2005

Education for Democracy: Discovering Civic Engagement

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Recommended Citation

Available at: http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/mcnair/vol9/iss1/14

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Education for Democracy: Discovering Civic Engagement

Abstract
Exploring the concepts of an experiential education promotes transformative connections between the academic classroom and other domains of student life. Therefore, this research aims to discover the capacity that education has to change the world. It explores Jane Addams’ work, her efforts to encourage democracy, and her educational philosophy that emphasizes learning from life experiences. Additionally, her philosophy of social ethics is intertwined with the writings of John Dewey, Charlene Haddock Siegfried, Ira Shor, and various other theorists. My analysis uses feminist and critical theory to formulate a learning foundation that fosters civic engagement for students and educators.

Introduction
In recent years, the educational landscape has changed dramatically, especially in post-secondary education. Since more high school students have gained access to college, more women, individuals of color, people from diverse cultural origins, and economically disadvantaged students comprise post-secondary education’s frontier. As the terrain of American colleges continues to become more diverse, it is necessary to address how post-secondary educators can reform their pedagogical methods within the classroom to effectively reach all of these students.

The current world of academia gradually erodes students’ essential need for participatory learning over time by focusing on knowledge transfer instead of transformation. Because of this lack of experiential learning, educators need to focus on how to create a classroom that proposes active participation, sharing of common experiences, and a commitment to social change. This idea came about when I started doing research on feminist and liberatory pedagogies and reflecting on my own education. During my exploration, I found that the road has been paved for creating a classroom environment that stimulates and incorporates life experiences. Over the years these progressive methods and theories have faded from educators’ eyes. I want to bring back the voices of educators who have become invisible, therefore, I am focusing on the methods of Jane Addams, who until recently has not been acknowledged for her efforts to incorporate various educational methods to achieve a rich and diversified educational process.

Jane Addams is best known for founding Hull House in 1889, a social settlement in Chicago. Addams began her journey with concerns for immigrant neighbors and over time began reflecting on their shared
experiences. She is most often noted as a women who “captured the dreams, ideals, imagination, and sometimes hatred of many people in the United States” as a social reformer, organizer, and peacemaker.1 During her time at Hull House, Addams developed a theory of social democracy that became influential in the world-wide peace movement, for which she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931.

Addams’ views on education stem from her understanding of democracy. She argued that democracy rests on our mutual understanding and willingness to listen to others, appreciating others’ perspectives in light of their ways of living, and working cooperatively with those individuals we may disagree with. The central view of democracy that Addams developed at Hull House “was a vision of society in which all individuals, regardless of gender, ethnicity, race, or economic status, would have the opportunity to fully express and to develop their talents, interests, and ambitions.”2 By incorporating Addams’ thoughts on education, her social philosophy, and her deep conviction in the importance of experiential learning with educational goals today, a new ground for classroom discourse and the exploration of knowledge can be created. I propose that through the integration of Addams’ methods, a community of learners will be produced that stimulates democracy and civic engagement.

Methodology

Jane Addams’ educational methods focused on learning from life, thus, I do not believe researching her theories through one method would allow for her efforts to be applicable to all areas of education. I have decided to use an interdisciplinary approach for this research project. By using this approach, I am able to transcend structural boundaries between disciplines and achieve a more complete method of inquiry. For my research, I am combining feminist and critical theory approaches of inquiry.

At the heart of much feminist research is the aspiration, even the responsibility, of taking action and bringing about change for the condition of women. Feminist research is not simply a stance against male chauvinism or a movement for women’s equal rights, but the lasting commitment to alleviate the ideology of domination that permeates Western culture on various levels. As John Dewey stated, “When women who are not mere students of other persons’ philosophy set out to write it, we cannot conceive that it will be the same in view point or tenor as that composed from the standpoint of the different masculine experience of things.”3 Feminism offers new ways of viewing human values, decision-making, and the very nature of human experience. Feminist methods allow one to see the indispensable component of human diversity. At the most nominal level, feminist research simply attempts to integrate the female perspective into social reality. Because of the feminist insistence that the particulars of women’s lives are significant in the public sphere, feminist research encourages the incorporation of individual experiences, which are used to help authenticate and validate the scholarship.4

Critical theory as a research methodology adopts an overtly critical stance to inquiry. Critical theory researchers attempt to understand the ideologically distorted situation of some individual or group, to discover the forces that have caused that situation, and to show that these forces can be overcome through awareness. Thus, critical theory research is based on the conviction that societal conditions are historically created and deeply influenced by the imbalance of power and special interests. Because of this, critical theory insists upon an awareness of the political nature of a social phenomenon.

For my research, I use both feminist and critical theory methods to illustrate Addams’ social philosophy and how her methods can be used to create an educational environment that is transforming, thus formulating a foundation for an interactive, engaged pedagogy that opens up the door to empowerment. Within critical theory, I analyze the various perplexities that Addams worked through during her time at Hull House. Some of the issues I will be addressing are dialogue, diversity, cooperative learning, and empowerment. In addition, through the use of feminist and critical theory, I will explore how Addams applied her methods to the conditions she encountered. By reviewing Addams’ application of her educational methods in which all individuals, regardless of gender, ethnicity, race, or economic status, would have the opportunity to fully express and to develop their talents, interests, and ambitions.1

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By combining feminist and critical theory methods, I am able to holistically address Addams’ thoughts on education. For instance, Addams’ efforts represent feminist methods by presenting new ways to view human

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values and the very nature of human experiences. In addition, she advocates that we must recognize and cultivate the essential component of human diversity. Addams’ philosophy integrates various critical theory or liberating methods by calling for individuals to recognize the situation of some individual or group, discover the forces or situations that have caused the individual’s predicament, and to overcome those forces through awareness.

Searching for the Right Social Philosophy

Jane Addams worked the majority of her life refining the methods she used to create and uphold democratic relations at Hull House. When Addams set out on her mission at Hull House, she defined a settlement as “an attempt to express the meaning of life in terms of life itself, in forms of activity.” Addams’ definition of a settlement anticipated a ground for exploring life that promoted growth and constant interaction among the members of the community. For Addams, democracy was the foundation she used to explore and define the very meaning of the settlement. Her comprehension of democracy “is not merely a way to structure government; it is more broadly a way of living together that enables individual abilities and social life to flourish.” As we can see, Addams’ conception of democracy and her definition of a settlement parallel each other in many ways. She states, “The social and educational activities of a settlement are but differing manifestations of the attempt to socialize democracy, as is the existence of the settlement itself.” Through continuous interaction and experience in diverse and new situations, social intercourse between classes and races becomes a way of life. More progress and transformation arises, as each member becomes part of the community.

Addams conceived society or community as a social organism, with all parts necessary for the whole and dependent on the whole. In order to create a social organism that incorporates everyone’s ideals, Addams focused many of her efforts on democratic ways of life. In her book, Democracy and Social Ethics, she stated that she thought of democracy, “not merely as a sentiment which desires the well-being of all men, nor yet as a creed which believes in the essential dignity and equality of all men, but as that which affords the rule of living as well as a test of faith.” Before the introduction of Hull House to the city of Chicago, individuals from different ways of life had minimal interaction. In the Social Darwinist thought of Addams’ era, people often saw themselves pitted against others in competitive modes, both individually and in terms of class, therefore, democratic thought allowed for a broadened and humanizing perspective of the community. Addams once stated, “A democracy modifies our conception of life, it constantly raises the value and function of each member of the community, however, humble he may be.”

The main objective of the settlement was to bring into the circle of knowledge individuals who may have been left out or who felt that they had no significant function within the community. Thus, it is not surprising that “her view of democracy was built on the insistent conviction that all people could be led to see that they had a self-interest—a self-interest that was also a common social interest—in the protection and fulfillment of the interests of others.” Addams worked to ignite the common interests of the community members by offering kindergarten classes, reading clubs, drama clubs, alternative classroom settings, and various other educational and engaging activities. The clubs and groups that Addams helped foster at Hull House may have had different objectives, however, all of them were formulated to civically engage and reveal the common interests of individuals within the community.

The activities at Hull House encouraged Addams to continually reflect and refine her social philosophy. Addams aspired to create a social philosophy centered on a diverse community that fostered a sense of citizenship essential for a continual reciprocity of thinking and action. Within this constant reciprocity, individuals were urged on towards a social and individual life of democracy as a social ethic.

Jane Addams and American Pragmatism

The guiding vigor in Addams’ social philosophy is pragmatism. Charlene Haddock Seigfried in her book Pragmatist Feminism defines, pragmatism, as a philosophy that stresses the relation of theory to praxis, takes the continuity of experience and nature as revealed through the outcome of directed action as the starting point of reflection. Experience is the ongoing transaction of organism and

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6 Marilyn Fischer, Wadsworth Philosophers Series on Addams. (Toronto, Canada: Thomas Learning, 2004), 14.
8 Jane Addams, Democracy and Social Ethics, (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 7.
9 Addams, A Centennial Reader, 145.
10 Lagemann, 4.
environment; in other words, both subject and object are constituted in the process.11

However, it is imperative to note that Addams was often forgotten as a pragmatist philosopher, even though John Dewey credited her influence, because she was a woman and not in academia. The inherent principle of pragmatism, which Addams demonstrates in her work at Hull House, is a strong conviction for anti-absolutism. In Addams’ social philosophy, she viewed truth as a never-ending, back-and-forth process between thought and action.

Beginnings of Pragmatism
American pragmatism became very popular during the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, better known as the Progressive Era. The innovative idea of pragmatism originated at Harvard University with Charles Pierce and William James. However, soon after philosophers at the University of Chicago quickly generated an approach called the Chicago School of Pragmatism. “This new school was first noted by James in his correspondence with John Dewey in 1904 when referring to the recently published Studies Logical Theory.”12 In addition, during this time the first generation of women were attending college and entering discussions on the problems with industrialization and urbanization. On the other hand, even though women were finally achieving access to education, the feminist perspective was restricted in the field of philosophy.

William James
Seigfried points out in her book that James and Dewey took measures that promoted individual women and causes of equality. For example, “Lucy Sprague (Mitchell), Gertrude Stein, and Mary Whiton Calkins all studied with James.”13 Even though these women studied and interacted at the university level with James, he still practiced the theory of “separate spheres.” Since James maintained this notion, he contradicted his own philosophical pleas for pluralism, tolerance, and openness to change. Thus, James’ philosophy should be very accepting of the feminist perspective, but in his practice he systematically affirms difference between men and women. Even though James assigns differences to women, he recognizes that multiple viewpoints are needed in order to correct dominant views. For example, “while he mistakenly assigns sympathy as something natural in women, he does take the bold step of suggesting it is an important moral attribute that all should develop.”14

John Dewey
Dewey is most often recognized as the most influential pragmatist philosopher in education. He did not hold the direct anti-feminist sentiments that James did in his work. For Dewey, “we are all conscious beings whose capacities for interactional awareness are coextensive with our ways of being alive.”15 In his work, he focused on the importance of reflecting on our experiences in order to be open minded and conscious of different views. Similar to Addams, Dewey’s major thoughts about the

structure of society were based on democracy and education. In Dewey’s work, he advocated that “in order to understand both that and how all of [our] experiences, including those we call intellectual, are grounded in transactional [relations]—is for philosophy to achieve the significance of a method.”16 Thus, philosophy needed a method that rejected dualistic thinking and recognized that ignoring perspectives was oppressive.

Even though Dewey’s philosophy and work did not have anti-feminist notions, “it can be argued that [he] did not go far enough to imagine how the philosophical engagement of women might look and how it would transform philosophy.”17 Furthermore, it can be said that he often did not sufficiently acknowledge the influence of certain women in his work. As a male philosopher, it appears that he did not feel that academia would discredit him for not acknowledging certain ideas by women. For instance, when he credited women, like Addams, those credits have faded away and diminished the voice of women in the pragmatist movement almost entirely.

Dewey and Addams
As noted previously, Addams is often forgotten as a pragmatist philosopher, even though John Dewey credited her influence. Some may ask, why is this important? Recovering the heritage of women in philosophy is necessary because “as long as thinkers and issues sanctioned by the canon dominated philosophy, women were discouraged from seeing themselves in the role of academic philosophers and had little

14 Ibid., 7.
15 Elizabeth Kamarck Minnich, “Experiential Education: Democratizing Educational Philosophies,” Liberal Learning, Association of American Colleges and Universities, (Summer 1999), 12.
16 Ibid., 10.
17 McKenna, 7.
incentive to look to philosophy for guidance in their lives as women.”

As previously stated, Dewey first discussed the Chicago School of Pragmatism idea formally with James in 1904, but by this time Hull House had been open for five years and Addams had already published her book *Democracy and Social Ethics* (1902). Since Addams was a woman, there is often a misconception about who developed central ideas first. When in fact, “Dewey credits Addams with developing the thesis that democracy is a way of life, a position that is central to his own theorizing.”

Overall, pragmatism uses the essential component of democracy to create a social philosophy focused on the importance of human connections and the understanding of differences.

**Jane Addams Pragmatism**

The three main ideas of pragmatism that Addams developed through her work at Hull House were the importance of experience, emphasis on continual growth, and the essential need for diversity. Addams emphasized the importance of experience because she believed that all truth, all-knowing, comes from interaction with others in the community, thus, pragmatist experimentation is transactive, changing both the investigator (teacher) and the object of investigation (student). Secondly, continual growth and the ability that humans have to adapt themselves and their societies stems from our reflections of our experiences. For instance, in Addams' analogy of society as an organism, all the parts of an organism are necessary for the whole and dependent on the whole. Therefore, when we interact responsively with one another, we must adjust in order for our organism to continue functioning. As a result, when we experience something we act upon it, we do something with it, and then we undergo change. Diversity is needed in order for the inclusion of multiple voices and points of view. In pragmatism one never knows truth unless one hears all sides, for Addams, hearing multiple voices and the under-represented people is a necessity for knowing truth and for taking the right action.

**Looking Back and Thinking Forward**

Jane Addams opened Hull House “on the theory that the dependence of classes on each other is reciprocal; and that as the social relation is essentially a reciprocal relation, it gave form of expression that has peculiar value.” The settlement was designed as an alternative method of education, which promoted clubs for the awareness of social and cultural problems. She realized that class and ethnic lines divided American society, which presented unequal opportunities for individuals to cultivate their educational abilities. In addition, these dualistic divisions within society discouraged individuals from crossing and engaging in relationships outside of their class or race. The second motivation for the settlement that Addams discusses in her essay, “The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements,” is “the impulse to share the [human] race of life, and to bring as much as possible of social energy and the accumulation of civilization to those portions of the race which have little.”

The very idea of Hull House makes Addams different from William James and John Dewey because she opened up boundaries by presenting an alternative view of education based entirely on understanding others' experiences and cultivating those relationships in a communal setting.

Hull House opened at a time when the first generations of American women were graduating from college, thus, it provided a forum for these women to use and combine their knowledge. Florence Kelley, an influential Progressive reformer, understood that “personal changes were never enough. [Women's] significance lay in the ways they led to changes in group life, particularly changes in the highest expression of group life—the state.” Furthermore, participation in public life was necessary for social reform; thus, women began organizing and working together locally and nationally to stimulate social change. Therefore, from the beginning, “pragmatism appealed to women thinkers and activists who found in it a movement within which they could work for a new intellectual and social order.”

**Was Addams a Feminist?**

The term feminism was not coined until later in the Progressive Era and was not widely used until 1913. Addams did not call herself a feminist most likely because the term was not used during the majority of her work. By the time feminism became an appropriate term for women working for equal rights, the suffragist movement had been divided into two different realms. However, when looking back we can evaluate how

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19 Ibid., 628.
21 Ibid., 15.
Addams' social philosophy includes the feminist perspective and how that perspective influenced the methods she used at Hull House. Nancy Cott describes that the modern feminist agenda "enable[s] female individuals with several loyalties to say we and to achieve sexual equality while making room for sexual difference between women and men." Therefore, when reviewing the definition of feminism in relation to the social philosophy that Addams promoted at Hull House and in her life, we must take into consideration how her influence as a woman affected her pedagogical/pragmatist methods.

**Libratory and Feminist Pedagogies**

When thinking forward we can trace Addams’ methods to show unique parallels to liberatory and feminist pedagogy. The objective of liberatory or critical pedagogy is to provide a scope through which educators are more capable of examining and interacting with the politics of education. In this instance, politics does not define any political party, but refers to “how we make meaning of commonplace events [or] the purpose and goals of public education.” Like Addams’ philosophies, the primary goal of liberatory pedagogy is to challenge educators, students, and administrators to recognize, engage, and critically examine undemocratic practices and institutions that maintain inequality and oppressive identities. This goal promotes the development of educational practices that encourage teachers and students to critically examine and identify relationships of power, ideology, and culture thus, creating an environment focused on active emancipation through awareness. In this sense, “[culture] is shaped by the lived experiences and institutional forms organized around diverse elements of struggle and domination.” Through this process, the student’s experiences within the sphere of popular culture (such as television, music, news, and movies) aid the process of understanding and reflecting on classroom material. Hence, in order to examine the diverse histories and perceptions of race, class, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality, it is inherent that both the students’ and teachers’ voices be heard. By engaging both the students’ and teacher’s voices in classroom discussions, educators are able to unchain themselves from the traditional relationship restraints with students. As the traditional relational chains are broken between students and educators, the classroom environment provides a ground for the crossing and engaging of multiple interconnected relationships. However, “the mere removal of constraints or a mere relaxation of controls will not ensure the emergence of free and creative human beings.” Instead, liberatory pedagogy encourages the plurality of American voices to be heard in the classroom and for new relationships to be forged from engaging dialogue.

The pedagogy of feminist teachers is based “on the certain assumptions about knowledge, power, and political action that can be traced beyond the academy to the political activism of the women’s movement in the 1960s.” Feminist pedagogy is grounded in social change; therefore, the foundations of feminist pedagogy can be unlocked by looking at its origins in grassroots political activity. Women’s consciousness groups that formed in the late 1960s were based on friendships, common political commitments, and discussion of shared experiences, much like the clubs at Hull House. Furthermore, they emphasized reliance on experience and feeling, sharing common experiences in collective leaderless groups, and the shared assumption that understanding and theoretical analysis were the first steps to revolutionary change. As the main goal of feminism was infused into feminist classrooms, the need for social change became relevant to students and educators. As a result, the call for social change and activism within the feminist classroom has been essential to transforming the classroom environment and the students’ learning process.

**Finding the Connections**

In Addams’ writings, she frequently stressed the idea of cross-cultured contact, which leads to individual growth and sympathetic understanding. She stated, “that we may get, and should get something of that revivifying and upspringing of culture from our contact with the groups who come to us from foreign counties, and that we can get it in no other way.” Her main goal in education was to create an environment where individuals of different backgrounds, classes, and races could learn from each other’s experiences. Addams believed that the public schools held the power to recognize and cherish culture, however,

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26 Ibid, 3.


she “criticized the schools because
their culture had become entirely
detached from experience.”  


31 Fischer, 32.

32 Addams, Democracy and Social Ethics, 84-85.

33 Fischer, 44.

34 Addams, Democracy and Social Ethics, 97.


36 Addams, her methods were not regarded as an educational pedagogy, however, when looking at liberatory and feminist pedagogy today, it is quite easy to see how her methods strove for the same goal. Addams wanted to kindle individuals’ dreams by widening the circle of knowledge and by stressing the importance of personal experience. In addition, she wanted people to realize that truth is not absolute, but instead it is forever changing. By introducing multiple viewpoints through democratic dialogue and sympathetic understanding, the bridge between life and learning can be formed by producing a community of learners. Addams stated,

We have learned to say that the good must be extended to all of society before it can be held secure by any one person or any one class; but we have not yet learned to add to that statement, that unless all men and all classes contribute to a good, we cannot even be sure that it is worth having.

Hull House was an attempt to cultivate and share common experiences, with the hope of finding the good that all of society wished to contribute to. By sharing common experiences, Hull House’s various activities aimed to spark a fire in people’s hearts to contribute to the cause of humanity.

Setting the Stage for Education Today

Throughout this paper, I have discussed Addams’ techniques in education, thus, the next step is to find a way to intertwine her methods with education today. In order to effectively assess how her ideas can be fused with education today, we must first understand the importance that civic engagement or citizenship has for education. Citizenship to most individuals is thought of as distinctively political and defined in terms of government; however, in Addams’ view we see a different view of citizenship. We must realize that government is only a small portion of life. Today, we find that most of our problems cannot be solved through legislation, but instead through sympathy and understanding of common experiences. John Dewey, stated that “the content of the term citizenship is broadening; it is coming to mean all the relationships of all sorts that are involved in membership in a community.”  

When we take to heart the meaning of citizenship, we can understand how important democracy is in education. Hence, Addams’ comprehension of democracy as a way of living together that encourages and fosters social intercourse can aid in the reconstruction of pedagogical methods in post-secondary education.

In academia, there have been two intense shifts: “first, at the level of practice, as excluded and formerly silenced groups challenge dominant approaches to learning and to definitions
of knowledge; and second, at the level of theory, as modernist claims to universal truths are called into questions.”

Addams has addressed these dramatics shifts by focusing on a need for personal experience and a critical, reawakened awareness of issues of power, ideology, and culture. Using Addams’ comprehension of democracy and her pragmatist approach, I will highlight certain areas that her philosophy can help expand and broaden for education today: (1) the importance of experience; (2) the role of authority; (3) diversity; and (4) empowerment.

Personal Experience as a Source of Knowledge and Truth
Like scholarly knowledge, personal experience can be an invaluable fountain of knowing. Experience allows for an exploration of the gap between students’ and teachers’ life experiences and learning experiences inside the educational realm. Early women’s consciousness-raising groups saw feelings “as the source of a ‘true’ knowledge of the world for women living in a society that denied the value of their perceptions.” Nevertheless, women in the early consciousness-raising groups viewed feelings “as the source of a ‘true’ knowledge of the world for women living in a society that denied the value of their perceptions.”

Truth was a never-ending, back-and-forth process between thought and action, thus as educators, students, and citizens, it important to recognize that no one’s life experiences are more important than another’s, but rather a way of helping each individual link new information to prior knowledge. Often for students to see the relevance of class material, they need to connect that knowledge to their own experiences through reflection and dialogue. As for myself, connecting knowledge learned within the classroom with outside experiences helps me understand the material more clearly.

Since truth is not absolute, but only partial and relative, students and teachers can become aware of how their positions affect others. Addams believed, “The democratic ideal demands of the school that it shall give the child his own experiences a social value; that it shall teach [them] to direct [their] own activities and adjust them to those of other people.” Therefore, Addams not only asks for individuals to own their experiences, but also to recognize the oppressor within us through exploring our emotions, feelings, and personal experiences. The very process of using life experiences to link new information to prior knowledge is not knowledge transfer, but knowledge transformation.

The Role of Authority
The role of authority within the classroom undoubtedly sets the tone for teacher-student and student-peer relationships. Ira Shor states, “I am troubled by the term ‘authority of experience,’ accurately aware of the way it is used to silence and exclude.” Additionally, for women teachers in any academic position, maintaining a stance of authority is sometimes necessary in order to refute the idea that male professors are more competent than female professors. Much like Addams, Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren have suggested that a form of “emancipatory authority needs to be developed, one that can illuminate the connection and importance of…teacher education programs.”

Addams frequently recognized that the figure of authority should also be a teachable role, whether that figure is a parent or a teacher. In addition, she believed that recognizing the responsibility that we have for the well-being of others would only follow when individuals first realized how they depend on others. Certainly, “those who are less well-off in society are made acutely aware of their dependency on those who have the power to deprive them of the necessities of life, those in positions of power find it more difficult to recognize or acknowledge their dependency on others.”

The goal here is not to degrade the role of a teacher, but to get away from the dominant view of teachers as mere transmitters of knowledge because without questioning one’s own position of authority, obtaining a nonhierarchical vision is often difficult for educators.

The role of authority continues to be one that is hard to translate into a classroom setting that encourages reflection of one’s own personal experiences. For example, bell hooks states, “I am troubled by the term ‘authority of experience,’ accurately aware of the way it is used to silence and exclude.” Additionally, for women teachers in any academic position, maintaining a stance of authority is sometimes necessary in order to refute the idea that male professors are more competent than female professors. Much like Addams, Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren have suggested that a form of “emancipatory authority needs to be developed, one that can illuminate the connection and importance of…teacher education programs.”

36 Weiler, 450.
37 Ibid, 463.
38 Addams, Democracy and Social Ethics, 7.
39 Ibid, 81.
initiate a form of emancipatory authority into the classroom, students are able to engage in critical thinking, to decide what forms of knowledge are best suited for living in a just and democratic society. Thus,

a reconstituted notion of emancipatory authority suggests, in this case, that teachers are bearers of critical knowledge, rules, and values through which they consciously articulate and problematize their relationship to each other, to students, to subject matter, and to the wider community.49

Giroux and McLaren’s idea of emancipatory authority confronts the dominant view of teachers as the transferors of knowledge, therefore, positioning teachers to reject any ideology that constrains them from providing a transformative education. The emancipatory authority that Giroux and McLaren call for is very similar to the idea of authority that Addams wanted. In Second Twenty Years at Hull House, Addams stated, “Democracy believes that the [individuals] at the bottom may realize [his/her] aim only through an unfolding of [his/her] own being, and that [he/she] must have an efficacious share in the regulation of [his/her] own life.”45 Addams’ hope was that the settlements would work with individuals to show them how to break free from their constraints and recognize their roles in the community.

Diversity
As education is embedded with so-called characteristics of “cultural norms,” it is very simple to see that education is related to race, class, gender, and sexuality. For example, “if education is viewed as preparation for carrying on processes historically associated with males, it will inculcate traits the culture considers masculine.”46 The environment of the classroom is the most important phase for opening up new ways of thought and crossing and engaging in multiple relationships, however, it is often the most difficult to transform.

Addams developed the Labor Museum in 1900 to help area residents understand different cultural practices and to create a sense of unity amongst the community. In doing so, she bridged the divide between thought and practice, which “fulfilled Addams’ vision for Hull House as a place to express the meaning of life through life itself, and to unite people in solidarity, recognizing their common humanity.”47 If education is molded as an opportunity for everyone’s lives to be part of a learning experience, then we create appreciation for different cultures, races, and genders. Addams once said, “It was the function of the settlements to bring into the circle of knowledge and fuller life, men and women who otherwise might be left out.”48 Understanding multiple identities within the classroom is best when personal experience is presented for others to reflect and understand dominant structures of oppression. The Labor Museum created conditions that allowed for the environment to transcend structural and hierarchical boundaries to create relationships, bonds, and an understanding of each other’s common experiences.

Empowerment
For me, as a woman student, empowerment in the classroom is often the key for opening doors to a transformative education. I have decided to analyze empowerment last because the importance of experience, the role of authority, and diversity are essential components for empowerment. The basis of empowerment can be traced back to Freire, whose ideas were developed from his experiences in Brazil during the 1920s. Even though Freire’s work emerged from his connection to class oppression, his ideals have been expanded to aid in the empowerment of women and other minorities. Freire also believed that “one cannot empower others but can create conditions that make it possible for others to reflect and act on their reality.”49 Understanding that one cannot empower others, demonstrates that as educators we cannot explicitly believe that the classroom environment empowers individuals, but we can evaluate how we uphold an environment that stimulates self-reflexive thinking among students.

Feminist theories have added a gendered view to the overall conceptualization of empowerment. This gendered view of empowerment began in the early women’s consciousness-raising groups that focused on sharing common experiences of sexuality, work, family, and participation in a male-dominated society through collective, leaderless groups. These groups functioned similar to the clubs at Hull House, as creative and enriching outlets for the participants. Therefore, feminist pedagogy adds the notion that empowerment is relational in nature.

44 Ibid, 313.
45 Addams, Second Twenty Years at Hull House, 383.
47 Fischer, 46.
48 Addams, Second Twenty Years at Hull House, 404.
Addams' methods, feminist pedagogy, and liberatory pedagogy emphasize classrooms based on participation they respect and encourage students to be connected or hands-on-learners. Ira Shor states, "people begin life as motivated learners, not as passive beings. Children naturally join the world around them. They learn by interacting, by experimenting, and by using play to internalize the meaning of words and experience." However, our current educational systems erode students' essential need for participatory learning by focusing on knowledge transfer. When I look back on my education, the cornerstone of my success and educational endeavors has been found in environments that have challenged and empowered me. Hence, by integrating pedagogies that propose active participation amongst diverse backgrounds, sharing of common experiences, and a commitment to social change, we will find ourselves in an environment that promotes freedom and active emancipation.

Culminating our Journey
Becoming a teacher gives one power to open up the world of possibilities, knowledge, and self-reflection. Therefore, a teacher has the possibility to create an empowering environment where all participants are interconnected. I do not want to imply that teachers are perfect individuals who cannot make mistakes, but instead that teachers – even those who stumble along the way – can increase awareness, passion, and inspiration to create an environment that is transforming. My research has aimed to discover the capacity that education has to change the world.

Finding a transformative pedagogy that engages students and teachers will hopefully promote an academic environment that stimulates individuals to become active participants not only in the classroom, but also in society. I believe that the foundations needed for a transformative pedagogy already exist, but need to be brought together as one method and not as separate methods. By analyzing Addams' social philosophy, I have revealed ideas that promote a new ground for the exploration of knowledge, which is neither oppressive nor suppressive of the development of personal experiences as a legitimate starting place for learning.

As we culminate our journey, I urge individuals to think about Jane Addams and her efforts to encourage learning from life. Most importantly, we need to recognize that as we begin thinking forward into the future of education, finding the necessary elements that engage students and teachers will be the key to a curriculum that encourages democratic learning and discovers the power of civic engagement. Therefore, as students and educators, we must recognize that "transformation is a journey of hope, humor, setbacks, breakthroughs, and creative life, on a long and winding road paved with dreams whose time is overdue." The light at the beginning of the journey has been ignited, and now it is our choice to keep it lit or let it burn out.

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50 Shor, 17.
51 Shor, 263.
Bibliography


