

Primarily, Black Reconstruction in America challenged the preconceived ideas that America was founded on principles of democracy. When the founding fathers wrote the Constitution they refrained from using the word slavery because it directly challenged their
professed belief in equality and human rights.\(^{187}\) Democracy, in its purest form, technically could not and did not exist in America due to the character of political institutions and economic structures, a point also emphasized in John Dewey’s work. Du Bois observed that, with time, “black labor became the foundation stone not only of the Southern social structure, but of Northern manufacture and commerce, of the English factory system, of European commerce, of buying and selling on a world-wide scale.”\(^{188}\) As long as northern capitalists controlled the economy, democracy was, per Du Bois, mere window-dressing. Du Bois asserted that northerners broke with this conception of democracy when northern industry finally decided to challenge the southern plantocracy.\(^{189}\) Once the Civil War started and the slaves began to free themselves, the Union was forced to recognize the blatant hypocrisy of a democracy built on slavery.

By labeling what had previously only been referred to as “the slave” or “the Negro” the Black Worker, Du Bois let educated Americans know that he was placing the African American in the context of industrialization and integrating slaves into the story of American labor. As Du Bois astutely asserted, black workers during the Civil War “wanted to stop the economy of the plantation system, and to do that they left the plantations.”\(^{190}\) Slavery was not simply a social structure nor was it held in place because of black inferiority. Another force that held slavery in place so long was the master class’s efforts to engender feelings of inferiority, defenselessness, and helplessness in their slaves. Otherwise how could seven percent of the total population of


\(^{188}\) Ibid., 46.

\(^{189}\) This is Hegel but via Karl Marx, see footnote 36.

\(^{190}\) Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 45.
the South keep in submission 3,953,696 slaves? Du Bois traced the slaves’ self-emancipation through the struggles of black activists like Frederick Douglass, abolitionists like George Evans, and the white workers in their wake. Thus, the door was opened for the enslaved to rise up as a collective mass and take what was rightfully theirs by birth: freedom.

The Hegelian influences on Black Reconstruction in America can be seen in the structure, methodology, and purpose of this work when compared to Hegel’s own masterwork, The Philosophy of History. In The Philosophy of History Hegel postulated that history was the story of the development of the human spirit in time through the growth and perfection of its own self-consciousness. “Given this abstract definition,” Hegel noted, “we can say that world history is the record of the spirit’s efforts to attain knowledge of what it is in itself.” For Hegel, history was a process of emancipation and enlightenment and reached its end when reason and society were synthesized and when “the divine principle in the state is the Idea made manifest on earth.” Just as Du Bois’s desired goal was freedom and equality for the darker races of the world, Hegel’s was the attainment of the “Idea” or the absolute end towards which humanity was progressing through history. Du Bois adapted Hegel’s ideas in his writing of Black Reconstruction in America. The story of black Americans was one of a continuous struggle for freedom. Thus he stressed their collective sense of identity and their group self-consciousness, especially in terms of black Americans’ persistent desire for learning and for freedom. He wanted to give black men and women legitimacy and agency. As historian Thomas Holt theorizes, “indeed, one cannot even conceptualize an individual consciousness, a self continuous

191 Ibid., 32.
192 Hegel, The Philosophy of History, 401.
193 Ibid., 415.
from one time point to another, without a concept of history, of memory.”  

Du Bois helped identify and create that memory. What Hegel offered was a systematic theory of how the world was the creation of the human spirit. Du Bois applied this idea to the material world to show how the world could be seen as a creation of relationships between groups of people. Hegel’s idealist philosophy gave Du Bois a complex model for his own thinking about the relationship between black consciousness and history. This influence can vividly be seen in *Black Reconstruction in America*. 

Hegel began his *Philosophy of History* with the claim that “world history is the process of the consciousness of freedom – a progress whose necessity it is our business to comprehend.” 

For man to truly be free to work for the common good (which would signify the end of history) the individual’s concept of freedom must coincide exactly with the state’s concept of freedom. Du Bois took up the challenge of defining a common freedom in *Black Reconstruction in America* by claiming that freedom in America would occur when democracy was realized in the economic, social, and political spheres. Du Bois diverged from Hegel and leaned towards Marx in the way his concept of freedom was linked to the emancipation of labor. In this way, Du Bois managed to widen his focus beyond the plight of African Americans to incorporate the liberation of the white working class into his battle for freedom and democracy. In Du Bois’s words, “the

195 One important note to be made at this point is that this is where Du Bois deviates from Hegel and leans more towards Marx. Just as the *Philosophy of History* greatly influenced Du Bois so too did the *Communist Manifesto* and other writings of Karl Marx and Frederich Engels. Marx believed that humanity could continually strive towards a full understanding of Reason in History and once this development of absolute “self-consciousness” was realized, true human emancipation would occur signifying the end of history. This idea in essence is a reiteration of Hegelian philosophy. Marx, however, adapted this belief and applied it to economics and class struggle to prove that the ultimate end would occur when class struggle was nonexistent and all humans were free from oppression to work for the common good. In true form, W.E.B. Du Bois adapted this now Hegelian based Marxist philosophy to argue that freedom from racial oppression transcending all national borders would lead human history to its true end.
emancipation of man is the emancipation of labor and the emancipation of labor is the freeing of that basic majority of workers who are yellow, brown, and black.”¹⁹⁷ We should note, however, that Du Bois also molded Marxist thought rather than simply applying it straightforward to the class struggle in America. Historian Cedric J. Robinson argues that: “Du Bois was conscious of the problems which had beset mass movements bringing together whites and Blacks – problems which he felt spokesmen for Communism ignored.”¹⁹⁸ Much of Du Bois’s talent as an historian came from his ability to take the best of already existing history and philosophy and use it to support and complicate his own beliefs. He used his education to situate himself and his people in world history. This movement, Du Bois believed, would give African Americans an identity based on something other than slavery, granting them agency and authority.

Du Bois’s early studies in sociology, philosophy and history provided him with the tools for the content of his academic writings. These texts, The Philadelphia Negro, The Souls of Black Folk, and Black Reconstruction in America, presented the African American as a person better suited for American democracy than the white Protestant male. Black Americans’ oppression had given them strength, discipline, solidarity, and a “second sight” into the promise and the broken promises of America. Du Bois eloquently observed: “Once in a while through all of us there flashes some clairvoyance, some clear idea, of what America really is. We who are dark can see America in a way that white America cannot.”¹⁹⁹ In effect, Du Bois turned the prejudice and oppression suffered by black men and women on their heads, using them to argue for African Americans’ rightful entry into civic and public life based on their special insight. Du Bois believed their identity was unique and validated their demands. As Rutledge M. Dennis

¹⁹⁷ Du Bois, Black Reconstruction in America, 16.
¹⁹⁸ Robinson, Black Marxism, 278.
contends, “Du Bois was reaching a conclusion already reached by previous theorists on class and power: that differential class and power relations produce differential consciousness and promote differential class and group interests.” Yet Du Bois ingeniously added race to the mix. He believed that white prejudice toward and oppression of black people helped them develop a distinctive consciousness. This consciousness, along with education, validated African Americans’ claims to equality and mobility within American society. Armed with the gift of second sight and proper education, Du Bois believed an elite group of men and women could provide leadership for the black masses. The “talented tenth,” a small number of mostly northern, college-educated men and women would lead African Americans out of ignorance and persecution into a life of freedom and equality.

The first formal statement of this theory occurred in 1903 in an essay entitled “The Talented Tenth,” which both begins and ends with the same statement: “The Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men.” This elitist theory revolved around the idea that a people should be judged by its most educated, most affluent, and most successful members. Black intellectuals were to become the means for bringing the “lowly” masses into the American public life. Du Bois characterized this alliance as a “loving, reverent comradeship between the black lowly and the black men emancipated by training and culture.” The talented tenth would use its education and its standing in society to reshape social values and construct or reconstruct social institutions to incorporate the black masses. Dennis points out that, “according

to Du Bois, the educated elite was an important concept that could be useful in the area of social change as it relates to politics, economics, education, and culture.” 203 The educational process for Du Bois consisted not only of academic pursuits but also of cultural ones. The talented tenth, therefore, were to be “leaders of thought” and “missionaries of culture.” 204 They were to prove to black and white America alike that African Americans had much to offer American society.

Du Bois’s concept of the talented tenth shifted during different phases of his career and was marked by his support for different institutions or groups that matched his changing theories. The first phase occurred as Du Bois was beginning to define the problems confronting the black population in the United States. Traces of the talented tenth can be glimpsed in both The Philadelphia Negro and The Souls of Black Folk. In The Philadelphia Negro Du Bois wrote, “In many respects it is right and proper to judge a people by its best classes, rather than by its worst classes or middle ranks.” Du Bois saw leadership forming within the black world as members of the talented tenth joined forces with white men and women who were fighting for black equality as well. Mary Ovington, Jane Addams, Oswald Garrison Villard, and John Dewey all lent their support to Du Bois’s various causes. One key moment was the creation of the Niagara Movement in which blacks and whites debated civil rights side by side. In 1905, Du Bois sought to mobilize black intellectuals by calling a meeting that would draw up a plan for national action. Lewis notes: “the call stated two forthright purposes: organized determination and aggressive action on the part of men who believe in Negro freedom and growth; and opposition to present

methods of strangling honest criticism.”

Men such as Monroe Trotter, one of Du Bois’s Harvard classmates; William H. Hart, professor of law at Howard University; and Harry Clay Smith, editor of the Cleveland Gazette; made up the vanguard of the talented tenth and were present at the convening of the first Niagara meeting. Unfortunately, the Niagara Movement did not accomplish the goals Du Bois intended due to financial difficulties, opposition from Booker T. Washington, and internal conflicts. The movement did, however, set a precedent for black leadership and provided the foundation for the creation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

The NAACP, created in 1909, was divided. On one hand, it was seen as a white organization dedicated to the uplift of African Americans though well-financed litigation. On the other, the NAACP was an interracial organization challenging mainstream public opinion on issues of race in an attempt to secure civil rights for African Americans. Those who sought to hire Du Bois wanted black leaders for the movement. Though Du Bois worked closely with his white allies at the NAACP, he firmly believed in black leadership. As Dennis asserts, “he never gave up the idea that Blacks and Blacks alone would have to chart a program for the future of Blacks and that self-help and self-direction were crucial to the struggle.” Du Bois pushed for the black population to support the NAACP, but, more importantly, to control it to insure that black objectives and ideas would prevail. Du Bois remained at the NAACP as editor of its magazine The Crisis until 1934. His call for the development of a black world or “segregation without discrimination” caused his rift with the organization and its founders. During the interim years, while he taught at Atlanta University before his return to the NAACP in 1944, Du Bois

205 Lewis, Biography of a Race, 316.
206 Ibid., 387.
continued to hope that the black, educated, elite would rise up and mold a black identity and culture that would solidify African Americans’ place in society.

Du Bois’s concept of the talented tenth was also directed towards the African continent, marking a significant shift in his theory. In this phase of Du Bois’s thought, the talented tenth was “centered around the need for African people on the continent and in the diasporas to free themselves from the various forms of colonialism by maintaining political, economic, and psychological links for their collective survival.” Du Bois believed that for Africans and their descendants in the West to be freed from European colonialism and oppression they needed to form a worldwide movement of solidarity between black people everywhere. The Pan-African Congress run by Henry Sylvester Williams was an organization of educated professionals including Du Bois whose constitution committed them to “encourage a feeling of unity and to facilitate friendly intercourse among Africans in general; to promote and protect the interests of all subjects claiming African descent, wholly or in part, in British colonies and other places.”

One must not confuse the goals of this organization with those of Marcus Garvey’s “back-to-Africa” program. The Pan-African Congress was an association of intellectuals from the United States, the West Indies and Africa that wanted to bring the darker races together to fight for freedom and equality. These men embodied the spirit and had the credentials of the talented tenth. Unfortunately, like the Niagara Movement before it, the Pan-African Congress disbanded after a planned fifth meeting in 1929 failed to take place.

Though Du Bois’s belief in the talented tenth remained, the failures of the two

208 Ibid., 395.
movements contributed to a more pessimistic tone in his later years. From the 1950s onward, Du Bois began to accuse the black elite of working with the white power structure to help prevent the social, political, and economic mobility of the black masses both in America and in Africa. Du Bois warned:

> We must admit that the majority of the American Negro intelligentsia, together with much of the West Indian and West African leadership, shows symptoms of following in the footsteps of Western acquisitive society, with its exploitation of labor, monopoly of land and its resources, and with private profit for the smart and unscrupulous in a world of poverty, disease, and ignorance, as the natural end of human culture.\(^{210}\)

What Du Bois was witnessing was the emergence of class lines among African Americans. The elite, educated class had come to view itself as distinct from the black masses. Du Bois foresaw a worsening of class tensions if white discrimination were to decrease. Green argues of this stage of Du Bois’s career that, “He further hypothesizes that social stratification and a class structure will be a part of black life. He claims that this class structure will be manifested in the differing attitudes held toward labor, wealth, and work.”\(^{211}\) Despite this affront to the original goals of the talented tenth, Du Bois continued throughout his life to hold out hope. His eventual turn to socialism reflected his disenchantment with the growing class stratification within the black population and his dismay over white intransigence. In the end, Du Bois directed his attention solely to Africans on the continent. He began asking of them what he had hoped to see in America: “Give up the individual rights for the needs of Mother Africa; give up tribal independence for the needs of the nation.”\(^{212}\) Africa was to set an example for the oppressed peoples of the world since African Americans had failed.

The evolution of Du Bois’s concept of the talented tenth followed the trajectory of African Americans’ changing identity during the early part of the twentieth century. Du Bois’s initial idea was that this elite group of men and women would help create a sense of pride for African Americans. They were to become agents of social change. With his knowledge of past economic and political oppression, Du Bois realized that help would never come from white America. Instead, African Americans needed to create their own organizations and institutions, such as the Niagara Movement, the NAACP, and the Pan-African Congress, as sources of uplift. Du Bois argued that “The Talented Tenth of the Negro race must be made leaders of thought and missionaries of culture among their people. No others can do this work and Negro colleges must train men for it. The Negro race, like all other races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men.”\textsuperscript{213} Du Bois was convinced that culture and civilization for black men and women throughout the world would only be realized by the masses through the example of a talented leadership. Education would provide the means to freedom and equality within society, more specifically, within American public life society. While Du Bois did not think that there was one single mode of education for African Americans to follow, he did believe that education occurred in everyday life as well as the classroom and that some forms were better suited for their struggle for equality than others.

Education was essential to Du Bois because it provided the principle means for black empowerment. His concepts centered on a system of meritocracy. This model provided an important counterpoint to the “Hampton Model” of an industrial education advocated by Booker T. Washington and others of the Tuskegee Institute. The Hampton Model represented the most

prominent example of education for African Americans at the turn of the century and was designed to prepare black men and women for low wage and semi-skilled jobs. This system did not challenge the existing power structure. Instead it established an inferior set of expectations for blacks in higher education, largely contradicting the idea of Du Bois’s talented tenth.

Industrial, or vocational, education was based on the theory that African Americans should receive an education that was designed to equip them with the technical and manual competency needed to function in an urbanizing world. Yet the jobs black workers were to fill were all menial and low-paying. Its advocates saw this type of education, as Lewis states, as “a breakthrough, an affordable, academically sufficient, and economically productive solution to the South’s intractable problems.”214 Assuming that black men and women would continue to live in southern states, Washington stressed agricultural education for men and domestic sciences for women. He based his entire model on his belief in the economically indispensable role of the African American. As Harvey Wish argued about Washington’s method: “pupils learned arithmetic much better by studying everyday problems of selling hogs and crops raised in Alabama or of measuring schoolrooms. They knew the little triumphs of a small Negro rural society in producing better pigs and chickens and a more bountiful corn crop.”215 Industrial education promised African Americans economic advancement through labor that in some ways mirrored their slave past. Washington, however, believed that once blacks had achieved economic stability, whites would recognize their important contributions to the economy. Labor would grant them a voice.

As in Du Bois’s case, Booker T. Washington’s belief in education as a solution was a

214 Lewis, Biography of a Race, 123.
215 Harvey Wish, “Negro Education and the Progressive Movement,” The Journal of Negro History 49:3 (July, 106
result of his personal experiences. He was born a slave on April 5, 1856, on a plantation in Franklin County, Virginia. He attended Hampton University from 1872 to 1875 and upon graduation accepted a position as a teacher. Moving to Washington, D.C., in 1877, Washington studied briefly at Wayland Seminary. After returning to Hampton as a professor, he eventually became the head of an industrial training school for blacks sponsored by the state of Alabama in Tuskegee. 216 Using Tuskegee as a political base, Washington, by the 1890s, became the most prominent black leader in America. His ability to get along with southern leaders and white northern philanthropists was essential to his success. The most famous statement of Washington’s career came in a speech, which became known as the “Atlanta Compromise” and which established his influence over the black community. The Hampton-Tuskegee model, upon which the speech was based, was predicated on African Americans retaining their current place in American society. James Anderson contends, “it was the logical extension of an ideology that rejected black political power while recognizing that the South’s agricultural economy rested on the backs of black agricultural workers.” 217 Industrial education built on the experience of the African American past. Directly after Reconstruction, this type of education seemed to be the most viable option; however, as Du Bois would argue, the model could not keep pace with technological changes and did nothing to secure the African Americans’ right to vote or civic equality.

Interestingly enough, Du Bois did not openly engage Washington in debate over the Hampton-Tuskegee model. Their argument took place, instead, in speeches, editorials, political

maneuverings, and publications. In 1903 Du Bois published The Souls of Black Folk, which closed off any possibility of his working with Washington. One of the most important essays in this book, “Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others,” detailed Du Bois’s arguments against Washington’s educational beliefs. Du Bois noted that “this is an age of unusual economic development, and Mr. Washington’s programme naturally takes an economic cast, becoming a gospel of Work and Money to such an extent as apparently almost completely to overshadow the higher aims of life.” Many opponents of industrial education, including Du Bois, took issue with the model due to its apparent disregard for the potential within the black community. Advocates of industrial education assumed that black people in America were destined for subordinate roles in society for the foreseeable future. Du Bois’s argument hinged on his belief that the black population was already capable of much more than just menial labor.

Du Bois also disagreed with the way Washington’s model seemed to place the blame for blacks’ disabilities on blacks alone and with Washington’s outwardly subservient alliance with white leaders in both the North and South. This connection led some black leaders - not just Du Bois - to resent him and be suspicious of his motives. Many saw his actions as an attempt to appease the white philanthropists who supported Tuskegee. Though Du Bois was definitely an advocate of uplift within the black community, as seen in The Souls of Black Folk, Black Reconstruction in America, and in his “talented tenth” theory, he too realized that civic equality and voting rights could only be assured with the cooperation of the nation as a whole. According to Du Bois:

While it is a great truth to say that the Negro must strive and strive mightily to help himself, it is equally true that unless his striving be not simply seconded, but

rather aroused and encouraged, by the initiative of the richer and wiser environing group, he cannot hope for great success.\textsuperscript{219}

Du Bois wanted change to occur throughout American society. He realized that higher education provided the African American with access to more than just economic advancement. Industrial education would result in the “disfranchisement of the Negro” and the creation of a permanent black inferior caste. Du Bois ended the chapter with a call for the black men of America to oppose the Hampton model. Higher education would provide a foundation for black culture that did not hearken back to blacks’ essential role in slavery as menial laborers and would contribute to a new identity for African Americans.

This theme of creating a new identity for African Americans appeared throughout Du Bois’s work. Every opportunity that he had, Du Bois argued for establishing African American culture and power through the redefinition of concepts of race. Before the turn of the century being “black,” Negro, or African American, meant being a slave. Du Bois and other black and white leaders sought to change the prevailing stereotypes through different means, Du Bois’s being education. As a scholar and a scientific thinker he recognized that a “hardheaded, pragmatic, and culturally grounded educational perspective”\textsuperscript{220} would provide the foundation for black political, social, and economic power in America. Du Bois was an innovator and attempted to prove to whites and blacks alike that African Americans were intelligent men and women. They were not inferior. With the proper means, they could lift themselves out of their servitude and stand shoulder to shoulder with American society. A new identity based on intelligence would enable this transformation and challenge racial prejudice.

\textsuperscript{219} Ibid., 172.
Du Bois was both an example of and an advocate for the incorporation of blacks into the American public life. Du Bois’s own education and early intellectual work reformulated preconceived notions of race and African Americans’ place in history. By adapting to black Americans’ circumstances certain aspects of European philosophy, Du Bois tried to correct the blatant mistakes being made in scholarly work, particularly by the Dunning school. His intellectual work stands as a testimony to his argument that education could be used as an agent of change. His mastery of continental thought and creative application of it to the plight of African Americans proved that a talented tenth of black leaders could invert established stereotypes. Du Bois’s concept of the talented tenth also validated the African American claim to American public life. The talented tenth proved the potential within the rest of the black race. The talented tenth, because of its education, in turn challenged the trend towards “vocational” schooling for the black masses. Du Bois argued that black men and women were just as qualified as others for university training in the arts and sciences. Their gift of second sight would enhance their contributions to American public life.

Du Bois’s life and work embodied the struggle of all African Americans. He contested prevailing ideas about culture and middle class beliefs in order to integrate black people into both. Du Bois strived to eradicate the forces arrayed against the inclusion of African Americans through the medium of education. Du Bois argued, “We must give to our youth a training designed above all to make them men of power, of thought, of trained and cultivated taste; men who know whither civilization is tending and what it means.” Du Bois endeavored to place education at the forefront of the African American struggle for freedom and equality. His intellectual descendants, in the landmark desegregation case of Brown v. Board of Education and
the countless black men and women who fought - and still fight today - for equal educational opportunities for their children, continue to reaffirm the truths Du Bois first articulated a century ago.

Conclusion

Educating to Change the World

The social world exists spiritually, as conceived, and a new conception of it, a new perception of its scope and bearings, is, perforce, a change of that world.  

John Dewey, Jane Addams, and W.E.B. Du Bois each used education to restructure society and promote reform. John Dewey’s work has had the widest influence. He rejected the developing class of intellectual elites on the grounds that the group was becoming increasingly removed from the common interests of American society. As Cohen argues, “To John Dewey, all education was vocational; the present system of education in America was undemocratic because it provided vocational training only for the future professional classes.” Dewey freed knowledge from classrooms and academia so that ordinary Americans could benefit from its power to restructure society. Addams’s scope was slightly narrower as her vision was centered upon how education could benefit women and immigrants. She showed women by example how they could use education to widen the woman’s sphere. Educated women could enter what had previously been defined as the men’s sphere, remaining distinctly feminine but seen as equal. Du Bois worked to uplift African Americans. Du Bois used education, like Dewey and Addams before him, to redefine constructions of race and place black Americans within the fabric of American history and consciousness. Coming from positions of privilege and marginalization, Dewey, Addams and Du Bois worked to make American public life more inclusive and

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democratic. By combining the pragmatic principles of education with more radical ideas of social revolution, these twentieth-century reformers were able to question the definitions of class, gender and race and thereby boldly challenge the nation to live up to its professed ideals. Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois shared many similarities in the content and methods of their work. All three focused on the plight of those less fortunate and stressed the centrality of education to reform. With such similar agendas, it seems strange that they did not formulate their methods together. Instead, their connections arose from a shared spirit of Progressivism and their similar backgrounds. Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois all developed intellectually under the guidance of strong role models. Dewey’s intellectual role models were primarily Professors Torrey, Mead, and Hall. These men instilled in him an understanding of the power of knowledge and influenced his ideas concerning the ideal relationship between students and teachers. Historian Harold Taylor contends, “It became a familiar Deweyian view that the reason students and teachers should be mutually involved in working out their own educational plans was not only for the experience they could gain, ...but for the insight they could reach into the study of human values and social philosophy.” Through his own personal development, Dewey came to understand how important the methods of teachers were to the student’s learning process. In addition, Dewey’s experience with his teachers showed him how knowledge could become power when applied to social situations.

Addams’s role model, her father John Addams, filled a similar place. John Addams supported the education of women and taught his daughter to recognize the goodness in all humans. Curti notes, “His complete lack of racial prejudice and his firm conviction that the similarities of men far outweigh the differences, were an indelible influence in the forming of the

daughter’s view of human nature. So too was his belief in the essential equality of men and women. Addams conceived many of her social theories as a result of her father’s teachings and drew strength from his belief in her. Du Bois’s role model was much like Dewey’s. Frank Hosmer, the principal of Great Barrington high school, recognized the potential in Du Bois and pushed him towards a college education. Lewis observes, “Later he would understand just how fortuitous Hosmer’s influence upon his life had been. In 1880s America, not even the sons of millowners (and no daughters) took college education as a matter of course.” Hosmer greatly influenced the early intellectual growth of Du Bois and instilled in him an appreciation of the equalizing power of education, an appreciation that would deepen at Harvard and the University of Berlin. All three reformers recognized their debt to education, and, therefore, placed knowledge at the center of twentieth-century reform.

A second characteristic that Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois had in common was the superiority of their educations. Middle-class boys, like Dewey, did not typically aspire to a doctorate in philosophy. Du Bois and Addams were also constricted - Du Bois by race and Addams by her sex. Each reformer overcame a variety of barriers that tried to hinder their progress. Dewey faced financial difficulties and failed to receive two scholarships from The Johns Hopkins University. Du Bois overcame similar problems with help from the John F. Slater Fund for the Education of Negroes. Industrial education was practically the only option for African Americans at this time. As Harvey Wish shows, the educational theory of the era presupposed that “the Negro needed to be taught manual training skillfully because for many

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226 Lewis, Biography of a Race, 36.
227 Dewey was only able to pursue his doctorate after appealing for a loan from an aunt. He struggled to meet tuition requirements throughout his years of study, but managed to complete the degree.
years to come this would be his chief function in society; and girls must have the domestic sciences ... even the liberal Northern colleges would undoubtedly refuse to enroll all the Negroes who wished to enter.”

Despite racial prejudice, Du Bois pushed through to become the first African American to receive a doctorate from Harvard in 1895 after completing two years abroad at the University of Berlin. Addams claimed a similar achievement in her acceptance of the first Bachelor of Arts Degree ever awarded to a woman at Rockford College. In late nineteenth-century America, women’s education was generally restricted to training them for missionary work and the domestic sciences. Addams attended Rockford Seminary but enrolled in a wide range of classes. Curti observes of her college years: “She was introduced to new ranges of feminism, she felt dissatisfied with the old belief in the ascendancy of intuition in the feminine mind. Under the influence of positivism which she discovered, she concluded that women ought to study intensively at least one branch of natural science to make the faculties clear and more acute.”

Addams structured her education so that she would be equipped to live in modern America. She subverted the stereotypical education offered to women. The similar tactics and achievements of Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois linked them together through common experiences in pursuing higher education. These experiences shaped the choices made by all three reformers throughout their lives.

In addition to the similarities between the backgrounds of Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois, their methods brought them closer together as they gained national prestige and garnered the attention of the press. Not only were they prolific in writing and speech, but they put their ideas into practice. Dewey founded the Laboratory School to test his ideas on educational reform.

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Addams created Hull House to show how women could extend their housekeeping roles into the public sphere. Du Bois taught at black universities and spent most of his life in affiliation with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), an organization that fought for the equality and social freedom of African Americans. The three succeeded not just because of what they did but because of who they were. They became living examples of their ideas, garnering the trust of American society. Women, African Americans, and working class Americans looked to Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois and saw a world of possibility. These three reformers became forces in American public life through education and hard work, proving by example that the categories of race, class and gender could be contested and challenged.

The reforming interests of Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois, though distinct, brought them into contact with each other on more than one occasion. They supported each other’s efforts, lent their influence and expertise to each other’s projects, and took advantage of opportunities to address different audiences. Dewey and Addams, for example, were instrumental in the development of the NAACP. As Lewis argues, “The widely held perception that what became the NAACP was started by African Americans is understandable but only symbolically true. For that very reason, Du Bois deliberately inflated the contributions of African Americans when he chronicled the events of the 1909 National Negro Conference.”

John Dewey made an appearance at the Conference, lending credibility to the new organization. Dewey argued during the morning session that racism deprived society of “social capital,” meaning that America wasted its resources by not drawing on the skills and wisdom of African Americans. He was deeply troubled by the denial of rights to an entire group of people based on color and re-emphasized the theme of the Negro Conference, which concerned the basic humanity of blacks -

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230 Lewis, Biography of a Race, 387.
their mental and biological parity with white people.

Addams held similar concerns and appeared at the National Convention on Negro Strategy in 1910 alongside both Dewey and Du Bois. The Conference was widely publicized by the press, putting Du Bois, Addams, and Dewey at the forefront of African Americans’s fight for equality. “The Conference adopted detailed plans for a permanent organization.” Wish notes, “the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, with the headquarters in New York and, fittingly enough, they chose Du Bois as head of a special committee of publicity and research as well as editor.” After the Conference, Du Bois continued to call on Dewey and Addams for contributions to the NAACP and its magazine, The Crisis. In the spirit of reciprocity, Du Bois made subsequent visits to Hull House and the University of Chicago, addressing social problems of class division and gender prejudice. Together, Du Bois, Addams, and Dewey were part of the same continuing struggle against Jim Crow society and prejudice against women and the working class.

Addams and Hull House incorporated a multitude of people and networks composed of both whites and African Americans. She shared with Dewey and Du Bois a hope for a new moral order and the empowering dream of democracy. The similarities between the struggle for equality of women and African Americans did not go unnoticed by either Addams or Du Bois. They shared a vocabulary of “separate but equal,” and neither considered integration a viable option for the foreseeable future. As Deegan contends, however, “They believed race and gender relations could be changed because human behavior was flexible, learned, and capable of social reconstruction.” Du Bois lent his support to Addams’s work on behalf of women and

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232 Deegan, Race, Hull House, and the University of Chicago, 16.
immigrants by lecturing at Hull House on a number of occasions. Addams noted on one such speech, “[Mediterranean immigrants] listened with respect and enthusiasm to a scholarly address delivered by Professor Du Bois at Hull-House on Lincoln’s Birthday, with apparently no consciousness of that race difference which color seems to accentuate so absurdly, and upon my return from various conferences held in the interest of ‘the advancement of colored people,’ I have had many illuminating conversations with my cosmopolitan neighbors.”

Du Bois and Addams both believed that gender and racial prejudice created instability in society, which paradoxically made the female and African American worlds resources for social change. The distance between mainstream society and women and African Americans gave them special insight into the problems confronting modern America. Du Bois’s appearance at Hull House could not have been more natural, for he and Addams shared a common faith and language. American society would not progress if it did not open itself up to the insight and culture of women and African Americans.

The University of Chicago’s affiliations with Hull House introduced Dewey to the work of Addams and he too became a frequent speaker at Hull House. Addams remarked in Twenty Years at Hull House, “I recall ... an audience who listened to a series of lectures by Dr. John Dewey on ‘Social Psychology,’ as genuine intellectual groups consisting largely of people from the immediate neighborhood, who were willing to make ‘that effort from which we all shrink, the effort of thought.’” Dewey remained a close friend of Addams’s and became a trustee of Hull House. His ties to Hull House only deepened when the University of Chicago included the settlement among its extension programs. Both Dewey and Addams were concerned with the

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233 Addams, Twenty Years at Hull House, 146.
234 Ibid., 199.
split between education and life, art and work. Horowitz argues that “both hoped to use their institutions as controlled social settings that would reconstruct the experience of the immigrant or child. As a frequent visitor and speaker at Hull House, Dewey had an important effect on Miss Addams: he served to crystallize and give theoretical formulation to the settlement house experience.”235 Addams used Dewey’s ideas on education in her fight to uplift American women. With knowledge as its locus of power, Hull House opened up the middle class to include educated women and immigrants within its ranks.

Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois were able to collaborate and support each others’ interests because they all shared the spirit of Progressivism. The movement, embodied in the Progressive Party, gathered the advocates of reform -- social workers, journalists, suffragists, economists, professors, the aroused middle class of America -- in the crusade for a better society. It recognized that distinctions of race and class had no place in democracy, a belief shared by Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois. At its core, Progressivism denied that the Darwinian principle of survival of the fittest could be used as a guide for social, economic, or political relationships. “Progressives argued,” Brown notes, “that Darwinian theory actually proved human beings were so evolved that their lives were not determined by genetics but rather by culture and environment. Through collective action, humans could consciously construct a social environment that emphasized opportunity, not survival of the fittest, and balanced individual wealth and community health.”236 Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois, each in their own way, had been fighting against prevailing notions of Social Darwinism their entire lives. With education, women, African Americans, and working class white men could easily affect change.

Progressivism validated their beliefs in the potential of politics and promised the American public reform policies that were designed to create opportunities for marginal groups to gain social and political power.

Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois did not adhere to Progressivism in thought alone. They supported efforts to get a Progressive in office, either by working on campaigns or simply casting a Progressive vote. Addams appeared at the 1912 convention that nominated Theodore Roosevelt for president and supported the plank devised by Du Bois for African American suffrage and civil rights. When Roosevelt threw his weight against the plank, Du Bois endorsed the Democratic candidate, Woodrow Wilson, only to be disillusioned by the anti-black legislation passed during his Presidency. Dewey, though he did not actively engage in the campaigning process, voted Progressive in the 1912 elections. All three shared the excitement of the Progressives’ vision of an eight-hour work day, a six-day work week, no child labor, old age and unemployment insurance, and woman suffrage. Teddy Roosevelt, unfortunately, lost the ballot for President in 1912. The Progressive spirit nonetheless continued to infiltrate public policy, and many Progressive reforms were championed by various interest groups and implemented by the established political parties. By 1916, America was engaged in a war overseas and re-elected Wilson to usher the country into a new decade. Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois embarked on possibly their most influential work in the 1920s and 1930s, but found the American public increasingly discerning and skeptical.

One possible explanation for the “failure” of Progressivism, and thus of Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois, was the narrowness of their agendas and their failure to combine forces. The Progressive Party, to begin with, was spread too thin. It tried to incorporate a policy of universal
reform, and, therefore, did not adhere to one main agenda. Historian Robert Wiebe attests that “the society that so many in the nineties had thought would either disintegrate or polarize had emerged tough and plural; and by 1920 the realignments, the reorientations of the progressive era had been translated into a complex of arrangements nothing short of a revolution could destroy.”  

Yet this same “complex of arrangements” resulted in the diluting of Progressive goals and a bureaucracy that was difficult for activists to fight against. The broadness of Progressivism pointed the nation to the right paths but did not provide the means to travel them. Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois fell prey to the same problem. They each led extremely demanding lives in the public eye and wisely concentrated their energy on those they wanted to help the most. As Du Bois astutely stated: “One who is born with a cause is predestined to a certain narrowness of view, and at the same time to some clearness of vision within his limits with which the world often finds it well to reckon.” These three reformers published, spoke, and worked with a narrowness of vision that was sometimes unavoidable. Dewey’s agenda was largely geared to help those white and male. He rarely, in his writings, referred to women specifically. Though he argued that education should be available to all members of society, he was referring to America’s white male population. Women and African Americans did not yet have universal access to education, therefore, they were not included in Dewey’s argument. Dewey, himself being white and male, had much more freedom than Addams and Du Bois when it came to the radicalism of his ideas. He could have tried to incorporate gender or ethnicity into his argument, furthering Addams’s and Du Bois’s agendas. For one reason or another, he chose not to and his philosophies contain certain blind spots when it comes to questions of race and

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Du Bois’s rhetoric was much like Dewey’s on the subject of gender. Instead of consistently fighting for the equality of all African Americans, Du Bois often limited his argument to black men. Hazel Carby notes: “although Du Bois declares that he intends to limit his striving ‘in so far as that strife in incompatible with others of my brothers and sisters making their lives similar,’ beneath the surface of this apparent sacrifice of individual desire to become an intellectual and a race leader is a conceptual framework that is gender-specific; not only does it apply exclusively to men, but it encompasses only those men who enact narrowly and rigidly determined codes of masculinity.”

Du Bois’s project suffered from his complete failure to imagine black women as intellectuals and race leaders. Part of this limitation could be attributed to the sexism of Du Bois’s moment in history. Du Bois’s argument for the equality of African Americans was radical enough without the inclusion of women. His social system remained patriarchal. This sexism became a characteristic of the African American male intellectuals who followed Du Bois’s example, a characteristic that women like Addams and her black counterpart Ida B. Wells struggled to overcome.

Jane Addams and Ida B. Wells both worked to liberate women and reform society, but while Addams’s discourse was distinctly white, Wells’s was African American. For these women, the challenge was not in producing an alternative to patriarchal society, but in getting their ideas heard somewhere other than the domestic sphere. Where Dewey and Du Bois could test their ideas in theories and intellectual debates, Addams and Wells were more restricted. They had to abide by the very social structures they were trying to change. One difference between the two was that while Addams could get the attention of Du Bois and other black civil
rights leaders, Wells could not. Wells was slighted by Du Bois and the NAACP because she was a woman, and was initially omitted from the Committee of Forty, the group that would found the NAACP. In her fury, Wells broadcast the charge that Du Bois was responsible for her omission because of his resentment of her frank independence.\textsuperscript{240} Wells’s experience with gender discrimination in black society was quite different than that of Addams. Addams was accepted among men to some extent because she was white. Perhaps this is why Addams never questioned the notion that gender differences were innate, which clearly limited her agenda. Phillips argues, “She never challenged the basic assumptions of the ideology, nor the doctrines of separate woman’s sphere and a distinct female nature. If anything she strengthened the ideas by giving them scientific validity.”\textsuperscript{241} Even as Addams felt pressure from her critics, she was listened to because of her race. What Wells wrote of white NAACP leader, Mary White Ovington, was undoubtedly true of Addams, too: she “has made little effort to know the soul of the black woman; and to that extent she has fallen far short of helping a race which has suffered as no white woman has ever been called upon to suffer or understand.”\textsuperscript{242} Though Addams and Wells both fought for gender equality, the divisions of race kept their efforts apart.

While the narrowness of Dewey, Addams, Du Bois and the Progressive Party’s vision contributed to their failure to see their dreams realized in the early decades of the twentieth century, historical events also barred their progress. As the century opened, though, it appeared that Progressivism had won. Small town American ethics were being adapted to the new, bureaucratic-minded society. Reform programs effected a variety of policy changes, including

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\item \textsuperscript{239} Hazel V. Carby, \textit{Race Men} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 10.
\item \textsuperscript{240} Lewis, \textit{Biography of a Race}, 396.
\item \textsuperscript{241} Phillips, “The Education of Jane Addams,” 64-65.
\item \textsuperscript{242} Ida B. Wells, \textit{The Crusade for Justice; The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells} (Chicago: The University of Chicago
\end{itemize}
regulation of child labor, factory inspections, and slum clearance. African Americans gained
access to universities, fought against menial positions in labor, and asserted their equality.
Women began to exercise their right to vote, and new ideas in education were being implemented
in schools across the country. Looking forward, Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois believed that
America would continue moving towards their vision of the Great Society. They could not have
foreseen how the legacy of World War I and the Great Depression, followed by another world
war and the Cold War, would erode America’s confidence. They believed their work would
carry America forward through difficult times. Instead, a period of disillusionment set in and
Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois failed to live to see their dreams realized as a variety of events
influenced public opinion against anything seen as potentially radical.

World War I placed Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois in opposition to much of American
society. Addams vehemently opposed the war, while Du Bois and Dewey were inclined to
support America’s defense of democracy. Dewey’s thinking about the war did not change until
its end when Wilson’s war aims were defeated at Versailles, which exposed the war as just
another imperialist one. Dewey admitted that “the consistent pacifist has much to urge now in
his own justification; he is entitled to his flourish of private triumphings.”

Du Bois experienced similar misgivings at the war’s conclusion. Du Bois had welcomed Wilson’s
decision to go to war because he believed that a radically transformed world order would result
after America’s victory. He foresaw in the apparent decline of European civilization a return to
an Afrocentric world: “Old standards of beauty beckon us again, not the blue-eyed, white-
skinned types which are set before us in school and literature but rich, brown and black men and


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women with glowing dark eyes and crinkling hair. The sooner the rotten edifice of racism and class exploitation crumbled, the sooner the world would be bathed in a golden hue that harks back to the heritage of Africa and the tropics.”  

The racism inherent in America’s armies and the imperialistic treaties ending the war eroded Du Bois’s initial optimism. He was stunned and deeply saddened by the upsurge of racial hostility both at home and abroad. Du Bois lamented: “With the Armistice came disillusion. I saw the mud and dirt of the trenches; I heard from the mouths of soldiers the kind of treatment that black men got in the American army; I was convinced and said that American white officers fought more valiantly against Negroes within our ranks than they did against the Germans.”  

By 1920, both Dewey and Du Bois came to agree with Addams, who had opposed the war from the beginning and had born the derision of the American public.

The disillusionment of Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois mirrored that of the American people. World War I was a scene of massive carnage. Millions of men died on the battlefield for an ideal new world order. Yet little changed. An entire generation was wiped out with little progress towards human equality. As a result, Americans became suspicious of anything deemed “radical.” Historian Robert Wiebe argues of the era, “Antiradicalism not only defined the nature of Americanization and justified the restriction of immigration, but it also demanded orthodoxy in all public education ... a large majority of vocal citizens obviously believed that the nation did face ‘a clear and present danger’ from abroad in a sweeping, furtive sense.”

Those who believed their authority was in danger attacked even the most respected so-called radicals. Each

246 For more information regarding Addams’s stance, refer back to chapter 3.
of these radical groups could, with some justice, be identified with critics of the war, for it was believed that only bad men opposed a good war. Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois each came under public attack at some point or another due to their wartime beliefs. The arguments made by Addams and Du Bois on behalf of immigrants, African Americans, and the poor were stifled. Dewey’s reforms of public education became affiliated in many minds with the training of revolutionary thinkers. America sunk into a depression and some came to believe that humanity could not progress and was destined to repeat the same mistakes. America entered a period of doubt when reform was viewed as subversive, the masses were feared, the labor movement was crushed, and racism increased.

The most powerful factor in the disillusionment of the 1920s was the generalized sense of national crisis. Turning away from the Progressive spirit of reform, Americans looked for guidance to those with simple, persuasive answers and the means to implement them. Wartime policies silencing “subversives” and promoting unquestioning patriotism survived in the post-war era and helped stifle dissent. Progressive-era radicals became visible, available enemies as conservatives linked foreign dangers to radical domestic policies. Social control increased, inspiring drives to restrict immigration and to Americanize newcomers. Wiebe contends: “The commitment to close America’s gate as far as possible materialized during and just after the war. In the same fashion, plans to homogenize those who were already here also concentrated upon the most obviously ‘alien.’” Those who came to America during the 1920s, faced open attacks on their languages and unfamiliar customs. American nervousness reached its peak with the Red Scare of 1919 and 1920, which witnessed wholesale arrests in immigrant quarters and concerted

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248 Ibid., 288.
strikebreaking against unskilled union members. Confidence in human progress was replaced with paranoia, a feeling that found its keenest expression in the foreign and domestic policies of the Cold War, when dissent of any kind was ruthlessly stamped out as Americans focused more on the differences between people rather than the similarities. The Progressive spirit seemed to disappear completely and many believed they were witnessing the end of the democratic American experiment.

One lesson that John Dewey, Jane Addams, and W.E.B. Du Bois taught Americans remained with them in these years marked by doubt and confusion. In principle, Americans carried with them the understanding that history was not the story of continual human progress. Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois each believed that humans progressed according to experience and to have social progress, people would need to continually strive for it. Society needed to make mistakes so that it could grow. Dewey argued, “Man’s duty is never to obey certain rules; his duty is always to respond to the nature of the actual demands which he finds made upon him, -- demands which do not proceed from abstract rules, nor from ideals, however awe-inspiring and exalted, but from the concrete relations to men and things in which he finds himself.”

All three reformers ascribed a singular value to learning from experience and to humanity’s ability to adapt to different situations. Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois were still trying to implement their egalitarian visions when World War I broke out and put their plans on hold. The intellectuals, politicians, and bureaucrats who had the most public power and influence in the post-war era led American society down a path different than the Progressives had originally intended.

The efforts of Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois did not go unrewarded, however, for Americans in the 1960s and 1970s rediscovered the progressive spirit. A new generation,
inspired by the examples of Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois, set out to achieve social equality and fulfilled the dreams of these three reformers into present day America. Today, it has become fashionable to criticize American education. To the end of his life, Dewey defended his belief in the school as the most effective means for social progress and for developing the virtues required for a creative, democratic society. He shifted the focus to the child and eschewed rote memorization, non-interactive learning, and a “one size fits all” approach to pedagogy. Dewey’s words of 1936 are just as compelling today: “The child is the starting-point, the center, and the end. His development, his growth, is the ideal. It alone furnished the standard. To the growth of the child all studies are subservient; they are instruments valued as they serve the needs of growth ... Literally, we must take our stand with the child and our departure from him.”

Much has changed in the educational system as a result of Dewey’s work. Currently, Dewey’s texts are mandatory reading for anyone pursuing an advanced degree in education. Special programs are designed for children who have difficulty learning or need extra attention. Dewey believed that “as a society becomes more enlightened, it realizes that it is responsible not to transmit and conserve the whole of its existing achievements, but only such as make for a better future society. The school is its chief agency for the accomplishment of this end.”

We can clearly see that Dewey did not advocate a static mode of teaching nor a curriculum that accepts the status quo. It is precisely because the school could become the most effective medium for social reform, for making a more intelligent and humane society, that Dewey placed such importance on education.

No one has influenced education as much as Dewey. Teachers are now viewed as heroes and knowledge is advertised as power. Education has become public property and part of public

250 Quoted in Bernstein, John Dewey, 39.
culture. For the past fifteen years, the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) has run a public service campaign entitled “The More You Know.” This campaign is the longest running, most comprehensive and powerful public service campaign in media history. The stations’ advertisements address adults and children alike, emphasizing the importance of education. These announcements encourage parental involvement and raise awareness about important social issues. They embody Dewey’s pragmatic nature as they promote the education of children and inform the public about possibilities of social reform. Thus, even in popular culture, we see progress towards Dewey’s ideal. Americans are becoming more informed and are engaging in open public debates through a variety of different media. “Life-long learning” programs exist in every urban center. Even with the current emphasis on content tests as the indicators of educational achievement, Dewey’s methods to philosophy have permanently changed the way children are educated.

Addams was also rediscovered in the latter half of the twentieth century. Her pacifist stance was lauded as wars in Vietnam and Korea caused Americans to question the nation’s military commitments and resulted in the renewal of peace efforts. In ways that Addams never completely realized, twentieth-century gender roles and definitions remained fundamental to the alternative to war that she posed. There are still groups that draw upon Addams’s convictions that women’s natural work and instinct are towards nurturing human life and relationships. Addams’s vision of an alternative to war hinged on the substitution of “feminine morality” for “male aggressiveness.” She argued that “the thing that is incumbent on this generation is to discover a moral substitute for war, something that will appeal to the courage, the capacity of

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252 For more information see www.nbc.com.
men, something which will develop their finest powers without deteriorating their moral nature, as war constantly does.” Addams’s choice of words foreshadowed the connections drawn between the woman’s movement and peace advocates of the 1970s. Addams proved right, to date, in one crucial respect: women are still more interested in peace than men. It is, therefore, of no coincidence that women gained freedom and rights during times when America was engaged in wars overseas.

Beginning in the 1960s, women openly challenged the patriarchal structure of society. Whether in women’s clubs, universities, social work, labor organizations, or public businesses, women have become visible and powerful to an unprecedented extent. In Addams’s view, women performed important, challenging work; she urged everyone to acknowledge women’s importance to the public sphere and to realize that women’s work should not be limited to the home. No where is this change more evident than in the position of First Lady. Prior to the 1930s, the role of First Lady had been defined by the dual roles of wife and hostess. Eleanor Roosevelt, however, refused to be confined to the White House and changed forever the expectations of what a First Lady could be. As Susan Ware argues: “Eleanor Roosevelt was an inspiration for the nation’s women. She constructed a public persona that combined traditional female virtues like concern with the home and family with nontraditional behavior like visiting coal mines, writing a newspaper column, and serving in the United Nations.” Eleanor was a true product of the Progressive Era, acting as a spokesperson for women’s new roles in politics and protesting against Jim Crow. She publically proved Addams’s argument to be true: women could lead interesting and stimulating lives and fulfill conventional roles as mothers and wives.

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253 Quoted in Schott, “Jane Addams and William James on Alternatives to War,” 246-247.
254 Susan Ware, Letter to the World: Seven Women Who Shaped the American Century (Cambridge: Harvard
Since her stay in the White House, the role of First Lady has continued to evolve into a position of enormous power. Hilary Clinton set the current standard for the First Lady as she developed her own policy initiatives, pushing for the expansion of health insurance and raising public awareness of health issues. After surviving scandal and scrutiny, Hilary Clinton became the first First Lady elected to the United States Senate and the first woman elected statewide in New York. It is because of Jane Addams that women can go so far and dream so big. Her efforts on behalf of women’s rights changed forever society’s expectations of women today.

On August 28, 1963, Roy Wilkins, the executive secretary of the NAACP broke the news of W.E.B. Du Bois’s death to more than 250,000 men and women assembled at the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. From late morning into mid-afternoon, these crusaders for African American equality had gathered for the March on Washington to act as “the advance guard of a massive moral revolution for jobs and freedom.”\textsuperscript{255} The marchers witnessed a parade of a “who’s who” of America’s civil rights, religious, and labor leadership, none of whom would have been there had it not been for the work of Du Bois. In a real sense, Du Bois was seen as one of the founders of the black freedom movement. His life and work embodied the struggle of all African Americans and he endeavored to place education at the forefront of the black struggle for freedom and equality. He foresaw the coming power of education and stated: “The university must become not simply a center of knowledge but a center of applied knowledge and guide of action. And this is all the more necessary now since we easily see that planned action especially in economic life, is going to be the watchword of civilization.” In order for blacks to get their voices heard, they needed to be educated. Du Bois’s fight for the higher education of African

\textsuperscript{255} Quoted in Lewis, \textit{Biography of a Race}, 1.
Americans inspired the leaders of the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

The leaders of the March on Washington -- Asa Phillip Randolph, Whitney Young Jr., and Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr.-- were educated men, confident and intelligent. They dedicated their lives to continue the fight begun by Du Bois. The 1954 decision of the Supreme Court in Brown v. Board of Education had already challenged the policy of “separate but equal.” In 1964, the United States government passed the Civil Rights Act. This bill outlawed discrimination in voter registration and public accommodations and prohibited private employers from refusing to hire or from firing employees on the basis of race. When the bill was introduced, there was a lengthy debate of its contents; however, the public was in favor of change, and legislators responded. Legislation concerning affirmative action soon followed, increasing the number of African Americans in the work force and in universities. The struggle for equality begun by Du Bois continues today as the tide has turned against affirmative action in states like California and in the Supreme Court decision ruling race-based scholarships and affirmative action unconstitutional. Race remains a controversial issue, and Du Bois’s call for call for equality and freedom remains as timely as ever.

This thesis was written in a historical moment that enabled me to analyze John Dewey, Jane Addams, and W.E.B. Du Bois as a group. Their lives and works intersected in so many ways that I confidently place them together as reformers who believed in the power of education to uplift marginal members of American society. Most likely, Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois would not agree with my categorization. Yet, they all held radical beliefs about progress, social structures, education, freedom, and equality. They confronted prevailing notions about the determining characteristics of class, gender and race to reveal that all humans share a common
experience in the past, present, and future. Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois saw the world differently and worked to change it. Because of their efforts, knowledge has become a genuine social property, available to most Americans. My philosophy of education, which is immeasurably indebted to Dewey on principles, is also profoundly shaped by Du Bois’s racial egalitarianism and Addams’s faith in women. Today, an African American can run for president, a woman can head a Fortune 500 company, and an educator can change the world.

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