JOHN DEWEY’S THEORY OF GROWTH AND AMY ALLEN'S FEMINIST THEORY OF POWER APPLIED TO THE WORK OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTERS

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ABSTRACT

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Over the last twenty-five years, there has been an increased interest in bringing together pragmatism and feminism. The dissertation advances this movement. It specifically examines the theory of growth offered by John Dewey and the feminist theory of power outlined by Amy Allen. The dissertation then examines the two theories in relation to the theory and practice of domestic violence emergency shelters. Dewey's theory of growth, which may apply to individual growth, and the work done with individual women in shelters provides a nice point of convergence from which to examine pragmatism and feminism. Before bringing representatives of pragmatism and feminism together, the dissertation addresses a criticism of Dewey's work that presents a potential obstacle to a productive merger. The dissertation alleviates the criticism that Dewey's theory of growth is cryptic and allusive by presenting the theory in light of his central pragmatic commitments. This presentation contextualizes his statements about growth and frames them within a comprehensive theory. In addition, the criticism that Dewey does not significantly address issues of power within his work is potentially problematic for application to the work of domestic violence shelters. To address this issue, the dissertation evaluates Dewey's work for whether it adequately theorizes the modes of power that Allen argues are necessary for a feminist theory of power, specifically, domination, resistance, and solidarity. The conclusion is made that while Dewey's theory embraces, or at least accommodates, each mode of power, his emphasis on problem-solving and cooperative inquiry masks the fact that problems may result from oppressive relations of power, making their resolution that much more difficult. To supplement Dewey's ability to diagnose relations of power, the dissertation explores the possibility of a joint theory between Dewey and Allen in application to the theory and practice of domestic violence
emergency shelters. The dissertation concludes that the fruitfulness of this examination illustrates the potential benefits for the continued pursuit of collaboration between pragmatism and feminism.
John and KT Hunter
Frank and Margaret Peabody
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INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

The commonalities of pragmatism and feminism have suggested a productive merger and provided a rich source for analysis over the last twenty-five years. This dissertation aims to augment this merger by offering a feminist assessment of John Dewey’s theory of growth, and by evaluating whether his pragmatic theory provides tools for feminist analysis. One of the most problematic obstacles for a merger between Dewey’s pragmatism and feminism is that he does not offer an adequate analysis of power, something central to feminist theory and practice. The dissertation considers this criticism and evaluates Dewey’s strengths and weaknesses in embracing a feminist analysis of power. The dissertation thus draws on the comprehensive feminist theory of power developed by Amy Allen. Allen suggests that a feminist theory of power must address three modes of power: domination, solidarity, and resistance. The dissertation examines her theory and whether Dewey is able to embrace or accommodate each of these modes of power, concluding that bringing the work of Dewey and Allen together shows promise for application to the work of domestic violence shelters. To introduce these concepts, this chapter frames John Dewey as a Classical Pragmatist philosopher, introducing his views, and provides a brief overview of feminist theory and movements, specifically the domestic violence movement. In addition, it highlights the research joining pragmatism and feminism.

2. John Dewey

John Dewey was born to Archibald Sprague Dewey, a grocer, and to Lucina Rich Dewey in 1859 in Burlington, Vermont (Westbrook 1). He graduated from the University of Vermont in 1879 and then spent three years as a high school teacher (6-8). During this time he engaged in private study with his former professor, Henry Augustus Pearson Torrey, and had two essays
published in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. Dewey began graduate work in philosophy at Johns Hopkins University in 1882 (Westbrook 8-9). He earned his Ph.D. in 1884 and began teaching at the University of Michigan (20-21). While at Michigan, he met and married Harriet Alice Chipman (35). He taught and conducted research at the University until 1894. In 1894 he moved to the University of Chicago, where he stayed until 1904. At the University of Chicago Dewey chaired the Department of Philosophy and the Department of Pedagogy (Rockefeller 224-227). He was also director of the Laboratory School, an elementary school associated with the university. During these years, he developed a friendship with Jane Addams of Hull House. In 1904 Dewey resigned from the university over tensions with the administration regarding the Laboratory School and his wife’s role as principal (230-31). Dewey found a job at Columbia University, where he taught from 1905-1930 and then served in an emeritus status. He was involved with numerous academic and social organizations and “rose to a position of unequaled prominence in the philosophical profession” (Campbell, *Understanding* 9). In 1927 his first wife died, and in 1946 Dewey married Roberta Lowitz Grant. He died in New York City on June 1, 1952 (Westbrook 377, 537).

2.1. Influences

Dewey aimed to develop a philosophy relevant to improving life and social conditions. This goal can, in part, be traced to the influence of his mother, his first wife, and Jane Addams. Dewey’s mother was an evangelical Protestant who participated in philanthropic work as Dewey was growing up and likely “exercised a formative influence on Dewey’s social conscience” (Westbrook 4). Harriet Alice Chipman also had a significant influence on his views. Dewey met his future wife at the University of Michigan, when she took one of his courses. She encouraged Dewey’s shift away from doctrinaire religious beliefs and toward a social gospel concerned with
the community (35). Westbrook suggests, “it was no coincidence that Dewey’s immersion in politics and social reform followed close upon his marriage” (35). Dewey met Jane Addams during his tenure at the University of Chicago. Charlene Haddock Seigfried argues that Jane Addams’ work at Hull House was likely “not so much an example of Dewey’s theory of education, as it was already exemplary of what Dewey sought to theorize” (Pragmatism 74). Seigfried suggests that Addams’ influence on Dewey was stronger than many theorists imply. Addams’ work at Hull House provided concrete examples of democracy as a way of life and the importance of interaction with others, concepts Dewey works to theorize and that remain central to his work (74).

In his formal training in philosophy at Johns Hopkins, G. S. Morris guided Dewey in studying the Idealism of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. As Dewey tells it, Hegel provided “a demand for unification,” which Dewey describes as a remedy for “the sense of divisions and separations . . . of self from world, of soul from body, of nature from God” (“From” 153). Dewey then “became convinced of the superiority of the Darwinian model of naturalized processes to the Hegelian model of ideational processes” (Campbell, Understanding 12). H.S. Thayer suggests that, for Dewey, “idealism, with its categories of the organic whole, and development viewed as a passage from ‘contradictions’ to ‘syntheses,’ gave way to the evolutionary and biologically conceived notions of growth as a process of ‘conflicts’ and ‘resolutions’” (167). Dewey’s assertions that experience continually changes and that one should search for solutions from within experience, which the dissertation considers in more depth, reflect remnants of Hegel’s influence (Rockefeller 361). Hegel’s influence also persists in Dewey’s belief “that there is an organic connection between the individual and society and that the mind of the individual is developed in and through the interaction of the two” (Rockefeller
From Hegel, Dewey inherited a deep “sense of the dynamic and fluid interaction of life” and a belief in “its organic quality” (Bernstein, *Praxis* 167). Dewey retains from Hegel the belief that individuals are in interaction with others and their environment, such that individuals both influence and are influenced. The two theorists also share the rejection of the dualism between subject and object as defining categories of experience (Rockefeller 366). Richard J. Bernstein suggests, however, that Dewey’s “concern and appreciation of the organic unity of life” drew him away from Hegel and toward an evolutionary understanding of human beings (*Praxis* 172).

While Dewey was firmly rooted in Hegelianism, William James’ theory offered Dewey an example of “the rooting of human psychology in organic experience and history” (Westbrook 66), which helped Dewey naturalize his own view. Dewey began to believe that there was “no need to bring in an Absolute to unify experience” (67). Both Darwin and James impacted Dewey’s move away from Hegelianism (Thayer 177). They supported the idea that “[a]n organism does not live in an environment” as a separate entity with some connection to a higher order; rather, “it lives by means of an environment” (Dewey, *Logic* 32). In James and Darwin, Dewey was introduced to the idea that “[o]rganic life as a process of activity involves (and is continuous with) an environment” (Thayer 177).

2.2. Dewey as Classical American Pragmatist

Pragmatists consider Dewey one of the founders of pragmatism, along with Charles Sanders Peirce and William James, both of whom preceded him. The pragmatism of Peirce and James had some impact on Dewey but not as a primary or foundational influence. All three share the belief that meaning, decision making, and even defining truth are connected to consequences. For instance, when Peirce, in discussing the meaning of the term *hard*, suggests that “the whole conception of this quality . . . lies in its conceived effects,” he suggests that identifying
something as hard indicates how it can be expected to interact with other objects (CP 5.403).

The founders of pragmatism also share an epistemological framework. Pragmatists reject the Cartesian method as disconnected from experience and not reflective of how individuals actually gain understanding as a starting point for philosophy. Pragmatists hold that reasoning takes place within a context and that individuals cannot attain certainty. Lack of certainty and the changing nature of experience leads pragmatists to conclude that one may develop hypotheses grounded in experience, rather than seeking fixed principles, to guide action.

Peirce coins the word pragmatism, deriving it from Kant’s distinction between praktisch and pragmatisch. In Kant’s system praktisch refers to beliefs that are “given through reason completely a priori” and pragmatisch to beliefs that are “empirically conditioned,” which Thayer explains to mean they are “based on and applying to experience” (Kant A800-B828; Thayer 138). Kant goes on to say that pragmatic belief is a “contingent belief, which yet forms the ground for the actual employment of means to certain actions” (Kant A824-B852). Peirce rejects the praktisch because of its “a priori associations” (Campbell, Understanding 13) and because in relying on the praktisch “no experimentalist type can ever make sure of solid ground under his feet” (Peirce, CP 5.412). With inspiration from the pragmatisch in Kant, Peirce appeals “to a criterion of the conceivable consequences, i.e., the class of confirming instances, under standard test conditions, as the one right way of determining the meaning of . . . ideas, beliefs, predicates, [and] statements” (Thayer 138). Peirce holds that theorists can make concepts more clear by understanding meanings to indicate likely outcomes. He says:

A conception . . . lies exclusively in its conceivable bearing upon the conduct of life; so that . . . if one can define accurately all the conceivable experimental phenomena which
the affirmation or denial of a concept could imply, one will have the complete definition of the concept. (CP 5.412)

Inspiration from Kant is also evident in Peirce’s “view of meanings as general, as expressed in formulas prescribing kinds of operations and results, as found in forms and rules of action” (Thayer 138). Peirce seeks to clarify concepts and general principles. James, however, argues that Peirce applies this theory of meaning too narrowly. James wants to expand the theory to address larger questions, such as freedom versus determinism or materialism versus theism. To resolve these concerns, James argues, individuals should ask, “[w]hat difference would it practically make to anyone if this notion rather than that notion were true?” (James, Pragmatism 45). According to James Campbell, James “eliminates the concern with the long-term effects for the group of inquirers and with the full spectrum of effects. And . . . moves beyond Peirce’s tightly focused concern with only certain words and ideas to consider the meaning of broad philosophical doctrines” (Understanding 17). He views pragmatism as a “method for settling metaphysical disputes that might otherwise be interminable” (James, Pragmatism 45). He moves away from Peirce’s suggestion that meaning is found in general concepts and suggests that pragmatism can look at particular circumstances and individual experiences (Thayer 139).

James argues that “true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief, and good, too, for definite assignable reasons” (Pragmatism 76, emphasis removed). Where Peirce ties pragmatism to Kant’s empirical versus a priori distinction, James contends that pragmatism “is derived from the same Greek word πράγμα, meaning action, from which our words ‘practice’ and ‘practical’ come” (Thayer 139; James, Pragmatism 46).

Peirce argues that “the meaning of a concept . . . lies in the manner in which it could conceivably modify purposive action, and in this alone” (qtd. in Ladd-Franklin 718). Peirce goes
on to say that “James, . . . in defining pragmatism, speaks of it as referring ideas to experiences, meaning evidently the sensational side of experience” (718). James applies Peirce’s method to determining what is true in a wide variety of circumstances. James takes this method and opens it up, arguing, “[a]ny idea upon which we can ride, so to speak; any idea that will carry us prosperously from any one part of our experience to any other part, linking this satisfactorily, working securely, simplifying, saving labor; is true for just so much, true in so far forth, true instrumentally” (James, Pragmatism 58). Unlike Peirce, James connects truth to human values or goods. In addition, he holds a forward-looking view that calls one to “bring out of each word its practical cash-value, set it at work within the stream of experience” (53).

Dewey’s concern is that James is too quick to settle on truths and does not take time for their investigation (Campbell, Understanding 21). Dewey shares with James the desire to focus philosophy on issues of importance in human experience (22),¹ but he moves away from concerns about truth and suggests “warranted assertibility” as a replacement (Dewey, Logic 15). Dewey modifies Peirce’s inquiry from a method of settling belief to a method of resolving problematic situations (Smith 98). Toward this end Dewey suggests that individuals use principles gained in experience as hypotheses, rather than attempting to identify fixed prescriptions. Smith argues that Peirce and James maintain a correspondence theory of truth. They hold that truth “appeals to the authoritative force of an antecedent reality and requires the adjustment of thought to that reality” (Smith 52). Dewey, on the other hand, holds a transformative theory of truth. He “rejects the antecedent reality, emphasizes the problematic or indeterminate character of the situation . . . and aims at transforming that situation into a settled

¹ James is concerned with improving individual experience, he argues that “[s]urely the individual, the person in singular number, is the more fundamental phenomenon, and the social institution, of whatever grade, is but secondary and ministerial” (Memories 102).
or determinate affair” (Smith 52). Dewey emphasizes the use of principles and hypotheses as ways to improve life, rather than determining whether or not they are true.

Dewey shares with Peirce and James a rich account of experience. All three hold that ideas are not “reflections or products” of “simple and inspectable impressions” or “less vivid semblances” of “sensations” (Thayer 137). They hold that:

the experiential causes of ideas and beliefs may be necessary conditions of their occurrence, but not a sufficient condition in the analysis of what they are, viz., what (in any case) they mean, or whether they are or are not true. (Thayer 137)

James suggests that experience is not primarily cognitive (Campbell, Understanding 67), but can refer to either the process or content of experience (69). Dewey says:

‘[E]xperience’ is what James called a double-barrelled word. … [I]t includes what men do and suffer, what they strive for, love, believe and endure, and also how men act and are acted upon, the ways in which they do and suffer, desire and enjoy, see, believe, imagine – in short, processes of experiencing. (Experience and Nature 18)

That individuals cannot disassociate themselves from their environment implies for Dewey that they cannot separate themselves from one another. Individuals and others in their community have a trans-active relationship, where each influences the other. Humans are embedded, and reasoning takes place within that interaction. Individuals are not radically independent; rather, they impose themselves on the world and those around them and are imposed upon. This embedded view is part of the anti-Cartesian view shared by pragmatists. The Cartesian method calls one to develop universals outside of experience, something the embedded individual cannot do with certainty.
Peirce argues that “the most striking feature of the new theory [meaning Pragmatism] was its recognition of an inseparable connection between rational cognition and rational purpose” (CP 5.412) that is, the theory suggests individuals reason with some aim in mind. Peirce critiques the Cartesian strategy because it calls for universal doubt, and Peirce suggests that philosophers should not “pretend to doubt in philosophy what we do not doubt in our hearts” (CP 5.265). The Cartesian method requires one to take beliefs out of context and challenge all beliefs in a way that is inconsistent with usual methods of verification. In addition, pragmatists hold individuals are unable to verify when they may have stepped outside of their own context in order to develop universal principles.

Peirce does not despair because individuals cannot attain certainty. Rather, he looks to the potential in cooperative inquiry as the best method for addressing intellectual problems. Peirce suggests understanding concepts as hypotheses grounded in experience “capable of being verified or refuted by future observers” (CP 1.7). Groups or communities may develop these hypotheses together. Peirce argues that the “opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by the truth” (CP 5.407). In order to vigorously test various hypotheses “at any particular point in this process of cooperative inquiry the individual is admonished by Peirce to maintain an attitude of doubt and openness” (Campbell, Understanding 16) when he almost commands “[d]o not block the way of inquiry” (CP 1.135). Peirce, as paraphrased by Campbell, holds the position that “[t]he human weakness against which we must be ever on guard is our often-demonstrated willingness to settle issues too soon by acquiescing to inadequate methods for the fixation of belief” (Understanding 16). Peirce proposes a theory of inquiry embedded within a behavioral process. Doubt is “a state of uneasiness and hesitancy” brought to resolution by attaining or altering a belief (Thayer 84). Doubt may give rise to a
struggle, to which Peirce says, “I shall term this struggle Inquiry” (5:394, emphasis removed). Inquiry is thus the process of resolving doubt. Dewey similarly develops a theory of inquiry aimed at resolving problems faced in experience and implores individuals to cultivate tolerance.

Campbell suggests that “Dewey’s methods were critical and cooperative, like those of Peirce; but his interests were moral, esthetic, educational and social like those of James” (Understanding 22). Dewey “perceived the ways in which Peirce’s ideal of a self-critical community of inquirers had important consequences for education, social reconstruction, and a revitalization of democracy” (Bernstein, Praxis 201). Dewey aims to move away from questions of truth, instead suggesting collective inquiry in the pursuit of “warranted assertion[s],” in “attempts to address such topics as economic policy, legal practice, educational theorizing, and political organization” (Campbell, Understanding 22). He thus strikes a balance between Peirce’s collective inquiry and James’ concern with the individual experience (Thayer 169). Dewey examines the individual-in-context, addressing “the question of working out ways in which persons might engage in intelligent and imaginative occupations with a sense of purpose and value in a social order” (Thayer 442-43). In Dewey’s attempts to work out methods of intelligent action that include social inquiry, he shares more with Peirce than with James (Thayer 443).

One way to approach Dewey’s work is to understand it as culminating in his theory of growth. To understand this theory one must look to some of Dewey’s central pragmatic commitments. The next section introduces Dewey’s theory of growth and the pragmatic commitments that inform this theory.
3. John Dewey’s Theory of Growth

Critics charge that John Dewey’s theory of growth is cryptic or allusive, as he argues that growth is the end of growth and that growth should foster more growth. These claims become more clear, however, when informed by Dewey’s pragmatic commitments, specifically, his claims regarding the possibilities for and limits of human knowledge, as well as his arguments for what is morally justifiable. These pragmatic commitments inform and fill out his theory of growth, which will allow one to evaluate and more clearly apply his theory of growth.

From the uncertain but not completely unpredictable nature of experience, Dewey gleans some concrete suggestions for approaching reflection, interaction, and decision-making. As individuals do not have access to complete certainty, he recommends continually challenging ideas and testing working hypotheses in experience. One way to challenge ideas is through interaction with others. Interaction has the potential to challenge ideas directly when one questions another’s position and indirectly as one encounters another’s experiences. To foster the interaction between individuals that challenges ideas and beliefs, Dewey advises that societies support the development of individuals’ reasoning abilities and cultivate opportunities for meaningful interaction. Dewey also contends that challenging one’s ideas and interaction with others facilitate a more satisfying and fulfilling way of life for each individual. He thus contends that experience justifies the encouragement of individual abilities and that interaction with others provides opportunities for a more fulfilling life.

Dewey also argues that moral traditions provide guidance in interaction with others. He specifically considers how the moral traditions of Western philosophy inform future moral

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2 By cryptic or allusive criticisms, the text refers to criticisms, such as those from Yeager Hudson, who suggests that “Dewey’s criteria are truncated and thus inadequate precisely because they provide no such normative guidance” (17) or from Patrick Diggins, who argues that Dewey’s theory of growth is problematic because “[t]he desire to achieve meaning, purpose, and value does not arise from the biological givens of growth. A life that turns on nothing more than growth could be aimless and empty” (315).
reflections. Theories of the Good suggest the importance of reflection on ends; theories of the Right indicate duties to others; and theories of Virtue convey the significance of individual actions’ connection to the common good. Independently, each of these kinds of theories points to a single component of moral deliberation, but all three are useful in considering possible courses of action.

His understanding of human knowledge and of morality inform Dewey’s theory of growth. The particulars of what it means to pursue growth are indeterminate before the consideration of current contexts and likely consequences. Dewey recommends that people develop habits of interaction with and tolerance of others, of flexibility to adapt to new circumstances, of reflection, and of sensitivity to the good of others, in order to facilitate growth. Individuals and groups may evaluate particular propositions and the resulting consequences and use that evaluation to guide future action.

Dewey’s theory relies heavily on the possibility of fruitfulness of interactions in refining ideas and challenging those that do not assist in experience. Dewey’s critics, both feminist and not explicitly feminist, argue that in relying solely on the possibilities of communication without additional mechanisms, Dewey does not adequately consider power structures that hinder free interaction or indicate non-cooperative motives in interaction with others. To provide realistic suggestions for refining and challenging ideas, one must recognize and address the power structures and non-cooperative components of interaction that hinder communication, something his critics charge, Dewey does not do. Many of these criticisms of Dewey stem from a rich feminist tradition that assesses, critiques, and influences the ideology that guides relationships between men and women.
4. Feminism and Feminist Movements

Charlene Haddock Seigfried\(^3\) characterizes feminism as having conceptual and historical dimensions (*Pragmatism* 4). Conceptually, feminism is “based on the premise that women have been and continue to be oppressed . . . or based on the premise that gender is a fundamental category of analysis” (4). Theorists interested in a historic conception identify feminism “with the beginning of an organized women’s movement and seek some precipitating event” to mark its start (4). As this dissertation addresses the work of domestic violence shelters, specifically within the United States, the work and ideology of shelters informs the framing of the feminist perspective discussed. Conceptually, the dissertation finds significance in the principles that have guided domestic violence shelters and in the rise of the women’s movement in the United States during the 1970s.

The feminist movement of the 1970s developed under the influence of the civil rights, anti-war, and black liberation movements. The work toward gaining equality for African-Americans set precedents useful for women’s efforts to gain equality. Those women participating in the struggle against racial oppression began to consider how to address gender oppression. By the 1960s many women had participated in various political and social movements, paving the way for their participation in a women’s movement. Politically, the 1970s saw a rise in interest in participatory democracy and a distrust of hierarchy. Often these organizations and movements did not welcome women’s participation and did not challenge the hierarchy of gender relations (Schechter 30). Women gained confidence and opportunities as they joined the paid work force, but felt torn between their gains outside the home and an ideology that confined them to the home. Working women also experienced discrimination and

\(^3\) Seigfried is the leading scholar on joining pragmatism and feminism, and her book *Pragmatism and Feminism: Reweaving the Social Fabric* is the germinal work in this area. For this reason, and because she is able to describe feminism concisely and clearly, the project draws from her characterization of feminism.
lower salaries within the work place and wanted to respond. Education, participation in politics, discrimination in the work place, and other experiences led many women to question their social positions and to challenge social norms (Schechter 30).

The feminist movement began as groups of women started organizing around issues of gender. These groups often reflected one of two branches of feminism, women’s rights feminism and women’s liberation feminism, both of which have proponents today. Women’s rights feminism emphasizes gaining the same opportunities and rights for women that society already affords to men. The liberation feminists approved of these aims, but also argued that women needed more than new opportunities and equal rights. They argued that male/female relationships and structures in society needed drastic restructuring (31). The liberation feminist’s stance that what happens between men and women in their private relationships has political and social implications opened the door for women to discuss their personal lives with other women. These discussions, which became known as consciousness raising groups, formed the foundations for the domestic violence movement (31). These branches are significant, but the domestic violence movement and the framework of domestic violence shelters do not clearly reflect one ideology or the other. The liberation movement helped set the groundwork for the domestic violence movement, but shelters are not now organized on solely liberation feminist principles. In fact, the ideology of those working in, volunteering for, and supporting the work of domestic violence shelters varies widely (43-52).

The idea that domestic violence is part of a batterer’s strategy to gain or maintain power and control within a relationship guides many shelter practices. The first conceptual dimension of feminism that Seigfried identifies, that “women have been and continue to be oppressed,” grounds the work of shelters (Pragmatism 4). Shelters often operate under the belief that the
shared social status of women allows men to continue to have control in individual relationships, such that violence is a legitimate, or at least concealable, use of force. When social norms maintain or conceal men’s use of violence against women, men throughout society have access to violence against female partners with little reproach. For instance, shelters reject the idea that women want abusive relationships due to learned helplessness or masochism. Rather, they argue that batterers often use or threaten the use of violence to coerce women to stay in relationships. Because of the physical danger in leaving an abusive partner, shelters are often in confidential locations and make women’s safety their primary goal.

The importance of power, supported by social structure and ideology, in male/female relationships is significant for the work of the domestic violence movement. For this reason, in the application of Dewey’s theory to the work of domestic violence shelters, his theory must embrace or accommodate a theory of power.

5. Literature on the Merger of Feminism and Pragmatism

In examining the pragmatist feminist literature, the dissertation will highlight the feminist criticisms of pragmatism, specifically John Dewey’s lack of an analysis of or ways to address power. These criticisms offer a starting point for the assessment of Dewey’s theory of growth, and the dissertation will assess their weight through the examination of a feminist theory of power, and the theory and practice of domestic violence shelters.

Pragmatist feminist scholarship often takes as a starting point the commonalities between the two disciplines. For example, pragmatism and feminism base analysis in experience, see benefiting people as the main goal of research, reject the idea of a neutral observer, and encourage collaboration (Seigfried Pragmatism 37; Sullivan Living 5). In the early 1980s
pragmatist and feminist scholars thought these commonalities indicated the potential for a fruitful merger.

Charlene Haddock Seigfried’s 1985 essay, “Second Sex: Second Thoughts,” formally marks the beginning of the merger between pragmatism and feminism. In this essay, Seigfried uses pragmatic empiricism to critique De Beauvoir’s distinction between “irreducible facts of observation and the myths which overlay them” (“Second” 308). Others gradually followed Seigfried’s lead in merging pragmatism and feminism. In 1991 several such articles appeared in the Transactions of the C.S. Peirce Society. In 1993 and 2001, Hypatia (Seigfried, Special) and The Journal of Speculative Philosophy (Sullivan), respectively, dedicated entire issues to integrating pragmatism and feminism. The first book dedicated exclusively to examining this integration was Seigfried’s Pragmatism and Feminism: Reweaving the Social Fabric (Sullivan, “Guest” 69-70). The authors of these early works employed a variety of approaches, such as tracing the historical connections of the two disciplines, assessing the potential utility of pragmatism and feminism for one another, and applying pragmatic principles to feminist issues (70).

Though Seigfried was, and still is, the leading scholar in joining pragmatism and feminism, she warns that “[a]ssumptions about women affected not only the personal relations of individual pragmatists, but entered into the very fabric of their philosophical thought” (“Missing” 412). She suggests that because of these ingrained assumptions theorists must carefully assess the early pragmatists before integrating their work with feminism (412). Seigfried says, of Dewey specifically, that he rarely examines how women’s and men’s experiences differ or explores the impact of power on individual interactions. Seigfried also suggests that he “seems curiously uninterested in accounting for the virulence of prejudice and
its persistence or in exploring in detail how it alters the lives of those affected by it” (“John” 55). She also points out, however, that Dewey does attempt to expose bias, develop contextual analysis, and engage multiple perspectives, all significant components of feminist research.

Scholars such as Erin McKenna, Heather Keith, and Shannon Sullivan (Living) followed Seigfried in considering John Dewey’s work in relation to feminist theory. Seigfried and McKenna are fervent in their criticism that Dewey fails to consider power. The dissertation will test this criticism by examining the components of a feminist theory of power and determining whether Dewey’s theory embraces, or at least accommodates these components.

Since the literature on power is too broad in scope to cover in this project, the dissertation specifically looks to a prominent feminist analysis of power. Additionally, the dissertation’s aim to consider the application of Dewey’s work to domestic violence shelters, institutions that often have strong connections to feminist theories and movements, also justifies examining a feminist theory of power to provide a clear picture of what a Deweyan theory, applicable to domestic violence shelters, requires.

6. Amy Allen’s Feminist Theory of Power

Amy Allen argues that a feminist theory of power must take into account the experiences of power that many women face: domination, the limitation of their opportunities and choices by men (or others); resistance, the ability to resist that domination; and solidarity, the joining together with others to gain strength or challenge domination. Allen criticizes feminist theorists who examine the various modes of power in isolation and suggests that feminist theorists need a comprehensive account of power to evaluate and address women’s experiences. Isolated assessment is likely to miss the ways that various modes of power affect one another. For instance, experiences of domination that impact character are likely to determine the methods of
resistance that individuals consider or are capable of enacting. To explore this kind of impact fully, Allen argues that the concept of power must include all three as modes of power, though they may be considered distinctly in analysis for the sake of clarity. To explicate each of these modes of power, Allen calls on Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Hannah Arendt.

Foucault’s theory of power provides a foundation for Allen’s comprehensive theory. Foucault characterizes power as relational, dynamic, and dispersed, as well as repressive and productive. The relational, dynamic, and dispersed components allow for the examination of power between individuals and do not limit the origin of power to a single source. His theory also allows for the possibility that power changes for individuals in new circumstances and even between two people or groups over time. The repressive and productive components indicate that dominating influences may use deterrents and incentives to identify and even to determine acceptable characteristics or behaviors for particular individuals within a society. Exercised in this way, domination produces or influences the character and habits that compose an individual. Foucault’s theory thus allows for the examination of the relationship between domination and an individual’s ability to act.

Allen has some concern that Foucault does not clearly indicate how an individual can have agency in a highly dominating environment. To fill this gap, she turns to Judith Butler. Butler gives an account of gender not as innate, but as the compelled repetition of norms enacted again and again by individuals. For a society to maintain norms and the facade that those norms are innate individuals must reenact them. That norms require repetition to ensure their continuation indicates that exact repetition is not necessary and does not always occur. The theoretical space for agency is present, but not explicit, in Foucault.
Butler indicates that agency is possible; however, she also claims that simply recognizing the possibility of agency does not lead individuals to resist norms. In fact, many recognize dominating norms and still do not resist them. Butler explains that resisting norms is much more likely to occur when individuals participate in and feel supported by groups that assist in enacting resistance. Though Butler recognizes the significance of supportive groups, Allen argues that neither Butler’s nor Foucault’s account of interpersonal interaction allow for the development or maintenance of the kind of supportive groups needed to encourage resistance. To find such support, Allen turns to Hannah Arendt.

Arendt’s theory defines power as a collective force, such that power only exists when individuals act jointly. She recognizes other modes of force, but suggests that power only occurs collectively. Acts of power occur when actors, in reciprocal and mutual interactions, join together to attain some shared end. She also contends that individuals develop their skills and abilities through these interactions. Allen calls on Arendt because the possibility of reciprocal and mutual interactions that Arendt theorizes makes supportive groups that can enable resistance theoretically feasible.

Allen argues that bringing the three theorists together provides the tools for a comprehensive theory of power useful for understanding women’s experiences. Foucault’s theory provides the foundation for a theory of power, where power is present within relationships, dispersed throughout society, and has the potential to change from one interaction to the next. His theory also indicates that domination can influence an agent’s character and behavior. Butler contributes an account of agency, possible even in very restrictive situations, through the mis-citation of norms. Lastly, Arendt theorizes the possibility of supportive
interactions significant for jointly effecting change. Allen suggests that these joint instances of power also have the potential to facilitate individual resistance.

Allen also provides the methodological tools of foreground and background conditions or examining power in its different modes. The dissertation explores Allen’s tools and examines to what extent Dewey’s theory is able to embrace these components of power and whether his theory is able to accommodate those it does not clearly embrace, concluding that, as examined thus far, his theory successfully accommodates the components of a feminist theory, domination, resistance, and solidarity. The dissertation then turns to the application of Dewey’s theory, supplemented with Allen’s work on power, to the work of domestic violence shelters.

7. The Theory and Practice of Domestic Violence Shelters

While the primary objective of domestic violence shelters is safety, they also educate and provide assistance to battered women. Feminist theories about the structure of society and the experiences of battered women inform the techniques shelters employ. Feminists argue that social structures typically favor men and offer women comparatively fewer options. These structures leave some women without the resources, ability, or opportunity to protect themselves from domestic violence. Feminists argue that these structures account for the larger number of female than male victims. In addition, feminists suggest that because some social norms endorse or seem to allow violence against women, domestic violence is not an isolated problem (“Evolution;” Cunningham 20).

In their article, “Empowerment Practice: A Focus on Battered Women,” Bridget Noël Busch and Deborah Valentine describe four techniques used to assist battered women: enabling, linking, catalyzing, and priming. The dissertation will use this categorization to frame an examination of shelter practices.
Enabling means providing assistance to victims as they explore options and make decisions. Such instances may include introducing and discussing possible solutions and/or providing emotional support. At times, this means simply listening to battered women and, at other times, helping women to prioritize needs and to consider the consequences of various options.

In addition to enabling, shelter staff also assist women through the technique of linking, that is, assisting women in developing relationships with friends and relatives who encourage them, offer assistance, and do not blame or condemn the women for their situations. Because batterers often belittle and blame their partners, helping women to develop supportive networks allows positive influences to counteract the negative influence of abusers.

Shelter staff also participate in catalyzing or providing economic support, often donated by the community or raised through grants, for victims of domestic violence. By offering resources such as food and clothing, shelters ensure that a lack of sustenance will not become a barrier to seeking safety. This kind of assistance is temporary because shelters ultimately aim to help women obtain independence and develop sources of income. Shelters aim to progress from providing resources directly for women to assisting each woman in obtaining resources for herself.

Priming is the educational endeavor in which shelter staff strive to enlighten community agencies and institutions that impact battered women. Some of these institutions have unwittingly made it harder for battered women to gain independence. For instance, in the past psychiatrists, in sessions with women and in published works, have emphasized the need for behavioral changes for battered women, rather than challenging male violence or helping the women leave the relationships (Busch and Valentine 20-24). Shelters address system-wide
hindrances that individual women do not have the time, energy, information, or resources to address. Examples here include teaching police more effective ways of dealing with domestic violence incidents and lobbying legislators to support laws that protect battered women.

Feminist theory has developed the mindset and techniques that have allowed shelters to deal effectively with individual women and the societal institutions that help or hinder their empowerment. Dewey’s theory of growth primarily supports this productive feminist account.

8. An Enhanced Theory of Growth

For application to domestic violence shelters, Dewey’s theory needs enhancement to incorporate the assessment of and response to power. His theory must examine more explicitly the impact of the social structures of power and the effects of identification with particular societal groups on individual experiences. To incorporate this kind of analysis into Dewey’s theory one must consider whether his theory needs a complete reconstruction or if simply expanding its scope is sufficient. Applying Dewey’s theory to domestic violence shelters will help with this examination.

The dissertation argues that elements in Dewey’s theory of growth do facilitate and support an analysis of power and ways to address its consequences, such that only the scope of his analysis needs revision. For instance, the reflective and deliberative component of Dewey’s theory of growth includes the examination of a broad range of contextual factors. Dewey’s work on education and the practices of the Laboratory School, where Dewey served as director, model these examinations. Within the school curricula student projects and activities introduced broadly related contexts. For instance, a cooking project introduced basic chemistry and agricultural concepts. Because Dewey’s theory already includes an examination of contexts, Deweyan theorists simply need to expand this examination in order to incorporate an analysis of
power. The examined context must also include differences in influence and control between groups and the role of group identity and status in interactions.

Additionally, the dissertation considers Dewey’s recommendations for communication with numerous and varied individuals as a way to encourage growth. Communication encourages growth because, as one begins to understand the perspectives of others, she may draw upon their experiences in reflection and deliberation. Communication also has the potential to challenge ideas and beliefs. Understanding another’s experiences and incorporating that understanding into one’s decisions play a role in efforts to address relationships of unequal power. The dissertation argues that while Dewey does not adequately address power, his suggestion to interact with others in a way that enhances understanding parallels some feminist strategies for addressing power.

These considerations suggest that Deweyan theorists may expand the content of his examinations without detriment to his work, resulting in a Deweyan approach that clearly supports the theory and practice of domestic violence shelters. Corresponding to the shelter techniques of enabling, linking, catalyzing and priming, the enhanced theory will support individual development, engaged communication, creative problem solving, and the examination of context. The techniques for problem solving and the emphasis on making improvements would justify some victims’ leaving abusive relationships, and the concern with individual circumstances in conjunction with an analysis of power would relieve victims of blame for the abuse, both aspects that are significant in feminist practice.

Feminists who have struggled for equality and opportunities may be resistant to the theory because of its grounding in uncertainty and openness to continuous reevaluation. Feminists have undertaken difficult work and some of their gains have taken a long time to
achieve; Dewey’s commitments to uncertainty may thus seem to undermine this work. Dewey’s hypotheses regarding techniques and aims, however, remain useful. Dewey’s theory of growth and the feminist theory and practice in shelters have enough in common that integration to address social problems may be fruitful in addressing the lives of battered women. With less urgency pragmatists and some feminists may then continue to dialog about truth, justification, and certainty.
CHAPTER I. JOHN DEWEY’S THEORY OF GROWTH IN LIGHT OF HIS PRAGMATIC THEORY

1. Introduction

John Dewey outlines growth as an active adaptation to new circumstances, such that one is “moving to become better” (*Democracy* 51; *Reconstruction* 180-81). He rejects that any individual can (or would want to) define fixed criteria for the ends of growth; rather, he argues, “[g]rowth itself is the only moral ‘end’” (*Reconstruction* 181). Growth, therefore, becomes the sole criterion for moral evaluation. Rather than setting up fixed ends, Dewey suggests that determining the conditions for what is good, or even better, is a continuous process of considering the context of a situation, taking into account new insights, and reconsidering old assumptions. The most successful pursuit of growth, therefore, includes a continual reevaluation of what it means to grow and adjustment to this evaluation. Dewey suggests that adding a reflective and deliberative component to one’s habits is the most likely way of facilitating and attaining further growth (which itself requires reevaluating what it means to grow and how to attain that growth) (*Democracy* 52-53).

This chapter examines three significant components of Dewey’s theory in an effort to fill out his theory of growth as a moral criterion. Each of these components is examined in turn, in an effort to develop a comprehensive view of growth as a moral criterion consistent with Dewey’s more general theory. These concepts include: (1) the limitations of human reason; (2) possibilities of human reason; and (3) the morality of social interactions. These sections will consider that Dewey’s view of the scope of human reason necessarily precludes the possibility of certainty, but does not entail that pursuing the improvement of life through reflection is impossible or not worthwhile. The chapter also examines the tentative conclusions Dewey draws from his understanding of human nature regarding the responsibility individuals have to one
another. In addition, the chapter summarizes Dewey’s theory of growth, evaluates it in relationship to the concepts listed above, and considers conditions under which growth is likely to occur and how to facilitate growth. It provides measures that may indicate whether or not growth is occurring. Finally, the chapter examines Dewey’s implementation of growth in the Laboratory School, a school he helped found while at the University of Chicago.

In summary, the chapter examines Dewey’s suggestion that growth is a moral criterion and how other components of his theory inform an individual’s understanding of the concept of growth. It then examines conditions Dewey suggests facilitate growth and how he aimed to encourage growth within an elementary school. Before beginning that examination, Section 2, “Dewey’s Understanding of Human Psychology,” provides a background to the sections that follow.

2. Dewey’s Understanding of Human Psychology

Dewey’s understanding of human psychology informs his argument that growth is a criterion of morality. The relevant psychological concepts to be explored include: habits, impulses, desires, and interests. Dewey’s perspective on habits, impulses, desires, and interests informs his argument by proving a hypotheses regarding human nature. It is these perspectives that form the tentative assumptions under which Dewey operates.

Habits guide the majority of adult human actions and are acquired dispositions that are enacted in various circumstances. Individual habits “actively seek . . . for occasions to pass into full operation” (Democracy 53). Habits are not tools passively waiting for direction from the mind or intellect to consciously coordinate action; rather, they are “energetic and dominating.” Habits are “active” and automatically “project themselves” in response to the environment (Human 22). Dewey argues for the position that habits “once formed perpetuate themselves” and
“stimulate, inhibit, intensify, weaken, select, concentrate and organize . . . [impulses] into their own likeness. They create out of the formless void of impulses a world made in their own image” (88).

Habits are primarily non-reflective, but that does not mean they are innate, predetermined, or fixed in some way. Habits are resilient but malleable. Dewey argues, “we usually acquire habits that are settled to the point of routine. But unless and until we get completely fossilized, we can break old habits and form new ones” (*Ethics* 1932 305-6). An individual’s habits have the potential to change over time in response to her environment, to new circumstances, and to her own reflection. The non-reflective nature of habits allows the individual to accomplish even complex tasks without focusing on individual details. This allows an individual to reflect and change habits without the total disruption of her other functions. Habits are the “adjustment to an environment which at the time we are not concerned with modifying, and which supplies a leverage to our active habits” (*Democracy* 52). For instance, the habits involved in walking allow one to respond automatically to the terrain in getting from one place to another and at the same time to contemplate what one will do upon arrival. Dewey suggests that “[a]t any given time, certain habits must be taken for granted as a matter of course” in order to learn new habits or modify others (*Human* 30-31).

An individual has many habits that are then applied to a variety of circumstances. For instance, individuals may develop the habit of carefully monitoring their language in a work setting and be less careful in a social setting. Habits include a wide range of activities, including how one approaches life (for instance, spontaneously or with careful organization, arrogantly or modestly) and the “modes of thought” or methods “of observation and reflection” that

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4 John Dewey and James Hayden Tufts are coauthors of two editions of *Ethics*, one in 1908 and one in 1932. Though both claimed to embrace the entire work, Dewey wrote the middle sections and Tufts the first and third sections. The dissertation will refer to Dewey when referencing the middle sections and Dewey and Tufts when referencing the first or third sections to indicate Tufts’ authorship and Dewey’s endorsement.
characterize reasoning (*Democracy* 53). Habits guide such a large scope of activity that they actually “constitute the self” (*Human* 21). These habits have such “a hold upon us because we are the habit[s]” (21). Dewey continues:

> Were it not for the continued operation of all habits in every act, no such thing as character could exist. There would be simply a bundle, an untied bundle at that, of isolated acts. Character is the interpenetration of habits. If each habit existed in an insulated compartment and operated without affecting or being affected by others, character would not exist. (29-30)

Habits include control of one’s responses and movements, but also the skill with which one interacts with the world. For instance, the habit of successfully walking or building bridges involves the individuals’ “ease, deftness, and accuracy” in their own movements and thoughts about the activity, as well as their “economical and effective control of the environment which they secure” (*Democracy* 51). A better walker will have coordinated control of her body, but that includes navigating various conditions in nature and being able to negotiate multiple terrains. A better bridge builder has technical skills to construct a design, calculate costs, and choose materials. This all depends, however, on understanding the factors impacting the environment: how various building materials and terrains interact, the uses of the bridge, the availability of materials, etc. Habits guide action, are basic components of character, and influence the success of our interaction with the environment.

An impulsive act contains the potential to disrupt habits. Impulses are immediate non-reflective responses and may not indicate anything about an individual’s character. For example, Dewey argues that a person who feels guilty about a thought that “popped into his head,” needs not worry because what is important is what is done with the thought, not its mere
occurrence (*Ethics* 1932 188). Impulsive or instinctive actions are spontaneous acts, arising unreflectively out of the wide range of possible human behaviors; these acts do not originate from habit or cultural influence, but from prior innate faculties. One might suggest an analysis of these impulses, hoping to show that humans are intrinsically altruistic or intrinsically selfish. Dewey argues, however, that impulses do not conform to a particular temperament. The analysis of impulses will show humans naturally conduct a wide range of behaviors, interpretable in a variety of ways (*Human* 66-67). Habits guide most activity, but may be interrupted by impulses.

Another important component of human nature is desire. Desire is directed toward a particular object. An impulsive response can be quickly converted into a desire (for instance, a person feels hungry, then thinks that the leftover pizza in the refrigerator will satisfy that hunger, producing a desire for the pizza and directing action toward attaining the pizza). Desires arise both instantaneously and through reflection on approved ends (*Ethics* 1932 187). For instance, a person may be hungry and so desire pizza, but may also be concerned with her health. Reflection can thus turn the initial desire for pizza toward something more healthy. This desire drives coordination of action to find something else to eat.

Desires are strong forces and, in pursuit of a desired end, one narrows her focus and disregards those things that seem to be distractions. This is useful. If one tried to consider every factor of a situation, she would never attain any goals. Desire focuses action on attaining a particular end at the expense of other ends and of sustained reflection. This focus has the potential to be blinding: one may disregard significant factors or ideas that are relevant to the pursued end. Even those desires so immediately connected with impulse have the potential to “swell and swell until they crowd out all thought of remote and comprehensive goods” (*Ethics* 1932 208). To ward against the monopolizing power of desires, particularly those one may later
regret, an individual may cultivate desires and habits toward approved ends (*Ethics* 1932 187-89). For instance, an individual may cultivate the desire to be healthy by eating with friends who are concerned about their health and by looking for healthy, enjoyable foods. This develops the habit of eating well and reinforces it through the knowledge of multiple healthy alternatives to pizza. Dewey suggests that “fostering at every opportunity direct enjoyment of the kind of goods reflection approves” will make those goods more likely to guide action even when conflicting desires arise (210). Repeatedly participating in something one enjoys will make the desire stronger (188-89). In this case, enjoying food with friends, trying new foods, and keeping alternatives in the refrigerator all cultivate this desire.

A series of interconnected and persistent desires arise when one develops an interest. The example above traces the beginning steps toward cultivating an interest in healthy food. An “[i]nterest is regard, concern, solicitude” for an object or activity that unifies action (291). An interest will lead one to develop habits that facilitate its pursuit. For instance, someone with an interest in taking photographs may travel to new places to take pictures, search out the works of other photographers, and practice new techniques. This interest in photography both motivates her to practice and study, and unites her action toward becoming more proficient in taking photographs.

Interests direct activity toward their fulfillment, thus influencing habit and desire. Individuals may cultivate desires through the sustained pursuit of and attention to the object of an interest. The desires associated with particular interests are interconnected and support one another. Interests unify multiple desires around a particular end. Without interests, desires are isolated, and each pursues a different goal. The focused, as opposed to vague, content of interests allows desire to easily attach to them. Reflection contains the possibility of
transforming, either encouraging or discouraging, a specific desire. Examples of interests may include (for an artist) painting, (for a judge) making equitable decisions, and (for a doctor) helping the sick (Ethics 1932 290). Interests provide a unifying end general enough to be sustained over time, but specific enough to be a captivating pursuit. Individuals may develop sustained interests that are part of one’s life in multiple ways in “calm moments of reflection” and that will then guide action in the face of competing impulses or desires (208). When a person nurtures an interest and cultivates desires around that interest, habits develop aimed at fulfilling the interest. Since habits constitute character and the self, these interests have a significant impact on identity and individuals’ pursuits (295-96).

From this account, one gets a picture of an individual primarily driven by habits, but interruption of those habits may provide the impetus for reflection. Desires direct and capture attention, but an individual may cultivate desires toward particular ends. Finally, interests may develop related habits and desires. These psychological components inform the hypotheses on which Dewey basis his theory of growth.

3. Components of Deweyan Theory Relevant to Considerations of Growth

Dewey holds that the search for complete certainty is futile; however, that does not mean the search for better methods of problem-solving and for evaluating consequences is also futile. What it does mean is that a Deweyan criterion for pursuing and evaluating morality must be flexible and open-ended. Dewey suggests that taking advantage of and seeking disruptions, developing flexible habits, and participating in interaction with others, are methods likely to improve problem-solving. Growth calls for the best use of these methods. In addition, Dewey holds that the Good, Right, and Virtuous are factors that arise out of human experience and interaction. Deweyan morality incorporates critical reflection upon these factors. Understanding
Dewey’s views regarding the limits of human reason, the possibilities for better problem-solving, and the critical assessment of moral factors, will enrich one’s understanding of Deweyan growth as a criterion and model for making and evaluating changes and decisions.

John Dewey and James Hayden Tufts model the criterion of growth on three psychological stages of conduct. The proponents of this scheme characterize the first psychological stage as non-reflective activity, which includes instinctive acts and those behaviors uncritically adopted from one’s culture. When these prove inadequate, the second stage, conscious attention to and reflection on one’s activity may occur. This stage may include deliberation and struggle in examining past or current behavior and in seeking and evaluating new behavior. After evaluating future possibilities, conscious attention is applied to adopting new, considered behaviors. The last stage is the habitual enacting of the approved behaviors when they no longer require continual reflection. Thus, the last stage also consists of unreflective activity, though the activity has developed through one’s own consideration, rather than instinct or unreflective adoption from others. So, one begins with unreflective activities, goes through a period of evaluation of those activities and possibilities for the future, and finally adopts new habits. Dewey and Tufts argue that in moral development one may go through this process again and again. One may submit the unreflective habits adopted in the third stage to conscious attention and reflection, thus, beginning the process anew. In addition to one’s own behaviors, an individual may also evaluate and alter environmental conditions.

Growth suggests a continual process that, particularly when modeled as a series of repetitive stages, will embrace the continual reevaluation needed in the midst of a precarious

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5 In the first edition of *Ethics* the psychological stages of conduct include: (1) instinctive activity; (2) consciously directed activity; and (3) habitual activity (that has been adopted from the consciously directed activity) (1908 42). The second edition of *Ethics* contains a similar description of the psychological stages of conduct, including: (1) biologically or need-driven activity; (2) activity of one’s culture adopted unreflectively; and (3) activity chosen after one’s own reflection (1932 12). Above, I combine these psychological models to best draw on the strengths of each.
human experience. This highly adaptable process will also keep at the forefront the recognition that changes do happen and new guides for action may be required. At the same time growth does not suggest simply change, but change both directed toward something better and grounded in an understanding of human nature, the environment, the individual, and the moral commitments that arise out of experience. The remainder of the chapter examines these components in Dewey’s theory and how they inform his theory of growth.

3.1. Nature of Human Experience and the Limits of Reason

This section examines the changing and precarious nature of human experiences that suggest to Dewey the limits of human knowledge and the need to evaluate assertions with open-ended criteria. He understands changing conditions to characterize much of human experience, and individuals as engaged and embedded within their circumstances. Present circumstances limit individuals, with the result that reason may address current problems, but does not provide resources for certain or universally applied claims.

On a very simple level, seeking complete certainty is not justified because often the beliefs, traditions, norms, etc., that individuals, religions, nations, and other groups, have accepted as certain are later rejected or reformulated. This serves as a warning to be cautious in presuming access to certainty. Dewey argues:

We live in a world which is an impressive and irresistible mixture of sufficiencies, tight completenesses, order, recurrences which make possible prediction and control, and singularities, ambiguities, uncertain possibilities, processes going on to consequences as yet indeterminate. (Experience and Nature 47)

In light of this understanding of the world, claims to certainty overstep the bounds of what is justifiable. Methodologically, Dewey and other pragmatists are suspicious of the Cartesian
approach, where one begins with complete doubt and aims to build a knowledge that is certain. Pragmatists argue that attempting to rid oneself of all biases and previously held assumptions is impossible because “[w]hile one is doubting some specific belief, other beliefs are taken for granted” (Eames xv). In addition, systems built in this way have shown to maintain biases and produce assumptions relevant only to particular contexts, providing their adherents with a false sense of certainty.

Another reason for Dewey’s hesitation regarding ultimate or fixed principles is that circumstances are not duplicable. Each circumstance has unique elements, and principles or rules developed in the past may not work in the future (*Human* 165). Not only are individual circumstances unique, but (particularly in the present age) technology is rapidly changing the way individuals interact, which in turn has an impact on the factors of moral reflection in decision making (*Ethics* 1932 283). For instance, the industrial revolution, through “improved methods of communication and transportation,” was able to break “down barriers of language, tradition, and political isolation between peoples” (150). The result of this today is that individuals interact with a much larger number of people, but on a less intimate level. This change in relations between people alters the extent to which individuals can attend to each person they encounter, potentially a factor of moral reflection. That individuals are able to devote less time to each person they encounter, may alter what morality requires. Dewey endorses consideration and understanding of the principles of the past, but argues that “social situations alter; and it is also foolish not to observe how old principles actually work under new conditions, and not to modify them so that they will be more effectual instruments in judging new cases” (*Human* 165). He argues that principles develop from “like points” and that from “resembling experiences general ideals develop . . . through language, instruction, and tradition”
Generalities are useful in decision-making; however, generalities are useful only as guides, not as obligatory principles (Human 164-69). A related concern is that it is possible for human understanding to develop. Static principles imply knowledge is complete and discourage the search for better understanding and reevaluation. The possibility exists of making new connections or of seeing circumstances in a new light. Additional or new understanding may alter the way one thinks about or classifies circumstances or events, particularly regarding their moral significance (Ethics 1932 282-83). Not only is this a reason to be skeptical of claims that seem or feel certain, but is also a reason to search continually to improve understanding.

Not only do things change, but human experience is an engaged process between an individual and her environment—the physical world and other individuals. Neither individuals nor the environment are separate or fixed entities that interact without influencing the others. The development of individual character does not occur prior to experience in some way, rather, it develops in response to experiences and interactions. Dewey claims:

The structure of whatever is had by way of immediate qualitative presences is found in the recurrent modes of interaction taking place between what we term organism, on one side, and environment, on the other. This interaction is the primary fact, and it constitutes a trans-action. (“Conduct” 220)

The trans-active nature of the relationship between humans and their environment has the potential to alter morally relevant factors. An individual operating under a fixed moral theory may miss this possibility. Dewey suggests that all experiences are trans-active. In any interaction the individual:

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6 In this passage, Dewey uses the Kantian seeking universality in principles as an example of his criticism. However, these criticisms may also apply to something such as mainstreaming in education where the same curriculum is presumed to be beneficial for all children.
brings . . . forces that play a part in the interaction. . . . There is no experience in which the human contribution is not a factor in determining what actually happens. . . . In an experience, things and events belonging to the world, physical and social, are transformed through the human context they enter, while the live creature is changed and developed through its intercourse with things previously external to it. (Art 251)

Certainty cannot be claimed when human interaction with the environment potentially modifies each participant. Theory must adapt to this possibility. The individual cannot simply learn through observation, but must recognize that her participation in learning or knowing impacts the environment (Bentley and Dewey 67-68).

The embeddedness of human experience is also significant because individual actions and thoughts are responses to and in interaction with what individuals encounter. Reflection is at most problem-solving or an effort to enhance experience; it is not a point of access to the absolute. Individuals do not have access to the application of reason beyond experience. The intellect or moral status of humans does not separate them from the interactions of the world, nor provide them with a special outsider perspective. Humans are embodied, and a part of the processes of the world. Dewey argues:

Action is response; it is adaptation, adjustment. There is no such thing as sheer self-activity possible—because all activity takes place in a medium, in a situation, and with reference to its conditions. But, again, no such thing as imposition . . . [or] as insertion of truth from without is possible. (The Child 290-91)

Individuals are in transaction with their environment: they are responsive to their experiences; they direct action and problem-solving toward specific ends; and their actions and reflections are serial—they do not reflect or act separately from their ongoing and responsive
environment. This is significant for its impact on the scope of human reason. Dewey argues that individuals are problem-solvers and that they anticipate their impact on the future. Their foiled expectations and desires inspire reflection as part of the process of influencing and understanding future experience (Reconstruction 159-62). Reflection serves as “an instrument of adjustment or adaptation to a particular environing situation. Its meaning, its character, its force, is known when, and only when, it is considered as an arrangement for meeting the conditions involved in some specific situation” (Studies 310). In a co-authored work, Arthur F. Bentley and Dewey contend “man and his doings and transactions have to be viewed as facts within the natural cosmos” (55 n. 8).

Despite this trans-active relation, some theorists have started with an isolated individual, such that the individual is independent and able to exert her own individuality without influence from others. Dewey suggests that people are embedded within their social circumstances, evident in the impact of the social customs on individual development.

Individuals develop based on responses to their surroundings and within the context of society. Dewey suggests this “fact is accentuated and made fundamental by the fact of infancy—the fact that each human being begins life completely dependent on others” who are already embedded in social traditions and customs (Human 60). He goes on to say that, while “individuality always colors responsive activity and hence modifies the form which custom assumes in its personal reproductions,” it is not separate or removed from the environment to which it responds (60). Dewey is suggesting that individual development and adoption of habits only occur within an environment that influences and shapes those very processes. When the individual comes into contact with the group (specifically when an infant is born), the “activities of the group are already there, and some assimilation of its own acts to their pattern is a
prerequisite of a share therein, and hence of having any part of what is going on” (*Human* 43).

Dewey describes custom as so powerfully ingrained that we often do not recognize its influence. He says:

> [O]ur tendency to ignore the influence of tradition as a controlling factor is itself very largely due to the fact that when we begin to reflect, to invent, and to project new methods and aims, tradition has already done its work so completely that we take it for granted without thinking about it, so that we deliberate and project within limits set by custom. ("Custom" 414)

This further illustrates the extent to which individuals exist in context. The social circumstances influence an individual’s methods for theory, solutions, and aims. Habits and ways of framing the world are not determined by the environment, but they are responses to and lie deep within the influence of that environment.

Dewey describes human experience as an engaged process between individuals and their natural and social environment. Particular circumstances and context prevent an individual from having access to an external or outsider perspective and limit their ability to problem-solve and reflect to within that context. Dewey’s diagnosis of the human possibilities for knowledge may seem dire. Uncertainty accompanies every action, and context limits the individual. He argues that some philosophers have worked under the hope that through the use of thought “men might escape from the perils of uncertainty” by finding a realm not plagued by unforeseen and unexpected consequences (*Quest* 6-7). Dewey characterizes much of philosophy as a “[q]uest for complete certainty” (7). However, theorists have only found certainty “in pure knowing” (7). In order to escape the uncertainty that comes from the unknown, philosophers retreat to a realm of pure thought disconnected from the experiences of life, encouraging a disregard for the
physical or practical aspects of life. This retreat leaves philosophy disconnected from or only remotely connected with actual experience (*Quest* 7). In addition, Dewey argues that philosophy in effort to convince “men of the truth of doctrines which are no longer to be accepted upon the say-so of custom and social authority, but which also are not capable of empirical verification” would futilely “magnify the signs of rigorous thought and rigid demonstration . . . [through] abstract definition and ultra-scientific argumentation” (*Reconstruction* 91).\(^7\) Dewey argues that instead philosophy needs to accept uncertainty and to recognize its place within historical and embedded traditions. Tentatively, then, philosophy may assess and help clarify, but must recognize that at “no point or place is there any jump outside empirical, natural objects and their relations” (*Reconstruction* 94; *Experience and Nature* 61). Dewey explains:

> We are here concerned with the fact that it is the intricate mixture of the stable and precarious, the fixed and the unpredictably novel, the assured and the uncertain, in existence which sets mankind upon the love of wisdom which forms philosophy. Yet too commonly, although in a great variety of technical modes, the result of the search is converted into a metaphysics which denies or conceals from acknowledgment the very characters of existence which initiated it, and which give significance to its conclusions. (*Experience and Nature* 55)

Dewey warns against philosophers who aim to establish certainty and thus compromise the possibility of its application.

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\(^7\) Dewey suggests that a wide range of theorists, including “Plato and Democritus, St. Thomas and Spinoza, Aristotle and Kant, Descartes and Comte, Haeckel and Mrs. Eddy,” separate “a superior true realm of being and lower illusory, insignificant or phenomenal realm” that does not allow one to grapple with change and unpredictability as conditions of experience (*Experience and Nature* 55). Authors of Introductions to volumes of *The Collected Works of John Dewey* comment on this further. Stephen Toulmin suggests that Dewey is specifically addressing both empiricist and idealist theories of knowledge for not recognizing the role that gaining knowledge is an active process—a process of not simply observing, but “operating on the world.” Dewey traces this “spectator model of knowing” back to the classical Greek philosophers (Toulmin x-xiv). Sidney Hook suggests that Dewey reads “most regnant philosophies of the past as attempts to glorify the certain, the fixed, and the eternal and to degrade the probable, the contingent, and the temporal” (Introduction x).
The changing nature of experience, the possibility for development, and the limitations of human perspective, suggest to Dewey that a moral criterion must be flexible and adaptable to various modes of change. Growth will have to be open-ended and not prescribe a set of fixed ends. This does not mean that individuals are without any guidance in what Dewey means by growth. Rather, he suggests that individuals or communities may turn to reason and reflection to help address uncertainty and the precarious, and that it is possible to develop techniques—though not fixed principles—to guide. The next section will address the possibilities for reason and reflection within the confines of the limits of knowledge just identified.

3.2. Inquiry – Possibilities for Justification
(in Light of the Nature of Human Experience and the Limits of Reason)

In response to “a world which is an impressive and irresistible mixture” of both the stable and the precarious, Dewey admits that deliberation will not always solve dilemmas or problems and that reflection does not guarantee the improvement of circumstances (Experience and Nature 47). However, in response to this, he suggests that the “choice is between the development of a technique by which intelligence will become an intervening partner and a continuation of a regime of accident, waste and distress” (Human 189). He argues experience shows that intelligence often serves as a successful “intervening partner,” making its pursuit worthwhile (189). Reasoning must recognize the precarious and stable. Dewey argues that to “be intelligently experimental is but to be conscious of this intersection of natural conditions so as to profit by it instead of being at its mercy” (Experience and Nature 63).

Dewey argues that individuals can make improvements and develop guidelines for action through reflection on particulars, examination of the contextual aspects of a situation, and generalizations of ideas tested in experience. Emphasizing particulars and the unique contexts of

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8 This is said in a discussion of primarily economic concerns.
situations avoids the need for an overarching explanation applicable to all circumstances.

Grounding in particulars also means that theorizing does not demand an outsider or god’s-eye-view perspective that Dewey argues is simply not accessible.

Individuals should ground methods for improving life in the circumstances of the present, as experience prevents making universal or completely certain claims. However, more general claims may serve as guides for action. Dewey suggests one direct reason toward the problems that impact one’s experience. He argues that his method:

accepts at full value the fact that reflective thinking transforms confusion, ambiguity and discrepancy into illumination, definiteness and consistency. But it also points to the contextual situation in which thinking occurs. It notes the starting point is the actually problematic, and that the problematic phase resides in some actual and specifiable situation. (Experience and Nature 61)

He also argues that this kind of contextual focus allows reflection to address what is of concern to the individual. He contends:

What is going on in the environment is the concern of the organism; not what is already ‘there’ in accomplished and finished form. In so far as the issue of what is going on may be affected by intervention of the organism, the moving event is a challenge which stretches the agent-patient to meet what is coming. (“Need for a Recovery” 9)

The agent should direct her attention toward what impacts her environment and on potentially malleable conditions.

Secondly, Dewey suggests refining skills of reason and reflection to address the problems one encounters and to guide action toward a better future. The generalizations, analyses, and reflections still serve a valuable role, but as guides or hypotheses to be tested. These guidelines
are not “fixed rules for deciding doubtful cases” (*Human* 165). Rather, Dewey argues one may use principles as “instrumentalities for their investigation, methods by which the net value of past experiences is rendered available for present scrutiny of new perplexities. Then it will also follow that they are hypotheses to be tested and revised by their further working” (165-66). Dewey suggests the method of inquiry as a way to address current problems and to develop and test guides to action. In addition, he argues that his method of inquiry is able to take into account the precarious nature of human experience and to take advantage of intelligence as a resource. The process of inquiry includes identifying a problem or potential solution, considering and evaluating possible solutions and their consequences, and, once a solution is implemented, testing the application of that solution in experience. This section examines these stages of inquiry in more detail and investigates Dewey’s general suggestions for enhancing inquiry. It also considers Deweyan growth as a process that calls one to to take advantage of and encourage inquiry.

### 3.2.1. Processes of Inquiry

In light of these concerns, Dewey suggests “inquiry” as a method for problem-solving. Inquiry is “the controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in its constituent distinctions and relations as to convert the elements of the original situation into a unified whole” (*Logic* 108, emphasis removed). Identifying the situation as problematic and in need of resolution is the first step of inquiry (111). One must set out the terms of the situation to help identify the problem and determine boundaries for potential solutions. Some factors do not yield to individual control, and these “constitute the terms of the problem, because they are conditions that must be reckoned with or taken account of in any
relevant solution that is proposed” (*Logic* 113). Once an individual (or group) determines the terms of the problem, she (or they) may develop and deliberate on possible solutions.⁹

The methods of developing possibilities are significant since immediate responses may not lead to a useful plan of action (114-16). Steven Fesmire argues that Dewey encourages using one’s imagination, meaning “the capacity to concretely perceive what is before us in light of what could be,” to develop possible solutions creatively (65). Dewey argues that “imaginative vision elicits the possibilities that are interwoven within the texture of the actual” (*Art* 348). An individual may thus perceive the potential in a situation. In addition, Dewey suggests that as one considers a situation, possible solutions will present themselves through impulses (*Logic* 113). These ideas and possibilities “occur at first simply as suggestions; suggestions [that] just spring up, flash upon us, occur to us” that individuals then form into possible solutions (113-14). It is important to keep in mind that the factors of the situation one considers and the formulation of hypotheses are in service to finding a solution. Dewey describes them as “operational” or as tools in solving the initial unsettledness (117, 520).

In the process of developing and evaluating various options regarding a situation, conducting “dramatic rehearsals” is an initial technique for weeding out some possibilities. In a dramatic rehearsal, one evaluates a solution based on imagining both the consequences of, and one’s own internal responses to, those consequences (*Human* 132). Those outcomes that are pleasing in their anticipation are considered in more detail. The pleasant response to a particular option does not mean that it is automatically the best, or even that it is justifiable. Rather, as Jennifer Welchman explains, the pleasant response anticipated reflects that the action under consideration would fulfill some good for the individual and is thus worthy of further consideration. The “subjective experience of the ‘fitness’ of the plan to the disposition is a

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⁹ It is evident that Dewey endorses beginning with and emphasizing particular situations.
feeling of pleasure,” which can arise simply as a manifestation of finding a possible solution (Human 161, 177-79).

Individuals or groups may then evaluate potential solutions through deliberation. Dewey and Tufts describe deliberation as “intelligent attention and care to the quality of an act in view of its consequences” and suggest that it is “constituted by scrupulous attentiveness to the potentialities of any act or proposed acts” (Ethics 1932 272-73). Deliberation on possible solutions means considering possible actions to take or changes to make in light of their “anticipated consequences” (Logic 113).

Deliberation, for Dewey, is not calculation of future emotions, but is an attentive process to present responses and options and their connections to future experiences. Dewey says:

[B]y constant watchfulness concerning the tendency of acts, by noting disparities between former judgments and actual outcomes, and tracing that part of disparity that was due to deficiency and excess in disposition, we come to know the meaning of present acts, and to guide them in the light of that meaning. (Human 144)

One may consider each possibility in terms of its impact on dispositions and habits, its effect on the future (Welchman 178), and its impact on current meaning and significance.10 When consequences and responses are unknown, an individual may evaluate them through experimentation. This process includes testing options fully in experience; testing some part of the option, when time or some other constraint prevents full testing; or testing possibilities in the imagination. When a person cannot conduct her own experimentation with various possibilities, other kinds of experimental evidence, such as case studies, can assist in decision procedures (178-79). When an agent tests hypotheses, she considers their potential consequences and may

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10 This will be discussed further in section 3.3.1 “The Good.”
alter the hypotheses in the process of reflection. She then evaluates various consequences to determine which option to pursue.

The function and success of potential solutions depends on their implementation and outcomes. Dewey argues:

[T]he final test of its possession of these properties [functionality and ability to resolve the situation] is determined when it actually functions—that is, when it is put into operation so as to institute by means of observations facts not previously observed, and is then used to organize them with other facts into a coherent whole. (Logic 114)

If the implementation of a suggestion does not resolve the indeterminacy of a situation, a new process of inquiry begins, now including the results of previous reflection and action.

Dewey suggests that using the process of inquiry to solve problems and generate hypothetical guides to action will likely improve life. The criterion for morality must take advantage of these possibilities. In the effort to make improvements, Deweyan growth encourages using, testing, and revising the methods of inquiry. Dewey’s understanding of the possibilities for human understanding in solving problems and improving life inform his open-ended theory of growth.

Inquiry is a process of using reflection and deliberation to solve problems and improve circumstances. Dewey calls for the rigorous use of inquiry, which fully recognizes the limits of humans as embedded in and engaged with their environment. Previous experience is available as a tool to guide this process. Deweyan recommendations for and evaluations of growth are grounded in taking advantage of this understanding of inquiry. The next section examines general strategies and techniques that Dewey suggests enhance inquiry.

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11 In contrast to utilitarian theory that is oriented toward calculating the best consequences to pursue, Dewey is advocating a method oriented toward solving specific problematic situations. The utilitarian calculates the best course of action, where Dewey is arguing for a position that considers consequences and past experience in an effort to “resolve entanglements in existing activity, restore continuity, recover harmony” (Human 139).
3.2.2. Recommendations for Enhancing Inquiry

The pursuit of clear and unclouded solutions to problems is difficult. Habitual behavior and individual desires draw attention away from potentially relevant factors. In addition, that (1) circumstances may change; (2) new understandings may develop; and (3) individuals are embedded within their circumstances, limit individuals’ abilities to make epistemologically justifiable claims. In other words, not only are individuals likely to miss relevant factors, but the relevant factors may change. Multiple changing and potentially elusive factors for consideration make openness to new ideas and experiences for reflection significant. A difficulty in the pursuit of growth is determining what one is missing, blind to, or biased against. To counter these limitations, Dewey suggests strategies for enhancing inquiry (specifically, taking advantage of and seeking disruptions, developing flexible habits, and increasing sociability).

3.2.2.1. Take Advantage of Disruptions

Non-reflective habits that maintain day-to-day functioning determine much of an individual’s life. Interruptions in these habits have the potential to lead to reflection on circumstances and to help identify a problem or improvable situation. When that occurs an individual may reflect on potential solutions. Interruptions include impulses, unexpected events, a new perspective introduced in conversation, encountering a new method, or having a new experience. These interruptions have the potential to initiate conscious reflection toward identifying potential problems and considering possible solutions.

Section 2 of this chapter on “Human Psychology” described impulses as immediate reactions to events to which one may not have a response—thus, disrupting habits. The disruption may require reflection in order to determine what to do, thus providing the opportunity for further reflection on habits and the environment. Unpredictable events may
cause similar disruptions. This disruption may require reflection, as a new circumstance, for which habits are not prepared, necessitates a new response. Dewey explains that “untoward circumstance[s]” present new conditions to which an individual cannot simply respond as she has in the past. An encounter with the unexpected or unfamiliar “gets [an individual] into trouble from which only observation and invention [can] extricate” her (Human 121-22). The interruption of habits can lead one to see circumstances as in some way improvable.

Additionally, interaction and negotiation between habits themselves may result in a disruptive event. Certain habits may guide similar circumstances. However, no two circumstances are identical, and an individual’s own habits may come into conflict when more than one habit guides action in a particular circumstance. This may lead to the disruption of habitual action that is then followed by reflection (Human 38-39; Hildreth 56).

Potentially a variety of additional events and circumstances lead to reflection. Dewey suggests that the process of recognizing a situation as improvable can begin simply “with a wish, an emotional reaction against the present state of things and a hope for something different” (Human 161).

Each individual develops habits in how she deals with and responds to impulses and other disruptions in habits. Dewey advises people to develop habits that take advantage of these disruptions. He alleges that impulses “may be drawn upon continuously and moderately” in the service of reflection on habits (73). An individual may incorporate impulses into their life in an uncontrolled and disruptive way, or “organically” and smoothly in deliberation. When the latter occurs, Dewey says, “we call it learning or educative growth” (73). Thus, when they serve as the impetus for reflection and deliberation, individuals may use impulses and other disruptions as a step toward Deweyan growth. The indeterminate situation presents something unexpected and
the habits guiding what one does and how one responds to this disruption may take several forms. For instance, one may return to habits developed prior to the disruption, rely on and follow the advice of an authority figure, consult one’s intuitions or already existing habits, or call on experimentation and reflection. Dewey does not expand upon these responses, but they do highlight possible ways of responding to disruptions. He advises that one develop habits that deal with disruptions experimentally and reflectively, suggesting that disruptions provide an opportunity to reflect on one’s current habits, ideas, presuppositions, methods, relations, etc. This reflection may take its impetus from the habits of an individual, aspects of a situation, or collectively from aspects of the community and culture (Human 125-26). The reflection may be brief and consist merely of altering one’s immediate course of action; or, as Dewey encourages, the habitual response to disruption may lead to deeper reflection on the various factors of the problematic situation. Not only may one learn to take advantage of the disruptions encountered, but one may seek out disruptions to gain additional opportunities for reflection.

3.2.2.2. Seek Disruptions through Interaction

An agent may actively seek to expose herself to disruptions or to situations that will challenge her ideas. Dewey suggests that an individual expose herself to circumstances that will challenge habits and that she develop responses that will make the most of these challenges. Interaction with others is a potential source of refining thought and of collaboration. This interaction may help an agent consider ideas and experiences in a new light and develop an alternative interpretation of circumstances. In most meaningful communication, expressing

12 Charles Sanders Peirce, often considered the father of Pragmatism, argues these are the habitual methods people use to determine or settle belief (4:358-87).
13 Human Nature and Conduct is about both social and individual behavior. Dewey asserts that “the oscillation between impulse arrested and frozen in rigid custom and impulse isolated and undirected is seen most conspicuously when epochs of conservatism and revolutionary ardor alternate. But the same phenomenon is repeated on a smaller scale in individuals” (117).
oneself to others requires imagining an idea from another’s perspective. Dewey describes this imagining as “considering what points of contact it has with the life of another so that it may be . . . [put] into such form that he can appreciate its meaning” (*Democracy* 8). Both the acts of expressing an idea and receiving feedback from the listener may lead to reflection, as one gets a glimpse of another’s point of view. The receiver of the communication “shares in what another has thought and felt and in so far, meagerly or amply, has his own attitude modified” (8-9).

Communication and interaction do not rely solely on the exchange of language, but also include physical responses, vocal inflections, and limitations created by the environment, historical and cultural influences, etc. Through communication and the exchange of ideas, an individual may refine her ideas and develop new, more fruitful ideas to pursue (Dewey and Tufts, 1932 361-62). Thus, communication potentially serves as a kind of refinement process for an individual’s thought, such that social participation is a way of seeing one’s own projects and ideas in a new light. Dewey and Tufts argue:

[I]n a genuine conversation the ideas of one are corrected and changed by what others say . . . What he gains is an expansion of experience; he learns; even if previous ideas are in the main confirmed, yet in the degree in which there is a genuine mutual give and take they are seen in a new light, depended and extended in meaning, and there is the enjoyment of enlargement of experience, of growth of capacity. (1932 346)

Both the act of expressing oneself to another and the receiving of her response have the potential to lead to reflection on the ideas expressed and to expose oneself to ideas not yet considered.

Dewey endorses communication “in which there is a joint interest, a common interest, so that one is eager to give and the other to take. It contrasts with telling or stating things simply for the sake of impressing them upon another” (*Democracy* 225-26). Realizing the potential of
communication requires a deep sense of communication, one where people exchange ideas and have an interest in deliberation. Through this kind of exchange, deliberation and reflection continue to develop. Communication “enlarges and enlightens experience; [and] it stimulates and enriches imagination” (Democracy 9). Interaction enhances the development of possibilities and their evaluation. Dewey goes on to say that communication “creates responsibility for the accuracy and vividness of statement and thought;” communication not only provides an expansion of possibilities, but it also holds individuals accountable for their ideas (9).

Communication between homogeneous individuals or groups provides less benefit than communication between more diverse groups. Dewey argues, “uniformity and unanimity in culture is rather repellent,” suggesting that the “richness and the attractiveness of social institutions depend upon cultural diversity among separate units” (“Principle” 288). The more individuals who participate in a common interest, such that:

- each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down of barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity. There more numerous and varied points of contact denote a greater diversity of stimuli to which an individual has to respond; they consequently put a premium on variation in his action. They secure a liberation of powers which remain suppressed as long as the incitations to action are partial. (Democracy 93)

Interaction with different kinds of people exposes one to new ideas that challenge thought and potentially refine ideas. Dewey encourages this kind of exposure in order to refine thought.

Seeking disruptions provides additional opportunities for challenging ideas and the disruption that may lead to reflection because “[d]iversity of stimulation means novelty, and
novelty means challenge to thought” (*Democracy* 90). Dewey describes interaction with numerous and different kinds of people as an impetus for this reflection. The mutual give and take between participants most effectively leads to critical reflection. This kind of exchange with a variety of people is an important way to enhance inquiry, enabling a person to seek and take advantage of disruptions by means of flexible habits.

### 3.2.2.3. Develop Flexible Habits

Dewey suggests that developing flexible habits will enhance the effectiveness of inquiry. Flexible habits adapt to the insight gained from deliberation and reflection. Dewey warns that “what makes a habit bad is enslavement to old ruts” (*Human* 48). To maintain the possibility of growth, one must remain adaptable and capable of taking in and assessing new situations, thus, recognizing the possibility for change. Routine habits prevent this adaptability because they “put an end to plasticity” and “mark the close of the power to vary,” which is stifling to growth (*Democracy* 49). This flexibility or plasticity is “the power to retain from one experience something which is of avail in coping with the difficulties of a later situation”—the “power to modify actions on the basis of the results of prior experiences” (49). Developing flexible habits also means the ability to develop new habits (51). Dewey recommends the adoption of flexible habits that allow one to carry out the necessities of life, but that also recognize and embrace the possibility of change. These habits direct action when encountering a disruption or a new experience.

Flexible habits incorporate reflection and assist one in seeing situations as potentially improvable and in investigating further possibilities. Dewey contends that “[o]nly an environment which secures the full use of intelligence in the process of forming habits can counteract” stagnation. He continues:
But this fact only indicates the need of persistent care to see to it that the function of intelligence is invoked to its maximum possibility. The shortsighted method, which falls back on mechanical routine and repetition to secure external efficiency of habit, motor skill without accompanying thought, marks a deliberate closing in of surroundings upon growth. (Democracy 54)

Flexible habits allow one to adapt to changes and to implement solutions developed in inquiry. Without the ability to adapt, habits remain stagnant and growth cannot occur. Dewey suggests, “the intellectual element in a habit fixes the relation of the habit to varied and elastic use, and hence to continued growth” (53).

Flexibility in habits allows an agent to incorporate reflection into routine activities and to adapt to new circumstances and understanding. Dewey suggests that, in general, increasing one’s ability to take advantage of and seek disruptions in one’s habits and to adapt flexibly to new circumstances will enhance both opportunities for and the ability to go through processes of inquiry. Lastly, sociability, the subject of the next section, has the potential to enhance inquiry.

3.2.2.4. Enrich Sociability

Sociability greatly increases the potential to enhance inquiry. Interaction with others may help disrupt habitual behavior, call into question one’s assumptions, and help one see things from another perspective. These interactions challenge and test ideas and facilitate collaborative collective inquiry, enhancing the ability to solve common problems. In addition, interaction helps individuals develop their own abilities to reason and problem-solve. Due to their potential power to aid inquiry by calling attention to what one may have missed, Dewey recommends continued interaction with others. Charlene Haddock Seigfried argues that the recognition that “selective interest plays a necessary role in our ability to organize our experiences satisfactorily”
inspires Dewey to develop “a methodology of inquiry that takes such bias into account” (“John” 55). He does this by requiring inquiry to incorporate the “inclusiveness of others in decision-making processes” (55). To help address the limits of human knowledge and embedded experience Dewey calls inquirers to consider the perspectives of others.

Additionally, social interactions play a significant role in the development of individual capacities and self understanding. Dewey and Tufts argue that “[a]part from the social medium, the individual would never ‘know himself,’ he would never become acquainted with his own needs and capacities,” because “the mind is nourished by contact with others and by intercommunication” (1908 388; 1932 320). They also argue:

Breadth in extent of community life goes hand in hand with multiplication of the stimuli which call out an individual’s powers. Diversification of social activities increases opportunities for . . . initiative and endeavor. Narrow and meager social life means limitation of the scope of activities in which its members may engage. (Dewey and Tufts, 1908 385)

An enriched social life increases an agent’s ability to interact in the world and opens opportunities for development. As development involves scrutinizing and improving interactions with the world, an agent gains knowledge of herself through social interaction (Welchman 164). Sociability, thus, helps one gain tools for problem-solving and understanding oneself.

Sociability is also important because Dewey believes collective inquiry is a useful method for addressing social problems. The process of inquiry discussed above can also take place on a social level. On a larger scale and with greater numbers of people, specialization becomes possible. The group may rely on the advice of experts to guide problem-solving. Again, Dewey calls for problems encountered in the society to direct inquiry. So, the first steps
in social inquiry are identifying the problem, “gathering information, clarifying the situation, and identifying possible options” (Campbell, *Community* 46). Then, similar to how the individual looks for possible solutions, the members of the community look for possible solutions and evaluate their consequences. The community may call upon the work of experts to assist in this process. Dewey calls for the “cooperative practical efforts of men of good will in all occupations and professions” (“Has”367) in order to address the “issues of stupendous meaning” that impact the society (*Individualism* 108). The ideas may then be evaluated and tested by members of society. Dewey endorses “local agencies of communication and cooperation” (*Freedom* 177) and “institutions of ‘debate, discussion and persuasion’ ... where the possibilities of tolerant and reciprocal interaction of groups are combined with the ongoing possibility of a high level of ‘deliberate inquiry and discussion’” (Campbell, *Community* 47; quoting Dewey, *Public* 365 and “Introductory”100). Collective inquiry has the potential to make “our political activity a cooperative inquiry into the problems facing society and the social enactment of programs to deal with those problems” (Campbell, *Community* 48).

Sociability enhances the process of inquiry. Interactions draw attention to factors one may not have considered, challenge and test ideas, facilitate the development of individual capacities, and allow for collaborative inquiry. Dewey calls for participation in social interactions likely to have these results.

This section has reviewed the possibilities of inquiry and ways to encourage its enhancement. Inquiry for Dewey is an open-ended process that aims to solve problems through the consideration of past experiences and future consequences. One may improve one’s ability to inquire by taking advantage of and seeking disruptions, developing flexible habits, and enriching sociability. One may develop guides to action, but must be vigilant in looking for
changing circumstances and new understanding. Deweyan growth is informed by the theory of inquiry, and thus includes continual efforts to improve one’s ability to reason and solve problems. Improving problem-solving and taking advantage of the possibilities for human reason ground growth. Thus, individuals may pursue growth through the processes of inquiry and their enhancement. How well individuals use and enhance inquiry may serve as a method for evaluating growth.

In moving to an examination of Dewey’s moral commitments, two ideas from the previous discussion of his theory of inquiry continue to play a significant role, specifically that inquiry is effective as a collective process, and that individuals are in transaction with one another. These ideas will help justify Dewey’s commitments to promoting the skills of inquiry in others and paying attention to the good of others and the community.

3.3. Moral Considerations

Dewey takes the analysis of traditional moral theories seriously and of value for his own moral theory. He examines various theories and argues that they too narrowly focus on single elements of moral concern (namely, the Good, the Right, or the Virtuous). Dewey argues that morality arises through experiences consistent across humanity. The human experiences of “desiring, purpose, social demand and law, sympathetic approval and hostile disapproval are constant. We cannot imagine them disappearing as long as human nature remains human nature, and lives in association with others” (Ethics 1932 309). From these common experiences the concepts of morality develop. The “fundamental conceptions of morals are, therefore, neither arbitrary nor artificial. They are not imposed upon human nature from without but develop out of its own operations and needs” (309). By grounding moral concepts in common human experience, Dewey challenges the claim that without connection to something wholly separate
from experience (such as pure reason or a connection to the supernatural) morality has no foundation. This section examines both Dewey’s views regarding how the moral concepts develop from shared experience and his evaluation of theories that have made each moral concept central.

Dewey contends that the Good highlights that the ends one pursues should be evaluated reflectively, the Right suggests that duties to one another arise out of human interaction, and the Virtuous suggests that individuals should consider their own impact on the common good. Each offers an abstract lens from which to consider moral action. The details of what constitutes the Good, the Right, or the Virtuous vary with the ambient circumstances. The likely impact on each individual is a relevant moral factor in decision making. In examining each theory, Dewey says his “aim will be not so much to determine which is true and which is false as to see what factors of permanent value each group contributes to the clarification and direction of reflective morality” (*Ethics* 1932 183). Dewey’s examination of moral theories is hasty and likely does not do justice to the theories he reviews. Yet, examining his work on the moral traditions helps explicate his moral theory and specifically his theory of growth. The examination in this section is intended to highlight Dewey’s view “that each great system of moral thought brings to light some point of view from which the facts of our own situations are to be looked at and studied. Theories afford us at least a set of questions with which we may approach and challenge present conditions” (180). Each of these moral theories arise from considering some features of human experience, yet they do not address those factors introduced by the other moral theories. This section reviews Dewey’s contention that growth must recognize multiple moral factors.
3.3.1. The Good

Dewey suggests that individuals may anticipate consequences and direct action toward particular goals. Individuals desire certain outcomes and direct action toward various purposes. Reflection on these ends, comparing ends between people or communities, and facing conflicting goals all lead to considering the justification for various pursuits. Dewey suggests that this leads to the idea that some pursuits have value in themselves; thus, the concept of the Good arises. An individual may evaluate what makes particular ends good, and consider which ends to pursue (Ethics 1932 181, 308).

Dewey reviews several theories that, as he contends, “attach chief importance to purposes and ends, leading to the concept of the Good as ultimate” (181). These theorists argue that determining and pursuing those ends that are good is the most significant component of a moral life. For instance, hedonists argue that the good of an object or achievement comes from the pleasure it generates; so, they suggest determining and pursuing that which will generate the most pleasure (191). Hedonists contend that individual desires are the most important factors in moral decisions. Dewey criticizes the hedonists equation of the good with the pleasurable without evaluating the cause of the pleasure (194). This results in designating those desires indicative of one’s character or disposition as good without any reflection or judgment regarding the character or disposition itself (193-94). Rather, “[p]leasures may accompany a good, but it is not the criterion of a good” (Eames 142). Pleasure, particularly an immediate response of pleasure, does not necessarily indicate something good (Ethics 1932 195). Dewey argues “that a pleasure which does not ‘bear reflecting upon’ is different in kind from one which does bear reflecting upon” (196). He suggests that, rather than designating the desirable as good with the hedonists, one should cultivate desires for the good. The hedonists miss integrating “the office
of the judge—of reflection—into the formation of our very desires and thus [they do not] learn to take pleasure in the ends which reflection approves” (Ethics 1932 196). Dewey suggests that reflection can help determine different kinds of pleasures, and help identify the better pleasures. Moments of “calm reflection” when one is not “undergoing the urge of strong desire” may assist in determining good ends that can help guide action (196).

John Stuart Mill attempted to address the lack of reflection in hedonism by suggesting that some objects of desire are better than others and by distinguishing between higher and lower pleasures. Dewey challenges Mill’s idea that things in themselves, outside of their experienced context, are good or bad. For instance, Dewey would argue that in isolation one cannot judge whether the pleasure from sex or reading is higher. What makes one pleasure higher than another is its connection to “the whole self.” The higher end pleasure “issues from objects which are enjoyable in themselves but which also reinforce and enlarge the other desires and tendencies which are sources of happiness” (199). The significant distinction, and what Dewey thinks Mill comes close to identifying, is “that the satisfaction of the whole self . . . is a very different sort of thing from the satisfaction of a single and independent appetite” (197). Sex is often characterized as the fulfillment of an “independent appetite” and thus one may rightly judge it lower; however, sex can also be an expression of a connection with another person. Thus, at times sex may be a higher pleasure when part of an integrated satisfaction.

Pursuing an integrated satisfaction relates to Dewey’s second concern with hedonists, that they advocate the seeking of pleasure in itself. Because of this, they miss that a particular end often serves as the motivating force of desire. One does not easily pursue vague goals, such as maximizing pleasure, or satisfying “the whole self.” Additionally, predicting what will be pleasurable in the future is difficult and what is pleasurable is often the result of many factors
outside of one’s control. Dewey describes pleasures and pains as “just the things in the way of consequences which it is most difficult to estimate” and “so externally and accidentally connected with the performance of a deed, that attempt to foresee them is probably the stupidest course which could be taken in order to secure guidance for action” (Ethics 1932 193). Instead, Dewey recommends the development of those interests able to guide action and provide satisfaction to “the whole self” in the pursuit and attainment of particular ends. An interest is some end that holds one’s attention over time, unifies action, and influences desires and habits. These interests are then able to satisfy, to guide action, and to provide a “present enjoyment” that strengthens motivation (209).

In contrast to the hedonists, those of the Cynic school in Greece are suspicious of any desire. They aim to minimize the force and pull of desire by developing strict habits of conduct. Those of the Cynic school hold that morality, similar to a set of artisan skills, takes practice and honing. Dewey agrees that it is beneficial to develop habits to deal with unpleasant situations and desires of which we do not approve; however, this does not mean people should suppress desires and avoid experiences of pleasure. Those of the Cynic school had the same limited view of the connection between desires and judgment as the hedonists. Just as pleasure does not indicate what to pursue, neither does it indicate what to avoid. Additionally, judgment may influence desires, so it is possible to cultivate desires. The Cynics also miss that simply suppressing desire may fail, as desire has no new goal or set of habits on which to focus; thus, they miss the power and importance of desire as motivating (204-6). In response to those of the Cynic school, Dewey rejects their simplistic view of desire, but endorses their call to develop habits. In times of calm reflection one may develop desires and habits that promote worthy ends, to counter strong desires that focus on negative ends. Thus, Dewey argues for “the need of
fostering at every opportunity direct enjoyment of the kind of goods reflection approves” in order to develop the motivation and preparation to act on those goals in the future (Ethics 1932 210).

Epicureans also pursue the Good, but they incorporate some reflection into this pursuit. They take into account the uncertainty of future pleasures and that many factors are outside human control; thus, they suggest pursuit of immediate pleasures. Epicureans recognize that some pleasures are fleeting or followed by suffering, so warn against “thoughtless grasping at the pleasures of the moment,” and recommend pursuing those that are currently satisfying, “calm and equable” (200). They aim “to cherish those elements of enjoyment in the present which are most assured and to avoid entanglement in external circumstances” (201). While Dewey comments that this involves retreat from the difficulties of life and “selfish engrossment in one’s own enjoyment,” he praises their cultivation of “gentle and equable enjoyment[s]” that results in both present and future satisfaction (201). Interests focus attention on a particular aim, but sustained over time and appealing to multiple desires may also create pleasure in their pursuit. While problem-solving is future-oriented, preparation for and attention to the future gives meaning and purpose to the present. The Epicurean attention to the present suggests the importance of this aspect of experience. Despite his emphasis on consequences, Dewey does not suggest focusing entirely on future outcomes, nor solely on improving the future for its own sake, but also recommends attention to the past and present. One has more control over the present than over the future or the past, and it is a site of pleasure and meaning. Dewey states “[m]emory of the past, observation of the present, [and] foresight of the future are indispensable. But they are indispensable to a present liberation, an enriching growth of action” (Human 182).

Planning for the future focuses attention on, and increases the significance of, present activity. The present moment gains significance as “every act effects a modification of attitude
and set which directs future behavior” (*Public* 334-35). Reflection on the present may result in a meaningful experience and in the potential for a better future (*Human* 182-83). As an illustration, Dewey considers the process of building a house for oneself. The past experiences of living arrangements and the consideration of the home’s future uses guides the current planning and building of the home. Considering the past and the future, one is able to produce significance in present activity, as “the present activity is the only one really under control” (184). Consideration of consequences is a primary component of deliberation both in terms of its potential impact on future outcomes and its impact on present meaning and significance.

In examining theories of the Good, Dewey considers the role and nature of desire within each theory. He emphasizes recognizing desires as a motivating and driving force, as well the role played by reflection on the ends and aims of those desires. Desires provide the drive for action, yet, they often stem from one’s character and are not isolated urges. Thinking about the end to be attained and through participation in related activities one may cultivate desires. In addition, desires do not often find expression in vague ends, but direct action toward particular objects or ends. Moral theorizing needs to take into account the nature of desires. Dewey suggests developing interests which reflection approves. Interests provide a particular aim or object that desires may pursue and, when sustained over time, a way to cultivate desires and develop habits. Interests also serve as a way to accommodate Dewey’s adaptation of Mill’s higher and lower pleasures; that is, interests allow one to cultivate an end or aim that one may pursue over time and on multiple levels, and that will ultimately provide more satisfaction.

Dewey’s discussion of the theories of the Good suggests interests as a way to address the malleability, but not complete plasticity, of desires, acknowledge the important role desires play in motivation, and provide a means to pursuing higher satisfaction.
Dewey says his own view is a “reflective morality” and that “[t]here can . . . be no such thing as reflective morality except where men seriously ask by what purposes they should direct their conduct and why they should do so; what it is which makes their purposes good” (Ethics 1932 184). He embraces the concept of the Good that emerges from human desires and the ability to foresee, evaluate, and pursue particular ends. Where hedonists and members of the Cynic school begin by asserting the worth of desires in themselves, Dewey suggests determining Good ends through reflection and continual testing. This reflection will impact desire and provide guidance in cultivating present enjoyment of those pleasures approved by reflection. In general, the concept of the Good focuses one’s attention on the moral significance of the ends being pursued and the need for their evaluation. Dewey suggests that goods are those “which, when they present themselves to imagination, are approved by reflection after wide examination of their relations” (212). However, due to the changing nature of human understanding and relationships, “reflection in determining the true good cannot be done once for all . . . It needs to be done, and done over and over and over again, in terms of the concrete situations as they arise” (212). Theories of the Good do call attention to the importance of evaluating ends, but focus solely on this moral concern. Dewey’s reflective morality takes into consideration ends as well as other moral factors.

3.3.2. The Right

Dewey suggests that individuals live in interaction with one another, not in isolation or self-sufficiency. In living together individuals make demands on one another, and develop regulations or laws to maintain order (Ethics 1932 217). These demands and laws do not designate or determine moral demands, but indicate that one actually has moral obligations that do not stem from desire. From the development of laws and the demands people place on one
another, the concept of the Right develops. Dewey concludes the Right signifies moral standards or principles one is obliged to follow. Some moral theories focus solely on the concept of the Right and “are impressed by the importance of law and regulation, leading up to the supremacy of the the concepts of Duty and Right” (Ethics 1932 181). Dewey reviews one such theory.

Immanuel Kant’s theory emphasizes the right as the most significant moral factor. For Kant, desires only serve one’s own pleasures and are often opposed to the moral Good found in reason. Through reason, individuals are able to determine what morality demands. Morality is a struggle because individuals want to fulfill their own desires, but rationality warns against desires and specifies what individuals should do regardless of what they may want. In fact, Kant suggests that desires should not even serve as motivation; motivation should arise from “appreciation of the obligatory nature” of the moral law (220).

Kant argues that reason is universal and necessary. The categorical imperative calls one to universalize the act or motive under consideration, thus to imagine that agents always act or are motivated in that way. He then argues that claims universalizable without contradiction are imperative. Kant illustrates this idea by considering the making of a promise one does not intend to keep. This proposed act is then universalized: everyone could make a promise and not intend to keep it. The result in this case is that promises would not exist because people would suspect others were lying. Thus, it involves a contradiction (promises could not exist) and Kant concludes that making a promise without intending to keep it is not moral. Dewey argues that Kant’s procedure calls attention to wider consequences and not the demands of reason. It does not, as Kant suggests, call one to “[i]gnore consequences and do your duty because moral law . . . commands it;” rather, it calls one to “[c]onsider as widely as possible the consequences of acting in this way; imagine the results if you and others always acted upon such a
Dewey argues that Kant calls one to examine the *consequences* of universalizing to determine whether something is right, and does not rely on rationality alone.

What Dewey finds useful in Kant’s theory, and in other theorists who emphasize the Right, is that they draw attention to the importance of considering consequences beyond oneself (224-29). The Right, independently from the Good, calls attention to the demands of others and obligations to them. Dewey says, the “ultimate function and effect” of the “claims and expectations” constituting the Right “is to lead the individual to broaden his conception of the Good,” helping her see the concerns of others, and not simply her own desires, as significant (225).

Dewey does not think the Right is a fixed principle that can be determined through analysis. He suggests that from within various relationships particular duties develop. For instance, from the parenting relationship duties to one’s children arise and in friendship duties to one’s friends. He argues, “their authoritative force springs from the very nature of the relation that binds people together” (219). Through reflection on these relationships one can consider our obligations and duties to others.

Dewey thinks theories emphasizing the Right have mistakenly attempted to develop fixed principles or standards. Rather, he suggests the obligations and claims of others in some situations indicate more general obligations. A sense of duty arises out of generalizing specific instances of duty. One can then use that generalization in future situations. Dewey cautions against using this as a rule, but suggests “a general sense of duty is to make us sensitive to the relations and claims involved in particular situations,” particularly in the face of strong desires (232).
The concept of the Right leads to evaluating interests and the objects pursued with regard to others. Theories emphasizing the Right suggest that morality consists of imperatives, separate from the resulting consequences or the pulls of desire. Even without accepting that morality is a collection of rules, the concept of the Right draws attention to the obligations and duties that arise from interaction and relationships with others. Dewey argues that relationships simply include duties. From this perspective, one may evaluate her interests based on their impact on others and whether or not they permit the fulfillment of her duties. In inquiry, one must assess the nature of these relationships, what duties arise, and what claims one has on others. The structure of society and the nature of relationships change, and so Dewey argues that the current “problem is to develop new stable relationships in a society out of which duties and loyalties will naturally grow” (Ethics 1932 234). Individuals and communities may use the Right and even a sense of duty to sensitize one to the needs of others and what one owes to them. It offers a perspective of obligations to other individuals from which to evaluate interests.

Dewey’s evaluation of the Good suggested one develop interests in reflected upon ends. Theories of the Right suggest these interests may be evaluated in terms of their impact on others. Dewey still argues that focusing solely on the Right is too narrow and that a view focused solely on the Right cannot accommodate the various relevant factors of morality. The next section will address another of these factors, the Virtuous.
3.3.3. The Virtuous

Dewey relates that with spontaneity and directness individuals approve and disapprove of others. For some this suggests an implicit standard guiding these judgments. These theories hold “approbation and disapprobation, praise and blame as the primary moral fact, thus terminating with making the concepts of Virtue and Vice central” (Ethics 1932 181). This is problematic when one encounters different standards of praise and blame across communities or between individuals. Encountering these differences encourages questioning what one should praise and blame and how to distinguish those traits that are worthy of praise and those worthy of blame. From this search the concept of Virtue arises, the search for excellences “worth approving” (235-37).

Dewey criticizes the use of spontaneous praise and blame as a standard for multiple reasons. First, the sense of what one should praise and blame is not independent from cultural and personal perspectives, but rather reflects the perspective of the individual and influences of the community. Secondly, the expression of praise and blame generally concerns family and friends and has little extension beyond them. Lastly, those expressing praise and blame respond to striking cases, but do not necessarily address particulars and subtleties of more complicated moral situations (239).

Dewey suggests that Mill aimed to address the difficulties found in theories derived from praise and blame and in this draws attention to what is useful in these theories. Dewey argues that Mill did not reject virtue as a standard, but rather amended it so that virtue means concern for the common good. Thus, theorists should not classify Mill’s utilitarianism as a hedonistic theory or theory of the Good because it is first a theory of virtue. Hedonistic theories suggest that individuals should concern themselves with getting the most pleasure, while Mill’s
utilitarian theory is concerned with the common good and evaluates individuals based on the contributions that they make. Focusing one’s efforts outside of their own good and toward a common good, requires something first of one’s character and disposition before the evaluation of consequences begins. It at least requires one see her interests as consistent with the interests of the whole. Dewey argues that when Mill insists that education should “establish in the mind of every individual an indissoluble association between his own happiness and the good of the whole,” he moves sufficiently far enough away from hedonism to identify his theory as one of virtue. Mill also includes equality, suggesting one consider each individual in moral reflection (Ethics 1932 239; Mill 25).

In emphasizing virtue, Mill and other theorists call one’s attention to the common good as part of moral theory. According to Dewey, Mill highlights “that only intimate personal disposition will enable” one to “make a regard for general happiness of others . . . a regulative purpose in his conduct” (Ethics 1932 241). Mill brought to utilitarianism, which already embraced the consideration of consequences, the necessity of individual character focused on good of the whole (243). Rather than adopting praise and blame as a standard for determining virtue and vice, these concepts can offer a perspective from which to reflect on one’s desires. Notions of praise and blame call one to consider her desires and aims in the light of her impact on others. Virtue and vice as concepts can assist in evaluating one’s own ends in relation to the group. They also go beyond the conception of the Right and draw attention to the way individuals pursue ends. However, the vagueness of ‘the common good’ offers little motivation or guidance in action. Rather than aiming for this vague end, Dewey recommends the development of interests conducive to and supportive of the common good (246-48).
Section 3.2.2.4, “Enrich Sociability,” addressed the significance of interaction with others as a way to introduce new ideas and challenge those already held. The concept of the Virtuous goes beyond this. This moral concept draws attention not simply to fulfilling an obligation, but to how one’s character contributes to the common good. It draws attention to one’s interaction with and impact on the larger community. Mill’s emphasis on character in pursuit of the common good highlights the individual impact on the pursuit of a general good. Dewey agrees with Mill’s assessment that individual habits and dispositions are a part of pursuing the common good (Ethics 1932 241). An individual may use the impact of one’s interests and desires on others as a tool for the evaluation of those interests.

One does not have to attain a point where “what gives others happiness will also make him happy” (248). Rather, one may choose “those objects which do bring good to others” (248). The individual then “gets a personal satisfaction or happiness because his desire is fulfilled, but his desire has first been made” in regard to others (248). Contemplating the virtuous may suggest a number of objects or ends “which are in agreement with the needs of social relations,” and then “by personal choice” one may determine which of these ends to pursue. Dewey admits, “[t]his enjoyment may be shorter in duration and less intense than those which he might have had some other way. But it has one mark which is unique . . . He has achieved a happiness which has approved itself to him” (248). The theories of virtue call attention to the role of character on the good of the whole. Again, Dewey will conclude that theories of Virtue and Vice are too narrow. The next section will consider this criticism more generally.
3.3.4. Conclusions Regarding Moral Traditions

Dewey’s understanding of human knowledge leads him to skepticism regarding moral certainty; yet, he contends that enough similarities exist between different circumstances to justify the use of reliable principles. Dewey argues:

Principles exist as hypotheses with which to experiment. Human history is long. There is a long record of past experimentation in conduct, and there are cumulative verifications which give many principles a well earned prestige. Lightly to disregard them is the height of foolishness. But social situations alter; and it is also foolish not to observe how old principles actually work under new conditions, and not to modify them so that they will be more effectual instruments in judging new cases. (*Human* 164-65)

In light of this, Dewey surveys moral traditions to assess the guides to action they offer. From this examination he draws two conclusions: (1) that each group of moral theories developed from and calls attention to a particular moral concern that arises within human experience, and (2) that one may glean methodological techniques from reflection on the moral traditions. The following common experiences each give rise to the corresponding moral consideration: (1) the goals and aims individuals develop suggest the evaluation of those ends as good or bad, moral or not moral; (2) the laws and demands placed on others that arise in communities indicate some duty and responsibility to others; and (3) the praise and blame distributed in communities indicate that effort toward the common good is important and that individual character is an important part of seeing that good realized. Independently, these theories do not recognize the significance of the moral factors introduced by the others. Yet, each provides a realm from which to evaluate interests, desires, habits, and actions. Dewey summarizes:
The self should be wise or prudent, looking to an inclusive satisfaction and hence subordinating the satisfaction of an immediately urgent single appetite [Good]; it should be faithful in acknowledgment of the claims involved in its relations with others [Right]; it should be solicitous, thoughtful, in the award of praise and blame, use of approbation and disapprobation [Virtuous], and, finally, should be conscientious and have the active will to discover new values and to revise former notions. (Ethics 1932 285).

Growth will include the examination and consideration of each of these moral factors and call for the continued testing of judgments made in reflection upon them. As circumstances change, the moral factors provide a lens for evaluation, but do not prescribe what one should do. Eames says of pragmatists generally:

Their account does not tell us what is specifically right and wrong in each concrete situation, but it does provide a method by which an individual can analyze each moral situation he encounters. It is a method which allows the individual to entertain several hypotheses and to think out the implications of each. Thus on this view the mind of man is liberated from moral dogmatism and is free to discover the unique good of each situation. (147)

Growth provides an alternative moral framework that allows individuals to draw from each of the moral theories and to have the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances.

Dewey also develops technical recommendations for developing moral considerations that recognize the nature of human motivation and desire. Rather than desires guiding choices, what is or what one hopes will be pleasurable, individuals may cultivate interests that are mindful of the concerns of others and that play a role in the common good. This encourages the development of habits and desires that promote the Good, to the extent one understands it, in
order that one may delve more deeply into specific problems and moral inquiry. These investigations may call into question already developed interests or habits that an individual may then reflect upon and alter.

Practitioners may find Dewey’s method and even his discussions of moral traditions removed from any particular moral commitments and his calls for open-endedness may make these two elements seem even further apart. However, Dewey does draw some tentative conclusions from his understanding of human experience that can ground his method.

3.3.5. Hypothetical Conclusions Regarding Moral Responsibility

Dewey is committed to a morality:

connected with actualities of existence, not with ideals, ends and obligations independent of concrete actualities. The facts upon which it depends are those which arise out of active connections of human beings with one another, the consequences of their mutually intertwined activities in the life of desire, belief, judgment, satisfaction and dissatisfaction. (Human 224-25)

Dewey’s suggestion to connect morality to experience, his method of inquiry, and his processes of challenging ideas and reconstructing values do not necessarily guide individuals in how to interpret or apply perception, nor do they guide individuals in promoting particular social structures that facilitate individual development. Campbell concedes that “Dewey’s support for values like democracy and equality was not the result of his philosophical method” (Understanding 141); however, this does not mean they were totally divorced from his method either. Dewey contends that we look to collective experience and the best understanding of human needs and nature to ground moral ideas.
From his understanding of human experience and the moral traditions, Dewey draws some conclusions about morality. This section will examine these conclusions and their relationship to growth as a guiding aim. In line with his understanding of human knowledge as limited, Dewey holds moral assertions as hypothetical and open to testing in experience.

He argues that morality is social “not because we ought to take into account the effect of our acts upon the welfare of others, but because of facts. Others do take account of what we do, and they respond accordingly to our acts. Their responses actually do affect the meaning of what we do” (Human 217). Section 3.3.3. “The Virtuous,” considered Dewey’s argument that praise and blame and imposition of duties on one another is part of interactive experience. This: social pressure is involved in our own lives . . . [W]e live mentally and physically only in and because of our environment. Social pressure [to act morally] is but a name for the interactions which are always going on and in which we participate. (224)

Dewey suggests that morality is not an ideal imposed from outside of experience, but that morality develops within interactions. This is evident in the pressure felt from other individuals, this pressure is also deeply influential and impacts one’s desires and observations (Human 224-25). The moral principles influence individuals and to engage morality intelligently, one must take these principles seriously. Dewey argues that a “failure to recognize the authority” of the claims that develop in social interaction entails a “defect in effective apprehension of the realities of human association” (224). One may engage them “in some way or other—or else quit and get out” (58). Dewey recommends engaging them reflectively and aiming to determine what guidance they may offer. Humans are in transaction with one another and out of these interactions morality develops. This section will examine what Dewey argues are justifiable responses to trans-active human experience.
Dewey suggests that the impact of the social on the individual justifies the claim that an individual has a responsibility to the social. Customs have a significant impact on the habits individuals develop and thus on their character and interactions with the world. These habits provide the means of interacting with the world and the ability to engage in meaningful and productive activity. The impact of social customs on individual habits provides the medium through which individuals engage their environment. The conditions of individual lives—opportunities, capabilities, beliefs, etc.—are due to their social environment. Section 3.2.2.4, “Enrich Sociability,” discussed Dewey's assertions that the social may expose bias, allow for someone to see his or her own needs and capacities, and provide the opportunity for an enriched life. Dewey goes further to suggest that one should “conceive individual mind as 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” (School 69). Interaction with others provides tools needed for problem-solving and inquiry, which are valuable in improving life.

Dewey argues, “[l]ife itself consists of phases . . . in which the organism falls out of step with the march of surrounding things and then recovers unison with it” (Art 19). Campbell explains that “[f]or Dewey, living is a process of overcoming such troubles” (Understanding 46) and inquiry is a way of addressing problems that takes into account possibilities and limitations of human knowledge. Interaction with others makes problem-solving and inquiry possible—one learns the tools from others. Eric MacGilvray goes so far as to suggest that pragmatists hold that “experimental inquiry is a necessary condition of human flourishing” (549) and social interactions allow individuals to develop the skills and capacities needed to engage in these processes, thus enabling them to flourish.
Social interaction also allows for collective inquiry that can address problems in the social environment, which influences the individual. Not only do social structures impact an individual’s character and provide tools of inquiry, but social interactions provide meaning and significance for individuals. Dewey argues that “[s]hared experience is the greatest of human goods” and that “[t]he things in civilization we most prize are not of ourselves,” they exist “by grace of the doings and sufferings of the continuous human community in which we are a link” (*Common* 57). MacGilvray ties problem solving and the importance of shared experience together, arguing that pragmatists hold the shared experience of “experimental intelligence” as “a shared human capacity of paramount importance” (549). Individual connection with others is important because “[t]hat happiness which is full of content and peace is found only in enduring ties with others” (*Public* 368).

In responding to the influence and opportunities provided by the social, Dewey suggests that “[t]here is sound sense in the old pagan notion that gratitude is the root of all virtue” (*Human* 19). Both the impact of the social on our abilities and social interaction as a source of meaning and fulfillment, at least in part ground individual duties to the social. The impact of the social on the individual, as well as the fulfillment the social provides, suggests to Dewey that an individual has a responsibility to the social. He condemns one who “attributes human achievement and purpose to man in isolation from the world of physical nature and his fellows” for being “affected by lack of natural piety” and missing that success is “dependent upon the cooperation of nature” (*Common* 18, 36). In a different tone, he similarly condemns “an individual so insensitive in his relations to others as to develop an illusion of being really able to stand and act alone,” suggesting this is a “form of insanity which is responsible for a large part of the remediable suffering of the world” (*Democracy* 49). Campbell summarizes that, for Dewey,
“[t]he proper response to our situation is thus not conceit but indebtedness” (*Understanding* 280). This is evident in his educational work as he suggests that education should encourage the development of students capable of “recognizing the ties that bind them to all the other members of the community, [and] recognizing the responsibility they have to contribute to the upbuilding of the life of the community” (“Social” 158).

From the discussions thus far it is possible to piece together a picture of what this duty or responsibility to the collective and individuals within the collective includes. Dewey suggests that inquiry is the best way for individuals and groups to address problems that arise. In addition, he suggests that collective experience provides meaning and significance in individual lives. Dewey argues that a capable and inquiring individual is most valuable to the community. He says:

> The best guarantee of collective efficiency and power is liberation and use of the diversity of individual capacities in initiative, planning, foresight, vigor, and endurance . . . [at the same time, full] education comes only when there is a responsible share on the part of each person, in proportion to capacity, in shaping the aims and policies of the social groups to which he belongs . . . human nature is developed only when its elements take part in directing things which are common, things for the sake of which men and women form groups. (*Reconstruction* 199)

Dewey suggests that collectively working together is the most effective way to attain shared goals and serves as the means for individual development. Judith Green explicates that promoting individual capacities is the “best guarantee of collective efficiency and power”: because it brings about the well-coordinated inclusion of highly developed, diverse personalities who contribute dispersed insights, disparate skills, differently located yet
cooperative criticisms, and alternative imaginative syntheses, as well as loyal commitment and hard work to assure the ongoing success of collaborative processes. This suggests that our central concern in promoting the general welfare must be the development of human persons within valued cooperative institutions, which requires the reliable availability of means to support their individual and mutual growth and flourishing. (267)

Expanding individual abilities to inquire supports individual development and the community’s ability to inquire effectively and improve problematic situations.

Supporting the development of individuals throughout society has the benefit of making one’s own interactions more fruitful as individual members of the society are able to interact more meaningfully with one another. An individual’s environment significantly impacts her development and capabilities, so the improvement of the whole group is beneficial to the individual. An individual comes to know and understand herself, as well as to develop in interaction with her environment, such that an enhanced social environment will enhance individual development (Welchman 195-99). Dewey suggests that a shared experience is a consummate value, so inclusive social interest is not a sacrifice of what is best for the individual (Gouinlock 265). For the individual an interest in and responsibility to the social includes concern and care for herself. Dewey argues:

Interest in the social whole of which one is a member necessarily carries with it interest in one’s own self. . . . since each one of us is a member of social groups and since the latter have no existence apart from the selves who compose them, there can be no effective social interest unless there is at the same time an intelligent regard for our own well-being and development. Indeed, there is a certain primary responsibility placed on
each individual in respect to his own power and growth. . . . When selfhood is taken for what it is, something existing in relationships to others and not in unreal isolation, independence of judgment, personal insight, integrity and initiative become indispensable exercises from the social point of view. (*Ethics* 1932 300)

As inquiry and shared experience are key to the betterment of an individual life, responsibility to the individual means facilitating and encouraging these processes. This is evident when Dewey argues that recognizing that “the welfare of others, like our own, consists in a widening and deepening of the perceptions that give activity its meaning, in an educative growth” has “political import” (*Human* 202). When members of a group recognize that enhancing inquiry will improve the lives of others, facilitating inquiry becomes part of their duty to others.¹⁴

It is not coincidence that promoting the good for the community and the individual includes the same recommendations, namely facilitating inquiry and promoting meaningful interaction. Dewey does not simply suggest that individuals have a responsibility to the social; he goes so far as to challenge the often assumed antithesis between individual values and shared values of the collective (Gouinlock 265). Individual character is tied to the common good, meaning it is important to consider one’s impact on society. Individuals are not separate components from the environment in which they exist; they are in transaction with that environment. Sullivan describes Dewey’s view that, “[b]ecause bodies are transactional, human experience always already involves more than humans considered as isolated from their environments” (*Sullivan, Living* 143). This suggests that pursuing what is good or right does not mean a private or inclusive good; it means the good of the community in which one exists.

¹⁴ MacGilvray suggests that this requires seeing humans as problem-solvers and scientific method or inquiry as the best way to solve those problems. Pragmatists follow Peirce’s line that “scientific investigation has had the most wonderful triumphs in the way of settling opinion. These afford the explanation of my not doubting the method or the hypothesis which it supposes; and not having any doubt, nor believing that anybody else whom I could influence has, it would be the merest babble for me to say more about it. If there be anybody with living doubt upon the subject, let him consider it” (MacGilvray 550; Peirce 4:384).
Sullivan describes Dewey's position that individuals should pursue “a mutual negotiation and transformation of a relationship between humans and their environments . . . which promotes the thriving of both” (*Living* 144). Dewey stresses the “inclusive nature of social interest,” and, as James Gouinlock, explains “[b]y this he means that one’s own good and the good of others is not a dualism, but both are included in the good of those associations in which self and others are jointly implicated” (265). Dewey encourages the search for mutually beneficial solutions that support the good of the embedded individual and their environment. The previous sections on moral traditions suggested agents may develop interests that promote the common good and guide action. Members of communities may tailor interests to impact the group positively.

To facilitate and enhance inquiry for the individual and the collective, Dewey recommends interaction and communication between members of the group. He encourages social structures in which individuals are free to interact and share ideas. Dewey does not endorse every interaction; rather, he calls for a genuine give and take where parties in the interaction are in a mutual exchange. The type of communication Dewey calls for will require building relationships and ensuring the mutual understanding of parties to the discussion. This free exchange will facilitate the most thorough inquiry. Dewey would thus support institutional and societal structures that encourage the skills of interaction and promote a genuine give and take between members of the community.15 Eric MacGilvray argues that, because it finds “experiential inquiry is a necessary condition of human flourishing, pragmatism promotes a set of virtues, including but not restricted to those of open-mindedness, honesty, impartiality, and regard for empirical consequences” that promote inquiry (549). Promoting one’s own and others’ freedom and development is the best way to attain a positive impact on the whole and on

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15 It is in promoting genuine interaction between individuals in collective inquiry that Dewey promotes democracy, an important element of his work that we will not get to in this text. However, it is worth noting that he sees democracy as the best social system for promoting the development and participation of all its citizens in genuine interaction.
oneself. The values of free interaction and the opportunities for self development emerge from Dewey’s promotion of and understanding of inquiry as the best method for solving problems (Welchman 195-99). Dewey argues that an “environment in which some are limited will always in reaction create conditions that prevent the full development even of those who fancy they enjoy complete freedom” (“Need for a Philosophy” 202-3).16

Dewey concludes human fulfillment, meaning, and improvement result from both shared experiences and the processes of solving problems and directing life. He suggests communities may promote shared experiences and the skills needed for directing one's life in social structures and institutions that encourage the development of individual capacities and collective problem-solving and deliberation. His observation of these as the sources of human fulfillment and meaning serves as a foundation for growth. He contends humans should develop institutions, interests, social structures, and habits with the aim of promoting individual and collective development and interaction hypothetically, tentatively, and with continued testing and evaluation of whether pursuits are mutually beneficial and if this is the way to promote collective and individual good.

These tentative conclusions regarding duty to others and the individual and collective good become a part of the pursuit of growth. Growth involves the pursuit of mutually beneficial solutions and a recognition of and increased sensitivity to one’s own connection with others. The next section examines how these various elements of Dewey’s theory inform one's understanding of his theory of growth.

16 A similar sentiment is evident when Jane Addams argues for the idea that:
Nothing so deadens the sympathies and shrivels the power of enjoyment as the persistent keeping away from the great opportunities for helpfulness and a continual ignoring of the starvation struggle which makes up the life of at least half the race. To shut off one's self away from that half of the race life is to shut one's self away from the most vital part of it; it is to live out but half the humanity which we have been born heir to and to use but half our faculties. (11)
4. Deweyan Theory Informs the Theory of Growth

Gouinlock suggests that the Deweyan “process of growth is one in which the organism enhances its ability to participate with its environment” (238). Dewey holds that understanding and circumstances change, and, in addition, he takes the environment to be both precarious and stable. A theory of growth compatible with these commitments will have to embrace this understanding of human knowledge and experience, as well as their impact on an individual’s “ability to participate with its environment.” This chapter has examined these commitments and Dewey’s strategies for pursuing guides to action and problem-solving in light of them. This examination informs his theory of growth.

The chapter began by examining that certainty is unattainable and that the contexts continually change. For this reason, Dewey does not want to claim to have certainty or to prescribe particular moral rules that are not adaptable to new understanding or new circumstances. Moral agents develop principles within particular circumstances and should recognize they may not have universal applicability. Based on this, Dewey rejects growth as “movement toward a fixed goal” (Democracy 55), arguing it is flexible and open-ended. However, Dewey does not take experiences to be wholly dissimilar from one another and suggests inquiry as a method for finding commonalities and learning from past experience. Inquiry is a process of identifying problems, considering possible solutions and their consequences, and testing the chosen solutions in experience. It is identifying and seeking solutions or conditions to make life better. Dewey’s theory of growth embraces his work on the possibilities of reason and the use of inquiry as a means to solve problems and to make life better. Growth, then involves aiming to solve problems and pursuing those habits and conditions that enhance inquiry.
Section 3.2 “Inquiry – Possibilities for Justification” suggested that an important element of inquiry is generalizing from one’s own and other’s experiences and finding ways to improve inquiry and develop strategies for improving life more broadly. Dewey suggests that taking advantage of and seeking disruptions, developing flexible habits, and enriching sociability are all ways of improving inquiry. The theory of growth embraces these elements as well. Growth will include not only addressing problems, but also gaining skills that assist in addressing problems more generally. Dewey argues that growth experiences “create conditions for further growth” and do not “set up conditions that shut off the person who has grown in this particular direction from the occasions, stimuli, and opportunities for continuing growth in new directions” (Experience and Education 19, 24). In this process an individual learns “to make nature his accomplice, rather than his antagonist” (Gouinlock 241). For Dewey, growth involves problem-solving and generally improving capacities for and the conditions of problem-solving. Thus, his theory of growth includes the process and improvement of inquiry as he takes inquiry to be the best approach for problem-solving.

The consideration of consequences is a vital component of Deweyan theory, and at least part of its importance is the meaning and purpose it brings to present experience. Inquiry is not simply about preparing for the future; it is about the current, “ever-enduring process of perfecting, maturing, refining” (Reconstruction 181). Individuals make improvements in considering current problems and possible solutions. Dewey argues, “[w]e always live at the time we live and not at some other time, and only by extracting at each present time the full meaning of each present experience are we prepared for doing the same thing in the future” (Experience and Education 29-30). One grows by growing now, by improving present circumstances.
Dewey suggests that the recognition of the changing nature of experience and understanding calls for continued testing of solutions and seeking experiences that will challenge one’s ideas. When Dewey argues that growing is “the continuous reconstruction of experience” (*Reconstruction* 185), he means that growing includes assessing and evaluating past experiences and applying them to present and future experience. Inquiry includes continual reassessment and evaluation, and Deweyan growth incorporates these processes. Dewey cryptically suggests that growth should be understood as “being an end” in itself (*Democracy* 55) and elsewhere that “[g]rowth itself is the only moral ‘end’” (*Reconstruction* 181). In arguing that growth is the only end, he uses the word end as “no longer a terminus or limit to be reached;” rather, it “is the active process of transforming the existent situation” (181). Growth, then, is not the “end,” but the continual reevaluation and adaptation that Dewey endorses as part of the processes of inquiry—which is to lead toward better problem solving, resulting in growth. He argues growth occurs “when a temporary falling out is a transition to a more extensive balance of energies of the organism with those of the conditions under which it lives” (*Art* 20).

Growth is more than the “end” it is “the only moral ‘end’” (*Reconstruction* 181). This chapter has also examined the moral component of Dewey’s theory. Individuals are social creatures in transaction with others and their environment. In this, Dewey grounds a responsibility to other individuals and the group itself. Dewey holds that skills of inquiry and social interaction are the best means for individuals and the group to make improvements and find meaning and significance. Thus, he contends that individual responsibilities to one another consist of promoting skills of inquiry and interaction. With this understanding of morality, one can see that the Deweyan concept of growth is grounded in the recognition of one’s relation to others and the promotion of fulfilling one’s responsibility to others. This is evident in his
suggestion that education should be “a freeing of individual capacity in a progressive growth directed to social aims” (Democracy 105) and should aim to develop “an interest in all persons in furthering the general good, so that they will find their own happiness realized in what they can do to improve the conditions of others” (Ethics 1932 243).

As growth consists of better preparing oneself for future experiences and a responsibility to others, James Campbell suggests that, for Dewey, growth includes the development of “the individual’s perception of his or her place in the ongoing social situation” and his or her ability to “improve such ongoing situations” (Understanding 138). This does not mean responsibility to others is clearly delineated or spelled out. Part of growth as a moral end will mean reevaluating moral responsibilities in light of new circumstances and changing understanding. Moral traditions of the past serve as tools to assist in considering the nature of morality and may indicate moral factors to take into consideration.

Growth is the end; it is that which individuals should pursue and use to evaluate their efforts. It is an open-ended concept, yet Dewey suggests that past experiences and evaluations inform the pursuit of growth. Interacting with others, developing flexible habits, and continually testing and challenging one’s ideas are likely to facilitate and help construct new ways of understanding and pursuing growth. In addition, Dewey’s understanding of human interaction suggests a responsibility to others. As improving problem-solving and reciprocal relationships are likely to provide meaning and significance for individuals, this is what the responsibility to others should promote. The next section will consider methods that indicate whether groups and particular experiences facilitate growth.
5. Indicators of Growth

As growth is a continual pursuit and not something attained once and for all, Dewey provides suggestions for evaluating whether or not a group is facilitating and encouraging growth. Specifically, he suggests examining the group’s structure. Dewey also suggests that theorists may evaluate whether the components of “interaction” and “continuity” promote growth in any particular circumstance. Examining interaction entails examining both the individual’s and the environment’s contributions to growth, while examining continuity involves considering whether one is able to apply past experiences to present and future circumstances. The next section addresses how the structure of a group serves as an indicator for the kind of growth encouraged within the group.

5.1. The Structure of Groups as an Indicator of Growth

Dewey bases his suggestions for social structure and interaction on his understanding of human nature. He holds that individuals develop and gain meaning through interaction, that social inquiry is useful for addressing problems, and that shared interests are possible. Dewey contends that genuine interaction with others is the best way to refine ideas. He evaluates groups first on an individual’s opportunities for engagement within the group—namely “how numerous and varied are the interests which are consciously shared” within that group (Democracy 89). This is a measure of whether the group structure is likely to promote interaction within the group and facilitate the refining of ideas among members. To encourage communication within the group, Dewey suggests that members should share a wide range of interests, which promotes “free and equitable intercourse” (90). The goal is not shared interests for their own sake but to facilitate exchange among members of the group. The “equable opportunity to receive and to take from others” provides each member with the most opportunities to have their ideas shared,
challenged, and improved (90). Members should also take turns with different kinds of experiences so that exposure to only a few ways of life does not limit their perception, such that they do not have access to the experience of others (90).

The second test is “[h]ow full and free is the interplay with other forms of associations” (Democracy 89). Dewey criticizes any group that has “interests ‘of its own’ which shut it out from the full interaction with other groups, so that its prevailing purpose is the protection of what it has got, instead of reorganization and progress through wider relationships” (91). Nel Noddings argues that, for Dewey, “[w]henever groups withdraw from connection, isolate themselves, and become exclusive, democracy is endangered” (35). Noddings spells out Dewey’s claim and suggests the testing of groups based on whether they “communicate freely across lines of class, religion, race, and region” and in “the quality of their association” (35). Dewey’s concern is that for a group “isolation makes for rigidity and formal institutionalizing of life, for static and selfish ideals within the group,” such that members will not have the opportunities for growth (Democracy 92). Isolated groups are less likely to consider or even understand the concerns of others, which limits their chances of learning from others. Interests within a group and interaction between groups may serve as an indicator of whether a particular group is supporting the growth of itself and its members through the kinds of communications encouraged.

Dewey’s test for groups is that they are providing the kinds of interactions that are most likely to promote the good of the individual and the group. His argument that interaction with others is likely to facilitate growth and refine ideas and practices means that group structure should encourage interaction. The free give and take of ideas characterizes useful interaction, so Dewey encourages tolerance of others, respect, and cooperation. Without these, the exchange is
less likely to be an actual give-and-take where individuals have the potential to learn from one another.

Noddings points out that it is possible for groups to seem to fulfill these criteria through free exchange with many groups similar to themselves. Dewey does not address this concern. Noddings contends that “an important objection to Dewey’s work is that he paid little attention to forms of systematic oppression and cultural hegemony” that may have led him to address the nuances of group differences more carefully (36). Once Deweyan theorists recognize this possibility, they need to more vigilantly examine the interaction between groups and whether they are only associating with groups like themselves. When groups test to determine whether they are interacting with other groups, recognizing the importance of Noddings’ insight, they must make certain that they are not only interacting with groups that hold similar ideas and values.

The examination of the relationships within a particular group, and interactions between that group and others, provides a way of examining whether the group facilitates growth. It is a first test of whether individuals are having the kinds of experiences that encourage growth and whether the group is encouraging the kinds of exchanges most likely to enhance its own improvement. In the next section the components of interaction and continuity will test for the promotion of growth in particular circumstances.

5.2. Interaction and Continuity as Indicators of Growth

The principles of interaction and continuity suggest to Dewey ways of testing experiences for whether they promote growth. That individuals are in constant mutually influencing relationships with their environment is the principle of interaction and that “every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the
quality of those which come after” is the principle of continuity (Experience and Education 19).

Interaction and continuity characterize all experience, but individuals may evaluate their constituents to determine whether or not they are likely to facilitate growth.

As considered above, individuals are engaged in a mutually influencing relationship with their environment. In inquiry, one addresses both herself and the conditions of her environment. When an individual encounters a problematic situation, she may apply inquiry to her own acts and character or to the environment with which she interacts. She may examine her capacities, abilities, weaknesses, attitudes, etc., as well as elements of the environment, like, other people, concepts in play, the local terrain, institutions, etc. The individuals and their environment are easily understood as evaluative when discussing the education of children. A child’s development depends on her capacities (reasoning, concentration, performance under pressure, etc.) and on the child’s environment (a crowded city, a rural area, materials available in the school, etc.). Whether the teacher was able to cater to a particular child’s abilities and whether she made good use of the environment are methods for evaluating the teacher. Dewey suggests individuals apply inquiry to both the use of their abilities and to the elements of their surroundings throughout life. An individual’s capacities, problem-solving abilities, reactions, etc., are all factors in the success of inquiry and that individual or another individual may evaluate their use. Dewey and Tufts argue it is possible to assess an individual’s utilization of the “surroundings, physical and social,” based on whether she is able “to extract from them all that they have to contribute to building up experiences that are worthwhile” (1932 22). Both the individual and the environment play a role in whether inquiry is successful. Regarding these two factors of interaction, Dewey describes two potential causes of a non-educative experience the “failure of an individual to adapt himself to the material” and “the failure of the adaptation of
material to needs and capacities of individuals” (Experience and Education 27). Both may be assessed as to whether or not they contribute to growth.

Dewey contends that because individuals are social they develop, are fulfilled, are challenged, etc., through interaction—they have a commitment to contribute to the common good and to consider the welfare of others. These commitments inform what it means to pursue moral or positive growth. Those “experiences . . . which develop the individual’s perception of his or her place in the ongoing social situation and foster the individual’s ability to take part in and improve such ongoing situations” promote positive growth (Campbell, Understanding 138). Growth occurs for individuals in improving their own abilities to and in actually improving the conditions of their environment in a way that embraces the needs and experiences of others. An example of this is a community member learning to be more patient with his neighbors, so that he does not cut off relationships, and so that the neighborhood is more likely to solve problems cooperatively.

Secondly, the kind of continuity occurring in experiences is a measure of growth. Continuity is the idea that “every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after” (Experience and Education 19). Inquiry may be applied to how well one is able to consider experiences of the past and apply them to future circumstances. One may do this by examining the habits that guide one’s evaluations and applications of past experiences to the future, i.e. deliberation, reflection, problem identification, and solution assessment. So, an individual may submit the very habits used in deliberation and evaluation to deliberation and evaluation themselves. In some cases this will be very straightforward. For instance, imagine a woman named Tina who does not always see fairly obvious solutions to her problems. After having friends point out simple solutions on
numerous occasions, Tina recognizes that she needs to alter or enhance her consideration of potential solutions. She may decide to employ a strategy, such as finding a quiet place to brainstorm and write out potential solutions, or she may go over the situation with friends to see what they notice. Here, Tina employs a common habit of inquiry to improve her deliberations in the future. Though Dewey emphasizes particular circumstances, when common elements or common problems occur, individuals may justifiably develop general guides to action. Addressing a reoccurring situation generally allows for more broad application. These considerations have the potential to become fairly complex as the potential number of factors and experiences under consideration increases. It is, however, very useful, as one is able to enhance her ability and chances of successful inquiry in multiple circumstances.

How well an individual is able to draw from experiences of the past in order to inform the future is an assessment of their ability to maximize continuity. Submitting the tools of inquiry (problem-identification, reflection, etc.) to inquiry provides a tremendous amount of continuity as the individual connects numerous past and future experiences in one situation. In other words, she is considering problems that when solved will improve multiple future experiences. She is learning to use and evaluate the tools of reason and inquiry to examine the experiences of the past in order to put herself in a better position both now and in the future, thus capitalizing on this principle of continuity. This is particularly important in light of Dewey’s suggestion that change occurs frequently, necessitating reevaluation of principles. One way to evaluate an experience is “on the ground of what it moves toward and into,” in other words, how it provides for future experience (Experience and Education 20). That the choices of the present impact one’s habits and circumstances in the future means that they are more than simply a
determination of what one will do at this moment, but that they will influence one’s character and experiences in the future.

Growth occurs in experiences that “create conditions for further growth” and do not “set up conditions that shut off the person . . . from the occasions, stimuli, and opportunities for continuing growth in new directions” (Experience and Education 19, 24). Individuals may evaluate experiences based on whether they promote growth in the future; and, since growth is a continuing process, those that do promote future growth are growth experiences themselves.

Examining the nature of continuity in any circumstance is a way of evaluating the growth that may occur. It was addressed earlier that Dewey holds interaction with others to be important for its potential to challenge ideas and refine reflection. So, individuals may evaluate growth, in terms of continuity, through whether experiences promote or hinder “occasions, stimuli, and opportunities” for increased and more meaningful interaction and cooperation. Since he also assumes a responsibility of the individual to the collective, individuals and groups may assess continuity based on whether one is able to learn from past experiences better ways to interact with others and enhance the community. For instance, on a particular committee one may notice that providing refreshments results in members being in less of a hurry to leave and more likely to engage in discussions, and linger after the meeting. Continuing to provide refreshments is a way of learning from past experience that increases interaction between members and that hopefully facilitates refining one another’s ideas and further cooperation. As a practical example Dewey applied his theory in an elementary school.
6. Theory of Deweyan Growth Evident in Educational Writing

Dewey’s work on education and schools is intimately connected with his understanding of growth and with his other philosophical commitments. Dewey helped to develop what was known as the Laboratory School (Burnett ix) and served as its director during his time at the University of Chicago (Seigfried, Pragmatism 293 n. 41). The Laboratory School was associated with the University and designed to test educational theory. Much of his writing on growth is about the practices of the school.

Dewey finds experience to be both precarious and stable and that through thorough investigation individuals can seek for what has worked in the past and what may work regarding present circumstances and future consequences. The best way to approach the future is not to develop an authoritarian government, educational system, or social structure; rather, Dewey argues that when individuals are better inquirers and more engaged with one another, they will develop better solutions. Hildebrand suggests that, for Dewey, “education’s purpose is to prepare us to survive and, hopefully, flourish in a future that is by nature uncertain. This is best provided by enabling each child to take full command of her own powers, rather than merely fashioning her to fulfill society’s current needs” (Hildebrand 125). Though Dewey’s Laboratory School focused mainly on elementary education, Dewey suggests that growth is a life-long endeavor (Democracy 54-56). Teachers and administrators designed activities to prepare students for life-long growth within their communities. Dewey describes some of these activities and the structure of the school in The School and Society.

Effective inquiry includes the ability to examine context and draw on past experience, both significant in the precarious and stable world. When elementary-age students entered the Laboratory School, they were put into groups of eight to ten students each and guided by an
instructor (*School 60*). In a student’s first few years, schooling consisted of activities that were familiar from home life, such as sewing, cooking, dramatic plays, story-telling, metal craft, and woodworking. Children had the opportunity to work on projects collectively and individually within these familiar areas (10, 73-74). The practice of developing skills in areas with which children were familiar was an effort to maintain a synthesis between their activities at school and their home lives. Dewey saw this synthesis as important because it helped to maintain and develop students’ interests in their work by making classroom activities relevant to their lives outside of school (15, 97-98). This process provides continuity characteristic of growth experiences.

The children developed a proficiency in various activities that teachers then used to guide them in analyses. With assistance, children examined both the development and significance of the activities of daily living within the larger society and historical context. In addition to learning about the contexts of the activities, students developed the technical knowledge and skills to make further analysis and conduct inquiry (73-76). These activities were not simply about gaining vocational skills; rather, they were also “points of departure” for increasingly sophisticated analysis as students matured (13). For instance, the processes of cooking served as an introduction to the study of the ingredients in use and their relationship with the local environment and also provided an introduction to chemistry. The goal was for students to begin developing the technical skills needed to learn biology and chemistry through familiar activities such as cooking and the immediate problems these presented. Carpentry and sewing not only to introduced students to trees and textiles, but also provided a way to study social context. Teachers helped students examine the methods and materials used in relationship “with commerce and distribution, [and] with art in the development of architecture and decoration”
So students were not only taught practical skills, these activities actually served as a platform for the analysis of context, influences, and wider impact and significance. In contrast to a technical school, where the primary aim was perfecting technical skills, the Laboratory School taught analysis and evaluation of one’s own work and the development of hypotheses. Dewey laments that in trade schools:

> the mastery of certain tools, or the production of certain objects, is made the primary end, and the child is not given . . . intellectual responsibility for selecting the materials and instruments that are most fit[,] . . . an opportunity to think out his own model and plan of work, [or] led to perceive his own errors, and find out how to correct them. (92)

The Laboratory School aimed to go beyond proficiency in technical skills to teach students how to reflect on their own work in order to improve their work in the future (92). Thus, the teaching of technical skills was a medium for learning and improving inquiry, rather than for perfecting a particular skill set.

Teachers and administrators emphasized activities and projects that analyzed elements of daily activities already familiar to students, and then extend that analysis to a larger context. The study of these activities introduced students to the skills needed for social, historical, and scientific analysis, using the connection between school and non-school activities to maintain their interest. Dewey argues that the Laboratory School taught the fundamental skills of education more effectively than in traditional schools where students studied subjects in isolation both from one another and from other activities. The belief that through performing and reflecting on familiar activities, students would maintain their interest in what they were doing, guided the teachers and administrators in the Laboratory School.
The teacher’s role was by no means easy. Hildebrand argues that in Deweyan schools teachers “have to match the present interests and activities of these pupils with preexisting curricular goals (for instance, of history or chemistry) by identifying specific problematic situations capable of integrating the two” (130). Ideally, the students’ desire to learn the traditional subjects of school—the “three Rs” curriculum—would arise because of their usefulness in the completion and understanding of the activities already in progress (76-78). Dewey suggested that when students’ skills developed in the context of a project or activity being conducted, those students would gain understanding. They would not simply memorize facts, but learn to apply skills and to understand their usefulness and history (87). By beginning with familiar activities and demonstrating their social impact and historical significance, the children would gain the skills needed for more precise and technical work, while still learning about the significance of the tools they employed. Over time, direction from the instructor and work with other students would prepare a student for self-directed study (79-80). The school encouraged teachers to employ the principle of interaction, aiming to ensure the individual student’s abilities and capacities are engaged and developed and that the environment facilitates that process.

Early in their training, children took up studying the daily activities from earlier time periods and made historical connections. Dewey recounts one such study of the colonial period. The students were given tools from the colonial period and used them to carry out tasks that they had already mastered in their own home lives. This method of study allowed the students to experience and understand both the needs and limitations of the colonial time period and how progress and development occurred (75). Dewey suggests that “[w]hat is primarily required for that direct inquiry which constitutes the essence of science is first-hand experience” (“Democracy in Education” 236). Students experienced a simulation of the social, historical, and
geographical contexts that impacted the progress and thought of colonial life (School 75). Students began to experience and understand the time period, instead of simply reciting the conditions of colonial life. In addition, they had the opportunity to consider the impact of colonial thought, experiences, and history on their present ways of living. Hildebrand reports that in the Laboratory School:

> [e]ach successive project in which children engage illustrates more diverse interrelationships and more general lessons. . . . Later stages of study introduce students to more abstract thinking, formal methods, and increased facility with symbols . . . Deweyan schools help students anticipate the use of abstract methods through gradual and practical exposure. (132-33)

Students were engaged in developing habits useful for current and future inquiry. The training of the school aimed to help students take up experiences of the past and apply them to the future, the continuity that Dewey suggests characterizes growth.

Collective inquiry facilitates growth, as this kind of inquiry is an important method of solving problems and emphasizes the benefits of having ideas refined by multiple perspectives. Collective inquiry provides opportunities for individuals to develop skills and attain satisfaction and fulfillment. Thus, Dewey suggests that education and schools should aim to promote individual development in connection with the community. Promoting a better society means promoting individual development and expanding individual options. The school provided an opportunity for both collective and individual activities. The collective work gave students the opportunity to be a part of a community and to learn to work together. Teachers gave students

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17 It is important to recognize that Dewey’s initial evaluation is that these methods for teaching are more successful than lecture and recitation—the primary methods of education in most schools at the time. What is more important to see in terms of theory and organizational strategy is that Dewey describes their conclusions as “tentative” and indicating areas for further study. He ultimately wants to ensure that the school encourages the growth of the child (School 24, 73, 79-80).
guidance in working together to solve problems and determine solutions. Teachers used collective work as a way to reduce competition between students so group discussion could become a time for exchanging and correcting ideas (*School* 11). Dewey argues that in an environment without collaborative work:

> [t]here is no opportunity for each child to work out something specifically his own, which he may contribute to the common stock, while he, in turn, participates in the productions of others. All are set to do exactly the same work and turn out the same results. The social spirit is not cultivated. (*Significance* 64)

The collaborative and communicative activities of the school potentially facilitate genuine conversation, in which Dewey and James H. Tufts argue:

> the ideas of one are corrected and changed by what others say . . . What he gains is an expansion of experience; he learns; even if previous ideas are in the main confirmed, yet in the degree in which there is a genuine mutual give and take they are seen in a new light, depended and extended in meaning, and there is the enjoyment of enlargement of experience, of growth of capacity. (1932 346)

Dewey argues that students in the school began to develop the skills needed for this kind of exchange, which would benefit their current and future endeavors.

The individual work that also took place in the school provided students with the time to develop individual skills and to follow their own interests. The projects children pursued on their own were intended to give them insight into their own work and also the chance to assess it. Dewey holds that a “growing intelligence” develops in “greater play for the individuality of the child” and argues that the school provided opportunity for that play (“Democracy in Education” 235). He continues that:
Until the emphasis changes to the conditions which make it necessary for the child to take an active share in the personal building up of his own problems and to participate in methods of solving them (even at the expense of experimentation and error) the mind is not really freed. (237)

To grow, Dewey argues, one must be able to participate in understanding and solving problems that impact one’s life. Through this participation, in both succeeding and making errors, children learn to direct their lives. Dewey describes two drawings of trees done by a student both before and after a discussion and a directed observation of trees. The second drawing shows noticeable improvement. This project gave the student a chance to assess his original drawing and independently return to the same activity to improve his work (School 27-33). In this project the child, supported by the teacher, improved his present abilities and was preparing for more complicated problems in the future.

Within the school this process of attempting a new skill, assessing the work done, and then making improvements played an important role in both individual and group activities. The students, with guidance from their instructor, joined together to assess their work and ideas. During these sessions instructors guided students through the processes of inquiry and in the development of skills useful in inquiry. Dewey reports that this time “becomes preeminently a social meeting place . . . the social clearing-house, where experiences and ideas are exchanged and subjected to criticism, where misconceptions are corrected, and new lines of thought and inquiry are set up” (34). These discussions were designed so that the children could learn to express ideas and display skills and then go through the process of receiving criticism, amending their strategies, and then working towards their new goals. Teachers aimed to provide students with the experience of seeing their own work develop through assistance from other students, as
a way to illustrate the value of a strong and cooperative community. In this way, children saw the community offer suggestions and potentially improve their individual work. In Dewey’s view, the activities and guidance provided at the school taught students both self-direction and cooperation within a group. It is through this teaching that “we shall have the deepest and best guarantee of a larger society which is worthy, lovely, and harmonious” (School 19-20). The aim of the school is not simply to prepare students individually for their life pursuits, but to benefit society overall. The collaborative exchange and give and take required for the process to work is justified in its benefits for the individual and the group, as well as in the responsibility to others that Dewey argues is grounded in interactive experience. Dewey argues that the individual’s social nature grounds consideration for one another and the collective group. That is why he argues that education should be “a freeing of individual capacity in a progressive growth directed to social aims” (Democracy 105) and should aim to develop “an interest in all persons in furthering the general good, so that they will find their own happiness realized in what they can do to improve the conditions of others” (Ethics 1932 243).

In the Deweyan school interactions between the teachers and students do not have to be characterized by imposition. When cooperation and participation occur “it is not the will or desire of any one person which establishes order, but the moving spirit of the whole group” (Experience and Education 33). From within or outside the school community, one may evaluate whether the school as a community facilitates growth, just as other groups. Members of the school and others may evaluate the internal interests shared among group members, whether communication is full and free, and whether the school has meaningful interactions with other groups. Dewey suggests that “control is social” and that “individuals are parts of a community,
not outside of it” (*Experience and Education* 33). Hildebrand argues that, in a Deweyan framework, teachers control:

by creating social and physical circumstances designed to elicit and encourage students’ natural desires and capabilities to learn. Student interest is ‘controlled’ not by external threats or rewards but because they find themselves engaging with others in solving the problems that various lessons present. (134-35)

Dewey is adamant about individual participation as a way of improving the community and as a means for individual development. He argues that the structure of institutions should encourage participation with others and individual development. In schools he calls for a system in which “every teacher has some regular and representative way in which he or she can register judgment . . . with the assurance that this judgment will somehow affect the school system” and that education will be improved through “adoption of intellectual initiative, discussion, and decision throughout the entire school corps” (“Democracy in Education” 231, 232). Students should also get this experience and Dewey encourages their involvement in the workings of the school. Part of the students’ training is to develop more and more responsibility, to direct their own activities, and to participate in democratic institutions and a democratic society. One way to do this is to include them in directing some aspects of the school (Axtelle and Burnett 287). Growth is a process most readily fostered by communication and reflective thinking and this remains the case in an institution. Dewey recommends open communication and input in the management of an institution, so that it is more likely to foster growth and to grow itself. Noddings suggests that Deweyan schools are “minisocieties in which children learn through practice how to promote their own growth, that of others, and that of the whole society” (37).
This section has briefly examined the implementation of Deweyan theory within the school setting. School activities aimed to prepare students for future problem-solving and inquiry by actually having students participate in those processes in the present and by developing skills useful for their pursuit. The school emphasized the development of individual skills through interaction with and in conjunction with others. This is consistent with Dewey’s view that individual and collective development is the best method for solving problems and developing meaning and significance. In addition, due to the open-ended nature of growth Dewey aims to build into the school participation and inclusion in decision making from teachers and students.

7. Conclusion – Growth as Moral Criterion

Growth is a flexible evaluative and guiding tool that demands attention to the best understanding of human ability to reason and of a critical moral framework in order to solve particular problems. Through generalizations and the evaluation of experience, Dewey has developed some guidelines for growth (specifically, that it is rational, recognizing the possibilities for justification, and moral, taking into account the factors of morality) as well as suggestions for its improvement (taking advantage of and seeking disruptions, developing flexible habits, and increasing sociability). Growth as a criterion will evaluate and call for an individual’s enhanced use of inquiry. It will consider an individual’s ability to recognize problems, assess possible solutions, and test solutions in experience. Growth will examine the quality and utilization of the environment in which one is situated, the capabilities of the individual, as well as one's ability to apply lessons from past experience. As the assessment of growth itself is embedded within the evaluator's context, she must continually look for more accurate assessments and challenge the conclusions drawn. Dewey suggests that individuals do
this by testing their ideas and being able to adapt to these tests. From the belief that individuals are problem-solvers, as well as the intense need for continued and rigorous reflection in this precarious world, Dewey recommends the development of the best problem-solving methods. This means promoting the moral values associated with individual and collective inquiry (tolerance, supporting the development of others, harmony).

Growth will also require the evaluation of the moral factors Dewey suggests develop out of experience (the Good, Right, and Virtuous). As mentioned, these factors also evolve as contexts change and practitioners and theorists must continue to evaluate the Good, Right, and Virtuous on the best understanding of moral considerations available. A Deweyan theorist considers these moral factors in the process of inquiry; reflection on and testing of them offer guides to action in moral decision making.

The limits of reason discussed above suggest that universal and fixed principles for moral decision-making are unwise. Rather than offering a hierarchical procedure for determining which moral ideal to pursue, Dewey insists that one must work within the context of particular circumstances. Each circumstance is different and will require individual considerations. Within each situation, one seeks what will exemplify the ideals in place. However, his theory does suggest that one should promote growth through increasing her ability to go through the process of inquiry and embracing reflection on the recommendations of the moral traditions and factors of morality. In the end, growth occurs in finding a resolution to a particular problem in light of the factors raised by inquiry and the moral traditions or in enhancing one’s ability to take advantage of the best tools of inquiry and moral consideration, which will enhance finding resolutions in the future.
In the Laboratory School, Dewey aimed to facilitate the development of growth by implementing activities that guided students through the processes of individually and collectively solving problems. This exposed them to the benefits of recognizing their social connection with others and enhanced their own abilities and capacities. Dewey encouraged the input of students and teachers throughout the school, maintaining his commitment to the free exchange of communication as beneficial for individuals and the group.

Growth is an open-ended and shifting goal that requires vigilance in considering potentially relevant factors and changing circumstances. Based on the precarious and stable nature of human experience, Dewey contends that promoting growth is the most likely way of improving circumstances.
CHAPTER II. JOHN DEWEY’S THEORY OF GROWTH IN CONJUNCTION WITH AMY ALLEN’S FEMINIST THEORY OF POWER

1. Introduction

Many ways exist to address the issue of power. Edward Said posits a “relationship between one’s motive for imagining power and the image one ends up with” (151). In the same vein, Steven Lukes argues that “the variations in what interests us when we are interested in power run deep,” so deep that he contends that the search for a comprehensive definition of power is a “mistake” (4-5). Likewise, William E. Connolly argues that no theory of power “will be incontestably established in all respects” (126). With an interest in bringing pragmatism and feminism together, specifically in the theory and practice of domestic violence shelters, the dissertation focuses on a feminist theory of power. Drawing from a feminist analysis of power, however, does not imply that a consensus exists among feminists as to what a theory of power contains nor toward its application. Despite the lack of consensus, the theory of power offered by Amy Allen, primarily in her work, *The Power of Feminist Theory: Domination, Resistance, Solidarity*, provides a comprehensive feminist theory of power useful in examining Dewey’s theory. Her work relies on and evaluates a good deal of the feminist literature on power and aims to synthesize this literature into a general theory of power. Allen describes feminists’ interest in studying power in the following way:

> Insofar as feminists are interested in studying power, it is because we have an interest in understanding, criticizing, challenging, subverting, and ultimately overturning the multiple axes of stratification affecting women in contemporary Western societies, including (but not limited to) sexism, racism, heterosexism, and class oppression. (2)

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18 Citations of Allen refer to her work *The Power of Feminist Theory* unless otherwise noted.
While Allen’s work is unlikely to be the final word on a feminist theory of power (as she admits that it might not apply to other cultures), it captures a picture of power as experienced by many women in the United States and offers a broad starting point from which to evaluate Dewey’s theory (Allen 5 n. 5). Thus, this dissertation is a continuation of the criticisms that have been made of Dewey and offers a point along the conversation in the assessment of what Dewey provides and where his weaknesses lie. This project may be continued in the future as both feminist theories and Deweyan theory develop. Allen’s account will help assess Dewey’s theory, specifically his limited account of power.

2. Dewey Lacks an Account of Power

Pragmatists, and Dewey specifically, routinely face the criticism that they do not provide an adequate analysis of or response to power. Nancy Fraser goes so far as to suggest that “the mainstream tradition of classical pragmatist social thought” is limited by “its neglect of power” (“Another” 173). This criticism of Dewey often goes hand in hand with the claims that Dewey recognizes that power often limits theory and practice, and that Dewey’s theory aims to root out biases and prejudice in thought. Indeed, the problem with his theory is that the recognition of and call to root out bias and prejudice is as far as his theory goes. Seigfried argues that men and women have a different relation to the “structure of power, a relation that Dewey sometimes seems to recognize, but not to the extent of developing a sustained explanation for it nor for its being overcome” (Pragmatism 150). The claim is that Dewey does not provide a detailed and thorough examination of social influences that impact relationships and interactions, or of the power plays of people within those relationships and interactions. Seigfried also contends that while those labeled “Classical American philosophers”¹⁹—C.S. Peirce, William James, and John

¹⁹ For purposes of this text the Classical American philosophers include: Peirce, James, and Dewey. Seigfried also adds to this list Josiah Royce and George Herbert Mead (Pragmatism 6).
Dewey—did suggest that “philosophers ought to continually interrogate our inherited beliefs to discover their biases and to develop new beliefs that can contribute to bringing about a better state of affairs than the present with its deification of existing centers of power,” they often missed “that what is usually explicated under the benign characterization of ‘perspectives’ often hides a will to dominate” (*Pragmatism* 6, 186, 191). It is this will to dominate that critics suggest Dewey does not explore. Erin McKenna argues that “Dewey rarely acknowledges the full strength of entrenched social power present in our habits of race, class, and gender” (“Need” 155). These criticisms indicate that Dewey recognizes that bias and prejudice hinder theory and practice; however, he does not address the depth to which biases and prejudices penetrate character and that individuals may actively work to maintain them. His works suggest that his “understanding of conflict between people of different interest and position was more episodic than enduring” (Lagemann 43). Alain Locke and Bernhard J. Stern explain that often:

views of culture . . . are based on attitudes and interests more sinister than naïve bias and innocent misconception. They are the deliberate coinage of propaganda and rationalization, and circulate dangerously and deceptively in the general currency of ideas and opinions. (5)

After these views are “[c]arefully analyzed, their major objectives are seen to be the justification of conflict and exploitation through the disparagement of other group cultures and the promotion of prestige and group morale through self-glorification and claims of superiority” (5). An adequate account of social interactions must recognize that bias and prejudice are not simply present, but that individuals and institutions support their continuation, a problem that Dewey recognizes, but does not explore (“Intelligence” 109).

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20 Seigfried is specifically arguing that African-American philosophers were able to bring this insight to pragmatism.
A closely related idea is that Dewey and other pragmatists do not offer an adequate response to socially entrenched power. Dewey’s call to expose these problems through communication and education is not enough to dislodge these views. Seigfried argues that, “[b]y locating conflicts in different approaches to life and not in struggles for power, . . . [Dewey] frequently underestimates what is required to overcome them” (“John” 55). McKenna argues that “[h]e naively, or just hopefully, supposes that habits can be broken by individuals in interaction with their various communities,” concluding that the “attitudes of patriarchy, however, have not yielded to such efforts” (“Need” 155-56). Because the prevalence of power and the desire to maintain power are not adequately addressed in his theory, Dewey is unable to provide resources or tactics to satisfactorily challenge that power.

C.W. Mills and Cornel West argue that Dewey’s solutions are not applicable to political parties vying for power or to “industrial cities or urban capitalist societies” (Mills 394; West 102). Mills argues that Dewey’s “conceptions are anchored in a social situation where integration can occur by means of liberal individuals heavily endowed with substantive rationality” (393-94) and tied to a rural, thus more intimate, social organization—a social situation that Mills argues is simply not present in politics where interactions are between “struggling, organized political parties” that have “a chance at power,” and are organized “for social fighting” (432-45). Mills and West agree that Dewey’s model of society is “a relatively homogeneous community which does not harbor any chasms of structure and power not thoroughly ameliorative by discussion” ( Mills 405; West 102). West argues that Dewey’s model may apply to small “artisanal towns or farming communities;” however, the homogeneity Dewey assumes “distorts his view regarding the role of critical intelligence in dislodging and democratizing the entrenched economic and political powers” in a more complex society (102).
According to Seigfried, McKenna, Mills, and West, Dewey’s hypotheses for addressing problems through communication and education are not sufficient when the problems faced include entrenched power. This would seriously limit any pairing of Dewey’s theory with feminist theory or application, since much of feminist work focuses on assessing and addressing power. Despite these criticisms, the dissertation argues Dewey, may yet accommodate and support a feminist theory of power.


Allen argues that a feminist theory of power needs to attend to the ways that power manifests itself in women’s lives by attending to the domination of women by men and the individual and collective instances of resistance by women in the face of that domination. Allen posits that a feminist theory of power has three modes “masculine domination, feminine empowerment and resistance, and feminist solidarity and coalition-building” (123). Feminists’ interest in power is primarily “in understanding and critiquing social relations of domination and subordination and thinking about how such relations can be transformed through individual and collective resistance” (Allen, “Feminist” 3). Allen suggests that feminist (and other) theorists giving accounts of power have not successfully incorporated all three of these elements into a unified theory useful for feminist analysis. In order to develop a more comprehensive theory, Allen draws on the analyses of power found in Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Hannah Arendt. She argues that each provides tools for developing a more broad and inclusive understanding of power that can serve as a resource for feminist analysis.

Dewey’s theory does not take on this kind of full-fledged analysis of power. While Dewey does not offer a sustained analysis of power in social interactions, he is able to accommodate or embrace many of the elements that Allen suggests a feminist theory of power
requires. The transactive component of Dewey’s theory will easily accommodate Allen’s theory of power as dispersed; his understanding of individuals as composed of habits offers tools for an account of agency that compliments Allen’s; and his theory of collective inquiry and of interests provide ways to enhance Allen’s understanding of collective power.

3.1. The Limits of Conceptualizing Power as Resource, Domination, and Empowerment

Allen argues that one needs a comprehensive theory of power (one that can simultaneously consider domination, resistance, and solidarity) to address women’s experiences fully. She opens *The Power of Feminist Theory* by reviewing the predominant theories of power found in feminist literature—those that identify power as a resource, as domination, or as empowerment. According to Allen, each of these theories offers a too simplistic account of the workings of power. She argues that while the theories of domination and empowerment each describe one mode of power, they neglect the assessment of other modes of power, thus masking the relationships between modes of power and limiting analysis of those relationships.

Power as a resource, similar to oil, food, or water, becomes a good that some have and others lack, creating a limited supply. Feminists describing power in this way argue that the current situation, in which women do not have equal access to power in public life and have less power than men in interpersonal relationships, needs to change (Allen 9). Feminist theorists who view power as a resource argue that women must obtain a larger share of the available power—a redistribution of power needs to occur. While feminist theorists may endorse more access for women in the public realm and more equal interpersonal relationships, the view of power as a resource remains problematic.

Feminists also describe power as domination. They posit that power is “a relation of domination and subordination” and consequently argue for “a dismantling of the system of male
domination and female subordination altogether” (Allen 11). For instance, Allen recalls Catharine MacKinnon’s position “that domination and gender are completely interrelated, such that relations of domination are implicated in the very formation of gender difference itself” (12). Thus, power is not analogous to a resource that men have and women do not; it is rather part of what it means to be a man or a woman. Power is characteristic or definitional of being male. Because domination is part of the gender difference, it is pervasive in society, so that “all men are in a position of dominance over women, and . . . all women are in subordinate position vis-à-vis men” (Allen 12). This means that all men have the ability to “exercise power over women,” even if they are not doing so at a particular moment (12-13). Allen also notes that Andrea Dworkin’s conception of power is one of domination, as Dworkin argues that “all men have some kinds of power over all women,” though it may take various forms, such as “social, economic, political, and physical” (Allen 13-14; Dworkin 125-126). It is important for a feminist examination of power to address the power men exercise over women; however, as Allen argues, power solely as domination does not adequately capture women’s experiences.

In distinction to the views of power as a resource or as domination, the concept of power as empowerment attempts to describe the power that women do have. Women are often able to change their circumstances and to choose their own courses of action, even in the face of dominating power. This concept of power developed through the observation that women are sometimes able to change oppressive circumstances and to help others gain power. The “care perspective” developed as theorists began to see women’s abilities to nurture as a valuable set of skills (Allen 18). Power as empowerment highlights the value of skills and abilities needed for nurturing that women often possess, but that rarely receive respect (18). From these abilities, and sometimes specifically from the mother/child relationship, theorists suggested an alternative
conception of power. Jean Baker Miller suggests that women’s experiences “can bring new understanding to the whole concept of power,” and Allen recalls Carol Gilligan’s conclusion that women learning “to integrate care for themselves with care for others” produced a sense of power (Miller 241; Allen 18-19). Work on “lesbian and women’s spirituality” emphasizes a similar development or gaining of power from within oneself or relationships (Allen 20).

Through their analyses, these feminist theorists introduced the concept of empowerment. This conception includes the ability to produce change, to find strength within oneself, to be creative, to transform, and to help others gain power often in the midst of oppressive circumstances (21-22). Allen suggests that this is important for a feminist analysis, but does not adequately address the variety of women’s experiences of empowerment.

Allen claims that, while these views are not entirely wrong, each—particularly the conceptions of power as domination and empowerment—describe only a part of an adequate feminist theory of power. She argues that a comprehensive theory of power should include domination, resistance, and solidarity. The theories that characterize power as a resource or as domination do not address resistance or solidarity. They emphasize the negative aspects of power as something women do not have, and they do not address how women are at times able to attain power and challenge the power exercised over them. Similarly, the theory of empowerment does not incorporate an account of domination, how domination may impact empowerment, or how, empowered, women may themselves dominate others.

Allen contends that it is important for a feminist theory to examine all three modes of power, but also their interrelations and effect on one another. She argues that theorists describing power as a resource, domination, or empowerment do not adequately account for the interconnected, dynamic, overlapping, relational nature of power found in modern societies.
Additionally, institutions often mediate individual interactions, and examining isolated modes of power does not address the impact of these institutions. Common patterns of behavior are institutionally and socially endorsed over long periods of time, masking their influence and origin. For instance, one may attribute the particular interactions between a male employer and female employee to their individual characteristics; however, understanding their actions in this way may minimize the influence of social norms on their characters and on how they interact with one another. In addition, this explanation ignores that the promotion practices of an institution may maintain the inequality of their roles. When patterns of behavior and interaction receive social endorsement, seemingly innocuous acts may have a severe impact on others and result in unanticipated consequences.

Allen argues that the theories described above are dyadic, meaning that they focus primarily on the interactions between two individuals or groups. For instance, they may emphasize the domination of a husband over his wife or of men over women. Allen claims, however, that complex social interactions and the distant consequences of our actions make dyadic views of power too simplistic. She argues that theories of power that evaluate modes of power independently obscure the multiple ways that domination and subordination occur and how they interact with acts of resistance. Independently examining modes of power also obscures the ability for an individual to occupy positions of domination and subordination simultaneously (24-26). For instance, the view of power as resource means that one either has the ‘resource’ of power or one does not. This is too simplistic, as a man may have power in relation to his spouse, but not to his boss, may have power in a home setting, but not in a more public setting. A more nuanced view of power is necessary.
Similarly, power as domination masks the complexity of power. Feminist theorists that focus on the power that men have over women as part of what it means to be a man or a woman are not able to address adequately the impact that race, class, sexuality, disabilities, and other factors, have on the use and experience of power. In addition, feminist theories that characterize power as domination maintain rigid or essentialist notions of identity by suggesting that “the domination relation is one that holds between men and women as such” (Allen 16). Feminists describing power as domination often examine the power men have over individual women and do not adequately consider the structural mechanisms in place that affect these relationships (Allen, “Feminist” 8). Theorists characterizing power as empowerment likewise do not consider the influence on the practices of empowerment by dominating and oppressive structures in which these practices develop. The pervasiveness of dominating power means that even the tools one draws upon for agency have potentially felt the impact of domination (Power 23-24). Allen aims to identify a broad conception of power that incorporates the examination of domination, resistance, and solidarity within one theory. The more one-dimensional theories that she reviews, specifically theories of domination and empowerment, touch on these concepts, but no theory offers a concept of power that brings all three modes together. Allen argues that when a theorist treats domination and empowerment separately, she may miss the dynamic element and ignore the relationships between them. For instance, a theorist relying on the theory of power as domination to examine the power of a husband over his wife may miss the wife’s domination over a disabled man or black woman in the workplace. Similarly, only using power as empowerment to consider a woman nurturing a child, misses that the woman’s subordinate position in society may influence her role as nurturer.
To theorize the connections between domination, resistance, and solidarity adequately, Allen argues for a more complex theory of power, and she finds it in Michel Foucault. Foucault provides a complex view of power in social relations that emphasize the relationship between kinds of power. However, he does not adequately account for an individual's ability to act freely when subject to such overwhelming influences. To address this and theorize a space for agency, Allen turns to the work of Judith Butler. Butler accounts for how individuals can both be subject to social influences and still be able to act freely or to resist social influences. Neither Foucault nor Butler accounts, however, for how women act in solidarity. For this, Allen turns to Hannah Arendt and her suggestion that the basis of collective action and solidarity is promise keeping as opposed to common identity or experience. In her later work Allen emphasizes that solidarity also serves an important role in individual resistance and empowerment.

3.2. Michel Foucault – A Repressive and Productive Mode of Power

Foucault rejects conceptions that frame power as solely an instrument of repression or restriction. He argues that locating power only in repression works to some extent when a sovereign dominates society, but no longer applies to modern social arrangements where power is a “mobile and constantly shifting set of force relations that emerge from every social interaction and thus pervade the social body” like a web (Allen. “Feminist” 10; Power 42). Power emerges in relationships and may change over time or between different individuals. Disseminated power thus becomes relational and dynamic (Allen, Power 33). In addition, power considered solely in terms of rules or restrictions does not fully account for the ability of social norms and ideals to permeate and influence behavior. Foucault’s work suggests that power not only restricts the individual, but “incites, provokes, and induces” individuals to construct and conduct themselves within its framework and limits (Allen 34). Power may limit an individual’s
actions and choices, but it also shapes characteristics, habits, attitudes, and expressions, as society encourages her to take up the very positions power creates. In Foucault’s words, power “exerts a positive influence on life, that endeavors to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations” (History 137). Allen explains power “creates objects of analysis, forms discourses that serve as analytical tools, and constructs knowledge” (34). For Foucault, “one is subject to a power that is being exercised over one . . . and simultaneously . . . one is able to take up a position of a subject only in and through this operation of power” (Allen 36).

Power as dispersed, rather than enacted from on high, may still result in a fairly unified set of influences. Forms of power gain influence and coherence as individuals repeatedly enact similar kinds of power and as that form of power circulates throughout society. Foucault describes this process as the “self-amplifying” structure of power (Power/Knowledge 160). Power “continually augments and increases its own force in the course of its exercise,” operating in a “mobile and circular manner” (Fraser, Unruly Practices 24; Foucault, Power/Knowledge 160). When power is productive and present in individual interactions, the influence of power does not simply repress, but gains embodiment through its influence on the individual and her future interactions. In this way, independent expressions of power gain influence and come to support one another. Sometimes these relations of power become part of macrostrategies that impact larger groups. The macro- and micro- techniques of power thus come to support one another. The individual then experiences coordinated and similar expressions of power in isolated individual interactions, institutions, and policies. This explains how power is dispersed, yet remains coordinated enough to impact the individual in similar ways under dissimilar circumstances (Fraser, Unruly Practices 22-24).
Butler adopts Foucault’s repressive, productive, and dispersed account of power and applies it to gender. Rather than being an innate expression of one’s sex, Butler argues that gender is subject to the repressive, productive, and dispersed power relations. She describes gender as a compelled performance—compelled, because it is subject to the relations of power Foucault describes, and performance, because it is not innate and enacted. Foucault and Butler explain how social norms and institutions may limit women to caretaker roles, at the same time defining the skills women develop and the training girls receive, thus influencing, and even creating, women that manifest similar traits. Butler describes the societal compulsion to take up social norms through rewards and punishments—specifically, the reward of recognition from others (Allen, *Politics* 84-85).

Foucault works within a framework of power as exercised over other individuals. He claims that “if we speak of the structures or mechanisms of power, it is only insofar as we suppose that certain persons exercise power over others” (“Subject” 217). Allen argues that “Foucault views power solely in strategic terms” (Allen, *Power* 56). She explains that by “strategic” Foucault means two things: “first, that power relations involve a confrontation or struggle between opposing forces; second, that there is an instrumentalist logic to these confrontations or struggles, such that each party to the struggle is concerned with getting the other to do what he/she wants” (*Politics* 50).

Allen is not suggesting that Foucault characterizes all interactions as solely strategic. Allen recalls that Foucault, in his late essay “The Subject and Power,” “distinguishes between power relations and relations of communication” (*Politics* 179). He argues that power and communication relations are distinct “types of relationship which in fact always overlap one

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21 “The Subject and Power” is an Afterword to Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow’s book *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. It is listed in the Works Cited under Michel Foucault “The Subject and Power.”
another, support one another reciprocally, and use each other mutually as means to an end” (“Subject” 218). Significantly, Allen is claiming that Foucault maintains both that power is strategic and that strategic power is always present in social interactions. So, while not fully characterizing all social interaction as strategic, Foucault maintains that strategic power is dynamic, that it permeates society, and that it defines or influences the roles individuals embody. Though Allen characterized the early Foucault as holding that “one is able to take up the position of a subject only in and through this operation of power” in his later work he opens the door to other kinds of interactions, such that power is always part of one’s ability “to take up the position of a subject” (The Power 36, emphasis added).

Foucault presents a theory of complicated social relations that allows for a pervasive account of power, useful in a society where institutions, governments, and social norms loom large. His theory remedies some of the limitations of the partial views of power given above. His analogy of power as a web is more apt in the midst of social structures not influenced by a sovereign and allows for a relational and dynamic account of power. Power dispersed

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22 Allen is not alone in arguing that Foucault’s account of power is strategic and always present. Thomas McCarthy argues that Foucault’s account of power is strategic. Citing the essay from which Allen draws, McCarthy recalls that Foucault’s characterization of the “exercise of power” (McCarthy 64) is “a way in which certain actions modify others,” that they are a “mode of action upon the action of others,” and that “structure the possible field of [another’s] action” (Foucault, “Subject” 219, 221). McCarthy contends “that Foucault’s final ontology tends to equate social interaction with strategic interaction” (McCarthy 64).

In addition, Arnold Davidson argues that “the articulation of this strategic model—with its notions of force, struggle, war, tactics, strategy, et cetera—is one of the major achievements of Foucault’s thought” (xviii). Similarly, Habermas argues that even in Foucault’s later work he comprehends “power as the interaction of warring parties, as the decentered network of bodily, face-to-face confrontations, and ultimately as the productive penetration and subjectivizing subjugation of a bodily opponent” (Philosophical 255). Habermas goes on to argue that Foucault “admits only the . . . contexts of more or less consciously strategic action” (287) and that Foucault’s “theory of power has erased all traces of communicative actions” (286).

McCarthy also agrees with Allen that this strategic power is present in social relationships. Again citing the essay “Subject and Power,” McCarthy notes that for Foucault, power is “coextensive with every social relationship,” and that “to live in society is to live in such a way that action upon other actions is possible and in fact ongoing” (McCarthy 64; Foucault, “Subject” 224, 222). This view of power greatly limits the integration of Foucault’s work with a feminist theory of power.

23 Thomas McCarthy echoes this idea. He suggests that, in Foucault’s later works, the subjects “are now represented as acting intentionally and voluntarily—within . . . cultural and institutional systems that organize their ways of doing things,” such that “they can, within limits, modify these systems; they can, in any case, make creative use of whatever space for formation of the self that these systems permit or provide” (McCarthy 70).
throughout the social system does not stem from a common source. Dispersed power accounts for how an individual may simultaneously occupy a position in which others exercise power over her and where she exercises power over others. Unlike the accounts of power as a resource or as domination, Foucault’s relational account of power explores the issue that power shifts in each relationship, so a man may have power at home and not at work, or a husband may dominate his wife, yet she has power-over a disabled man in another context.

Foucault also describes power as both constraining and producing. Power constrains an individual’s ability to act, but in constraining also defines the acceptable characteristics, habits, and ways of thinking for that individual. Thus, while limiting, power also plays a productive role in an individual’s character. Bringing together the possibility for domination and agency in the same situation aligns with feminist descriptions of women’s experiences. For instance, feminist theorists describe how women have agency, but are at the same time subject to social judgment and monitoring that induces them to act, such that they constrain movement, stay thin, or use ornamentation (Bartky). Understanding power as constraining and producing, unlike theories of empowerment, indicates how domination impacts one’s character, expressions, and options, thus influencing one’s ability to and methods of acting. Specifically, domination may influence the means of one’s empowerment. With Foucault, one sees that power influences an individual’s ability to act and her habitual patterns of action. Feminists make these analyses, but Allen suggests that they do not adopt a full-fledged theory of power that connects domination and individual action. When Foucault brings them together as interrelated, he offers tools for the broader conception of power Allen calls for: one that connects domination and resistance. Foucault’s theory suggests domination and the power to act are interrelated concepts (Allen 48-53).
Foucault endorses a dispersed theory of power in which power is repressive, productive, and strategically exercised. His theory provides a foundation for a feminist theory of power, where power occurs in individual relationships and finds support in social norms. He also connects the ideas that the power exercised over an individual does not simply limit their options, but influences their character. The dispersed theory of power and the impact of power on character are significant in examining how women experience power. To adequately address women’s experiences of power, Dewey must accommodate these structural components of power.

3.3. Dewey in Relation to Foucault

This section considers the elements of Foucault’s theory that Dewey either embraces or accommodates. Dewey’s theory of social interactions as dynamic, where individuals mutually influence one another, theorizes a social framework compatible with Foucault’s theory of power. Dewey’s ability to accommodate Foucault’s work is primarily evident in his understanding of habits. Dewey argues that individuals adopt social customs as part of their habits, often without recognition of what they are doing. He asserts that:

> The community without becomes a forum and tribunal within, a judgment-seat of charges, assessments and exculpations. Our thoughts of our own actions are saturated with the ideas that others entertain about them, ideas which have been expressed not only in explicit instruction but still more effectively in reaction to our acts. (Human 216-17)

Social norms, expressed through members of the community, respond to the developing habits of an infant, encouraging or impeding their continued expression (Sullivan, Living 94). Internalizing these responses through modifying habits may limit how an individual understands or expresses herself. Habits are significant, as they govern an individual’s interaction with the
world, compose character, and constitute individual identity. When social norms influence habits, they influence the very makeup of an individual. Thus, Dewey’s view endorses social norms as productive forces (Sullivan, *Living* 90-91). Habits form cultural customs that precede individuals and that “delimit the particular . . . options available to individuals and thus tend to reproduce themselves through individuals’ habits. Many times and in many different ways, the world, in its response to one’s engagement with it, ‘instructs’ one on ‘proper’ habit formation” (92). The influence of cultural norms on the development and expression of habits constrains an individual’s performance for as long as the habit or habits remain intact. Institutions or large social structures, as well as interactions between individuals influence the formation of habits. Dewey argues that “[c]onnections with our fellows furnish both the opportunities for action and the instrumentalities by which we take advantage of opportunity. All of the actions of an individual bear the stamp of his community” (*Human* 218). Under a Deweyan framework social influences both limit and have productive influence on individuals.

Through his account of habits, Dewey adds to an understanding of how individual power relations produce individuals. From Foucault and Butler one sees that norms encourage and even compel certain behaviors again and again. Dewey’s suggestion that repeated behaviors or habits compose character, sheds light on how individual instances of power influence character and not only isolated behaviors. The prominence of social influence within Dewey’s theory supports the permeating component of power Foucault describes.

Dewey’s account also accommodates Foucault’s theory of power as dispersed and relational. In a discussion of intelligence, Dewey recognizes the idea that “power is a blanket term” and that in order to understand power “[w]hat first is needed is the discrimination, [and] knowledge of the distribution of power” (“Intelligence” 109). Thus indicating that he also
understands power as dispersed. Additionally, in his theory of interactions between individuals Dewey contends individuals are in trans-action with others and the community, meaning each influences the other. The potential for either side to influence the other accommodates Foucault’s dispersed account of power. His view that cultural influences are often transmitted through individual interactions is consistent with Foucault’s account of power as relational. The mutual engagement with and influence individuals have on one another is consistent with Foucault’s theory of power as dispersed and relational. On Dewey’s theory individuals have influence on one another and social structure provides access to the possibility of exercising power over one another.

Dewey’s emphasis on the changing nature of human experience would also apply to any Deweyan discussion of power. Individuals are in continuous interaction with one another and their environment. These interactions are not fixed and need to be renegotiated. From a Deweyan perspective one would not anticipate that interactions or relations remain constant over time. Dewey would embrace Foucault’s contention that power relations continually change.

Without actually taking on a full-fledged analysis of power as seen in Foucault, Dewey’s description of the social framework embraces social influences as constraining, producing, dispersed, relational, and dynamic. Thus, some of the key components Allen finds useful in Foucault come fully within the embrace of Dewey’s theory, namely, an interconnected, mutually influencing, dispersed social framework that allows for complex relations of influence and the deeply ingrained impact of the social environment on an individual. In Foucault this permeating influence is often, if not always, strategic, meaning it consists of “imposing one’s will on another” (Allen, “Feminist”); while, for Dewey, this permeating influence is most often described as benign, even beneficial, and not strategically imposed. The difference reflects the
orientation of their work. While Foucault and Butler often highlight social problems, Dewey explores potential solutions or possibilities for improvement. Dewey recognizes the possibility of strategic influences, suggesting, “[d]eliberate unscrupulous pursuit of self-interest is as much conditioned upon social opportunities, training and assistance as is the course of action promoted by a beaming benevolence” (Human 218). He recognizes that “the structure of human association . . . operates to affect negatively and positively, the development of individuals” (Liberalism 31), and even that one may use power with constructive or destructive consequences (“Force and Coercion”). Unlike Foucault and Butler, however, he most often describes the impact of social influences as potentially beneficial and useful to the individual’s development. He encourages the development of cultural norms and educational curricula that are helpful to the individual. Dewey advocates for individuals and communities to reconstruct norms or customs, and suggests ways to improve this process. He thus indicates that norms and customs are in need of improvement; however, he does little to diagnose specific problems in detail and does not go so far as to consider the impact of malevolently established customs and norms.

Dewey’s failure to diagnose the strategic uses of power in detail creates a problem for his view. He describes situations as “problematic,” but without fully grappling with strategic uses of power, oppression, or domination, he does not have the tools to define them as horrific or terrible. Not clearly identifying the reality that problems may stem from abuses of power makes attempts to adequately address those situations more difficult. Feminists find frustrating that, given his emphasis on context, Dewey does not address in detail the strategic instances of power that shape many identities, nor contemplate the unique experiences of women (Seigfried, “John” 56; Heldke, “How Practical” 240-41). His emphasis on the potentially beneficial influences of others may be in response to the problem of strategic relations of power and indicate that he
actually does recognize strategic power as such; however, without clear diagnosis of the problem, remedies will not have the same force.

Dewey supports Foucault’s idea that social structures and norms have a significant impact on individuals. A Deweyan theorist may elaborate on his view to make more explicit strategic cultural norms and the potential for individuals to endorse strategic interactions. In effect, the theorist may help bring strategic power to the fore of theoretical concern. A Deweyan theorist may easily incorporate the identification of strategic instances of power and the need for subversion into Dewey’s already endorsed identification of the problematic and the need of reconstruction. If Dewey more fully recognized the use of making explicit strategic interactions, his commitment to contextually addressing problematic situations indicates that he would likely support more aggressive tactics as well.24 While Foucault offers a framework that captures power within a complex social structure, Allen argues that Foucault’s theory is unable to address the resistance and solidarity that a feminist theory of power also requires. The next section considers the weaknesses of Foucault’s theory.

3.4. Concerns with Foucault’s Theory of Power

Foucault’s account, supported by Butler and accommodated by Dewey, offers an explanation for how social norms influence an individual’s character and characterizes power as dispersed throughout social interactions. These components found in Foucault help address some of the problems raised by earlier feminist theories of power and provide a dispersed and complex theory of power. However, they also introduce some new concerns regarding agency and normativity.

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24 The strategic vs. non-strategic view of power will be returned to in this chapter, where Allen concludes that power is not limited to either strategic or non-strategic expression.
The claim that social norms influence an individual’s ability to act poses the question of how he or she has agency at all. When strategic influences of power not only limit options but create individuals, the productive element introduces the possibility that those influenced are not able to act of their own will. The possibility for resistance is clearly significant for a feminist account of power and is dependent on the possibility of agency. If social norms are permeating and productive, then theorists must address how one may step outside that production to act on her own and resist norms.

Foucault argues that individuals are subjects in two senses. Individuals are subject to or shaped by the constraining forces of power, and are subjects capable of directing action. With power producing or creating individuals, Allen contends that Foucault does not provide a clear explanation of how individuals become more than entities created by cultural influences and capable of directing action. For example, in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault argues that it is the power of the state to punish in conjunction with the power to produce the category of delinquency that incites prisoners to become delinquent. The prisoners seem to be determined by these powers. At the same time, however, Foucault says that individuals are able to act of their own will.

Particularly in Foucault’s later work, he holds that agency is possible and an important aspect of human life. In an interview, Foucault describes his interest in the Greek and Roman practice of “an exercise of self upon self by which one tries to work out, to transform one’s self and to attain a certain mode of being” (“Ethic” 113). He emphasizes the significance of not simply gaining liberation, but of determining the “practices of freedom” that will guide interaction (114). Additionally, Foucault seems critical of instances when “an individual or group manages to block a field of relations of power, to render them impasse and invariable
and to prevent all reversibility of movement,” because they limit practices of the self (114). He calls this a “state of domination” (114). Jana Sawicki goes so far as to suggest that Foucault’s work on practices of the self aimed to establish a “basis for practices of self-formation and invention . . . which . . . might provide us with a practice aimed at the concrete realization of our ideals” (103). The exercise of transforming oneself is clearly important for Foucault. Allen suggests that one may be able to integrate the productive practices of power with the practices of the self:

On this integrated Foucauldian account, the self is constituted from without by disciplinary, normalizing power relations and then (potentially, at least) constitutes itself through practices of self-discipline that (again, potentially) allow it to transform itself from a normalized individual into a living work of art. (“Foucault” 248)

The autonomous constitution, however, still requires resolution in light of the influence of outside shaping forces.

Allen asks, “how can selves who have been constituted by disciplinary and normalizing relations of power start from where they are and yet still take up a self-constituting relation to themselves that is empowering and transformative?” (“Foucault” 251). She contends that:

On the one hand, if we are always subjects in the sense of being subjected to myriad power relations, then what seems to be implied is a rather deterministic account of human agency; on the other hand, if we are always subjects in the sense of having the capacity to act, then the implication seems to be a rather voluntaristic account of human action that denies the grip that power relations have on us. (Allen, *Power* 55)

Allen argues that Foucault’s work lacks an account of individual and social interaction that explains how an individual is heavily influenced by social powers and still has agency and is
capable of resistance. Allen suggests that Foucault needs “an account of what it is that mediates between the agency of subjects and the power that subjects them” (Allen 56). He needs to address how social interactions allow for forceful, but not deterministic, influences.²⁵

Allen also notes that Foucault does not offer guidance in how to differentiate practices of the self from the accounts of imposed or internalized self-discipline from his earlier work. Jean Grimshaw argues that Foucault does not consider “the crucial question of when forms of self-surveillance can with any justification be seen as exercises of autonomy or self-creation, or when they should be seen, rather, as forms of discipline to which the self is subjected, and by which autonomy is constrained” (66). He does not provide a way of evaluating which practices or techniques are imposed disciplinary techniques and which are autonomous practices of the self. Foucault identifies these practices of self as ethical expressions, so not providing a way to distinguish between imposed discipline and self-expression indicates his general lack of an adequate normative framework.

Foucault describes the many and pervasive instances of power, but does not provide a way to identify the normatively problematic instances (Allen 57). Scholars, such as Nancy Fraser, Jürgen Habermas (“Taking”), and Michael Walzer agree with this criticism. Nancy Fraser, for instance, argues that Foucault is invested in political critique, particularly of domination and oppression, but that without incorporating some normative commitments, he does not provide justification for opposing any particular instance of power. Fraser contends that

²⁵ Some scholars read Foucault’s early discussions on power and the later discussions on autonomy in conjunction (Sawicki, Lloyd, Koopman). Allen’s contention is that they need to develop an account of how power and autonomy are compatible – something she finds most promising, as one will see in the next section, in Butler’s account. McNay similarly holds the position that: Foucault’s idea of the self does not really offer a satisfactory account of agency. Although the idea of practices of the self or an ‘aesthetics of existence’ gestures towards the autonomous . . . it is asserted rather than elaborated in detail. While Foucault’s work does not foreclose an account of agency . . . it is seriously limited by its conceptual underdevelopment.” (9-10) Rather than working to construct a Foucauldian account of agency, the next section will turn to Judith Butler’s already developed account.
Foucault must identify these commitments in order to distinguish between problematic and inconsequential instances of power (“Foucault” 282-85). Grimshaw suggests that the “fundamental charge” of this reading of Foucault is that his work may have some use “in contributing to the feminist ‘deconstructive’ project, [however] in the end it offers nothing to the projects of articulating a vision of the future, a critical feminist ethics, or coherent feminist politics” (55).\footnote{While this reading of Foucault is certainly not without its critics and likely requires further examination, particularly when working with another theorist critical of foundationalist ethics, the dissertation follows this reading of Foucault. The focus of this chapter is to assess Dewey’s work. It is less concerned with examining possible points of connection between Dewey and other theorists. The strong deconstructive project of Foucault will highlight Dewey’s weakness in this area. The more controversial reconstructive components of Foucault’s work will be less helpful in considering the merits of Dewey’s theory for application to domestic violence shelters. It is worth noting that while the philosopher Colin Koopman is more sympathetic to Foucault’s project, suggesting Foucault at least hints at an experimental constructive ethics, he still contends that Foucault is better at presenting problems than offering solutions, suggesting “[i]t is clear that Foucault was more interested in posing challenging questions that in definitively solving problems” (Koopman 10). Similarly, Jana Sawicki argues that Foucault’s: genealogy is not a theory of power or history in any traditional sense, but an antitheory. Therefore, it does not tell us what is to be done or offer us a vision of a better society. Instead, the genealogist offers advice about how to look at established theories and a method for analyzing them in terms of power effects. . . . They serve less to explain the real than to criticize other attempts to grasp it . . . Thus, it is misguided to turn to the genealogist for an endorsement of established theory. (164) The dissertation leaves a more detailed examination of the possible reconstructive affinities between Foucault and Dewey for a later project.} In articulating a theory of power that accounts for individual agency, Allen relies on Butler’s theory of performativity.\footnote{In one interview Foucault identifies power relations of domination as those “‘in which the relations of power, instead of being variable and allowing different partners a strategy which alters them, find themselves firmly set or congealed. When an individual or social group manages to block a field of relations of power, to render them impassive and invariable and to prevent all reversibility of movement—by means of instruments which can be economic as well as political or military—we are facing what can be called a state of domination’” (“Ethic” 114). However, Foucault more often rejects engaging in normative discussion and claims normative neutrality. Allen finds this unsatisfying as a normative framework, as he calls for resistance and is critical of normative practices (Allen, “Feminist” 13). Allen is actually unsatisfied with the normative implications or claims of all three of the theorists she considers—Foucault, Butler, and Arendt. Once each of the theorists has been examined, this chapter will turn to examining and evaluating Allen’s solution for addressing their normative inadequacies. At the end of this chapter Dewey’s normative framework will be offered as an alternative to the theory Allen offers.}

3.5. Judith Butler - Agency and Resistance as Modes of Power

In The Power of Feminist Theory Allen turns to the work of Judith Butler to address the possibility for agency and resistance. She criticizes Foucault for maintaining that individuals are both subject to constraining forces of power \textit{and} are subjects capable of agency, without
explaining how agency occurs. Allen argues that Butler through her theory of performativity is able to address the tension between individuals as both subject to power and subjects capable of directing action.

In *Gender Trouble*, Butler does not indicate how subjects have agency, so succumbs to the same problem as Foucault. Butler argues that gender itself is not innate or a biological manifestation of one’s sex. Rather, individuals learn and enact or perform feminine and masculine expressions. Butler’s formulation of performativity suggests that society and the expression of norms continually compels gendered performance. Individuals and groups reward or punish one for performing gender in an appropriate or inappropriate way. However, because individuals must continually enact gender, Butler further suggests that individuals may alter their performance and subvert heterosexist norms. Allen argues that in this early work Butler still needs to address how an individual may escape compelling heterosexist norms and choose to subvert them. Describing gender as continually compelled does not explain how one may act outside influential norms. Seyla Benhabib puts the criticism this way: “[i]f we are no more than the sum total of the gendered expressions we perform, is there ever any chance to stop the performance for a while, to pull the curtain down, and let it rise only if one can have a say in the production of the play itself?” (21).

In *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of ‘Sex,*’ Allen argues that Butler does a better job of explaining individual agency than Foucault or than in Butler’s own *Gender Trouble.* In *Bodies That Matter,* Butler relies on Jacques Derrida’s reconstruction of J.L. Austin’s theory of performative utterance. Austin suggests that performative utterances do not simply state a fact or make an assertion; they also perform some action. For instance, in saying, “I do,” in a marriage ceremony, “we are doing something, namely, marrying, rather than reporting something” (Austin
He argues that successful performative utterances occur in a context that conforms to “an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect” which includes “the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances” (14). He outlines other conditions that characterize successful performative utterances, such as that the procedure must be carried out completely and accompanied by the right motivations (14-15). These conditions seem plausible – saying, “I do,” does not marry one if the ceremony is not conducted by the right person or if the speaker is already married. Austin readily admits that performative utterances do not always meet the criteria he outlines, but suggests that he wants to look at those that are successful, not those that are “parasitic upon” the “normal use” (22).

Jacques Derrida challenges Austin’s approach. Derrida claims that it is a mistake to limit analysis to successful utterances and to take them to be “normal” and central to a theory of performative utterance. Rather, Derrida suggests that failures and the possibility of failure should be included within the examination of the performative. He argues that performative utterances do not succeed because they conform to conventional procedures and intended motivations; rather, they succeed because they refer to or cite previous contexts. An utterance that enacts or produces is referring to or citing similar utterances in the past to convey meaning. He argues that a performative utterance could not succeed “if its formulation did not repeat a ‘coded’ or iterable utterance . . . if it were not identifiable in some way as a ‘citation’” (Derrida 18).

Austin attributes success in performative utterances to their conforming to conventions, motivations, or positions. Derrida, on the other hand, contends that staying within these conventions is not what makes the performative successful. Rather, performative utterances are successful because they cite previous contexts, not because they repeat them exactly or maintain
certain conventions. In fact, they cannot repeat them exactly. Because utterances are repeatable and performed in new circumstances, citations are not exact (Carlson 60). Derrida contends that all performative utterances rely on imperfect citations. The reliance on citation to convey meaning, results in the possibility of failure in every exchange. Derrida argues that “Austin does not ponder the consequences issuing from the fact that a possibility—a possible risk—is always possible, and is in some sense a necessary possibility” (Derrida 15).

Derrida argues that performative utterances “can break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely illimitable” (Derrida 12), which means utterances “can be transplanted into unforeseen contexts and cited in unexpected ways” (Salih 91). Rather than concluding from the observation that there is “the possibility of disengagement and citational graft” in any performative utterance, as a risk of failure, Derrida suggests one take the risk as an opportunity. Derrida contends that what Austin considers a weakness—the possibility of breaking with convention—is really a feature of all linguistic signs and that one can use these instances to alter the conventions under which linguistic signs operate. Derrida argues that “[c]onventions and institutions can be broken with, performatives may ‘fail’ to enact what they set out to name, and these failures may be mobilized in the service of a radical politics of resignification” (Salih 91, 113).

Additionally, because iteration makes meaning possible, Derrida concludes that the failures of language Austin excludes actually play a role in generating meaning. Kevin Halion suggests that according to Austin:

Non-serious language such as dramatic, poetic or comedic uses are said to be ‘parasitic’ on ordinary language. According to Derrida[,] though, those contexts would be some of the contexts which, because a certain utterance is used in them, determine the meaning of
the utterance in question. That is, an utterance or sign is determined by its iterability and not just specifically its iterability within a certain type of context. So Derrida, unlike Austin, is committed to the view that ‘non-serious’ and ‘non-literal’ uses of language also determine its meaning. (Halion)

Derrida suggests theorists examine the non-serious utterances and the failures of the performative because these actually influence the meaning of performative utterances. When they become part of discourse, the non-serious and failures potentially impact the serious. Previous marriage ceremonies influence a marriage ceremony and its meaning, but so do marriages in plays, movies, books, and other cultural media.

Derrida suggests that all utterances contain interpretation, reading into, or reference to something else. He argues that, “[i]n order for a context to be exhaustively determinable, in the sense required by Austin, conscious intention would at the very least have to be totally present and immediately transparent to itself and to others” (18). Stanley Fish argues that, for Derrida, when an individual seeks or writes “even in the original moment of production, his [the speaker or writer] is an interpreted presence, a presence that comes into view in the act of construing performed necessarily by those who hear him even in a face-to-face situation” (46-47). For instance, to have meaning, the first marriage ceremony had to take place in a particular context and make reference to components of that context in order for participants to understand and enact the event. Even “the original moment of production” thus requires some relationship or reference to another context, as well as interpretation by the participants (Fish 47-48). That meaning stems from iteration entails that one does not have to cite the original moment to convey meaning. Derrida argues “that there are only contexts without any center or absolute anchoring” (Derrida 10-12).
Butler relies on Derrida’s reading and reconstruction of Austin in formulating her own concept of gender performativity. Austin argues that some statements actually perform acts, such as the statement, “I do,” which is an act of marrying. Butler suggests that gender is similarly performative. Gender identities are constructed through language. Butler suggests that “discourse is formative,” and by this she means that any reference to sex or gender is “at the same time a further formation” of the body it describes (Bodies 10). Butler challenges Austin’s distinction between statements that report (constative claims) and statements that perform. Butler then claims that in regards to sex and gender “the constative claim is always to some degree performative” (10-11). Salih describes that for Butler bodies are “linguistically and discursively constructed” (80), or, as Butler herself suggests “identity is performatively constituted” (Gender 33). Butler thus posits that the language of sex and gender are actually performative utterances. By this she means that such utterances actually shape and construct the gender identities they describe.

As Butler sees the construction of gender as a function of language, she sees enacting gender itself as performatives. Through enacting the discourse in place the formation of identity occurs. Butler contends that “gender proves to be performative, that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be” (Gender 33). Butler offers an analogy to performing on a stage. She suggests:

The act that one does, the act that one performs, is, in a sense, an act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene. Hence, gender is an act which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who make use of it . . . Actors are always already on the stage, within the terms of the performance. (“Performative” 272)
The script of gender thus has continuity through time and within individual personalities, and the
script calls for performance in each generation and individual life. Butler argues:

[T]here is no ‘I’ who stands behind discourse and executes its volition or will through
discourse. On the contrary, the ‘I’ only comes into being through being called, named . . .
and this discursive constitution takes place prior to the ‘I’ . . . the discursive condition of
social recognition precedes and conditions the formation of the subject: recognition is not
conferred on a subject, but forms that subject. (Bodies 225-26)

Discourse and the identities formed in language are prior to individual identity; individual
identity is influenced and constructed by the discourse in place. One may see that Butler’s
understanding of performativity includes the productive component of power described by
Foucault. On her account the very formation of individual identity is made possible through
social discourse.

Butler argues that “[p]erformativity cannot be understood outside of a process of
iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. And this repetition is not
performed by a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal
condition for the subject” (Bodies 95). Performativity, therefore, is more than simply
conforming to social norms. Performativity involves enacting social norms, the process through
which the identity of the individual develops and is created. Butler endorses the idea that the
“very interiority [of identity] is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse”
(Gender 174). Salih notes that Butler is “analyzing the processes by which the individual comes
to assume her or his position as a subject. Rather than assuming that identities are self-evident
and fixed . . . Butler’s work traces the processes by which identity is constructed within language
and discourse . . . the conditions of emergence of . . . the subject” (10).
Through enacting gender (and potentially other) norms, individuals perform the act of becoming a subject and of gaining an identity. Butler argues, “[i]n this sense, gender is always doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed” (Gender 33). Salih agrees that “[g]ender is an act that brings into being what it names” (64). The repeated acts of gender expression thus contribute to the construction of individual identity.

Describing gender language and gender itself as performative, Butler is able to draw from Derrida’s notion of citation. As Derrida suggests that performative utterances make sense, not because they conform to some convention, but because they reference or cite similar utterances of the past, Butler argues that gendered acts similarly cite gender identities constructed in past descriptions and enactments. Words are able to perform because “they draw upon and reengage conventions which have gained their power precisely through a sedimended iterability” (“For a Careful” 134). Similarly gender language and gender enactment signal one’s gender and enforce norms because they too “reengage conventions which have gained their power” through repetition (134). Butler argues that the “force or effectivity of a performative will be derived from its capacity to draw on and reencode the historicity of those conventions in a present act. This power of recitation is not a function of an individual’s intention, but is an effect of historically sedimented linguistic conventions” (134). The repetition of norms and their complete saturation in interactions give them regulatory force. Members of a community avow their norms as natural, normal, and correct. That force comes from iteration means that “[p]erformativity is thus not a singular ‘act,’ for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition ” (Bodies 12).
Butler contends that the current construction of gender discourse identifies gender as natural and connected to biology. Gender “is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis; the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of those productions . . . the construction ‘compels’ our belief in its necessity and naturalness” (Gender 178). Cultures produce gender identities in discourse and interaction that contain the idea that biology alone determines gender and that social construction plays no role in gender expression. Constructing gender as connected to biology masks the role of iteration and norms and makes challenging the ideas about gender more difficult. Disruption in that iteration has the potential to call attention to this false connection.

For Butler, societies do not simply reiterate norms and discourses, but enforce their enactment. Citations are “reiterated through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production” (Butler, Bodies 95). To maintain norms individuals and communities must continually cite those norms. In addition, those individuals and communities also monitor the citation of norms and dispense rewards to those that cite them correctly and punishments to those who do not. For Butler, “[g]ender performance is not an act by a voluntarist subject who simply chooses which sex or gender to be; rather, it is a compelled reiteration of norms that constructs individuals as sexed and gendered” (Allen 73).

Butler draws on Derrida’s suggestions that within each reiteration resides the potential to fail to cite norms correctly and that the possibility of failure presents an opportunity to challenge convention. In her examination of gender, she suggests that the failure to enact gender identities correctly or the intentional mis-citation of gender norms may serve to challenge gender
conventions. Butler gleans from Derrida the belief that the members of a group may use failures of performance to challenge norms (Salih 113). Butler says that Derrida “offers a way to think performativity in relation to transformation, to the break with prior contexts, with the possibility of inaugurating contexts yet to come” (*Excitable* 151-52).

Butler highlights drag as an example of mis-citation that can call into question the authority of the reiterated and compelled gender norms. Butler contends that, “[i]n imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself” (*Gender* 175). In drag there is the potential to “see sex and gender denaturalized by means of a performance which avows their distinctness and dramatizes the cultural mechanisms of their fabricated unity” (175). Salih contends that Butler envisions “subversive practices whereby gender performatives are ‘cited,’ grafted onto other contexts, thereby revealing the citationality and the intrinsic—but necessary and *useful*—failure of all gender performatives” (92).

For Butler, “[t]hat the subject is that which must be constituted again and again implies that it is open to the formations that are not fully constrained in advance” (“For a Careful” 135), thus creating the possibility of agency. Butler contends that:

[T]he ‘coherence’ and ‘continuity’ of ‘the person’ are not logical or analytic features of personhood, but, rather, socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility. Inasmuch as ‘identity’ is assured through the stabilizing concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality, the very notion of ‘the person’ is called into question by the cultural emergence of those ‘incoherent’ or ‘discontinuous’ gendered beings who appear to be persons but who fail to conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility by which persons are defined. (*Gender* 23)
She continues, “[t]he cultural matrix through which gender identity has become intelligible requires that certain kinds of ‘identities’ cannot ‘exist’—that is, those in which gender does not follow from sex and those in which the practices of desire do not ‘follow’ from either sex or gender” (Gender 24). Social norms establish ways of defining individuals within certain parameters regarding gender and sex. This means that the “persistence and proliferation” of those who do not remain within those parameters “provide critical opportunities to expose the limits and regulatory aims of that domain of intelligibility and, hence, to open up within the very terms of that matrix of intelligibility rival and subversive matrices of gender disorder” (Gender 24). Those who do not cite the norms of gender and sex correctly are able to call into question the apparent naturalness of those norms.

Butler contends that discourse is not fully determining. She argues, however, that any choice in one’s performativity of gender:

is to interpret received gender norms in a way that reproduces and organizes them anew. Less a radical act of creation, gender is a tacit project to renew a cultural history in one’s own corporeal terms. This is not a prescriptive task we must endeavor to do, but one in which we have been endeavoring all along. (“Variations” 131)

The powerful discourse and norms in which one acts significantly impact an individual’s options. Butler argues that, “[j]ust as a script may be enacted in various ways, and just as the play requires both text and interpretation, so the gendered body acts its part in a culturally restricted corporeal space and enacts interpretations within the confines of already existing directives” (“Performative” 272). The compelled citation of norms exerts a powerful influence; however, because cultures maintain norms through reiteration, subversion of the norms is possible within each reiteration (72-73). Allen explains that “the very fact that it is necessary for norms to be
reiterated or cited by individuals in order for them to maintain their efficacy indicates that we are never completely determined by them” (73). The compelled repetition of norms accounts for how norms exert influence and power over an individual. In order to convey meaning, participate in society, and avoid exclusion, one must cite cultural norms. At the same time, to sustain the system of norms members of a group must reiterate those norms. That individuals must conform on threat of punishment indicates, however, that they do not have to conform—they may refuse to cite, mis-cite, subvert, or offer an alternative interpretation of the citation. In fact, Butler argues that gender citations are “never quite carried out according to expectation” and that their “addressee never quite inhabits the ideal s/he is compelled to approximate” (Bodies 231). Situations and circumstances are different, so the citation of a norm is an interpretation of that norm and hence often imperfect. Butler thus argues that any particular citation is “an occasion to expose the norm itself as a privileged interpretation,” creating the potential for subversion (108). Through performativity as citation, Butler demonstrates how a society can exert powerful influences and at the same time provide the theoretical space for individual agency and resistance. For Allen, Butler’s framework provides a way of addressing the difficulties regarding agency found in Foucault’s work. The maintaining of norms through reiteration opens the theoretical space for explaining “the power that women do have—that is, empowerment,” as well as the possibility of resistance, “a specific use to which empowerment can be put” (Allen 122).

Laying out the possibility for agency and resistance not only solves the paradox of how an individual under subjection may still act, but it also speaks to some of the limiting aspects of the feminist accounts of power as resource and domination. Those accounts indicate that women are subject to power, but they do not indicate how women have power, attain power, or are able
to resist the power in place. In contrast, Butler’s work indicates how an individual may be subject to power and yet have the agency and capability to resist. Unlike the theories of power as resource or domination, Butler’s theory of performativity as citation provides the theoretical space for understanding how individuals may attain and exercise power, even in the midst of domination.

Butler holds that her work on subverting norms does not imply a normative prescription to challenge norms. In fact, Butler is uncomfortable with calling her work normative at all. Allen challenges Butler’s hesitation, suggesting that Butler’s persistent work on subverting cultural norms implies that individuals should challenge norms (Allen 75-76). The dissertation examines the normative framework Allen offers as an alternative to what she finds in Foucault, Butler, and Arendt after the discussion of Arendt’s work.

3.6. Dewey in Relation to Butler

Dewey offers an account of agency that strengthens Butler’s position. Butler resists understanding performativity as something individuals can take up and discard at will. Ingrained performances deeply influence individuals’ options. Butler does not characterize performativity as a stage performance where one puts on and then takes off a costume, and then leaves the character in the theater. Butler attributes the influence of norms on performance to the reiteration and enforcement of norms. Introducing Dewey’s notion of habits brings a new dimension to Butler’s work on performativity that clearly demonstrates the ingrained nature of performance. For Dewey, habits constitute individuals and form the foundations of their characters, yet individuals do not often consciously reflect upon or deliberately choose their habits. As Shannon Sullivan suggests “I know how to be a woman because and to the extent that I can effortlessly,
without thinking, do the things a woman would do in the ways a women would do them. That is, I know how to be a woman because of the bodily habits that I am” (Living 93).

Understanding performativity as habitual, or at least as relying on habits, makes routine and often non-reflective action a permanent component of performativity. In Butler’s discussion of gender performativity, one may get the sense that an individual consciously reflects on how or what kind of gender to express, then he or she performs acts of that sort. Introducing performativity as related to Deweyan habits makes explicit that individuals do not always consciously enact performance and offers an explanation for how unreflective performance occurs. Over time repeated performances become ingrained habits and individuals may not recognize acts as performative. Butler tries to move away from the association of the performative with something that one can easily choose whether or not to enact. She hints at a habitual framework when she says that gender is “a sedimented effect of a reiterative or ritual process” (Bodies 10). Intertwining Dewey’s concept of habits with the performative results in the gender performativity of talking, walking, interacting, communicating, desiring, and other behaviors having constitution in habitual actions that express one’s gender. Gender is expression, it often conveys information; and, as Dewey’s discussion of habits makes clear, it is not always consciously known or deliberately enacted (Sullivan, Living 96).

When performance includes a habitual component, it implies the idea that harmful performance may not solely result from strategic expressions of power. Unintentional and unrecognized habitual action may cause instances of harm. At times, the potential exists to easily address and change the habitual causes of these unintended harms. The potential to rectify problematic results through recognition of their causes does not appear in Butler or Foucault. The unreflective component of habitual performance also demonstrates, however, how strategic
instances of power go unchallenged. Strategic interactions may become so routine that they go unrecognized and so ingrained in relations that individuals defend the instances of power as natural and not even worth questioning. This consequence of unreflective performance is evident in Foucault and Butler. What Dewey brings to the discussion is the potential for some habitual behavior to be simply habitual, benign, and alterable.

Dewey describes actions and character in terms of habits and describes how they influence and are influenced by cultural norms. Butler’s concept of gender as performativity brings to light that these habits govern not only actions and character, but the way individuals perform these actions. Habits are expressions; they are stylized. Dewey makes clear that habits govern the daily routines of life. According to Butler’s concept of performativity, culturally influenced habits govern not only the routine, but how one performs the routine. The habitual aspects of the routine expand from Dewey’s more narrow understanding to at least the following (particularly emphasizing the gender norms in play): the kinds of exercises in which one participates; the products used in the shower and in getting ready; the kinds of clothing one chooses; the stylized way one walks; and the way one interacts with and responds to colleagues at a meeting. Dewey does not specifically discuss the implications of his work on habits to gender or sexuality. With Butler’s concept of performativity, one begins to see Dewey’s habits as more pervasive and as expressive in complex ways. Butler brings together the considerations of modes of being, their relation to cultural norms, and their specific application in gender. Dewey’s work on habits illuminates Butler’s analysis, but her work on gender may illuminate the extent to which gender norms impact habits and make his work more useful to the application of feminist theory.
For Butler, the compelled citation of norms constitute individual performance; thus, norms exercise great influence on the individual. For Dewey cultural norms influence individuals through interaction with and in response to individual habits. As habits develop, cultural norms encourage or discourage their continuation through the actions of others. Dewey argues that habits constitute individuals, so from the outset norms only have the capability to influence habits and not the capability to solidify a static character. Conceptualizing habits as adaptable, Dewey’s theory provides theoretical space for agency.

Similar to Butler’s discussion of mis-citation as subversion, Dewey argues that the disruption of habits may lead to reflection on the norms in place. Because habits are not static and are imperfect citations, they may have unexpected results when applied to new and changing circumstances or when they collide with one another when competing habits respond to the same set of circumstances. These unexpected results and collisions—mis-citations—have the potential to cause a disruption in the usual flow of habits and thought, providing the impetus for reflection on changing habits, factors in the environment, or the norms themselves. In this way, subversion is not simply possible in mis-citation, but individuals may deliberately enact mis-citations as a response to the evaluation of norms.

Together Butler and Dewey offer a stronger account of individuals as both subject to power and able to exercise agency. Combining Dewey’s concept of habits and Butler’s concept of citations results in understanding habits as influenced by social norms and often as citations of those norms. Culturally influenced responses of individuals shape others’ habits—often through punishment and reward. The compelled citation of habits makes explicit the possibility for malevolent influence that Dewey does not consider.
While Butler and Dewey do provide theoretical space for agency and resistance, Allen argues that examining Butler’s account of the psychological aspects of strategic power will illuminate the puzzling phenomenon that “[i]t is not at all uncommon for those who are subordinated to remain attached to pernicious and oppressive norms, practices, or institutions even after they have been,” in Fraser’s term, “rationally demystified” (Allen, *Politics* 73; Fraser, “Pragmatism” 161). Allen and Butler describe the phenomenon that, after individuals see the potential for resisting norms, many cling to those structures and influences. Butler suggests that individuals recognize but still do not resist dominating norms and will even work to maintain them. She argues that this occurs because power is foundational in the very formation of consciousness and individuality. For those who have long experienced the shaping influences of domination, to resist dominating norms means rejecting significant components of their identity.

Allen explains that, for Butler, “[t]he subject is founded when it turns (what will come to be seen as) an ‘eternal’ prohibition back against itself, when it imprisons itself in its own gestures of self-reproach or self-beratement” (*Politics* 76). The “prohibition [from dominating norms] turns the subject back on itself, creating the very interiority of the subject” (76). The compelled citation of norms does not only induce current action, but from the beginning induces a kind of self. In this way, the very formation of the individual identity and subjectivity is intertwined with his or her domination. Individuals then have an attachment to regulatory norms that maintain their domination because those same norms form part of their identity, so dismantling power structures may seem to entail the simultaneous dismantling of their identity (76-77). This attachment persists throughout an individual’s life. Individuals willingly attach to dominating power regimes that recognize their identity, even if that identity is subordinate. Dewey does not explore attachment to dominating norms, but he does understand that it is:
the desire of every individual for some acknowledgment of himself, of his personality, on
the part of others. It often seems to me that the deepest urge of every human being, to
feel that he does count for something with other human beings and receives a recognition
from them as counting for something. (“Psychology” 239)

Dewey, then, at least understands the importance of recognition from others as a motivator. In
this way, Dewey, like Butler, offers an account of agency and resistance, and an explanation of
why individuals may not resist.

Just as maintaining gender norms requires their citation, the attachment to regulatory
norms helps maintain their assumed authority in society. Rejecting an attachment to a
dominating norm, or simply the desire for something different, may present an opportunity for
subversion (Politics 77). Butler states, “if desire has as its final aim the continuation of itself . . .
then the capacity of desire to be withdrawn and to reattach will constitute something like the
vulnerability of every strategy of subjection” (Psychic 62). Butler argues that oppressed
individuals maintain dominating structures because they gain recognition as subjects or
individuals within those structures. Recognition as a subject has a strong psychological pull on
individuals. While an individual may turn the internalized critique outward and critique social
norms, she will find it more difficult to desire the subversion and dismantling of those norms that
constitute her identity and facilitate her recognition in society. Butler suggests that the
subversion of dominating norms is more likely when individuals have alternative means of
recognition on which to attach (Allen, Politics 84).

If an individual has an alternative avenue for social recognition, then she will more
readily embrace subverting dominating norms. When the alternative does not support a
dominant norm, forming a new attachment is a method of resistance that may facilitate further
resistance. Individuals may then resist embodying and maintaining the dominating norms in place through a less oppressive attachment. Allen notes that multiple ways to “form nonsubordinating or at least less oppressive attachments” likely exist, but suggests that individuals may draw “on the resources of social and political movements that create alternative modes of attachment and structures of social recognition” (*Politics* 93). An individual may form alternative attachments through interaction with others who recognize her through less subordinate identities (93). For instance:

Collective social movements, such as feminist and the queer movements, generate conceptual and normative resources, create networks of psychological and emotional support, and foster counterpublic spaces, all of which aid individuals in their efforts to resist regulatory regimes by providing new modes of recognition, new possibilities for attachment, and thus new ways of becoming subjects. The existence of these alternative sources of recognition, in turn, makes it possible for individuals to risk becoming unrecognizable in the terms set by regulatory regimes. (*Politics* 93)

Butler does endorse the possibility of alternative attachments that gain recognition; however, Allen argues that because Butler is ambivalent about the possibility of recognition that might ground collective power, theorist must look beyond Butler for nonstrategic power relations that provide the basis for alternative attachments (91). At times, Butler seems to acknowledge the possibility of non-strategic recognition. For instance, she argues, “we are not separate identities in the struggle for recognition but are already involved in a reciprocal exchange, an exchange that dislocates us from our positions, our subject-positions, and allows us to see that community itself requires the recognition that we are all, in different ways, striving for recognition” (*Precarious* 44). However, at other times, she conveys skepticism regarding the
possibility of recognition. For instance, Butler critiques Jessica Benjamin for holding “out for an ideal of recognition” and for implying that “recognition is something other than aggression or that, minimally, recognition can do without aggression” (“Longing” 273, 274). In this critique Butler proves skeptical of recognition based in anything supportive or interested in the well-being of another. Allen correctly assesses that Butler maintains in some texts “the possibility of nondestructive, nonaggressive forms of recognition,” while, in others, “Butler is highly skeptical about such hope” (Allen, Politics 88).

Allen concludes that Butler is at best ambivalent about the possibility of recognition as non-strategic (Politics 88-89). She contends that neither Butler’s nor Foucault’s theory fully accounts for the non-strategic or partially non-strategic, collective power needed for the development of alternative attachments.

Allen maintains that Foucault’s and Butler’s strategic accounts of power do not allow for supportive recognition. Allen argues of Foucault that he:

cannot make sense of how individuals cooperate with one another in collective social and political action to agitate for progressive change, nor can he make sense of how the

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28 While alternative readings of Butler may be possible this text follows Allen in suggesting that Butler provides a more straightforward account of agency than Foucault; offers an explanation of the psychological impact of domination; and is less helpful in offering an account of reciprocal interaction.

29 In regards to Foucault and reciprocity, mutuality, recognition, and distinguishing between self-mastery and internalized norms, Allen asks:

Does Foucault offer us the resources for distinguishing these sorts of disciplinary practices from one another? It seems to me that he does not, and his rather impoverished account of the self and the assumptions about social relations that underpin it are at least partly to blame. Restricted as it is to a strategic-game model, his account of social relations does little to illuminate the kind of collective or communicative power that emerges out of social movements. Via the exercise of this collective power or solidarity, such movements are able to generate the conceptual and normative resources on which individuals draw in their own efforts to transform normalization into liberation. (“Foucault” 250-51)

McCarthy agrees with Allen that Foucault offers a strategic account of power, contending:

As any operation of the other upon the self is conceived to be an exercise of power in which the other governs my conduct, gets me to do what he or she wants, liberty can consist only in operations of the self upon the self in which one governs or shapes one’s own conduct. The one-dimensional view of social interaction as strategic interaction displaces autonomy outside of the social network. (73)

When power between individuals is strategic, autonomy can only be located within the isolated individual. This is problematic for any potential integration of Foucault with a feminist theory of power. Confining autonomy to the realm outside of social interaction, means that Foucault is unable to theorize adequately that autonomy that may come from social interactions. In contrast, feminist theory and feminist movements have relied on the potential for collective development, enrichment, and solidarity.
resulting collective social and political movements generate the conceptual and normative resources on which individuals draw in their own efforts to transform subjection into liberation. \(\text{Politics 69}\)

Foucault does not rule out non-strategic interactions, but he maintains power as strategic and thus does not address collective power as seen in feminist theory. Butler, in starting with Foucault, adopts his strategic account of social interactions. Allen concludes that, “[i]n the end, both Butler and Foucault rely on an overly narrow conception of the social, one that tends to equate all social relations with strategic relations of power” (174). Butler and Foucault are in need of a collective account of power.

3.7. Hannah Arendt - A Collaborative Mode of Power

To theorize a collaborative mode or a collaborative account of power, in \textit{The Power of Feminist Theory}, Allen turns to the work of Hannah Arendt. Arendt argues, “power emerges from relationships between individuals who are working together for a common goal,” something not seen in the work of Foucault or Butler. For Arendt, the exercise of power occurs particularly when individuals “act in concert” toward a shared end (\textit{On Violence 44}). She contends that one of the fundamental aspects of the human condition (along with having biological life and the experience of worldliness) is plurality. Each of these fundamental aspects of the human condition corresponds to an activity (biological life corresponds to the labor required to meet biological needs and worldliness to the work needed to create material things). Plurality corresponds to the activity of (inter)action (Arendt, \textit{Human 7-8}).\(^{30}\) Through (inter)action individuals prove similar in some ways and not in others. Arendt suggests that, if individuals had no commonalities, no understanding between them could occur, but, if they had

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\(^{30}\) Arendt simply uses the word \textit{action}, but she seems to have something like interaction between people in mind.
no differences, they would not require speech for understanding, and people would know the needs and wants of others without communication (Allen 175-76).

Collective actors are bound together in solidarity “not by a shared essence or identity but by the promise to work together to attain certain [common] political goals” (101-2). Allen draws on Arendt because she offers a collective account of power grounded in shared goals and promise keeping. Arendt contends that “an agreed upon purpose for which alone the promises are valid and binding” may keep a group together (Human 245). In doing this she provides a communicative—as opposed to strategic—basis of power.

Arendt contrasts power with violence, authority, and strength, but she defines power itself as strictly a collective and relational phenomenon, such that “power springs up between men when they act together” (200). In surveying the American Revolution, Arendt argues that “power came into being when and where people would get together and bind themselves through promises, covenants, and mutual pledges” in order to act (On Revolution 181-82). She goes on to say that “only such power, which rested on reciprocity and mutuality, was real power and legitimate” (182). For Arendt, this collective “action both individuates and establishes relationships; it sets us apart and binds us together” (Allen 105). Relying on Arendt’s theory of power, which posits the possibility of collective action based in reciprocal and mutual relations, provides a theoretical basis to understand how feminists (and allies) work together to achieve common ends. In addition, because individuals may work toward a common goal in (inter)action, Arendt is able to accommodate the possibility of collectively developing new ways to recognize one another. The new manner of recognition provides an alternative to holding fast to oppressive ways of recognition, such that one may desire to subvert norms.
The collective is the source and location of power, but it also facilitates routine thought and the development of one’s ability to reason. According to Allen, Arendt believes that the “conditions necessary for being a thinking subject are only in place when there is a public space constituted and preserved by the power that arises out of the sharing of words and deeds” (“Power” 138). Arendt argues for the position that, “without a space of appearance [where individuals interact with one another] and without trusting in action and speech as a mode of being together, neither the reality of one’s self . . . [nor] of one’s own identity . . . can be established” (Human 208). Allen paraphrases Arendt’s view:

Even our ability to perceive and process sensory data, among the most fundamental capacities of the thinking subject, is dependent upon our common sense (sensus communis), and this common sense can only be had if there is a common, public space in which such sense can be rooted. Without an intact public space in which the world can be shared with a plurality of others, the thinking subject’s common sense is eroded, and the result is dangerous distortion of its ability to perceive reality. (“Power” 139)

Arendt holds that the collective is important for individual development and for the formation of individual identity.

In addition to the collective action that Arendt theorizes, Allen suggests that Arendt offers a way of thinking about and considering social power or collective action that may help prevent problems in identity politics. Theorists must first consider the problem as it occurs for feminists. Early second-wave feminists referred to the category of women. This category, however, is problematic, as the concerns of women often meant (or still mean) the concerns of white, middle class, straight women. For women who do not fit into all of these classifications, and for those who have very different experiences and political aims, addressing women’s concerns actually
had (or has) the effect of excluding many women from the movement and its goals. The dilemma in this position lay in its assumption of solidarity based on common experiences or the sameness of identity; many women have wildly disparate experiences and identities. For feminists, then, two strategies seem to remain: embracing the category of women and accepting the resulting exclusion of those who do not fit into the limited profile of the movement’s assumptions, or to reject the category altogether, thus losing any basis on which to act.

To solve the problem of categorization, Allen looks to Arendt for a theory of collective action that does not require common identity or repress difference (103-4). Arendt suggests conceptualizing identity, not as fixed or essential, but as political and as taken on for politically strategic reasons. Arendt describes using or adopting identity labels in order to resist oppression. She recounts that when the Germans introduced the yellow star in Denmark, the king responded that he first would wear the star and other officials indicated that such measures would result in their resignation, despite their non-Jewish identity (Eichmann 171-72). In response to the collective action of the king and other Danes, the Nazis did not pursue implementing the yellow star. Arendt argues that taking up identity labels at particular political moments allows resistance to oppression in solidarity, without assuming essential identities. She contends that, through promise keeping individuals may act in concert by adopting political identities that can resist oppression (Men 18).

Allen suggests that Arendt offers a conception of power as a form of collective action that does not rely on a shared experience or sameness of identity, thus avoiding the tensions in identity politics debates that arise from the false options of embracing or rejecting essential identity categories. From this, Allen theorizes a modality of collective power, providing a theoretical way to conceive of the possibility for collective action not evident in feminists’
accounts of power as resource, domination, or empowerment. Power conceived as a resource or as domination encourages a dyadic view of power that does not explain how women participate in collective efforts that change policy and help other women. Additionally, power conceived as domination relies on the essential notion of gender identity categories that Arendt avoids.

Allen does have normative concerns with Arendt’s work. She notes that Arendt does not consider the possibility that groups may enact collective action in dominating others. Arendt offers an account of action based in mutuality and reciprocity among those acting, but she does not address the ends or impact on others of that collective action (Allen 103). Allen argues of Arendt’s work that, “although [it is] quite useful for theorizing the positive collective empowerment of political actors, [it] is singularly unhelpful for theorizing the systemic relations of domination against which such actors struggle” (110). Allen’s charge is that Arendt’s theory of power does not offer tools for a comprehensive analysis of power, though her political work clearly recognizes instances of domination and oppression. Allen contends that Arendt’s work simply lacks an account of power as strategic (112).

Arendt’s collaborative account of power through promise keeping is useful for a comprehensive feminist theory of power, though Allen expresses some reservations about the normative component of Arendt’s account. Dewey likewise explores the possibility of collective action, primarily motivated by the potential for problem solving.

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31 As George Kateb puts this point, one “response to Arendt’s enormous claims for promise-keeping is that there is honor among thieves. . . . Such groups make commitments that should not be made, or if made, kept. . . . In ignoring the content and context of commitments, she takes us too close to the mystique of oath.” He goes on to say that “[p]romise-keeping cannot form a barrier to atrocity” (35).

32 Jürgen Habermas similarly argues that Arendt distinguishes political power from force by suggesting that force is strategic and separate from moments of legitimate collective action. For Habermas this excludes the examination of instances where collective interaction is side-by-side and intertwined with the strategic, such as “in the competition for positions to which the exercise of legitimate power was tied” (“Hannah” 221). He suggests this is an important element in understanding modern society and that “we cannot exclude the element of strategic action from the concept of the political” (222).
3.8. Dewey in Relation to Arendt

Both Arendt and Dewey argue the social plays a significant role in individual development. For Dewey, the social facilitates agency. Additionally, while Arendt draws on promise keeping as the basis of collective action, Dewey draws on the potential for problem solving and the ability to have interest in others as the basis for collective action. Each highlights elements of collective power significant for feminist theory. In addition, Dewey offers a number of tools useful in collectively developing the alternative attachments that Allen, drawing on Butler, suggests individuals may find useful in individual resistance.

Dewey encourages collective reflection and action because of their past usefulness in addressing problems and challenging individuals. He suggests that collective inquiry can address potential problems and find solutions with wide appeal. Bringing in a wide variety of perspectives strengthens potential solutions by addressing a broader context. In addition, through exchange with others, individuals develop. He argues, “[a]n environment in which some are limited will always in reaction create conditions that prevent the full development even of those who fancy they enjoy complete freedom for unhindered growth” (“Need for a Philosophy” 203). Dewey recognizes that useful communication requires a genuine give-and-take. Similar to Arendt, Dewey holds that individuals develop through social interaction and exchange. He suggests that a “society of free individuals in which all, in doing each his own work, contribute to the liberation and enrichment of the lives of others is the only environment for the normal growth to full stature” (202-3).

Dewey argues, that the “community without becomes a forum and tribunal within” (Human 21). Not unlike Butler’s account, one can use Dewey’s theory to trace the interiority of the subject to the internalized judgments of others. He says elsewhere that “[t]o learn to be
human ... is to develop through give-and-take of communication an effective sense of being an individually distinct member of a community” (*Public* 332). Collective inquiry thus takes on significance through its influence on the individual. Dewey suggests cultural and social influences actually have the potential to facilitate individual agency.

An account of agency is evident in Dewey’s theory, in that deliberation and reflection may occur through the disruption of habits. Agency is not simply possible, but the structures offered by the group have the potential to facilitate agency. Sullivan suggests that Dewey can help one understand that “gender constitutes a *productive* [and sometimes helpful], rather than merely repressive [and malevolent or strategic], ‘domain of constraints’” (*Living* 90). She recalls Dewey’s discussion of structure to indicate how habits facilitate agency even when influenced by cultural norms. Using the metaphor of a house, he argues:

> A house has a structure; in comparison with the disintegration and collapse that would occur without its presence, this structure is fixed. Yet it is not something external to which the changes involved in building and using the house have to submit. It is rather an arrangement of changing events such that properties which change slowly, limit and direct a series of quick changes and give them an order which they do not otherwise possess . . . Structure is what makes construction possible and cannot be discovered or defined except in some realized construction, construction being, of course, an evident order of changes. (*Experience and Nature* 64-65)

Sullivan argues that the house does not submit to the structure, but the structure makes the house; in a similar way, she posits that “the cultural constructs that structure us *are* us” (*Living* 91). She contends that Butler holds a similar idea, as Butler argues that the repetition of gender is “the matrix through which all willing first becomes possible, its enabling cultural condition”
Sullivan explains that “Butler makes clear that the performativity of gender not only constrains one to be the subject that one is. Performativity is also what provides one agency as a subject” (Living 97). The habitual structure, influenced by cultural norms, provides ways of interacting with the world and of organizing actions and selves. This structure allows one to make decisions and work toward particular ends. Habits of walking allow us to arrive at a destination efficiently; habits of communication, to convey information; and habits of eating, to experience the ambiance and company of others while one eats. These structured habits provide ways of interacting, communicating, and expressing. Dewey argues:

There can be no greater mistake . . . than to treat [freedom from restriction] as an end in itself...For freedom from restriction . . . is to be prized only as a means to a freedom which is power: power to frame purposes, to judge wisely, to evaluate desires by the consequences which will result from acting upon them; power to select and order means to carry chosen ends into operation. (Experience and Education 41)

Foucault calls the idea that freedom consists of having no restrictions the repressive hypotheses (Sullivan, Living 94). Dewey, Foucault, and Butler agree that getting rid of structure does not leave one free; rather, it leaves one with no agency. Dewey suggests that this structure comes in part from norms that influence individual habits. Dewey says that to “view institutions as enemies of freedom, and all conventions as slaveries, is to deny the only means by which positive freedom in action can be secured” (Human 115). The same structure that results in the constrained, habitual performance of gender (or some other identity) also provides the medium for effective action in the present.

The composition of character through non-static habits and the possibility to use reflection to alter those habits indicates agency in Dewey’s work. He goes further to suggest that
institutions and norms may encourage conditions (disruption of habits, reflection, flexible habits, etc.) that make agency possible. His work on education and schools emphasizes developing the very habits that promote agency. In this way social interactions and institutions contribute to an individual’s ability to assess situations and act of her own accord. Foucault, Butler, Arendt, and Dewey recognize the need for some structure, found in the social, for agency. Where Foucault and Butler’s critiques of social norms imply that the influences contributing to structure are in some sense necessary, but problematic for hindering agency, Dewey looks to ways this process also has the potential to enhance agency. That the collective may have a positive impact on the individual is significant for a feminist theory of power that aims to enhance women’s agency and their ability to resist domination.

Dewey’s basis for collective action differs from that of Arendt. He holds the position that human relations provide stronger ties for collective action than promise keeping. Dewey takes moral cues from the interaction and interdependence of individuals. Dewey contends that “[w]hen selfhood is taken for what it is, something existing in relationships to others and not in unreal isolation, independence of judgment, personal insight, integrity and initiative, become indispensable excellencies from the social point of view” (Dewey and Tufts, 1932 300). The individual and the community may develop together and:

[to suppose that social interest is incompatible with concern for one’s own health, learning, advancement, power of judgment, etc., is, literally, nonsensical. Since each one of us is a member of social groups and since the latter have no existence apart from the selves who compose them, there can be no effective social interest unless there is at the same time an intelligent regard for our own well-being and development. (300)
Distinguishing between the good of the individual and the community is arbitrary, so individuals may have an interest in the good of the social and themselves simultaneously (Gouinlock 265). In this regard Dewey makes a stronger claim than Arendt, for he argues that interaction promotes not only the development of individuals, but also the good of the community and the potential to address shared problems. Dewey also offers an alternative to the almost unemotional promise keeping as a basis for solidarity. One may willingly keep a promise, but Dewey wants to incorporate our desires and motivations in the process. Thus, while one may at times need to keep promises without having the desire to do so, Dewey suggests one may develop interests in a collective good, so that one desires and fulfills a promise to pursue that good. Both the commitments made through promise keeping and the individual investment in others and in the common good likely play a role in individual contributions to the feminist movement.

As Dewey understands human psychology, an interconnected series of desires that guide action, hold attention, and motivate the development of habits constitutes interests; thus interests influence the development of character. An individual may develop interests that satisfy the whole self when those interests connect to various aspects of the individual. Interests may focus attention, connect to multiple components of the individual, and connect to multiple desires. Dewey says that having “[i]nterests ... means that self and world are engaged with each other in a developing situation” (Democracy 132) or that there is a “union of the self in action with an object” (Dewey and Tufts, 1932 290). An individual with an interest actively pursues that interest and desires to see it through. One’s interests may directly relate to the good of others and so gain fulfillment in the success or improvement of others. Overlapping and joint interests in the common good enhance collective inquiry and action, as all have an investment in finding solutions. Collective inquiry and action are useful in addressing problems of the community and
most effective when individuals share common or overlapping interests, such that they are actually and genuinely interested in a common aim.

Dewey calls groups to search for collective actions that are mutually beneficial for individuals and the group. When individuals develop overlapping and joint interests in the collective or common good, they invest in the good of others and in understanding the needs of others. Dewey cautions against efforts “aimed at giving happiness to others directly” and argues that to “‘make others happy’ except through liberating their powers and engaging them in activities that enlarge the meaning of life is to harm them” (Human 202). Individuals may base the recognition of others in promoting the other’s growth, understanding their needs, and participating in a mutual give-and-take. In addition, on Dewey’s account individuals may have a genuine concern for the good of others when that good forms part of their own interests.

Dewey calls for collective inquiry because of its potential to solve common problems; however, it is also a way to pursue meaningful interactions with others. In addition, Dewey argues that the interconnected social structures suggest an interrelation between the good of the individual and the good of the community, and that one should simultaneously pursue both goods. His theory of collective action is thus based in problem-solving, but made more rich by mutuality and reciprocity. Dewey’s contention that individuals can have and share interests in one another and the collective good provides a more rich account of human interaction than that available in Arendt’s system of promise-keeping.33 This account of interaction captures the emotion and commitment present in many of the occasions in which feminists have joined together in collective action.

33 This is not to deny that there are likely times when collective action is based on promise keeping, but to suggest that there are times when it is based on more than promise keeping, and that those moments make instances of solely promise keeping more sustainable.
Dewey does not describe collective action taking place to resist oppression, but his theory can apply to those circumstances, as he routinely calls for the collective reconstruction of concepts through inquiry to deal with new circumstances and problems. When confronted with the problems of domination, this reconstruction provides a powerful technique for subversion. Specifically, individuals may apply inquiry to resisting domination collectively and to developing alternative concepts for the recognition of individuals. This new recognition, when based on a less oppressive ideology than those roles formerly recognized, encourages subverting dominating norms. With interest in others serving as a more rich account for grounding collective action or resistance than Arendt’s promise keeping, Dewey is better positioned to promote and facilitate the development of alternative attachments introduced by Allen and Butler.

Recognizing the use of alternative attachments in subverting oppressive norms, individuals may engage their interest in others by assisting them in developing and promoting alternative identities. These alternative identities provide individuals with new modes of interaction that do not rely (or rely on less) oppressive norms. Additionally, Dewey recognizes that social interactions influence individuals. He says, “an individual is nothing fixed, given ready-made”; rather, “the human infant is modified in mind and character by his connection with others in family life and . . . the modification continues throughout life as his connections with others broaden” (“Future” 291; *Liberalism* 31). With the recognition that individuals are strongly influenced by others and norms, that individuals can join together to effect those relations and norms, and that individuals can have interests in one another and the common good, Dewey is well positioned to support the development of less oppressive attachments by which an individual may gain recognition. Allen argues that where this kind of social
redefinition occurs, one still has to address whether the alternative attachment is actually resistance or simply a reiteration of the domination in place—a looming threat when social norms are influential and individuals have a psychological stake in the continuation of those norms. Individual development and social interactions develop and operate within the framework of domination, so how one might recognize and escape from that structure is unclear.34

Dewey supports collective action, with its resulting development of the individual, and he offers the theoretical support to the elements of solidarity; however, he does not identify these as tools for use in resisting oppressive influences. In labeling situations “problematic,” Dewey masks the potential for situations to be oppressive, life-threatening, or the limitation of one over another. Arendt brings to the fore the possibility that collective action may resist oppression or domination. Once a theorist recognizes instances of oppression, she may then apply Dewey’s method to those circumstances. Allen and Butler also suggest that in solidarity groups develop and recognize alternative identities that support individuals in rejecting psychological attachments to internalized dominating norms. Dewey’s theory encourages the development of interests in others and the reconstruction of concepts, such that, once applied toward norms concerning identity, a Deweyan theorist may embrace and support the solidarity that will facilitate individual resistance. Both Arendt and Dewey argue for the possibility and importance of collective reflection and action. Arendt suggests that this action is the manifestation of power itself, where Dewey does not explicitly address collective inquiry and action in terms of power. Neither suggests that collective action or solidarity requires the sameness of identity, but Dewey

34 This concern will be addressed below in conjunction with the discussion of Allen’s normative framework in the next section.
includes the motivational connection to desires and suggests that groups may base collective action in overlapping interests, or more significantly, in an interest in the good of others.

Where Dewey’s view accommodates Foucault’s repressive and productive account of power and supports Butler’s account of individual agency, it now strengthens the relationships that allow for collective action. After bringing the three theorists together, Allen presents her own methodological framework to help identify and diagnosis instances of power.

4. Methodological and Normative Components of Allen’s Theory and Dewey’s Alternative

Allen argues that an adequate feminist examination of power cannot examine the modes of domination, solidarity, and resistance independently. The modes are analytically distinguishable features of situations and are not types or forms occurring independently (129). This means that a particular situation may contain a combination of the modes of power. Theorists working on feminist relations of power must examine all three in relation to one another. To examine the relations of power Allen suggests using the analytic tools of foreground and background—a framework that Dewey supports.

4.1. Allen’s Methodological Framework

Allen identifies the foreground as the web of relations between individuals and the background as the set of social conditions—subject-position, cultural meanings, social practices, institutions, and structures—under which those relations operate. The first of the background conditions is the subject-position. The subject-position aligns with Foucault’s concept of power as restrictive and productive. Cultural norms provide expectations for the roles individuals may acceptably adopt, and Allen identifies the subject-position as the particular role (or roles) an individual may adopt according to these norms. Often less power accompanies the roles assigned to women than those assigned to men. The second background condition, cultural
meanings, describes ways of defining and understanding roles and relationships common to a
culture. For instance, cultural norms influence the meanings of the terms regarding sex and
gender. In white, middle class, Western culture, to be feminine often means that one is “passive,
cooperative, and obedient,” while to be masculine often means that one is “aggressive,
competitive, and in control” (Allen 132). These cultural meanings define expressions of gender
and seem to support men as aggressors, so behavior one might otherwise question may simply be
thought of as a man’s nature or at least his proper role. Identifying gender roles as connected to
culture suggests that, at times, identifying cultural meanings is the first step to subversion; if
aggression, competition, and control pertain to cultural roles rather than human nature, they are
alterable and one need not maintain or support them (132).

In addition to subject-position and cultural meanings, Allen examines social
practices—the common ways of interacting that develop throughout a society and that may
impact relations of power. For instance, the common practice of women staying home while
husbands work makes some women more vulnerable to domination because they do not have
access to income or to connections outside the home (133). As another background condition,
institutions often embrace and perpetuate cultural meanings and social practices. Many
institutions, for example, base hiring practices and expectations on an individual’s having a
partner who takes care of the home and children (134). Allen describes both surface and deep
structural backgrounds as additional background conditions. Surface structures are the general
patterns of power that emerge from particular interactions. Deep structures explain the particular
kinds of interactions that emerge as surface structures. For instance, the gender division of labor
where women clean, cook, and nurture, and men work outside the home, is a deep structure
whose common recurrence helps to form the surface structure in which men have more power
than women (Allen 135). These background conditions overlap and are connected to the foreground relations between individuals.

A theorist examining power needs to consider both the foreground and background to gain a broad and overarching account of power in a particular circumstance. Looking only at the foreground, a fight between a husband and wife may suggest that he has power over her because he is stronger and uses intimidation and coercion to get his way. Ignoring the background conditions may imply that this fight is an anomaly, not connected to larger social conditions (130-31). Allen says that one must look at the background conditions “in order to understand how relations between distinct individuals come to be ... ‘power-ed’” (131). Understanding the background conditions behind the same fight between a husband and wife may reveal more complex power relations. An individual may find the background cultural meanings of men’s and women’s roles evident and influential in the husband’s and wife’s expectations of one another and supportive of the husband having more control or power over the wife. The background social practice of the husband working may promote the wife’s isolation and increase dependence on her partner. The various conditions working together to maintain the husband’s control indicates that the actions of arranging for the kids to be out of the house when he is likely to be angry, having family members visit frequently, and keeping a hidden journal are actually carefully planned moments of resistance. Examining the foreground and background indicates that what appeared to be a simple fight may actually be interconnected modes of power; and their independent identification, along with the connections between the foreground and background, helps to make sense of the dynamics of power.
Allen suggests a range of conditions that a theorist may investigate to understand an individual’s interactions with others. Dewey more generally supports the examination of contextual factors indicating his support for Allen’s framework.

4.2. Dewey in Relation to Allen’s Methodological Framework

While Dewey’s work does not present a detailed analysis of foreground and background conditions his work supports these methodological tools. The example of a woman “Sue” will illustrate the kind of contextual analysis Dewey offers. Sue has a troubled relationship with her long-time partner and is considering how to improve the relationship. Taking care of the home isolates her from friends, and she worries that she is not adequately caring for her children and husband. Her husband gets angry at her often and accuses her of not thinking of the needs of the family. Sue often concedes to her husband’s requests and resents that he wins arguments. She also feels guilty about her responses and inadequacies. Trying to talk to her husband about these feelings is fruitless. Sue also tries talking to her mother, and her mother tells her to work harder and suggests that it is a duty and a great blessing for a mother to care for a family. Sue feels disappointed when her mother sends an “Organize Your Family Calendar” in the mail. Sue thought some variety might help, so she looked for a job, but was unable to find one that fit her children’s school schedule or that would pay enough to cover childcare.

Dewey holds that various aspects of social life impact a situation and that one may assess those aspects to inform plans of action. These contexts will help identify problems and accurately predict potential outcomes. Dewey’s theory calls for a thorough and rigorous consideration of context and of potential consequences.

Dewey specifically mentions that children should learn to consider social, historical, and economic contexts that impact a particular situation. This suggestion indicates that Dewey
supports analyzing the background conditions of social practices and institutions as Allen outlines. In conjunction with Dewey’s emphasis on collective inquiry, his emphasis on examining the given context in light of past experience and historical circumstances suggests his support for a broad examination of individuals as situated in larger social contexts, which embraces Allen’s suggestion that theorists examine both surface and deep structures. His emphasis on context indicates Dewey’s support for directly assessing the social positions open to individuals within a society. Dewey’s emphasis on examining and challenging conceptual and ideological frameworks is in line with Allen’s call to examine cultural meanings. Though Allen’s methodological tools are not described in the language Dewey uses, various aspects of his work can be drawn together and shown to support her methodological approach.

In Sue’s situation, Dewey would call for her to identify the problem by examining social, economic, historic, and other contextual factors. Allen’s methodological framework guides this analysis and suggests potential factors to consider. While Dewey is supportive of the various background conditions, Allen’s framework pulls these various elements together in a way that is useful for assessing power. Allen is primarily concerned with identifying the power relations in play and laying out a methodological framework to help in that process. This framework helps to reveal some of the contextual factors that are likely at work in Sue’s situation.

Using Allen’s framework reveals that Sue and her husband have accepted the cultural meanings that women are passive and men are more aggressive and in control, as exemplified in the tacit mutual agreement that Sue take care of the home and maintain relative calm. Cultural meanings are also identifiable in Sue’s mother’s suggestion that Sue should change her attitude about taking care of her husband and children, signaling that the problem is not with the husband’s expectations, but with Sue’s discontent. Acceptance of these meanings limits Sue’s,
her mother’s, and her husband’s ability to see other options for Sue, and allows her husband to maintain power in the home. Sue and her husband have also adopted the social practice of women’s staying home and caring for children while their partners work. This practice increases Sue’s dependence on her husband for financial resources and for social connections. In addition, the structure of the working world assumes that one has a partner to care for any children and the home, so Sue does not fit into the work world easily. Allen’s methodological considerations indicate that the circumstances of her interactions with her husband, her family, and the outside world are part of a larger system of power relations. For instance, her feelings of isolation connect to the cultural norms of women staying in the home, the cultural meanings of a woman’s role, and the institutional practices of men working. Society and individuals expect Sue to take up particular tasks, limited by her gender and the background conditions in place.

While Dewey calls for a critical and reflective examination of contextual factors, he does not introduce his readers to a direct investigation of women’s experiences. Allen highlights the methodological tools that may guide this examination in regards to power. She delves into the ways social norms may oppress an individual or group and offers tools for the examination of the influence of norms. Dewey encourages critical contextual investigation, but Allen illustrates the kinds of contextual factors and methodological tools useful in the historical and social investigation of some women’s experiences (with potential application to other oppressed groups) that are not explicit in Dewey’s work. A Deweyan theorist may pull together various components of Dewey's work to support Allen's assessment of power relations. As it stands, however, Dewey's work masks the depth of analysis that identifying and understanding power relations requires, as well as the need for this examination in society. He does this by not making
explicit the possibility of oppressive influences and by not applying the tools of historical and social analysis to instances of oppression.

In connecting the foreground and background conditions, Allen identifies ways that a particular group may experience oppression or domination within its own society, whether by intention or not. Though Dewey’s social framework does accommodate a pervasive and dispersed view of power, where individuals are mutually influencing and in transaction, he primarily discusses individuals facing problems or groups collectively facing problems. While framing inquiry as solving problems does not rule out that the problem is one of domination, it does not draw one’s attention to the possibility that the problem is strategic power.

4.3. Allen’s Normative Framework

Allen criticizes Foucault, Butler, and Arendt for not offering a framework that allows for a normative evaluation of a comprehensive theory of power. Though Foucault describes the social structures that allow for dissemination of power throughout society, in Allen’s view, he does not offer a clear framework for identifying those structures that are problematic and those that are helpful to an individual. For instance, a coach has power over members of the team, but this is not always an instance of domination. Allen also criticizes Butler’s failure to address the normative element in her writings (Allen 75), as Butler argues that any “normative dimension’ . . . consists precisely in a radical resignification of the symbolic domain” (Butler, Bodies 21-22). Though Allen does not address the problem herself, she criticizes Butler for denying a normative framework, when numerous calls for resignification rely on the normative claim that “gender and sex ought to be subverted” (76). Allen argues for the position that the normativity Butler relies on needs to be identified (75-76). Allen also finds fault with Arendt’s theory for describing power as arising out of collective action, but failing to differentiate between

35 Allen argues that Foucault does not provide an adequate moral framework for distinguishing the two.
those instances of collective action that are “benevolent or peaceful” versus those that are “downright evil” (103). Allen argues that these three approaches do not provide an adequate normative framework for evaluating power. She posits that Foucault, Butler, and Arendt largely limit their discussions to one side of the dichotomy of negative or positive power, while failing to convey that power may be either. Foucault and Butler offer “a more sinister and ominous account of the way power produces the very subjects that it constrains” and suggest that power “is in our bodies, our heads, and even our hearts” (Allen 93). Though Arendt recognizes more ominous or cynical uses of force, her conception of power relies on reciprocity and mutuality that makes it difficult to apply her theory to “group interactions that are normatively problematic” (Allen 103).

Allen contrasts Foucault and Butler’s account of power as negative or strategic with Arendt’s account of power as positive or communicative. Dewey’s account of interaction is communicative, and his account of habits illustrates how norms may exist and influence individuals in a communicative way to facilitate their agency, encourage future interactions, and condition them to pay attention to and affirm the will of others. Allen argues that social structures may contain dispersed and pervasive power in a way that is not, or not wholly, strategic. She rejects beginning with a framework of power that identifies it as either primarily negative, as in Foucault and Butler’s works, or primarily positive, as in Arendt’s or Dewey’s works.

Allen’s strategy for providing a normative framework is to suggest that the modes of power that a feminist theory must address are subsets of the broader foci of power-over, -to,

36 It may be argued that each of these theorists, Foucault in particular, do not offer such a one-sided view of power. Allen’s contention is that a comprehensive theory of power and compatible normative framework is needed. Her argument is still relevant if the authors she considers emphasize (or have been traditionally read as emphasizing) power as either strategic or communicative.
and -with. Domination is thus a kind of power-over, resistance a kind of power-to, and solidarity a kind of power-with. Her contention is that individuals or groups may exercise each focus of power in normatively distinct ways; domination is therefore a morally problematic power-over, resistance is a morally acceptable or exemplary power-to, and solidarity is a morally acceptable or exemplary power-with. Considering Foucault’s work, one may get the sense that power-over is always negative or normatively problematic; however, Allen argues that one may enact power-over as negative or positive and that a more nuanced assessment is needed. For instance, a coach may exercise normatively exemplary power over a team if she challenges the team and its members to learn self-discipline and perseverance; however, she may exercise normatively problematic power-over if she is too hard on the team and demoralizes team members. A conception of power that recognizes power-over as potentially positive or negative allows for the kind of integrated assessment of power that Allen seeks.

Allen claims to offer a normative framework, but she simply identifies domination, resistance, and solidarity as types of power-over, -to, and -with. However, normative judgments do not actually track these distinctions in the way Allen implies. This section first considers how Allen defines each kind of power.

Allen defines power-over as the “ability of an actor or set of actors to constrain the choices available to another actor or set of actors in a nontrivial way” (123). This definition is intentionally broad in order to incorporate the insights from Foucault’s analysis that power permeates society. Conceiving of power as dispersed also allows for a relational understanding of power, in the sense that interacting individuals or groups may limit one another’s choices (123-24). Allen argues, however, that power-over is not domination. In the instance of the coach, who has some control over and limits the choices of members of the team, this
power-over is not generally an instance of domination. Coaches often act in the interests of the team and of individual players and often play the role of helping and challenging the team. Many coaches exercise power for the benefit of the team and its members. Allen argues that this beneficial exercise of power distinguishes domination from the broader conception of power-over. She argues, “[d]omination entails the ability of an actor or set of actors to constrain the choices of another actor or set of actors in a nontrivial way and in a way that works to the others’ disadvantage” (125). Because the coach is acting in the interest of the players and the team, Allen argues that the coach’s exercise of power is not an instance of domination. She seems to imply that power-over is morally problematic when it is domination.

Power-to is the “ability of an individual actor to attain an end or series of ends” (126). This kind of power appears when individuals act in the sense made possible through Butler’s and Dewey’s discussions of performativity and habits. Agents have the ability to act even in the face of social norms and constraints. Allen contends that the ability to attain ends is not the same as resistance or empowerment and distinguishes “resistance as the ability of an individual actor to attain an end or series of ends that serve to challenge and/or subvert domination” (126). Implied in Allen’s discussion is a distinction between moral and non-moral actions, but she focuses on identifying acts of resistance and does not indicate whether all acts of resistance are normatively good.

In contrast to power-over and power-to, power-with is “the ability of a collectivity to act together for the attainment of an agreed-upon end or series of ends” (127). This power includes Arendt’s conception of collective action through promise keeping and communication. Allen criticizes Arendt for not offering a distinction between those collectives that work for positive ends and those that promote negative or even evil ends. Allen distinguishes solidarity as a
particular kind of power-with, suggesting that it is “the ability of a collectivity to act together for the attainment of an agreed-upon end of challenging, subverting, and ultimately, overturning a system of domination” (127). Again, Allen’s discussion includes an implied normative distinction suggesting that acts of solidarity are normatively positive—an assumption fraught with difficulty.

4.4. Concerns with Allen’s Normative Framework

Allen’s distinctions between kinds of power do not seem to offer the normative framework that Allen suggests she is after. Separating domination from a more general power-over makes sense, but her definition remains too broad to guide feminists in enacting resistance. Allen defines domination as that which “entails the ability of an actor or set of actors to constrain the choices of another actor or set of actors in a nontrivial way and in a way that works to the others’ disadvantage” (125). Sharon Bishop points out that under this definition both someone beating another in a tennis match and a transplant committee denying someone a kidney in a fair procedure count as instances of domination. In both the tennis match and kidney transplant the actions taken constrain the choices of another to the other’s disadvantage. Bishop holds, however, that neither are wrongful instances of power. The only moral distinction Allen offers, that between domination and non-domination, thus labels situations considered morally problematic as domination.

Additionally, if one were able to identify moments of wrongful power-over, not all instances of resistance and solidarity in response to that wrong necessarily qualify as moral. Bishop argues, “it seems to me a mistake to try to provide a theory of power based on a particular group’s interests without indicating . . . how the account addresses the normative claims of the public good” (588). For example, Arendt suggests taking up identities for subversion that are
under attack; yet, one cannot take up every identity under attack—time may not permit taking up
multiple identities, various identities may conflict, or one may have to choose between identities.
Allen does not hint at how to address a multitude of oppressions. The experiences of domestic
violence victims also illustrate that not all instances of resistance qualify as moral and some are
not even prudent. For instance, it is not uncommon to hear the suggestion that a battered woman
should leave her partner and in that way resist and completely reject his power, but that act of
resistance may put her at risk for serious injury or death, and so may not be the best course of
action. Butler notes that moments of resistance are not always successful and may even continue
to support the power in place (Bodies 226). This is not to suggest that Allen is not aware of the
sometimes negative consequences of resistance; rather, Allen claims to offer a normative
account, but the closest she comes is in making distinctions between kinds of power, which may
provide important considerations in moral deliberation, but do not track morality all the time.

The concern that not all acts of collective resistance of domination are moral also arises
in Allen’s discussion of power-with. For instance, an oppressed group may acquire a very
dangerous weapon that it then uses as a tool of resistance against its oppressors, destroying an
entire town in the process. Allen’s account would identify the use of this weapon as resistance,
but does not address whether it is morally advisable. Allen provides a broad range of types of
power significant to a feminist theory of power, but she does not provide the moral framework
for judging those acts of power or for determining whether or not to act against the given powers.

Bishop acknowledges that Allen’s main concern is to provide a framework “for thinking
about power and how to understand subtle, unintended, or unnoticed ways it can be wrongfully
oppressive, which in turn provides justification for resistance and collective action,” but she also

37 This may not be considered a moral example on some accounts, but it illustrates the point well.
says, “I don’t believe that Allen’s efforts at occupying the moral ground succeed” (589). At the very end of *The Power of Feminist Theory* Allen says:

I have sought to accomplish two tasks: first, drawing on the insights gained by our analyses of Foucault, Butler, and Arendt ... to define power and some key power terms according to the kinds of interests that feminists bring to the study of power; and second, to sketch out a methodology for analyzing power consisting of a series of perspectives from which power so defined might best be analyzed. Taken together, this definition of power and these methodological considerations provide a feminist conception of power that can illuminate the complex and multifarious relations of domination, resistance, and solidarity with which feminism is concerned. (135)

She accomplishes this goal by offering a theoretical analysis that brings together a broad understanding of power with methodological tools to evaluate its various dimensions. In this process, however, she does not explicitly identify the normative framework that individuals may use to guide action once they identify relations of power. Her discussion of Butler’s psychological component of domination makes the lack of an adequate moral framework more significant. Butler suggests that because domination may frame individual identity and social structures, it is possible that attempts at resistance are actually reiterations of that domination. Dewey’s moral theory of growth addresses the normative concerns within Allen’s work and the possibility of unrecognized reiteration of domination. His theory begins to provide the moral framework under which to consider and apply the broad theory of power developed by Allen.
4.5. Dewey Offers an Alternative Normative Framework

Dewey is committed to a naturalistic foundation for ethical obligations. He suggests promoting growth and grounds his normative theory in his understanding of human needs and experiences. That individuals are problem-solvers and inquirers implies that one should improve inquiry and apply it to gaining understanding, meeting obligations, and addressing experienced problems. Enhancing inquiry includes developing critical thinking and problem solving, developing flexible habits, and participating in collective inquiry. Inquiry is not always straightforward, however, and individuals may not easily recognize relevant factors, so Dewey calls for the examination of a wide range of factors and the exposure of individuals to others who will challenge their ideas.

Dewey finds two conditions supportive of encouraging the development of each individual’s capabilities and skills of inquiry: that collective inquiry is a very useful tool, and enhancing everyone’s abilities will increase the level of collective inquiry; and that individual development will increase the potential for individuals to attain human needs, broadly defined, as well as personal fulfillment. He then argues that several common elements of human experience, which moral traditions of the past highlight, suggest moral factors to consider in reflection. Dewey argues that the common experience of pursuing ends leads to evaluation of the ends one pursues, that the interdependence of human relations draws attention to the impact on others with whom one has a relationship and duties to them, and that the praise and blame of one another suggests the role of the individual in connection with the common good. Growth as a moral concept is the pursuit of enhancing inquiry and increasing sensitivity to and understanding of the obligations found in reflection on these moral factors. The changing nature of experience and human understanding suggest that one must develop hypothetical guides to action through
reflection on past experience. Individuals may also project possibilities in experience into the future as guiding ideals. A theorist may then use Dewey’s framework to supplement the work on power offered by Allen.

In the example of Sue, the woman in an unhappy marriage, Dewey’s theory may allow one to evaluate some potential causes for the problematic nature of her situation. Dewey provides a framework that allows analysis to begin with the experiences and problems one faces. One may examine the circumstances and conditions in place in order to consider possible changes to make. The morally problematic component of her situation may stem from her limited opportunities to develop her skills, the lack of consideration for her well-being expressed by her husband and family, or the burden on women to contribute to the common good. In addition, social and individual interactions limit her ability to grow disproportionately to the opportunities of her family members. Dewey endorses mutual growth, and, while a single instance of one getting a better opportunity over another may not constitute an instance of domination, one can see that Sue is routinely in a position of giving up opportunities and helping others. With Allen’s language one may identify Sue as experiencing domination and consider it as a potential source of her discontent.

Sue contemplates whether or not to leave her husband and can formulate her response under a Deweyan framework, in light of the background power relations that Allen introduced. Sue has come to identify her own happiness and well-being, as well as that of her children, as a Good worth pursuing; supporting her family as a duty that has developed out of their relationships; and providing a stable and productive home, as well as countering some of the oppressive background conditions about women as ways to connect herself to the common Good. Past experience and reflection inform her decision making process. Sue reflects on what
constitutes the Good, the Right, and the Virtuous, and evaluates potential outcomes in terms of the values they may fulfill. She conducts dramatic rehearsals to consider the outcomes of staying and leaving in light of these values. Leaving will require that she find a well-paying, full-time job, which will likely mean moving to a new town. She imagines working full-time and raising her children alone will be more stressful than her current demands. Looking at the background conditions, as highlighted by Allen, helps Sue to understand her circumstances in broader terms and gives a more realistic understanding of what might remedy her circumstances. She recognizes that she may have a harder time finding a job because she embodies the cultural meaning that women are passive and less assertive than men, but is not sure that simply recognizing that fact will increase her assertiveness in the short term. She also assesses her low expectations of herself as a learned behavior and often not reflective of her actual ability. Leaving will allow her to pursue her own and her children’s happiness and well-being more freely, but it will likely give her less time, as she will be the sole provider and caretaker. In leaving, she would still fulfill her duties to her children, but not to her husband. This is a concern, but Sue has also come to hold that her duty to her husband is not the primary value, particularly when it interferes with pursuing her own and her children’s good in a significant way. Lastly, leaving would create a significant disruption in her children’s lives, but she would then be able to provide a stable home and break from an intimate relationship in which power relations are significant.

On the other hand, staying will mean continuing to face her husband’s anger, though recognizing his expectations as influenced by cultural meanings and social practices may inspire her to resist some of his demands. Allen’s work emphasizes the possibility that the choices and options Sue faces are not the result of benign social interaction, but the result of interconnected
power relations throughout society. Identifying the social structures in place, lends credence to Sue’s identification of a problem and desire to reevaluate her values. Staying will mean not having to uproot her children or working outside the home for many hours at a time. It will likely mean she is less free to pursue her independent happiness, but may have more time to guide her children and assist in their development. Remaining in the home will allow her to fulfill duties to her husband and children that have developed out of their relationships. Her children will likely maintain a closer relationship to their father, which she sees as connected to the larger good. Additionally, if she is able to incorporate participation in a feminist organization (or some other group), she will support the resistance of female oppression – both challenging herself and connecting to the larger good.

Sue is not able to test these options in experience, but she is able to consider experiences from the past that may provide some insight into various options. Several months ago her husband went on a business trip for a week and Sue and the children were home without him. Things were fine, but Sue missed him and was excited for him to return home. If Sue had felt relieved during this week and anxious when her husband returned home, that may have counted as a very different kind of evidence. Also, a few years ago Sue volunteered at a food pantry and very much enjoyed the independence, the friends she made, and more directly connecting with the community. For Sue, these experiences count as evidence for staying with her husband and joining a feminist organization, where she can work to address some of the background conditions raised by Allen. If Sue joins the group they may collectively go through a process of inquiry to address some of these larger issues. Dewey recognizes her circumstances as problematic, but Allen helps identify that Sue is experiencing domination. Dewey is then able to provide a way of considering these circumstances and responding to them in light of Sue’s
particular circumstances. Dewey provides a realistic framework for addressing and evaluating problems and allows Sue to make a decision based on the consideration of likely consequences and outcomes of her decisions in response to the dissatisfaction she is experiencing.

The criticism remains that Allen does not offer a way of clearly identifying ahead of time which instances of power-over are morally problematic, or which moments of resistance and acts of solidarity are moral. Dewey will counter that this is not a fruitful approach to morality and that Allen does not need to, and indeed should not, offer a foundational or universalized moral framework. Foundational and universalizing frameworks are troubling because they make unjustified claims to certainty and do not allow for changing circumstances or developing understanding. Dewey admits that his theory will not convince skeptics to take up the values he finds justified in experience. He holds the position that an unquestionable proof is simply not available or accessible in human experience. He aims, rather, to offer justification for the values he endorses and to show that individuals and groups can make life better through inquiry and experimentation. If Allen’s critics are calling for a moral framework to counter the skeptic, Dewey suggests they are calling for too much. Rather, one should approach problematic situations on an individual basis and in terms of how to solve the problems at hand using reflection. Through reflection on past experience, an individual may develop guides to action, that she then tests in experience and it is in this process that Allen’s methodology and foreground/background categories serve as tools.

Sue does not, nor does anyone, have access to a full system of moral goods, duties, or virtues to pursue, but she is able to examine the norms or beliefs causing severe problems for herself and her family, and those are the problems Dewey would suggest she address. Women in similar circumstances can consider the collective experiences, successes, and strategies of others
and can use generalities such as Allen’s background or foreground methodology as resources in solving their individual problems. For Dewey, instances of domination are likely immoral or unjustified because they hinder the growth of all parties by preventing free interaction with others, the development of one’s own capabilities and flexible habits, and one’s own moral evaluations. The understanding of individuals as embedded within and significantly impacted by their experience provides a rich framework for beginning to examine the impact of domination on individuals.

Dewey is offering an account that investigates problems at hand. In a Deweyan system one may investigate unsettledness, individuals being treated as means, inequality, unhappiness, and power-over for the possibility that they are morally problematic in a particular circumstance. Dewey’s theory does not lock one into connecting all moral problems to a single factor, as virtue theorists treat character and act theorists treat actions (Pappas 130, 138). Dewey emphasizes the importance of examining context and taking account of the unique factors that may impact consequences. Dewey leaves growth open-ended because one cannot know the problems or the solutions of the future. Dewey’s system provides the flexibility to take a variety of moral considerations into account. He argues that “a first-rate test of the value of any philosophy which is offered to us . . . [is asking] . . . [d]oes it end in conclusions which, when referred back to ordinary life-experiences and their predicaments, render them more significant, more luminous to us, and make our dealings with them more fruitful?” (Experience and Nature 18). Deweyan theory is able to respond to Sue’s circumstance because her own dissatisfaction is enough to trigger further investigation and the evaluation of her circumstances. Dewey’s theory recognizes the significance of experience, holds that experience sufficiently tests morality, and contends that experience is the only available test of moral theory. Dewey grounds the evaluation of potential
solutions in whether they solve a given problem. Sue can test her new perspective and set of values in experience to see if her circumstances improve. In concert with the Deweyan method, she can draw on the experiences of that past and evaluate them in light of their effectiveness in the circumstances at hand.

Bishop criticizes Allen’s definition of domination, because it suggests losing a tennis match or being denied a kidney transplant by an equitable process are instances of domination. Dewey’s theory has the ability to identify both situations as initially problematic and open to further reflection. Examining the contextual factors of each situation will allow Dewey to identify the problematic circumstances and determine how to proceed. Specifically calling on the foreground and background conditions Allen highlighted helps theorists to identify these circumstances as not qualifying as instances of domination. The disadvantage experienced does not connect to subject-position, cultural meanings, social practices, institutions, or structures, as previously described by Allen. Clearly, not receiving a kidney transplant limits, even prevents, an individual from growing, so it may still qualify as problematic. Dewey can also concede, however, that a community developed a fair procedure on which to act in the meantime, providing a problematic yet still morally justifiable procedure on which to act. While one may find it somewhat unsatisfying that Dewey leaves some problems unsolved, not requiring the attainment of an ideal is also an advantage of his framework. One can work to improve circumstances and his theory does not prevent one from making improvements because a perfect, problem free solution is not available or is yet undiscovered. Dewey does, however, call on the group to examine closely the conditions of a fair procedure for unrecognized values and bias influences.
One may take a similarly contextual approach in evaluating whether an instance of attempted resistance to norms is actually such a case or is simply a reiteration of the norms in place. Dewey maintains that there is no guarantee that one’s attempts at reworking the power structures from within will result in success. Not having a guarantee, however, does not prevent improving the likelihood that attempts at resistance are subversive, and the way to evaluate them is through evaluation of their consequences in experience. It is possible that Sue does not subvert her husband’s influence and that seeing the rewards of caring for her children and gaining friends in the feminist organization is merely placating. However, as time goes on she can evaluate her interaction with her husband and children, as well as the work of the feminist organization. Her own responses, the interactions with her husband and children, and the experiences of the women in the organization all serve as indicators of whether Sue found some resolution. It is unlikely that Sue would address all cultural instances of domination, but she can search for a better set of circumstances and test her efforts through time.

Individuals and groups must determine how to resolve domination on an individual basis. They must evaluate resistance on the potential consequences, and especially on the future growth they will likely secure. An individual or group contemplating resistance in light of Dewey’s moral framework will have to consider likely consequences and their impact on the ability to enhance inquiry and to address concerns of the Good, Right, and Virtuous.

For instance, a hypothetical group of students has evidence that their institution actively denies and prevents members of their group from attaining access to resources and training. The administration routinely ignores the students’ requests for information and explanations. The students, then, have a variety of options as responses to the institution. Dewey would suggest looking closely at the contextual factors at play to understand the treatment of the students and
the administrative responses to them; however, Allen’s methodological framework can help identify the power dynamics at play. The students belong to a minority group, defined by the background condition of cultural meanings as lazy and not deserving of assistance. This attitude and the systems of power are pervasive, so the students encounter this attitude in the individuals with whom they interact and in the institutional practices that do not award them comparable scholarships or positions in exclusive student organizations. The institution and the societal norms in place support the administration’s actions regarding these minority students. Based on cultural meanings, the societal practices, of hiring these minorities to work in the food industry result in staff directing most of these students toward credit for work classes, particularly those involving restaurants or catering, instead of higher paying or more respected career tracks.

Multiple methods of resistance are open to these students: approaching another dean, not paying their bills, organizing a sit-in on campus, adopting passive-aggressive attitudes toward school employees, developing skill training for their members, destroying school property with a fire, and others. In considering what plan of action to take, these students can assess the likely consequences of each action. In regards to each option, the students may evaluate the potential for growth in the future, the use of the environment and individual capacities, the ends they plan to pursue, the impact on others, and whether one’s own interests are in line with the common good. Using the factors Dewey suggests, along with the current understanding of moral ideals students may weigh various options against one another. Those options that potentially improve the current situation or problem they consider in more detail in relation to the likelihood of bringing about the potential consequences. For instance, destroying property will likely only get the students involved in trouble, further preventing their own growth, and potentially impacting other members of their group negatively. Alternatively, recognizing the cultural meaning that has
defined them as lazy and not deserving may prompt some of the members to question that view and to set up skills training to support members in becoming productive and efficient workers as a way to challenge how society defines them. This course of action has the potential to promote the growth of the members and increase their interaction with other groups. Recognizing the background conditions and contextual factors impacting their current situation thus allows this group of students to embark on a course of resistance that would directly challenge the norms under which the administration acts. The recognition of the social factors in play, in conjunction with a more direct course of resistance may help the students get the opportunities they seek. Understanding the power reinforced by the institution prepares the students for the ingrained and deeply embedded attitudes and possible responses to their actions that they will face. Allen’s analysis of power allows for a more nuanced understanding of the interactions and relations that will influence consequences, and one may use this analysis in applying Dewey’s problem-solving strategies to make more informed decisions.

A group facing a more limiting set of circumstances and with fewer options may attempt a more aggressive mode of resistance if the opportunity arises. A group completely subservient may justifiably deem a weapon, takeover, or hostage situation worth the risk of harming others as their only chance to promote their own development and to try to get opportunities for others in their group. They must call upon lessons of the past and their best understanding of obligations that arise from experience and interactions to chart their moral course of action. Dewey would not deem an aggressive or violent approach ideal, as he suggests looking for mutually enhancing interactions, but he would find an aggressive approach justified when an oppressor is uncompromising.
Allen’s framework helps identify both situations in which domination is present and how that domination is socially, culturally, and ideologically supported. Dewey’s theory of growth based in problem solving is able to help develop a response to that domination in light of the particulars of the situation and past experience.

5. Conclusion

Allen suggests that a feminist account of power must accommodate domination, solidarity, and resistance. She develops this theory through an examination of Foucault, Butler, and Arendt. This chapter shows that Dewey is able to accommodate, embrace, and even add theoretical support to this analysis. In addition, Dewey offers a normative framework that is not found in Allen’s work. Allen is able to provide diagnostic tools that help define the problems Dewey’s theory begins to address. Dewey says:

It is a familiar and significant saying that a problem well put is half-solved. To find out what the problem and problems are which a problematic situation presents to be inquired into, is to be well along in inquiry. To mis-take the problem involved is to cause subsequent inquiry to be irrelevant or to go astray. (Logic 112)

To accomplish this problem solving well in regards to women’s experiences of domination, however, Dewey is in need of assistance. Allen is able to provide theoretical tools that will help identify those cases that are problematic due to domination and some of the specific ways domination is manifest. After introducing the theory and practice of domestic violence shelters, the dissertation will bring the theories of Dewey and Allen together to examine the potential for application in domestic violence shelters.
CHAPTER III. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE EMERGENCY SHELTER
THEORY AND PRACTICE

1. Brief Introduction to the Domestic Violence Movement

In 1871 Alabama and Massachusetts were the first states in the United States of America to declare a husband’s violence against his wife illegal. By the end of World War I, all states had taken the same action. Enforcement was inconsistent, however, and often failed to protect the abused wife; thus, in the early 1970s, women first organized to address the problem of domestic violence. In 1971 a group of women in Chiswick, England organized “taking over a public building and demanding government participate in the protection of women” (Gray-Reneberg, Beal, and Ford 73). Activists in United States took note of this event and started mobilizing themselves. Within the year, development was underway for domestic violence emergency housing shelters in Boston, Portland, St. Paul, and Los Angeles, among others (73).

Before the domestic violence movement and before emergency shelters opened their doors, battered women had little public assistance in finding safety from violence or in leaving their abusive partners. For instance, in a 1976 survey of New York there were 1,000 beds for homeless men compared to 45 for women. A 1973 survey of Los Angeles found 4,000 beds for men and 30 for women and children (Schechter 11). In the 1960s a few shelters offered assistance to women experiencing alcohol related violence (55). In addition, professionals from whom women might seek assistance, such as the police, psychiatrists, or judges often blamed women for their own abuse and/or defended the husbands. In their interactions with agencies, “[b]attered women consistently found that institutions were unwilling to help them and [were unwilling] to deal with the real problem,” the violence (24). For instance, it was not uncommon

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38 Citations in this section refer to Susan Schechter’s book *Women and Male Violence* unless otherwise indicated. Schechter was a leader in the domestic violence movement and this work was one of the first histories of the movement within the United States (Davies and Edleson).
for psychiatrists to attribute violence to a woman’s coldness toward her husband, police to threaten to arrest the woman for harassing her husband, or a judge to deny protection to a woman and to imply or suggest outright that she was mentally ill for staying with her husband (20-27).

In professional analyses that blame women, the:

[h]usbands’ historic, legal, religious, and culturally sanctioned rights to correct, chastise, or beat their wives are ignored. Disregarding hundreds of years of history, these arguments incorrectly assume equal power between men and women in intimate relationships. They fail to recognize that violence cuts off all discussion, makes its victims fearful and intimidated, and graphically demonstrates ‘who is boss.’ (23)

Individuals and institutions who blame women miss the fact that violence is often not an isolated incident, but that domestic violence has historically been and is still somewhat sanctioned in society. In the early 1970s, when institutions were ignorant of battered women’s circumstances and needs and violence was socially condoned, the battered women’s movement began.

The work of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 60s led women to consider their own status in society and provided an example of a political movement that resulted in substantial social change. In addition, Betty Friedan’s The Feminist Mystique was published in 1963, and women were increasingly joining the paid work force, though paid much less than their male counterparts (Schechter 29-30). Two branches of feminism developed during this time. Women’s rights feminism concentrated efforts on gaining women’s rights and the same opportunities for women that existed for men while the women’s liberation movement called for women’s rights and examined “the unequal gender division of labor and women’s lack of control over their bodies, sexuality, and lives,” and “demanded a total, egalitarian restructuring of male/female relationships and society” (31). The women’s liberation movement argued that
“what happened between men and women in the privacy of their home was deeply political,”
thus, setting the stage for a social movement concerned with the private relations between men
and women – the battered women’s movement (33).

Before the domestic violence movement began, the anti-rape movement developed in the
1970s. Feminists in this movement uncovered myths about rape; they denied the myth that
women like rape and that women “mean ‘yes’ when they say ‘no’” (35). The anti-rape
movement exposed institutions that blamed victims for their experience by letting rapist go free
and treating victims with indifference or hostility (35). The movement also brought to light that
black women and women raped by men in positions of power (doctors, judges, etc.) had more
difficulty having their cases heard or their abusers charged (37). Through the anti-rape
movement, feminists learned to navigate bureaucracies and public policy, develop organizations,
and coordinate a national network of women (39). The skills developed and analyses made in
the anti-rape movement provided tools and structures on which the battered women’s movement
could draw (43).

Consciousness-raising groups, where women gathered to talk about their experiences,
played an important role in the feminist movement. In talking to one another about the private
aspects of their lives, they “found that what they [individually] felt was ‘petty’ or ‘private’ was
widely shared” and that, experiences of isolation and weakness, concern with appearance, and
guilt about not doing enough for their families was a social phenomenon—a phenomenon related
to men’s “power and privilege over women” (32). Women then understood “power and
 privilege” as connected to the violence many women experienced and something they could
address (31-33). Hundreds of consciousness-raising groups throughout the country led to the
development of local battered-women’s shelters (33-34).
In the mid-1970s women began to organize in order to provide shelter and other services to battered women. Some women’s centers started as places for women to relax and socialize, but then developed emergency housing services when battered women’s needs became apparent. In other cases, survivors of domestic violence invited victims into their places of residence or coordinated women within the community to find places of shelter for battered women. Neighborhoods also developed some shelters as part of efforts to strengthen their communities (56-57).

The ideologies of women working in the battered women’s movement (even today) vary. It is common to divide feminists into those concerned with women’s rights and those concerned with both women’s rights and women’s liberation (45). Women working in the battered women’s movement do not necessarily fall into either of these categories. Women are motivated by the desire to help others in a way they were helped, an interest in fighting a patriarchal system or improving their community, or a sense of religious duty or feminine camaraderie, among others (43-52). Although programs developed in a variety of ways and articulated a multiplicity of philosophies, “they shared one common belief: battered women faced a brutality from their husbands and indifference from social institutions that compelled redress” (54).

Outside agencies were at times the necessary catalysts for shelter development; at others times they presented obstacles to overcome. Sometimes they even prevented shelters from opening. In the United States:

> [g]eneralizing about agency and government responses to the battered women’s movement is difficult. In some locations, agencies like the United Way, offering funds or legitimacy, or the YMCA, giving its space or staff time, were extremely helpful; in
others, similar agencies turned their backs or actively set up barriers to prevent grassroots

groups from encroaching on their ‘turf.’ (75)

Battered women and advocates criticized organizations, and “some of these agencies moved to

redress the complaint while others reacted with discomfort and fought back” (75). Funding from

agencies also complicated the work of shelters. Shelters that had been operating on their own

started accepting government funding and applying for grants. While this funding was useful

and often substantially increased their resources, government funding and grants were not always

stable resources. Shelters faced the potential for helpful sources of funding and at the same time

instability in whether that funding would be renewed (81-83). Despite this instability, by 1982,

300 to 700 shelters and safe home projects were established in the United States (83).

More stable funding meant an increased staff, fewer volunteers, and a division of labor

that was not previously in place. For some shelters increased funding led to the adoption of a

hierarchical structure, and sometimes funders required such a structure. Many advocates

reported that these changes distanced them from women staying in the shelter, causing their work

to shift from being part of a movement based on a women-helping-women model to being part of

an organization based on a social services model. These changes also introduced concepts of

mental health that shelters had worked to avoid, and provided fewer leadership and skill

development opportunities (94-95, 98). As shelters grew, they often hired a director and a board

of directors who many times offered valuable insight, but who also posed potential conflicts with

staff, volunteers, and residents (100). In addition, funders were willing to fund services to

battered women, but less willing to fund the more difficult to measure social change and

educational missions of shelters (95). The work of shelters influenced funding organizations,

however, as advocates for the shelter often educated funders about domestic violence and their
programs in making appeals for financing (96). Schechter suggests that the most successful organizations “tend to reexamine their work structures, plan directions, set long-range goals, and build in accountability mechanisms” (99).

Increased funds meant that shelters were able to implement new programs, hire staff, coordinate volunteers to handle 24 hour coverage, and develop methods for dealing with the many inquiries they received. Shelters could address more than immediate safety and finances. One of the most significant needs shelters aimed to address was care for battered women’s children. Often two-thirds of shelter residents were children. Though not initially a focus, shelters began to assess the needs of children in the late 1970s and early 1980s (88). Staff in shelters began receiving training to sensitize them to the needs of children (88-89). Some shelters were also able to offer childcare and have discussions with mothers about the needs of their children. Most shelters adopted a non-violence policy and staff taught mothers non-violent techniques for raising children (89-90).

Some groups moved into dedicated locations and tried to generate support and interest as they helped women. Others spent time writing grants and lobbying to gain funds and support, and then opened shelters. Strategies for gaining support often included “educational forums, public hearings, radio, and television to reconceptualize the issue and explain its parameters, stressing that woman abuse was a community responsibility rather than an interpersonal ‘problem’” (84-85). Through sometimes years of consistent effort approaching legislators, community members, and others, shelters were often able to secure funding and support. However, financial success for shelters often included both luck and tragedy—for instance, a new, supportive person in a position of power or a woman murdered by her husband within the community may provide secure funding and support for a shelter (85).
Differences regarding approach increased as shelters grew. In the 1980s and 1990s the shift to professionalization and providing more services continued. As the Pennsylvania Coalition training manual, *Justice, Autonomy, Restoration, and Safety, a Training Manual for Advocates* (JARS), states shelters began to work with and assess “welfare systems and policy issues, such as housing, mental health, substance abuse, and childcare” (Module 2:Page 44).\(^{39}\) In addition, “[g]rassroots advocacy, social change, and consciousness-raising efforts shifted in many communities to more mainstream approaches (research and evaluation, reform, training, etc.)” (JARS 2:44). These changes “led to some strategy shifts from challenging institutions to ‘coordinated community responses’” (JARS 2:44). Not only were the two kinds of feminism and grassroots organizers still present, but professionals with feminist and non-feminists ideas were becoming part of shelters and the women’s movement (Schechter 103). Shelters have often focused on immediate needs, to accommodate the wide range of perspectives held by their supporters (106). Most shelters, despite professional influences, maintained empowerment and self-help techniques.\(^{40}\)

In the mid-1980s emphasis grew on holding social systems accountable for their services to victims of domestic violence. In addition, advocates lobbied states to adopt useful and effective laws, including:

- criminal and civil protection order statutes, mandatory and pro-arrest statutes in responses to domestic assaults, stronger sentencing and monitoring provisions for convicted offenders, protection against divorce and visitation practices that jeopardized women’s and children’s safety, and laws to restrict the availability of guns. (JARS 2:43)

\(^{39}\) JARS citations will be in the following form through the rest of the dissertation: (JARS Module Number:Page Number), so this citation would read (JARS 2:44).

\(^{40}\) These techniques and evidence for the adoption will be examined in the next section.
As advocates went to court with victims, they saw and experienced the treatment of women in court and developed educational programs to assist courts in their work with battered women. Advocates also began to monitor the treatment of battered women within court systems and to report the problems they saw. In addition to challenging court systems, advocates began to work with health care providers and child welfare agencies in how to assist battered women and their children most effectively (JARS 2:43).

Many of the changes made to shelters are still in effect today; shelters are often supported by a wide-range of ideologies, though they commonly hold that domestic violence is the result of social norms and structures; struggle with raising funds and negotiating with funders; offer assistance, or at least referrals, beyond emergency housing, including: childcare, educational assistance, and job training; and advocate for women in court systems and with other agencies. The JARS manual reports that “there are approximately 1,900 local domestic violence programs and [that there are] state domestic coalitions in every state, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. In addition, there is public awareness of a once hidden part of daily life for countless women and children” (2:45). While great gains have been made in the domestic violence movement, “there are some places where this work is in its early stages: rural communities, communities of color, Native American reservations, immigrant groups, incarcerated women, women with disabilities and others whose unique circumstances have lacked the attention by mainstream advocacy” (2:45).

2. Current Shelter Techniques and Guiding Ideas

Most domestic violence shelters have the dual aims of providing safety for the women they serve and assisting these women in directing their lives. Shelter protocol is thus driven by maintaining safety and empowerment practices. This section will examine the aims and methods
of domestic violence shelters, through a variety of sources including, survey reports, expert anecdotes and advice, and state coalition materials.

2.1. Safety as the Primary Aim

Often the primary goal of a shelter is achieving and maintaining the safety of the women it serves. In *Shelters for Battered Women and Their Children*, Albert L. Shostack provides information on planning and operating a domestic violence shelter. He relies on surveys of shelters, other publications, and interviews to compile current practices (viii-ix). He reports that within shelters, safety is a primary factor in shelter policy and rules (Shostack 185). Susan E. Roche’s dissertation “Social Change and Direct Service” examines the balance between providing direct service to individuals and promoting social change. Roche relies on survey results from 1,423 individuals from 622 shelters (ii). In Roche’s study, 97.6% of shelter staff reported “A Lot” of emphasis on the goal to “increase the opportunities for battered women and their children to immediately obtain safe surroundings,” where only 52.2% indicated “A Lot” of emphasis on efforts to “Change cultural beliefs/values” (133-34). The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (PCADV) is the oldest coalition in the United States, has sixty-one member programs across the state, maintains a National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, and conducts a wide variety of services on behalf of battered women (*Pennsylvania*). The Pennsylvania Coalition training manual, JARS, prepares advocates for work with battered women in its member programs. This manual outlines safety as a primary aim of domestic violence advocacy. It states:

We work to create a safe place she can go. We assist her in defining safety for her. We work to remove the barriers to her struggle to live a violence free life. We work to
remove the oppression and subordination she has lived under with her batterer and with society as a whole. (3:12)

‘Safety planning’ is a key component for addressing safety in many shelter programs. ‘Safety plans’ are a direct way for the advocate and a battered woman to address the strategies the woman has in place and to consider new strategies and steps she can take to keep herself and children safe (Davies, Lyon, and Monti-Catania 113). The JARS manual includes a section on ‘safety planning’ and Jill Davies, Eleanor Lyon, and Diane Monti-Catania suggest that ‘safety planning’ is a term familiar to most advocates (5). In their work, Safety Planning with Battered Women, the authors aim to help advocates understand the decisions and risks battered women face, in order to prepare advocates to provide useful assistance. These plans can involve gathering important belongings, including having pertinent documents, clothes, and essentials in a safe place (Shostack 57); considering when is the safest time to leave and where to go; and “changing the locks, removing firearms from the house, [or] calling the police,” (Davies, “Safety Planning” 1). While leaving a partner may seem to be the obvious way of removing violence from a woman’s life, leaving is not always the safest action. Many homicides are the result of women attempting to leave a relationship. Shostack reports, “[w]omen are at greatest risk of being murdered or beaten while they are trying to end their relationship to the abuser” (Shostack xi). The safety of a battered woman does not always mean actually leaving the relationship. The shelter aims to assist a battered woman in making her own decision about what is best for her life in terms of the relationship and her safety. For instance, a woman may want to leave for a short time to show her partner she is serious about wanting the violence to end. An advocate attempting to get resources that require a permanent separation from a partner would not be

41 Jill Davies and Eleanor Lyon have been involved with providing assistance and studying legal advocacy with battered women, specifically in Connecticut. Davies has been integral in the development and training of advocacy based on Lyon’s work. Diane Monti-Catania is a training specialist and assists coalitions around the country with their training programs (Safety Planning ix-x, 201-202).
helpful to this woman (Davies, Lyon, and Monti-Catania 115). In Jill Davies’ “Safety Planning,” an appendix to a statewide evaluation in Illinois, she argues that, ideally, the “advocate begins this process by understanding each battered woman’s perspective on her risks and options. The advocate can then begin to add her information and resources to the woman’s current safety plans” (Davies 7).42

2.2. The Meaning of Violence and Attaining Safety

Shelters interpret most cases of domestic violence as a strategy “to gain power and control over another person. This explanation is profound in that it frames individual acts of violence within a pattern of behavior” (JARS 1:18). Though the domestic violence movement has fairly consistently promoted a self-help model for battered women, professionals have not always taken this approach. When the domestic violence movement began, professionals often suggested theories that did not provide adequate general explanations for the social phenomena of domestic violence. One theory was that both partners in an abusive relationship suffered from mental illness. Shelters (and later professionals) abandoned this theory as batterers perpetrated violence against their partners and maybe children, and people suffering from mental illness are often unable to limit their violence in this way. Shelters, recognizing intense psychological impact of domestic violence on a woman’s character, also rejected the theory that battered women suffered from mental illness. Practitioners called this theory further into

42 This evaluation is posted on The Violence Against Women Network (VAWnet). This network is through the National Online Resource Center on Violence Against Women, funded through a cooperative agreement with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and is housed within the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence. The network is a project of the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence. VAWnet reports their “resources are selected or developed to assure advocacy-based information and materials that are timely, reliable and relevant to all users” (VAWnet). Articles posted on VAWnet are noted through the rest of this section. In addition, this text was recommended through personal correspondence with Jackie Warrilow a Technical Assistance Specialist at the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, contacted through VAWnet. Additional texts recommended in this correspondence are noted through the rest of this section.
question after discovering the initial studies characterizing women as ill focused on women residing in mental hospitals.

Other possible explanations for domestic violence included the suggestion that individuals learned to enact the behaviors of an abuser or an abused individual, that violence was the response of an out-of-control husband, and that alcohol causes abuse. Practitioners rejected the idea that abusive relationships were learned behaviors, as many who witnessed violence as children did not grow up to be batterers or battered. Battered women who learned these behaviors were said to have developed a “learned helplessness” (Advocates). According to this theory, women were thought to seek violent relationships as a form of punishment or because they were addicted to violence. This was countered with the recognition that women often sought ways to minimize and avoid violence, at times ending relationships. The theories that husbands are out of control or that alcohol causes abuse were also abandoned, as abusive partners often directed violence solely against their wives, limited their violence to private life, and committed violent acts strategically, so as to leave no evidence, such as bruising.

Shelters then proposed the “cycle of violence” as an explanation for domestic violence (Advocates). This theory suggests that tension builds in the relationship, culminating in a violent episode, a time of apology and remorse, and another buildup of tension, beginning the cycle again. This theory has more recently been abandoned by shelters, as it does not resonate with battered women’s experiences. The most recent explanation of battering behavior is that it is an effort to attain power. This theory was developed with battered women and is illustrated in “The Power and Control Wheel” (JARS). This theory suggests that:

perpetrators [of domestic violence] bring into their intimate relationships certain expectations of who is in charge and what the acceptable mechanisms are for enforcing
that dominance. Those attitudes and beliefs, rather than the victim’s behavior, are believed to determine whether or not perpetrators are domestically violent. (Ganley and Schechter 21)

Shelters and theorists now believe domestic violence is part of a larger strategy of control by the batterer that includes creating dependence on the batterer such that leaving the relationship is difficult (Shostack xiii). Davies, Lyon, and Monti-Catania say:

Domestic violence is defined as a pattern of coercive control characterized by the use of physical, sexual, and psychologically abusive behaviors . . . a batterer uses whatever strategies are necessary to control his partner. These might include physical violence, threats about the children, limits on his partner’s independence, or devaluing his partner’s thoughts, feelings, opinions, and dreams—her very being. At the core of this control is the batterer’s goal to be the decision maker, the one who knows best, the one with the power. The woman is left with limited freedom to make decisions about her life. (3)

The implications of battering as a strategy of control are that, while a woman may want to leave her partner, he controls and has great influence over many areas of her life (including financial concerns, job status and skills, childcare, social networks, family relations, etc.) (Shostack x). Loretta M. Frederick describes the reality that battering often consists of multiple methods of violence and controlling behaviors by the batterer. As such, a battered woman is often “forced to negotiate for her daily needs in a climate of fear of everything from assaults to insults” (1). According to Frederick, battered women:

may have trouble distinguishing any violent incident from the rest, remembering dates or details, and she may minimize the abuse that has occurred. She may be experiencing
depression, anxiety, and other problems which are circumstantial in origin. As such, she may be having trouble caring for others, such as the children. (2)

A battered woman often needs assistance in order to gain freedom from this control and actually to have the option of leaving her partner. Shostack reports that shelters “recognize that victims and their children require a wide range of supportive services in order to make changes in their lives” (Shostack 30). Davies argues “that to be effective, safety plans must be comprehensive, meeting basic human needs and providing a life plan” (1). Advocates (those working or volunteering at the shelter) assist the woman in addressing her safety. This includes not only addressing the common strategies for maintaining safety, but also addressing the situational factors necessary for a woman to separate from her partner. In response to the wide-range of assistance a woman may need to gain independence, shelters expanded their resources for and services to women.

Batterers often belittle and tell their victims what to do, such that a woman may lack confidence and need practice in making decisions (Shostack xi). While shelters desire violence to end, they also work to address the related concern that women should direct their own lives (5). Because of this dual commitment, shelters encourage women in making their own decisions and strengthening their confidence. While the goals of ending violence against women and helping a woman direct her life can come into conflict, particularly when a woman does not leave her partner, most shelters aim to empower and assist women in the choices they make, not simply to direct them to leave their partners (5).

Busch and Valentine, in “Empowerment Practice: a Focus on Battered Women,” outline empowerment practices, as defined in social work practice.43 Although their text is within a social framework, Busch and Valentine outline concepts commonly used in shelters. Evidence

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43 Warrilow recommended this text.
for this claim will be given throughout the explanation of each concept. The idea, described by Y. Hasenfeld, “that the capacity of people to improve their lives is determined by their ability to control their environment, namely, having power” serves as the foundation for the empowerment practices (Busch and Valentine 83; Hasenfeld 478). Women who experience violence by someone with whom they have an intimate relationship have few opportunities “to control their environment,” and shelters provide a place of safety and support for women to increase control over various aspects of their lives (Busch and Valentine 83; Hasenfeld 478). Shelters develop their own procedures and practices, often adhering to the empowerment practices as outlined by Busch and Valentine. In “Empowerment Practice,” Busch and Valentine argue that empowerment practices incorporate the following four components: enabling, linking, catalyzing, and priming (86). Many shelters incorporate a feminist interpretation of the circumstances of domestic violence, not explicit in the Busch and Valentine definitions of the empowerment practices. The feminist understanding of domestic violence suggests that factors in the abuse of women include: the belief in a natural superiority of men over women; the lack of social consequences for using violence; the social conditioning regarding gender; and the historical and social objectification of women (Pence and Dasgupta 7-9). Elements of this interpretation are evident in examination of shelter’s approaches to each of these practices.

2.3. Empowerment Practice - Enabling

Busch and Valentine describe enabling as “identifying and recognizing the strengths of individuals or groups” (86). This is the practice of giving support to a woman by emphasizing her strengths, with the hope that she will gain the confidence, skills, determination, or other traits needed to direct her life. Examples of this practice include “[g]iving choices,” reviewing options and providing information, and “[v]alidating the situation,” meaning reassuring the woman of the
legitimacy of her emotions and responses to the situation (87). Additionally, enabling includes “[p]roviding emotional support” and “[p]roviding shelter” when needed (87). Shelters aim to provide these supports for a battered woman in the effort to assist her in making her own decisions.

Albert R. Roberts and Sondra Burman’s “Crisis Intervention and Cognitive Problem-Solving Therapy with Battered Women” examines eighty-seven follow-up questionnaires to an initial study of 176 shelters (6). Roberts and Burman report the following common techniques or models shelters employ in working with battered women: review of options, exploration and validation of feelings, assessment of immediate needs, work with clients in goal planning, crisis intervention, active listening, problem solving, and making referrals to support groups or counseling (7).44 Roberts and Burman also report the employment of the following techniques in shelters for empowering women: examination of potential outcomes, exploration of legal options, and education about the power and control aspects of intimate violence. In addition, shelters provide information, make referrals, schedule appointments, give reassurance that she is not at fault, initiate advocacy for welfare and housing, and accompany the woman to court (9). The results of Roberts and Burman’s survey, that shelters report reviewing options with women, supporting her feelings, and addressing her physical and emotional needs, indicate that shelters see themselves as enabling the women they serve.

Shelters emphasize the importance of building a woman’s confidence and providing the resources and information she may want. The battered woman knows her situation better than anyone else, and advocates aim not to assume that they know what is best for the woman (JARS 3:13; Shostack 150-151). In addition to having a commitment to a woman’s directing her own

44 The authors ultimately suggest that therapy, not simply the informal work of shelters, is needed for victims of domestic violence (8).
course of action, supporting a woman in making her own decisions has a safety component. Treat ing a woman as if she is sick, assuming one knows what is best for her, blaming her for the situation, making decisions for her, or simply taking control, have the potential to make a woman feel judged, wrong, or undeserving. When a woman needs support in considering options, she may interpret a negative response from shelter staff as another person unwilling to listen and unwilling to help meet her needs. The woman then identifies the shelter as unhelpful, though their services might keep her safe in the future.

The JARS manual describes services provided by advocates as supportive counseling and as non-therapeutic helping. According to this manual, advocates’ roles consist of listening, understanding, responding informatively, sharing power and responsibility, acknowledging victims’ competence, providing support, assisting victims in making decisions, building on victims’ strengths, and assuming that providing tools is the most effective way to healing (JARS 3:4). The manual defines encouraging autonomy as one of the four main goals of a shelter. In regards to this goal the manual states:

Because battered women are part of the larger class of women we recognize that we all have suffered the oppression of subordination by male society. We actively encourage the battered woman to take her own steps to safety. We may not agree with her decisions or actions but we respect her authority to act on her own behalf – it is, after all, her life. By doing this in a supportive environment, we are helping her overcome the oppression of male violence in her life and increasing her skills to live apart from her abuser. (JARS 3:11)

The JARS training teaches advocates techniques to enable women in the way Busch and Valentine outline.
Alice Twining, in “Beyond Victim Blaming: Feminist Therapy and Battered Women,” indicates that feminist therapy does not consider victims of domestic violence as sick or suffering from disorders; rather, they have suffered from intense violence and have developed a variety of coping strategies to deal with the risks they face (Twining 1). Information about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is offered for the woman’s consideration, but advocates should not determine what the woman does with that information (Twining 1). This does not mean shelters withhold information about traditional counseling, but also do not assume its necessity. Referrals are nevertheless made for “[s]eriously disturbed and mentally ill women” (Shostack 151). The process of enabling means that advocates support and help individuals reach a place of making their own decisions. In shelters, this means that women make as many decisions as possible about which services they need.

Davies, Lyon, and Monti-Catania describe an “advocacy that builds a partnership between advocates and battered women, and ultimately has each battered woman defining the advocacy and help she needs” (3). Shelters aim to have relationships within the shelter contrast the power and control that characterize a woman’s relationship with her violent partner. Davies, Lyon, and Monti-Catania argue:

The response to domestic violence must be built on the premise that women will have the opportunity to make decisions about that response— to guide the direction and define the advocacy. This means advocacy starts from the woman’s perspective, integrates the advocate’s knowledge and resources into the woman’s framework, and ultimately values her thoughts, feelings, opinions, and dreams—that she is the decision maker, the one who knows best, the one with the power. (3)

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45 Twining’s article is recommended on VAWnet.
This assistance can include educational strategies such as, role playing, modeling communication, praising women for their successes, challenging gently, helping prioritize, and others (JARS 3:15-16). Communication between the advocates and victim, as well as how the advocate interacts with a survivor of domestic violence, is stressed in the JARS manual. The manual highlights that:

[a]ny effective helping relationship involves empathic communication, the cornerstone of the helping process. It involves the capacity to listen, pay attention, perceive, and respond verbally and nonverbally to the helpee in such a way as to demonstrate to her or him that the helper has attended, listened and perceived accurately; it is responding rather than reacting. (JARS 7:9)

The manual highlights that confident, direct, open communication is effective in building trust (7:20). The author of one piece in the Domestic Violence Awareness: Action for Social Change publication argues, “[a]dvocates’ relationships with women who have been battered are the ‘life force’ of the movement to end violence against women” (16).46 Shelters and coalitions train and encourage advocates to reflect on their own methods of communication and the impact their beliefs and cultural influences have on their relationships with battered women (JARS 3:13).

The support that shelters provide a woman is in effort to enable the woman to have the confidence and support to make her own decisions, hoping she will choose and has the resources to have a life free from violence.

Part of enabling means sensitivity to the wide range of women’s experiences. To some extent the domestic violence movement attempts to address differences of race, class, disabilities,
age, and location that can intensify and result in multiple forms of oppression. It also continues to consider ways shelters can better serve these populations (Crenshaw; Grossman and Lundy). Theorists, practitioners, and members of minority populations have and continue to criticize the feminist movement’s homogeneous theories (Agnew 3-4). Feminists have made some progress, for instance, advocacy training now includes diversity training and examines multiple sites of oppression for women, coalitions have developed caucuses to address various women’s needs and differences (JARS 2; 6), and research databases such as VAWnet include resources that address these issues. Criticism and concern remains, as Barbara Christian expresses, “that white, middle-class feminist theorists have made only a halfhearted effort to take into account the different experience of women of other races and classes: ‘Often as a way of clearing themselves they do acknowledge that women of color, for example, do exist, then go on to do what they were going to do anyway, which is to invent a theory that has little relevance for us’” (qtd. in Agnew 64). Advocates are still negotiating the tricky territory of addressing multiple differences and effectively helping all battered women.

A part of the enabling process is providing a woman with contextual information about her situation. This includes examining the social conditions of battering, the manipulative conditions under which violence occurs, and the belief that women do not deserve violence and fear. Shelters hold and offer to women the idea that “domestic violence is more than an individual aberration, but a social problem with roots in the culturally defined attitudes and beliefs of batterers, victims, and society at large” (Shostack 30). Shelters introduce to women battering as a strategy of control exerted by the batterer (Roberts and Burman 9; Bennett et al.
This allows a woman to see her partner as responsible for the violence and its connection to a larger social situation, potentially relieving her of guilt and showing her that she is not alone.

2.4. Empowerment Practice - Linking

The second component of empowerment counseling presented by Busch and Valentine is linking. They explain that “[l]inking involves connecting individuals with others who share common histories, issues, and barriers” (86). Busch and Valentine suggest that linking in work with battered women follows Doman Lum’s assertion that “people and families can augment their own strengths by linking with others who can provide new perceptions and/or opportunities” (Busch and Valentine 86; Lum 253). Within the first shelters linking proved essential, as volunteers, often survivors themselves, provided shelter and resources to battered women, but also relied on battered women to maintain the shelter, often a volunteer’s home, and contribute financially when possible. Limited resources and space forced volunteers and battered women to work together to keep battered women safe. Women provided one another with support. Those shelters connected to consciousness-raising groups also found linking essential as it made women joining together to identify and address problems possible.

More recently, the professionalization of shelters introduces women who, while sympathetic to survivors and their concerns, are not necessarily survivors themselves. Those now working with survivors are thus often one step removed from a survivor’s experiences. Educated staff have largely replaced volunteers in running shelters (Roberts 60). In addition, professional training includes useful techniques, but does not foster the same kind of mutually supportive relationships necessary in early shelters. Federal and other funding source requirements tend not to emphasize women sharing common experiences. Financial support

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47 “Effectiveness of Hotline, Advocacy, Counseling, and Shelter Services for Victims of Domestic Violence” is an evaluation of 54 programs in Illinois conducted by a team at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

48 The results of Roberts’ “The Organizational Structure and Function of Shelters for Battered Women and Their Children” are based on survey responses of 176 shelters (63).
from federal and other financial donors requires documenting services, accounting for funds, and following funders' constraints. This introduces a bureaucratic and hierarchical element that further separates the helper and helped from the cooperative model often vital to early domestic violence shelters. Standardization now plays a significant role in providing assistance to battered women, further decreasing the sense that advocates and survivors share similar experiences and are working together. The common experiences of women in a male-dominated or patriarchal society, and the belief that any woman could experience violence, however, are still present and connect women to one another (Twining 1).

Shelters often provide group services or referrals to support groups (Shostack 155, Roberts 60). Shostack describes the group counseling or support groups, common in shelters:

Group counseling uses the interaction of group members, under the guidance of a counselor, to help participants evaluate their behavior, feelings, attitudes, and beliefs; address their issues and concerns; and consider ways to improve the quality of their lives.

(154)

Participants interact with one another and receive feedback and support from women going through similar experiences (155). These groups provide a place for battered women to interact with one another.

Linking is a significant component of empowerment practices because it allows women to see that they are not alone and potentially come to understand that their experience of violence is not their fault. This can provide the support needed to gain independence from a batterer. It allows women to connect with others who are going through or have been through similar experiences, such that they can share and learn from one another’s strategies, successes, and disappointments.
2.5. Empowerment Practices – Catalyzing and Priming

The last two components of empowerment practice that Busch and Valentine outline are “catalyzing” and “priming.” Busch and Valentine suggest that “catalyzing involves obtaining additional resources for individuals and families so that they can achieve independence and power” (86). Obtaining resources for battered women recognizes that some basic needs are “prerequisites” to gaining independence (86; Lum 253). As an example, Doman Lum describes a family that cannot afford childcare and lives in a small apartment. A relative in a distant city could move to the family’s town to help, but the small size of the apartment prevents another adult from joining the family. Catalyzing might include finding an apartment for this relative nearby, so that the relative is available to assist with childcare. Priming is when “social workers act as brokers for individuals or families with systems that have been historically challenging and seek to educate the professionals in these systems about the barriers and difficulties that disempowered individuals and families encounter” (Busch and Valentine 86). Examples of catalyzing include “[p]roviding economic assistance,” “employment assistance,” and “transitional housing,” while examples of priming include “[a]ppearing in court” and “[a]ssisting with an order of protection” (87). Sometimes advocates will simply get resources for individuals (catalyzing) or assist them with other agencies (priming), but their work is often assisting women through other agencies to obtain resources (for instance, applying for food stamps). In addition, advocates work with women in gaining more independence—the ability to gain resources on their own and to know where to go for assistance. Shelters increasingly add services to their emergency housing and basic counseling assistance in an effort to address the various barriers in place for a woman to live free of violence.
Batterers employ violence within a larger context of controlling and limiting a woman’s options. A woman may stay with her partner as a calculated risk to ensure housing, resources for her children, health care, employment, a certain living standard, and security in the face of future unknowns (Davies 2-3). Often for a woman to leave the violence within a relationship, she must address the risks of leaving, such as how to provide food and health care for herself and children. Addressing risks may include developing strategies to minimize the risks, learning to navigate assistance opportunities that alleviate some of the risks, and gaining confidence in her ability to manage the risks. To address the range of concerns and life situations that a woman may face, shelters try to offer a wider range of services to battered women, including offering services for their children. According to Roberts, shelters often indicate a wide range of services as a successful component of their work (60).

The Pennsylvania Domestic Violence Coalition, requires shelters belonging to the coalition to provide legal systems advocacy, social services advocacy, information, and referrals to other agencies (JARS 3:3). Advocacy can include accompanying the individual to an agency, getting permission from the woman to make the first call (“Tips” 3),\(^{49}\) role playing in order to prepare the woman for what to expect (JARS 3:15), and assistance in getting education and training (Twining 4). Shostack recalls that “[a]n objective expressed by many shelters is teaching skills that victims will require as they reach for a more independent life. There are often discussions of parenting, personal hygiene, preventive health care, how to find a job, and how to seek affordable housing. There is instruction in legal rights and procedures” (6). Roberts reports that shelters are adding a variety of services to their work including job assistance and vocational and professional training (60). Shostack informs his reader that:

\(^{49}\) “Tips for Social Workers, Counselors, Health Workers, Teachers, Clergy, and Others Helping Victims of Rape, Domestic Violence, and Child Abuse” is a publication of the Women’s Justice Center in Santa Rosa, CA. Warrilow recommended this publication.
Shelters are more than ‘safe houses’ for victims escaping domestic violence. In the relatively brief time that victims reside in a shelter, the staff members try to help them understand their troubled relationships, address underlying problems, and plan more-satisfying lives. Employees evaluate the needs and resources of each individual and assist them in identifying their options and objectives for the post-shelter period. Residents are then supported in planning practical steps to achieve their chosen goals.

(149)

Shelters have steadily increased their services to address a wide range of needs that battered women face. They aim to combine the strategies of catalyzing and priming, so that they are assisting women in obtaining resources and services for themselves.

Some work that shelters do may be considered strictly catalyzing, “obtaining additional resources for individuals and families so that they can achieve independence and power on the assumption that these resources are ‘prerequisites to the family fully utilizing their existing resources’” (Busch and Valentine 86). Obtaining resources for women may include sponsoring a food or clothing drive, with the aim of collecting the material goods that a woman and her children need. Catalyzing also includes systemic advocacy, or working within systems to make procedures more helpful to battered women. For instance, Pennsylvania Coalition requires member shelters to provide “[t]raining to or with community agencies/systems” and to perform “[s]ystem change/systems advocacy activities initiated to effect policy or procedural change” (JARS 3:3). This work does not specifically serve particular victims of domestic violence, but aims to make laws and agency procedures more helpful to the victims of domestic violence within a particular area. Systems advocacy includes working with other agencies (primarily government agencies), addressing laws and court procedures, training medical and police
responders (Shostack 53, vii), and conducting education regarding community attitudes and policy that impact domestic violence victims (Roche and Sadoski 14-15). Advocates work in various ways to educate members of their community and influence policies and laws that impact battered women. Shelter staff take part in community meetings that bring together various agencies that serve domestic violence victims in order to coordinate a response to domestic violence within the community. In addition, state, national, and international coalitions work together to develop best practices for victims, address concerns that cross communities, and learn from each other’s work.

The JARS manual reflects shelters’ commitments to both catalyzing (obtaining resources that meet immediate needs) and priming (building connections with agencies, policy makers, first responders, and community members in order to influence social norms and improve interactions with battered women). The manual indicates that the goals of advocacy include providing women with “the material goods and services to overcome the oppression” they face and ensuring “responses from systems and communities that maximize safety and hold batterers accountable” (3.11-12). The JARS manual teaches that catalyzing and priming are significant, stating “[a]dvocacy is individual and systemic” (3.11).

Susan E. Roche and Pam J. Sadoski’s “Social Action for Battered Women” examines social change missions within shelter programs, based on Roche’s study in “Social Change and Direct Service” and on their own preliminary work in examining coalitions. Roche and Sadoski’s work suggests that shelters are more actively involved in direct assistance of individuals than in larger issues of social impact. The issues shelters address most often are those “directly linked to domestic violence” and that meet immediate needs (“Social Action” 18-19, “Social Change” 134-135).50 Shostack similarly reports that most shelters emphasize

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50 Roche’s study did try to address why social change agendas are not as predominately emphasized as more direct
empowering individual clients, though some participate in organizing outside of direct shelter services (Shostack 5-6). Though shelters embrace the goals of social change and often work on issues of education and policy, they primarily spend time addressing the needs of individual clients.

3. Conclusion

Shelters primarily organize around the need to provide women with safety from abusive partners. This concern guides their policies and procedures as they work with women and their children. They also see that part of the problem of domestic violence is a social system that has taught women to blame themselves and made women dependent on male support. In addition, domestic violence is often a strategy of control, where the batterer aims to create a situation of dependence. For these reasons, shelters also adopt the goal of helping women gain independence and control over their lives. This independence and control can counter the belief that women need their partners and that living with abuse is their only option.

Shelters praise women who escaped from abusive men in the past and see escaping the fear of violence and regaining control over their lives as worth the risk of leaving important relationships. Such risks, however, can sometimes be too great for a woman to deal with on her own; shelters thus aim to minimize the risks of leaving an abusive relationship by providing her with support. The beliefs that no one deserves violence, that the cultural context often situates men as more dominant than women, that there is a history of justification of or indifference to violence against women, and that systems have traditionally favored men and been particularly difficult for female victims of violence to navigate, all justify and support the conclusion that time and resources should be specifically dedicated to assisting battered women. Shelters often

services. However, she did not find significant statistical links to the length of time shelters were in existence, their developmental aims, or their funding constraints. Only one of the mathematical analyses showed even marginal links to feminist ideology (“Social Change” 169-171).
aim to meet a wide variety of needs that surface in the complicated process of gaining independence. Shelters hold that assisting women in leaving a violent relationship and finding new means of survival and support offers a valuable service to battered women, and they are able to persuade staff, volunteers, donors, and government sources of funding to agree with them.

The services that shelters provide are primarily emergency housing and helping women make decisions about their relationships with abusers. When a woman decides to leave a relationship, shelters also provide information, support, and services to help her to gain financial and emotional independence from her partner. The advocates may believe that women should leave their partners, or they may want women to be freed from relationships that hurt them; however, shelters’ services primarily aim to support women in their decisions. The adoption of empowering techniques and providing information as the primary services offered to women shows shelters’ commitment to women directing their lives and deciding what will happen in their relationships, and not simply the ending of violence. Shelters aim to support women and when a woman wants to leave violence, they provide as much assistance as they can to make that possible. Though they cannot provide long-term housing or full support, shelters assist in getting food stamps, housing, childcare, health care, job assistance, and other resources and services. This support often means patience with women as they practice decision making and obtaining resources for themselves. Women also receive assistance getting out on their own and away from violence. Services are primarily available for women in crisis, but hotlines and support groups continue to serve women once they are through the crisis stage. Shelters often serve women who choose to or consider leaving violent relationships.

The method of empowerment and support assumes an understanding of women as capable of running their own lives and needing assurance and assistance in leaving a troubled
situation. Suggestion, support, and availability (not force or intimidation) will show some women the possibility of a different way of living—a way without violence, one with support, one where they make decisions and can direct their lives. Calming fears about safety, ability, and the future can provide a space for women to envision a different kind of future. Before this vision can take root and become a reality, women may need assistance to obtain basic needs of survival.
CHAPTER IV. BRINGING THE WORK OF JOHN DEWEY, AMY ALLEN, AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE EMERGENCY SHELTERS TOGETHER

1. Introduction

This chapter begins to integrate the theory of John Dewey and Amy Allen through the theoretical application of their theory to the work of domestic violence emergency shelters. Bringing Dewey and Allen together has the potential to offer a dynamic framework for theorizing, assessing, and addressing feminist issues. Allen primarily offers tools for theorizing and identifying relations of power, allowing one to assess and address domination. Dewey accommodates the structures of power Allen identifies and offers a framework that provides additional methods for the assessment of and approaches to addressing problematic instances of power. Dewey’s view is forward-looking and aims to make improvements. He argues that temporal and situational contexts influence the process of improvement, but he does not specifically address how diagnosis may take place or illustrate how one may include relations of power as part of the diagnosis. Allen is useful in closely examining power. She provides tools for examining the modes of power and the ways they impact one another, which are necessary for assessment and development of a context-sensitive response. Once Allen makes the details of an oppressive situation explicit, Dewey’s framework may generate useful responses. Most simply, he calls one to address the problems experienced by oneself or others. If one experiences oppression, Dewey’s work suggests reflection on and the consideration of solutions. He promotes strategies within his theory of inquiry that theorists and practitioners may find applicable, such as reflection, dramatic rehearsal, and testing options in experience.

Examining the theories of Dewey and Allen in conjunction with the practices and theories of domestic violence provides an opportunity to begin evaluating their theories in application to feminist issues. Specifically, applying Dewey’s moral framework to cases of domestic violence
also affords one a chance to evaluate Dewey’s flexible framework and whether it is realistic and applicable to battered women’s circumstances. These investigations will reveal that bringing Dewey's and Allen's theories together results in one (or some combination) of the following: (1) their work is inconsistent or incompatible with the work of domestic violence shelters; (2) their work is supportive of the work done in domestic violence shelters; or (3) their work offers substantial criticisms and suggestions to the work in domestic violence shelters.

2. Identifying Battered Women’s Experiences

Allen’s characterization of power closely aligns with the experiences of battered women. Allen, relying on Foucault, suggests that power is both repressive and productive; meaning, it both prevents an individual from performing certain acts and defines the appropriate options and roles available to her. When a community shares beliefs regarding members’ proper roles, individual relations of power enforce those roles and impact the members’ development, character, and ways of thinking. Maintaining membership and gaining favor in a community limit one’s choices. The community creates formal and informal parameters for acceptable behavior. Foucault’s theory highlights that, when power is productive, power-over will impact an individual’s character and thus her power-to and participation in power-with. Once Deweyan theorists explore the significant negative impact customs may have on individuals they can accommodate the repressive and productive roles of power Foucault describes. Customs, then, whether negative or positive, become a part of an individual’s habits and character, thus limiting options and influencing who she becomes.

Battered women experience domination and the limitation of their choices from cultural norms and from their individual partners. In the case of the character, Sue, an examination of the background conditions in her life reveal multiple social factors joining together to limit her
options. Social practices and institutions limit Sue’s career options and restrict her choices, as
norms limit the number of subject-positions available to women. She experiences multiple
background conditions that influence or even deter her away from independent and aggressive
positions, encouraging her toward more feminine roles. The foreground interactions with her
husband and mother support the influence of the background conditions; she takes on the
responsibility of her family and home as her duty, feels guilty after fights with her husband, and
often defers in conflict. The power-over Sue experiences influences her character and her
decisions. These similar foreground and background conditions influence her habits over a
lifetime, compounding their influence on her identity. The power Sue experiences not only
limits her options, but it influences the choices she makes and her methods for executing them.

An example from Evan Stark’s work *Coercive Control* illustrates how power becomes an
even more imposing productive factor in the lives of battered women, so much that Stark argues
domestic violence is part of “an offense to liberty that prevents women from freely developing
their personhood, utilizing their capacities, or practicing citizenship” (4).51 Stark describes a
woman he calls Laura. Laura was in an increasingly coercive, abusive relationship with Nick
such that Laura’s responses resembled someone with Stockholm syndrome, in which the
individual sympathizes with their abuser (Stark 127; McCue 20).52 Nick was violent with Laura
and made demands on her time, money, and social life, though often ambiguously defined.
Laura came to realize that not ‘correctly’ identifying the demands hidden within his ambiguous
messages was often met with violence (198-99). Laura was an easy-going person before meeting
Nick, but he imposed a strict set of “household rituals” or rules, laid out on numerous lists. He
expected Laura to maintain her house as laid out on the lists on threat of violence. A psychiatrist

51 Stark’s work draws on cases from his experience as an advocate, counselor, and forensic social worker (4).
52 Margi McCue explains that “Stockholm syndrome was first identified in 1973, when four people held captive in
a Stockholm bank vault for six days became emotionally attached to their captors. The hostages began to
perceive the criminals as their friends and police as their enemies” (20).
eventually diagnosed Laura with an obsessive-compulsive disorder (210). Nick’s demands became such a part of her life that fulfilling them became part of her personality. Nick constrained Laura’s time and movement in the home, and he also influenced the role Laura was able to embody. His demands produced new traits in Laura—traits of her disorder. Nick “had not only managed to transfer his ‘rules’ to her, but had her make them her own” (320). What is striking about this case is that Laura maintained Nick’s rituals and was diagnosed with the obsessive-compulsive disorder after Nick’s death, indicating that Nick’s pervasive constraints were also a productive force in Laura’s life (210). The examples of Sue and Laura illustrate how social norms and individual interactions are instances of repressive and productive power for women in shelter. In these examples the foreground and/or background conditions had the effect of limiting and producing.

That shelter staff turn first to empowerment practices and not medication or diagnosing disorders reveals their understanding that the power women experience in domestic violence is repressive and productive. The responses of battered women stem from their experiences and not from disorders or psychological abnormality (Schechter 57, 215). Through empowerment practices, shelter staff aim to help women gain resources, emotional support, and information, and meet other needs; however, staff are not trying to diagnose a disease or address a medical condition. Staff aim to help women gain skills and resources to change the environments in which they live. Women entering a shelter have a range of responses, potentially severe and disruptive, to their experiences of violence, coercion, and intimidation. Shelter staff understand, however, that the multiple ways in which battered women respond result from their circumstances and experiences, not from diseases or disorders. Shelter staff reject the idea that battered women simply suffer from mental problems; they contend that the power exercised over
the women’s lives and options influences their behavior and character in deep and far-reaching ways. The ‘problem’ from which a battered woman suffers is the coercive control the batterer exercises over her life. The influence of this control makes sense when one frames the battered woman’s experience in terms of repressive and productive power.

Another point of convergence between Allen’s theory and shelter practices is in the methodological schema she outlines. Allen makes explicit that identifying the foreground and background conditions present in individual and group interactions helps one to recognize the multiple pressures that influence women to embody feminine norms supportive of, or at least not challenging of, men as dominant and in control. Shelters similarly hope to help women see the societal factors that play a role in their experiences. To the extent that individual shelters have not outlined their ideology, Allen’s repressive and productive account of power, and methodological schema, may serve as useful in linking practice with a consistent theory. The repressive and productive account of power and the methodological schema will help shelter staff, battered women, and community members understand the experiences of women and the connection between social norms and the systemic nature of domestic violence. Understanding power in society and its impact on battered women may also help these groups devise and implement more effective strategies in countering domestic violence. For particular shelters that already have this ideology and methodology in place, Allen’s theory and schema support their efforts to expose domination and the connection between domestic violence and social norms. For such shelters, Allen’s work particularly her methodology may offer additional rhetoric for helping battered women and the community understand domestic violence.
Domestic violence includes physical harm as well as attempts to impose limits on and control partners. This influence thwarts or blocks an individual’s ability to direct her life, an ability that Dewey argues is significant for meaning and fulfillment. Dewey’s emphasis on self-determination supports shelter staff in continuing to make the connection between domestic violence and the coercive control of a partner. Shelter staff acknowledge that violence is only part of the problem facing women who seek their services. Batterers subject their victims to a variety of forms of abuse—verbal, financial, social, and emotional—all designed to control behavior and create dependence. Dewey’s concern for individual development reiterates the significance of addressing violence and manipulative behaviors. Shelter work includes addressing the ways batterers control partners and assisting battered women in gaining control. Domestic violence shelters, however, often provide only emergency shelter, providing residential services to women in physical danger. They try to assist women in understanding violence and control, but time and other demands hinder the communication of this message. Dewey’s emphasis on individual control encourages shelters to continue to emphasize the connection between violence and control to battered women and the community. Particularly after a Deweyan theorist has recognized the reality of strategic interactions, she is able to challenge oppression for hindering individual development and limiting the contribution of individuals to the community. Individual development provides the individual with meaning and fulfillment, as well as the skills of problem-solving and inquiry the individual can then offer to the community.

Battered women experience power that limits their choices and impacts their character and behavior; that is, they experience power as repressive and productive. Together the theories of Dewey and Allen support shelter work that identifies repressive and productive influences and provides tools to shelters for developing a framework to understand, assess, or, if nothing else,
explain to battered women and the community the ways that battered women experience power. In addition, both find significant circumstances that rob individuals of the possibility to develop their own meaning and significance in experiences. Dewey and Allen support the shelter staff’s understanding of how women experience power and the empowerment techniques that shelters use to help women respond to this power.

3. The Batterer’s Increasing Intensity

Bringing Dewey and Allen\(^\text{53}\) together in considering the imperfection of citation or performativity and habit suggests the motivation for the batterer’s increasingly intense tactics. No matter how the batterer intimidates, punishes, threatens, or creates fear, he cannot guarantee that his partner will comply with his demands or meet his expectations. He cannot ensure his control over her. Even with violence and threats, his partner may not maintain behaviors of the past, and the potential for subversion looms. To gain whatever control possible, batterers adopt ever more intense methods to cement their partners’ compliance. The possibility for subversion is ever present for the battered woman, but the tight controls on her life mean that subversion, even perceived subversion, is dangerous because of the violence that may follow. The violence women experience for not responding in an ‘appropriate’ way illustrates the potential for danger in mis-citations, mis-applications, or subversion. When a woman leaves her abusive partner, a sure indication to him that he is losing control, the tactics of control increase in intensity most drastically. Battered women are in more danger of death or serious injury when leaving a partner than at any other time of the relationship.

In the tightly controlled environment that many battered women face, others may not recognize battered women’s expressions of subversion and mis-citation. These hidden moments of subversion, however, provide battered women with important manifestations of agency or

\(^{53}\) Here Allen relies on the work of Judith Butler.
control. Laura expressed subversion by keeping a hidden journal and by not perfectly completing the household duties. She left dust under a chair or would estimate instead of measuring the height of the comforter off the floor. These moments gave Laura a way of subverting Nick’s demands, asserting agency an outsider might not recognize. Battered women enact a range of subversive acts in response to their partners. For some women, agency is manifest in their ability to reduce violence and protect children. Subversion and relief from the batterer’s control may come from small rebellions like Laura’s. Others may find ways of complying with their husbands’ requests that limit violence, such as taking short-cuts in preparing meals, so that they have time to do other things their husbands demand; inviting relatives over because their husbands are less violent with company; and having children out of the house when their husbands are most likely to be violent.

Shelter staff recognize that batterers use violence to gain control. Both Butler and Dewey suggest that this goal is not attainable, so the tactics continue to increase in intensity when batterers continually pursue control. While the influence of the batterer is often repressive and productive, Dewey and Allen suggest that positive influences benefit an individual’s development. Shelter staff aim to provide such influences in contrast to the relationships many battered women aim to leave.

4. Enabling

Enabling in domestic violence shelters is a process of assisting women in considering options, making decisions, and reflecting on possible outcomes. Enabling includes helping and supporting individuals as they learn to reflect and deliberate on their own circumstances, which includes understanding the role of background conditions in their lives. Through enabling, shelter staff commit and are trained to support women in gaining these skills to counter the lack
of control in their relationships. The JARS manual states, “[w]e actively encourage the battered woman to take her own steps to safety. . . . By doing this in a supportive environment, we are helping her overcome the oppression of male violence in her life and increasing her skills to live apart from her abuser” (3:11). Dewey supports formal training, and many of his works are in consideration of the education of children. He also encourages other institutions to facilitate growth. Similar to the way the students in the Laboratory School learned to examine their own activities in relation to larger social and historical contexts, battered women can learn about the background conditions that impact their experience as well as the many other women who share that experience. This context may provide a woman with a new perspective from which to evaluate her own experiences critically. The comparison between shelter practices and the Laboratory School curriculum does not imply that battered women are like children; rather, it suggests that Dewey would likely support an institutional approach to stimulate a victim’s growth. Battered women are in crisis, addressing the complications of separation and independence, and many need support in considering and evaluating options. The need for assistance increases as many battered women internalize the criticisms of their abusers and face limiting social conditions. A Deweyan theorist would likely endorse the facilitation of shelter residents’ directing their own lives, even when it requires support from shelter staff. Some battered women who have stayed in a shelter illustrate the work of Dewey and Allen on the potentially positive results of group interactions. In working with shelter advocates and other battered women, shelter residents gain confidence, self-direction, more positive images of themselves, and skills useful for the future.

Women who stay in a shelter face difficult circumstances, fear for their safety, uncertain futures, and problematic circumstances. Dewey suggests that inquiry begin with the
identification of and reflection on a particular problem and the malleable conditions present.

With insight from shelter staff, women begin to identify problems to address. In this process advocates help women understand the social contexts in which their experiences occur and the possibility that violence is a method of control. Examining contexts includes considering both sides of what Dewey calls the principle of interaction, the idea that individuals are in interaction with their environments and that individuals and their environment mutually influence one another. Examining an individual’s environment and her ability to operate in that environment (though purely a tool of evaluation, as Dewey holds the individual and environment to be in fact inseparable) may help identify problems and their sources. Shelter staff help women evaluate the conditions of their environment and their own skills to help identify the improvable conditions. Evaluating the environment means exposing the mutually reinforcing power-over of foreground and background conditions on women’s lives, so that they may critically reflect on whether they want to challenge those influences. In addition, while staying in shelters, battered women have access to skills training and character building, equipping them to negotiate their interactions with the environment, which includes other individuals, the physical environment, and social norms. For instance, a woman may initially seek methods for reducing her husband’s violence or ways to improve their relationship. After working with staff in the shelter, learning about other women’s experiences, examining foreground and background conditions, and assessing both sides of interaction, she may reevaluate her husband’s violence as unlikely to change and alternatively seek to separate from him instead of trying to change him. Context informs the evaluation of the problem and helps identify realistic ways of influencing circumstances to solve the problem.
Dewey’s works on the Laboratory School indicate the significance he assigns to context. In the school students learned to examine their own activities in relation to larger social and historical contexts. These activities increased in complexity as students grew older. Similarly, battered women learn about the background conditions that impact their experience as well as the many other women with whom they share experiences. Examining context provides both the students and battered women with a new perspective from which to evaluate their own experiences critically.

Allen and Dewey each support helping women to recognize and continue to develop their present abilities for resistance and self-direction. Evaluating influences in their own circumstances may help women understand that they do not deserve violence and that nothing justifies the violence and strategies of control their partners utilize. While batterers create havoc in their partners’ lives and negatively influence their habits and character, battered women have positive characteristics and habits supportive of resistance and subversion. Shelters aim to assist women by capitalizing on the habits they already have and by developing new habits useful in problem-solving and in determining how to respond to their circumstances. Shelter staff employ enabling to help with building habits and assisting in reflection. When shelter staff help women recognize these skills, they help them increase continuity, which Dewey describes as the connection between past, current, and future events. One may consider continuity in terms of how well one is able to connect past events to guide current action toward a better future. Shelter staff help women learn from the experiences of their past and the experiences of others to guide them toward a better future. The extent to which women apply their insights indicates their growth.
Dewey does not suggest, nor do shelter staff aim, to assist women in creating an ideal end. Staff help women create and build stability in ends that will guide the future. This illustrates the kind of end Dewey endorses. One cannot *prima facie* develop an ideal character or action to pursue, but one may develop, out of present circumstances, an aim that will likely guide one toward improving present circumstances. Individuals may develop malleable ends that direct action and focus attention for a time. Some women want to leave their relationships and establish themselves independently. From their present circumstance they develop the aim of leaving their partner. This end may not guide all of their actions for their whole lives, but it guides some of their actions now. Through the potential of better circumstances, one may develop a guiding end. Dewey asserts that solutions to problems arise out of experience. In successfully living without their partners, finding support from other individuals, and learning about opportunities for their own job training, within a shelter, women may come to see possibilities for life improvement.

Dewey directs the work of philosophy toward making improvements in individual lives, as well as in the collective. He argues that philosophy should focus on improving experience and that the test of philosophy is whether it makes those improvements. Dewey’s insistence that theory respond to lived experience supports taking women’s experiences seriously and assisting in meeting their needs. Dewey argues that philosophy should focus on developing theories and practices that make lives better, which is in line with the aims of shelter staff. Dewey’s theory supports examining the experiences of violence and control exercised over individual women, and, as violence is not an uncommon experience, examining factors systemically as well. Dewey argues that “[e]very existence is an event,” so:
the conjunction of problematic and determinate characters in nature renders every existence, as well as every idea and human act, an experiment in fact, even though not in design. To be intelligently experimental is but to be conscious of this intersection of natural conditions so as to profit by it instead of being at its mercy. (*Experience and Nature* 63)

Taking experiences as significant in themselves encourages empowerment of the marginalized. Seigfried explains, “[b]y recognizing the experimental character of everyday experience, pragmatism has developed a theory that has the potential to empower those whose class, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation have not been privileged in the cultural setup” (*Pragmatism* 160). Insisting on the significance of individual experiences makes the experiences of those outside the majority worth considering and potentially offers a valuable critique of norms.

The emphasis on present activity has a moral component for Dewey. He suggests that morality includes choices of the present and their connection with past experiences and future possibilities. Morality is thus never a completed or finished endeavor, but a continuing process, “a process including memory, observation and foresight, a pressure forward, a glance backward and a look outward” (*Human* 195). Consideration of the choices currently being made and whether they are moving one “from the worse and into . . . the better” is one subject of morality (195). That one’s choices are the subject of morality places a great deal of significance on the individual experience of making choices and moving oneself into better circumstances. Dewey emphasizes education, not only to educate, but to give individuals the opportunity for present and future moral development and improvement. This moving toward something better gives meaning and significance to experience (194-95). That working toward something better is a
concern of morality and a source of meaning and fulfillment informs the kinds of assistance individuals should offer one another. Dewey argues that “the recognition that good is always found in a present growth of significance in activity protects us from thinking that welfare can consist in a soup-kitchen happiness, in pleasures we can confer upon others from without” (Human 202). One cannot give others fulfillment, and making decisions for others usurps their ability to move themselves into something better. Dewey contends that to “‘make others happy’ except through liberating their powers and engaging them in activities that enlarge the meaning of life is to harm them and to indulge ourselves under cover of exercising a special virtue” (202). Dewey’s theory supports shelter staffs’ approach of enabling women and providing them with the opportunity to direct their lives and to develop the habits of thoughtful self-direction.

Helping a woman make decisions, as opposed to making them for her, aids her in attaining safety and in acquiring the meaning and satisfaction in the present that comes from actively directing life toward something better. Assistance in making decisions either teaches or helps her to develop the habits of working toward improvements, so that she has access to meaning now and tools for attaining meaning in the future. Dewey locates a source of meaning and significance in an individual’s directing his or her life toward something better. His conclusion supports the strategy of shelter staff to assist and guide women as they make their own choices. Shelter staff theorize that batterers try to control their partners, and staff do not want to simply step in as another controlling force in a woman’s life. Staff see the control and loss of autonomy, as well as the violence, as problematic. Advocates assist women in making phone calls, completing paperwork, and filing protection orders, so that, similar to engaging students in activities within the Laboratory School, they engage battered women in activities that serve as “points of departure” for future interactions with agencies and organizations.
(“Democracy in Education” 236). In doing for themselves, women develop or improve habits useful for future interactions. In addition, this personal effort allows battered women to build confidence in their abilities with supportive staff assistance present. In addition, Dewey argues that what “is primarily required for . . . direct inquiry . . . is first-hand experience” (236). The more opportunities staff give a woman to determine her own course of action, like a student in the school, the more she or he has “an opportunity to think out [her or] his own model and plan of work, [is] led to perceive [her or] his own errors, and [can] find out how to correct them” (School 92). Direct involvement in decision making also allows a woman more room to evaluate choices and not simply follow the direction of yet another authority.

In looking toward improving present circumstances, shelter staff assist women in assessing and reflecting on the potential consequences of their decisions. Considering and evaluating possible consequences is a significant component of Dewey’s theory of inquiry. Enabling, again, aims to assist women in going through this process. Enabling includes introducing options, such as services a woman was not aware existed; highlighting potential consequences, such as having to confront her partner in court in order to file a protection order; and helping a woman prioritize her goals. All of these efforts help a woman consider the consequences of the decisions she makes. Staff assist women in evaluating consequences and ultimately support women in their decisions.

Through the enabling process shelters provide an incredible amount of assistance and support to the individual battered women that use their services. Dewey recommends calling on experts in inquiry and would thus likely support the way shelters guide women through the decision making process. Staff are able to draw on past experiences of women in similar situations—sometimes their own experiences—knowledge of local systems, and research and
theory on social norms and domestic violence in order to assist battered women. Staff may have insight into the potential outcomes of various choices and suggest which aims will likely yield the desired results. Dewey encourages interaction between individuals and experts to address a given problem effectively. Seigfried describes how reciprocal instances may serve battered women: “[i]t cannot be assumed that the woman already has an explicit understanding of the full reality of her situation . . . Neither can it be assumed that neutral observers . . . have a privileged access to the truth of her situation. Interactive communication is required for a progressively better understanding of each particular abusive situation” (*Pragmatism* 164). Staff work as Deweyan experts, guiding, but not determining what direction a woman pursues, and offering their knowledge as a resource. As battered women have gone through a difficult experience, potentially having their abilities, support systems, and trust in others shaken, battered women often need further expert assistance past what Dewey recommends. The shelter provides support and opportunities for communication and interaction with others who may offer the needed support and ways of thinking useful to a battered woman in pursuing Deweyan growth.

The role of staff and volunteers in shelters also closely parallels the role of teachers in the Deweyan school. Both aim to assist the individuals with whom they work in making decisions and gaining skills that will provide meaning and purpose in the present and more opportunities for growth in the future. Shelter staff and teachers call on their experiences, the experiences of others, and research to guide their clients or students in understanding contextual factors and guiding future decisions. Both have moral grounding in the embedded nature of individuals as social creatures finding meaning in individually and collectively solving problems, and in taking the concerns and interests of others seriously. Staff in the Dewey school encourage students to participate in the governing of the school as a way to prepare them for the future and give
meaning to present experience. Though battered women are often only in shelter for a short
time, their participation and input in the running of the shelter similarly prepares them, gives the
present meaning, and is vital to the shelter’s ability to assist battered women in the future.

In enabling, shelter staff assist women in gaining skills useful for inquiry and in leading
them through the processes of Deweyan inquiry, one informed by Allen’s theory of power,
considering consequences and developing new habits. Shelter staff help women address the
problems they face. They help women consider options and evaluate their consequences. When
women want to gain independence from abusive partners, shelter staff help them develop useful
habits and assist in acquiring needed skills. Dewey and shelter staff encourage the development
of skills and habits that will likely allow for individuals to have more direction over their lives in
the future. Each encourages the increase in what Allen identifies as power-to. Dewey’s
emphasis on the morality of the present moment strengthens a shelter staff’s aims to assist
women in various processes and not simply to make decisions for them or control their lives.
Helping as opposed to doing for not only prepares battered women for the future, but allows
them access to the meaning and significance, however slight, found in directing one’s own life.

In enabling, shelter staff function much like the teachers in Dewey’s schools or the experts that
Dewey recommends for communities and individuals to look to in decision making. Shelter staff
and Dewey recognize the significance of a community of supportive influences.

5. Linking

Linking is connecting with others who may provide new insights or opportunities. The
domestic violence movement has its roots in the linking of women together through
consciousness-raising groups, and linking remains vital in shelter work. Shelter staff do not see
women as the isolated individuals of some philosophical theories; rather, they believe that
individuals influence one another and may support or hinder another’s development. In Deweyan terms, transaction, or mutually influencing interaction, characterizes experiences with others and the environment. Shelters do not aim to help women gain confidence and every skill they will need and then send them off to face the world alone. Shelter staff recognize the significance of a supportive network that assists women in making decisions and encourages battered women in living without abusive partners, so they assist women in building supportive networks.

Dewey and Allen argue for the possibility of a social system where individuals and the collective develop in conjunction. Dewey’s theory that individuals may learn to take the interests of others into account and to incorporate the realization of others’ development into their own interests, is supportive of the empowerment aims shelters employ. In interaction individuals learn from one another. Dewey contends:

Active connections with others are such an intimate and vital part of our own concerns that it is impossible to draw sharp lines, such as would enable us to say, “Here my experience ends; there yours begins.” In so far as we are partners in common undertakings, the things which others communicate to us as the consequences of their particular share in the enterprise blend at once into the experience resulting from our own special doings. . . . Things remote in space and time affect the issue of our actions quite as much as things which we can smell and handle. They really concern us, and, consequently, any account of them which assists us in dealing with things at hand falls within personal experience. (Democracy and Education 194)

Judith Green takes this passage from Dewey to mean that “[t]hrough the windows of one another’s differing experience that we transformatively encounter . . . women who have been

54 Here Allen is drawing on the work of Hannah Arendt.
both benefited and harmed by interactive systems of inequality can learn form one another’s . . .
stories” (274). Shelter staff aim to model for women the possibility that interaction and
communication of this sort exist. They offer to women, and attempt to display for them,
interactions not characterized by domination and control, but by mutuality and reciprocity.
Though he does not discuss it, Dewey’s characterization of human interaction as a shared
experience highlights the vulnerability present in human interactions. The experience of others
as intertwined with one’s own experience suggests the depth to which strategic interactions
impact both parties to the exchange. After isolation from family and various forms of abuse that
often accompany domestic violence, battered women may need a formal structure, like the
students experienced in the Laboratory School, that encourages interaction with others and
potentially illustrates the value of a communicative interactive community. In these groups
survivors of domestic violence support one another, share strategies and consequences of their
experiences that others in the group might find useful, and refine each other’s ideas. Dewey and
Arendt suggest that communicative, not strategic, relations may characterize power relations.
Through linking shelters assist women in developing communicative interactions and in building
mutually beneficial shared experiences that facilitate power-to and power-with.

5.1. The Collaborative Act of Individual Development and Resistance

For some battered women, their role as wife and mother includes supporting and
maintaining peace in the home, such that resisting or subverting their husbands results in not
fulfilling that female role. They exemplify Butler’s suggestion that individuals may have a
difficult time resisting oppressive norms because those very norms form the foundations of their
identity. In the previous example of Sue, many of Sue’s influences in childhood held that women
are nurturers, caretakers, and supportive of their husbands’ public roles. These individuals taught
Sue skills that would prepare her for the role of a nurturer, caretaker, and supporter. She initially felt fulfilled in adopting this role in marriage. When she no longer feels fulfilled or recognizes the domination in place, resistance may become an option. Resistance, however, may mean not nurturing, not taking care of her family, or not supporting some decision her husband makes—those very acts that have come to define her. It means giving up her identity, how she defines herself, and the roles that often govern how others interact with her. Such a thorough personal reversal would be difficult and daunting for one to pursue on her own, but Butler suggests that in these cases groups may form alternative identities and modes of recognition that make giving up an oppressive or harmful identity easier. Theorizing collective power is thus important for collaborative resistance, but also as it supports the enactment of individual resistance.

Butler suggests that, when individuals have a psychological attachment to oppressive norms, collaborative groups may provide support in subverting those norms through recognition and development of alternative identities. Shelter practices illustrate the difficulty of this work. For Sue or Laura to develop new images of themselves as not tied to their partners or the dominating influences of the background and foreground conditions may require the supportive assistance of shelter staff and interaction with supportive friends and family for a long time and in many facets of their lives. The expansion of shelter services to include more than a safe place to stay suggests that recognition through alternative identities may include helping women develop the practical skills and habits of those new identities. Sue may learn a vocational skill that helps her develop a new image of herself, and Laura may need help trying new activities to identify what she enjoys doing. The empowering techniques employed by shelter staff assist in encouraging and developing those new identities.
In enabling and linking, shelter staff aim to provide positive alternative identities to the woman as caretaker, homemaker, and supporter. Enabling is often done one-on-one, but still assists in helping a woman recognize herself as more than a caretaker. In linking, shelters intentionally help a woman build support systems that will help her appreciate and recognize herself as worthwhile regardless of her relation to a particular male. Dewey and Allen argue that this kind of communicative interaction is possible and beneficial for individual development. Both indicate that the influences from others that permeate character do not always have a negative impact on the individual. Dewey encourages the development of customs that significantly influence individuals but, unlike Foucault and Butler’s theories, argues that these customs may benefit individuals and the community. He suggests that customs and institutions can encourage individuals to develop skills of inquiry. Dewey and Arendt indicate that social groups may form through reciprocity and mutuality that encourage individual development, and shelters intentionally aim to promote social groups of this kind.

The changes in shelters from word-of-mouth operations located in individuals’ homes to more institutionalized and grant-funded organizations has resulted in the loss of some of the linking that occurred in early shelters. In early shelters, formerly battered women or women in the community often shared their resources and homes to create spaces for battered women. Women staying in shelters had to help one another and work together to pool resources. At present, most shelters have a board of directors, an executive director, and several paid staff. Few staff and volunteers are survivors of domestic violence themselves, so they cannot share directly in the experiences of the women they assist. With the increasing professionalization of shelter work, Dewey and Arendt’s ideas serve as a reminder of the important role of linking in women’s gaining supportive independence and confidence in themselves.
5.2. Potential Tension between Dewey’s Theory and Shelter Recommended Communication

For commentators, potential points of discord may arise between Dewey’s and shelter staff’s recommendations for communication. Dewey holds the position that the changing nature of circumstances, the tendency for habits to get stuck in ruts, and the limitations of knowledge, may hinder inquiry. To combat, but not eliminate, these obstacles, Dewey recommends taking advantage of and seeking disruptions, developing flexible habits, and interacting with others. The crisis situation of a woman in shelter, however, likely does not include these potential limitations as her most pressing obstacles to growth. Battered women’s need for dealing with a crisis and not generally improving inquiry results in some potential limitations for the application of Dewey’s suggestions to shelter work: specifically the recommendations to seek disruptions and to communicate with numerous and varied individuals.

Dewey’s recommendations to seek disruptions entails participating in situations and experiences that are likely to challenge thinking and habits, in order to reveal problems or a new approach. Seeking disruptions has the potential to call into question ideas and concepts one holds, so it is valuable in establishing better guides to action. One may interpret the work of shelter staff as helping women in establishing stability and dealing with disruptions already experienced. Seeking disruptions at this point may cause a battered woman further instability and result in her inability to develop any guides to action or goals for improving her life. Through empowerment techniques, shelters aim to assist women in dealing with the disruptions they already face. In the future, the advice to seek disruptions might prove useful, but, when in shelter, dealing with previous and current disruptions is likely a more productive course of action.
This discord between Dewey's and shelter staff's recommendations indicates a hasty reading of Dewey. His recommendations do not irreconcilably conflict with the work of shelter staff. Simply seeking out a shelter may challenge a woman’s thinking and expose her to new experiences and individuals. Women entering shelters are already experiencing the major disruptions Dewey describes. He recognizes the need for a balance between obstacles and encouragement in an individual’s life. Dewey says that “an environment that was always . . . hostile would irritate and destroy” and that “[m]erely opposition that completely thwarts, creates irritation and rage” (Art 65-66).

Battered women can focus on Dewey’s other suggestion to take advantage of disruptions. Shelter staff assist battered women with developing skills to respond to their circumstances. While Dewey would not suggest that these women never need to seek out new perspectives, he recognizes their current participation in new experiences and in addressing present disruptions. This illustrates the practicality of Dewey’s theory. While he generally recommends seeking disruptions, he also does not suggest that one seek disruptions regardless of context. He advocates seeking solutions to current problems and developing strategies for their improvement. Shelter staff help women examine context and possible consequences to improve circumstances. Staying in a shelter repeatedly exposes some residents to the possibility of independence. While shelter staff are not bombarding women with a constant stream of new perspectives (such as WWII history, Chinese medicine, or organic farming), they do introduce women to and help women attain radically different options than some have seriously considered before—supportive relationships that will assist them in leaving their partners. Battered women in the midst of experience serve as an example of the impracticality of a Cartesian method. The time, space, use, or possibility to question everything to find the certain do not exist; rather, the battered
woman can focus on solving current problems to improve her life. In addition, Dewey does not call simply for exposure to ideas, but for genuine communication with others that might lead to new perspectives. It may make take time for shelters to gain the trust of a battered woman and to introduce the possibility of independence from her partner.

The initial source of tension between Dewey’s recommendations to seek disruptions and shelters’ aims to build stability is reconcilable. Dewey gives his recommendation to stir up people’s ideas as a way to challenge static beliefs; however, Dewey also supports developing guiding aims and using disruptions to develop new guides for action. As battered women experience many disruptions in shelter, a Deweyan theorist will support battered women’s development of stable guiding aims.

While Dewey's theory supports addressing disruptions, the initial misunderstanding of Dewey's position may result from his emphasis on contexts in which one needs to seek disruptions rather than on the “excessively hostile environments that are all too often the lived experience of oppressed persons and groups” (Seigfried, Pragmatism 167). The emphasis on environments conducive to growth, leads Dewey to undertheorize how to address problematic contexts.

Another potential source of tension may arise for commentators between those with whom Dewey and shelter staff recommend individuals communicate. Dewey recommends cooperative inquiry and suggests communication with numerous and different kinds of people, as a method for challenging and testing one’s ideas. Shelter staff, on the other hand, recommend insulated and supportive interactions by encouraging victims of domestic violence to communicate with staff, other battered women, survivors of domestic violence, and supportive
friends. Shelter staff encourage women to meet other women going through similar circumstances and to seek and cultivate friendships with those who are supportive.

While Dewey’s suggestion for diverse communication may have general value, this recommendation overlooks at least two concerns for oppressed groups. It does not provide adequate reflection on how those excluded or oppressed can have their voices heard, nor does it consider that widespread communication may cause further harm to a member of an oppressed group. The experiences of battered women illustrate Dewey’s omissions.

Many battered women do not have the ability to access interaction with various people because their partners actively limit their opportunities for communication. For instance, a batterer may sabotage his partner’s job by repeatedly showing up and causing disruptions, or he may isolate her from friends and family by getting upset when she spends time with them. Dewey's theory leaves unexamined those individuals prevented from participation in communication or those who cannot encourage communication with others to develop. The advice to seek deep or meaningful communication with a variety of other people is not feasible for battered women isolated from others by their partners. Additionally, the communication battered women have with their partner is far from an exchange of ideas. Dewey’s advice for communicating with numerous different kinds of people in order to refine ideas makes the following assumptions: (a) individuals have some control over whom they communicate with, or at least, that they will have access to others with whom to communicate; (b) an individual’s attempts to communicate have even a minor degree of success; and (c) individuals have confidence in the value of their assertions to others. For some battered women, none of these assumptions characterize their experience. A batterer often isolates his partner from friends and family, authority figures ignore or do not believe her, friends and family do not want to take
sides, and the batterer abuses her psychologically, crushing her perception of the value of her own ideas. The battered woman’s opportunities for communication may be difficult to attain and her attempts at interaction thwarted or ignored.

Dewey calls for one to consider other’s ideas, but he does not advise individuals, such as battered women or other oppressed groups, on how to gain the attention of others and have their own excluded experiences heard. He does not explore the systematic and categorical exclusion of some groups or individuals over others. For his theory to apply to the oppressed, he needs to consider the role of power in interactions, because they can significantly limit opportunities for genuine communication. Those in positions of power need to understand Dewey’s commitment to interaction with others and listening to others’ ideas and opinions, which they may then act upon. Those with power need to include others or call attention to their concerns. Dewey does not fully examine the circumstances of those excluded, those without access to making themselves heard, and his work does not address the difficulty in achieving inclusion, especially when one tries to gain inclusion from outside the group. Not considering these groups makes his advice regarding communication less broad in scope.

The experiences of battered women also illustrate the potential for the negative results of Dewey’s suggestion for widespread communication. Dewey does not address circumstances in which broad communication may inflict further harm. For battered women, interaction with numerous and varied individuals may cause anxiety and do little to counter internalized messages of inadequacy. A battered woman hears from her partner and potentially from other individuals and her community that she does not deserve to be heard, that her situation is her fault, or that she deserves abuse. Professionals and organizations that battered women go to for help often blame the battered woman and deny or minimize her experiences. Taking up Dewey’s
suggestion for widespread communication may only make the experiences of battered women more difficult.

Erin McKenna expresses the concern that Dewey does not recognize the impact of power on interactions:

Dewey rarely acknowledges the full strength of entrenched social power present in our habits of race, class, and gender. He naively, or just hopefully, supposes that habits can be broken by individuals in interaction with their various communities. The attitudes of heteropatriarchy, however, have not yielded to such efforts. . . . Dewey calls . . . for more interaction. In doing this he seems to overlook the real damage that is done to a person in relations of domination and subordination. Dewey does not seem to realize that one’s self can be lost and that what is taking place is really a one-way monologue. I think Dewey’s integrated individual can be achieved, but not without our more radically changing our ways of relating. (155-56)

McKenna critiques Dewey for suggesting that communication among individuals will resolve societal concerns that stem from power, unless the nature of interactions drastically changes. While he describes individuals as influenced by interaction with their surroundings, he does not seem to recognize the depth to which bigotry and prejudice ingrain themselves within individuals. Bigotry and prejudice and their support in norms and institutions prevent individuals from interacting with others in any kind of mutual or equal way. McKenna suggests that Dewey offers the inadequate solution of mere interaction with others to resolve deeply ingrained societal concerns. She suggests that interaction with others is likely to do little when these interactions are already characterized by prejudice and domination. If a whole group is not
taken seriously, it may need other strategies for communication, such as homogeneous interaction, to gain a more equal exchange. McKenna argues:

withdrawal from situations of domination and subordination may be necessary in order to develop and nourish this new sense of agency. Withdrawal may be necessary to form the basis of a moral revolution. By removing oneself from the context of domination and subordination one may gain room to create new values—to create new selves. (153)

McKenna agrees with Butler that groups have the capacity to encourage individuals to develop alternative identities. Interactions between battered women allow them to recognize that the problems they face are societal, not individual, and that support from others provides strategies and courage to change their circumstances. In instances when the predominant story is belittling to a group and that message internalized, repeated interactions in an insulated group may provide members support in challenging the dominate message and in seeking viable alternatives. At times, this insulated communication results in the development of strategies to address oppression collectively as well as developing new ways of understanding one another.

Homogeneous groups have used rebellions, protests, sit-ins, and other strategies to call attention to their oppressive circumstances. They went beyond communication to gain attention. In some instances, groups used the strategies in an effort to make more visible the unequal communication taking place and to gain mutual interaction.

At the group level Dewey's and shelter's recommendations for communication seem to remain in tension. Similar to his recommendations for individual interaction, Dewey suggests communication with numerous and varied organizations on a group level. He argues that a group’s interaction with other organizations indicates whether the group facilitates the growth of its members and itself. Dewey contends that groups and group members should have full and
free interaction with many other organizations, as more interactions provide additional opportunities to challenge and test ideas that one may then bring to the group as a whole. Nel Noddings argues that, for Dewey, isolated and exclusive groups endanger democracy (35). The supportive and protective interactions that shelters encourage battered women to join and participate in, seem to encourage the withdrawal, isolation, and exclusive structure that Dewey warns against. Noddings attempts to improve Dewey’s theory and suggests that simply evaluating the number of organizations a group is associated with does not address that groups may associate with many very similar organizations. Noddings also suggests that one must assess whether the organizations a group interacts with all share the same values or beliefs. Even with this qualification, a Deweyan assessment of shelter communication would suggest that shelters do not facilitate growth because they interact with like groups and do not encourage battered women to interact with a variety of individuals.

Though Dewey recommends open and varied interaction, he does not endorse these recommendations regardless of context. In Democracy and Education Dewey argues that “isolation makes for rigidity and formal institutionalizing of life, for static and selfish ideals within the group,” which would limit the flux needed for Deweyan growth (92), so at least part of Dewey’s reason for promoting interaction between groups is to prevent rigidity and lack of empathy. Establishing that Dewey’s more general aim is promoting growth (and that he has no investment in the preservation of particular group structures), as well as his willingness to adapt strategies and goals when experience warrants, a Deweyan theorist should cautiously accept altering Dewey’s recommendations for group structures for battered women and other oppressed groups. The Deweyan theorist should endorse exceptions to warnings against isolated groups, because participation in these groups offers members of oppressed groups the recognition and
support that will facilitate the subversion of oppressive circumstances and will increase opportunities for growth in the future. Interaction within a supportive group provides a forum for addressing common concerns and potential problems for resolution without members of the dominating group present. While, at first glance, these groups may not be in line with some of Dewey’s particular recommendations, their aims of improving the ability of battered women to live without dominating power-over and to make decisions for themselves actually exemplify the spirit of Deweyan theory. In fact, groups could utilize the tools of inquiry to develop new strategies to call attention to the domination that members of the group experience.

Once a Deweyan theorist recognizes the impact of power on communication and the strength of the ingrained influences, she will endorse the supportive and insulated strategies of communication that Allen, Butler, and McKenna describe. Dewey encourages the development of individual and collective inquiry and widespread communication in order to challenge and expose problems in norms and in one another’s thinking. In particular cases, if widespread communication would likely hinder or prevent both individual development and an actual exchange of ideas, Dewey would not insist on its continuation. The difference between his suggestions and those of the shelter highlights that, at times, individuals, groups, or communities need to pursue alternative strategies to achieve widespread engaged communication. Dewey’s theory embraces the collective action of a homogeneous group when that group promotes engaged inquiry and interaction between individuals, even if the group is limited and primarily supportive when conditions of oppression ensue.

To understand the usefulness and significance of an insulated group of oppressed individuals, a theorist must recognize the impact of power and the strength of ingrained influences – something Dewey rarely addresses. His suggestions do not take into account
insulated groups as a method for countering pervasive oppressive ideas, nor does he consider that some may not have the access or the influence to set conditions for communication with others. Dewey seems to presume a certain level of already functioning interactions, such that instances of oppression require another set of tactics to address. The contextual component of Dewey's theory supports the work of shelters.

Though criticisms of Dewey's suggestions for communication are significant and substantial, one must also consider the complexity of the issues under consideration. One may have trouble understanding complicated social interactions and identifying instances of oppression, however, particularly when those in the oppressed group internalize the ideology of the dominate group. Often through the kind of communication Dewey recommends, a community or group begins to recognize problematic relations of power. A collective problem may only come to the surface as shared in communication. For instance, through communication among women who may have initially thought they did not have anything in common, male domination came to light as a common problem that they could collectively address. Women began to communicate across lines of economics, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, educational background, and ability, and, though sometimes they did not do this very well, those interactions exposed the common experiences of domination, oppressive cultural norms, violence and fear. Another example might be a diverse community that, through communication, realizes that its members share common sicknesses, which the community then links to a common water source. In many instances, through communicating with different kinds of people, a common problem surfaces. While Dewey does not adequately address strategies useful for oppressed groups, his recommendations for communication nevertheless have the potential to bring these kinds of circumstances to light. Because interaction and communication do not always identify the
problems and, at times, exacerbate them, Dewey calls for engaged and interactive communication. McKenna criticizes Dewey's suggestion for increasing communication and suggests it will only work through “radically changing our ways of relating” (156). Dewey supports and encourages this kind of radical change. Once a Deweyan theory more explicitly addresses oppression, the theory does provide communication as a way of identifying and addressing that oppression.

Dewey’s critics argue that these recommendations to seek disruptions and to communicate with many others do not provide the aggressive tactics needed to address entrenched social problems. Seigfried contends, “Dewey does consistently argue against the subjugation of women, racial or ethnic and other minorities, and the working class, and for their emancipation and full participation in society” (“John” 60). Seigfried, however, goes on to say that Dewey:

- thinks that these goals can be accomplished through rational persuasion, coalition building, a willingness to use the experimental method, and when all these fail, overt resistance, such as strikes and public pressure. . . . Since he also believes that agitation and confrontations, especially violent ones, expose a breakdown of communicative inquiry, he also ignores the issue of how to resolve conflicts when those in more powerful positions stubbornly persist in suppressing others. He does recognize that violence can take more subtle forms and that the use of even overt violence can be effectively hidden by those in power to make it look as if confrontation is always the fault of those protesting a misuse of authority. But this recognition does not lead him to revise his theory concerning problematic situations or his methods of resolution. (60)
Seigfried argues for the idea that women need more aggressive tactics to resolve the subordination of women and Dewey does not suggest the more radical strategies needed.

Michael Eldridge counters that Dewey’s suggestions do not rule out the possibility of more aggressive tactics, and he disagrees with Seigfried when she argues that Dewey is not willing to consider violent actions to induce change in coercive situations. Eldridge argues that Dewey wants to ensure that individuals or groups use violence and coercion with caution. Dewey’s “objection to violence . . . [is] that it uses force idly or destructively” (“Force, Violence” 212). Eldridge contends that Dewey “did not rule out in principle the use of force;” rather, he “was keenly aware of the undesirable consequences of more direct use of force” (17). In the passage above, Seigfried implies that, in addressing instances “when those in more powerful positions stubbornly persist in suppressing others,” one must rely on aggressive, even violent, tactics and criticizes Dewey for not embracing these methods. In another essay, however, Seigfried implies that Dewey was wrong to abandon pacifism (Introduction 8).55 This issue requires further analysis; however, on the surface, Seigfried is inconsistent in her demands of Dewey, and, at times, recognizes that Dewey is willing to endorse more aggressive tactics.

Whether or not Seigfried denies that Dewey is willing to endorse more coercive tactics generally, she does critique him for not endorsing aggressive tactics in gaining rights and equality for women and other groups. Seigfried’s push for more aggressive or violent tactics may strike some feminists as odd. Those feminists are wary of the use of violence, even for a worthy cause. Dewey emphasizes education and communication because he believes in their fruitfulness and long-lasting results. His discussions of education and communication are thus not, as West argues, what Dewey “falls back on” because he shuns or does not recognize social struggle, but

55 In her Introduction to Feminist Interpretations of John Dewey, Seigfried criticizes Dewey for his willingness to endorse more aggressive tactics. Seigfried explains that Jane Addams remains a pacifist during World War I, a “stance that isolated her not only from Dewey but from most people at the time” (8). Seigfried argues “Dewey’s less unequivocal support of pacifism could be construed as the one breach he made with her feminist goals” (8).
his recognition of the destruction and unintended consequences that result when one applies force and violence even toward a just end (106).

Sidney Hook reports that Dewey held that “[o]ur task, step by step, even when we take very large steps, is the piecemeal reduction of violence in human affairs as too costly, psychologically and materially, and therefore unintelligent” (*Education* 142-43). Hook goes on to say, “I am confident that Dewey’s approach to the question of violence in human affairs was affected by his assessment of the Civil War and by his early emotional reactions to it” (142). A more explicit statement of Dewey’s position, however, would have assisted in applying his theory to feminist theory and practice. A theory that clearly identifies the conditions of domination would likely examine the tactic of coercion and its use more rigorously. While Seigfried and others are correct that Dewey does not often draw on more aggressive tactics, Dewey refrains because he wants to avoid their often destructive and non-restorative consequences, not because he is unwilling to address injustice. He cautions against aggressive tactics because of their potentially divisive consequences and because they may not resolve the problem at hand. One can take Dewey’s aversion to confrontation or violent tactics as a cautionary tale about the very real negative consequences that may result from a too aggressive stance, and not as an unwillingness to support women’s rights. Similar to how shelter staff work to enable women and form alliances within their communities to support battered women as ways of confronting power, Dewey first endorses peaceful means of social change.

If the feminist movement had employed more aggressive tactics it may have more successfully addressed the entrenched power women faced in Dewey’s time and still experience today; however, the fault in Dewey’s theory is squarely in his lack of tools for diagnosing this entrenched power and not in his inability to address it once recognized. Dewey endorses
responding to problems and a wide range of strategies. The last 50 years have revealed an entrenched nature of women’s positions unrecognized 50 years ago. It is reasonable to suggest that Dewey would have supported increasing the intensity of strategies used by women and other groups as the nature of their status clarified. In addition, it is important to recognize the success of his suggestions for education and communication in mitigating some of these problems.56 Both Seigfried and McKenna critique Dewey for only suggesting communication and education, but education and communication are very powerful techniques for creating change. The communication among women brought their domination to light. It is through interaction and education of the residents, shelter staff help women resist domestic violence. Education of community members and dialog with agencies has changed institutions’ ways of addressing domestic violence and assisting battered women. Dewey also supports enhancing the quality of communication between individuals and is not satisfied with the current quality of communication. When Deweyan theorists endorse more aggressive tactics for attaining women’s access to the public sphere and equality with men, they are also likely to endorse a more aggressive pursuit of the very tools Dewey suggests: communication and education.

A Deweyan theorist may incorporate the analysis of power into his theory, and his strategy for communication and education may show some effect on even ingrained norms. Particularly if Dewey addresses members of a dominate group, encouraging interaction with others may challenge the ideology of those members. Communication with numerous and varied individuals may not necessarily assist battered women in growing and may harm their ability for self-direction. Rather, supportive interaction may help women develop better inquiry. Dewey should include these more nuanced needs; however, his recommendations for widespread and

56 In her essay, “How to Interrupt Oppressive Behavior,” Mary Mc Clintock advocates the use of communication and education to challenge oppression.
far-reaching communication indicates to individuals and groups that one should take caution in participation in and support of insulated groups, as this may lead members to oppress and harm others.

6. Catalyzing and Priming

In catalyzing and priming, advocates engage in activities on behalf of battered women. When catalyzing, shelter staff obtain the resources and essential items battered women and their children need to leave a violent partner. These items include food, clothing, transportation, diapers, soap, and other resources. Advocates obtain these goods through donations and drives, and by directly approaching individuals or businesses. Women and their children need these basic items to begin a process of change or growth. Batterers often create situations in which their partners depend on them for money, food, health care, and other needs, so, in order for battered woman to leave their partners, shelters initially meet these needs (when possible) and then help women find alternative ways to meet them. When shelters provide these goods in the short term, they give women time and space to consider how they might begin to acquire goods or find alternative sources of assistance. Providing material items to support battered women gives women a safe place to consider more options for their own growth in the future. The first step, in this case, is connecting with the shelter as an organization that can help provide those basic needs that may allow for further growth in the future. This process allows battered women to begin to consider alternatives. Dewey’s warnings about doing things for others signals caution in advocates efforts to provide for women. As providing shelter and material goods is short term and done in conjunction with assisting women in making their own decisions in other areas, however, a Deweyan theorist would not find it objectionable.
Priming is advocating for battered women with other agencies and in the community, so that those agencies learn how their practices impact battered women. Shelter staff do this as they assist individual women with different agencies. The staff learn agency procedures and develop relationships with those that manage agency protocol. Staff informally educate agencies about their impact on battered women through those relationships and formally offer training to educate various agencies. Police training now includes information about how to handle domestic violence cases to protect battered women. Priming and educating for more systemic change is often a lower priority for shelter staff, as assisting individual women with pressing needs occupies much of their time. Priming does occur within shelters, however, and is only a portion of the priming that occurs in the domestic violence movement more generally, allowing shelter staff and volunteers to participate in encouraging systemic change at various levels of society. This change occurs when shelters and their communities join with others to lobby for change and educate citizens and policy makers. All states now have coalitions of shelters that work together at the state level and join the National Coalition to impact federal policy (JARS 2:45).

Dewey and Allen offer the possibility of collective resistance as a response to oppression. Both Dewey and Arendt endorse collaboration toward a common goal (Allen argues that Arendt may at least be read this way), while Dewey goes further, suggesting that a community can pursue the common good. Arendt argues that power arises through individuals acting toward a common goal. In these collaborative interactions, individuals establish relationships, and individuation occurs. Arendt avoids the problems of collective resistance based on identity through the strategy of promise keeping. Through promise keeping, individuals work in conjunction without assuming an essential identity that might exclude others from participation.
Dewey contends that individuals may take a genuine interest in one another, so that one finds meaning in the success of another. Both Dewey and Arendt suggest that individuals can interact with one another in beneficial ways and that individual development takes place through interaction. Dewey grounds the obligation to interact and pursue mutual development in the promise of collective inquiry and its improvement when individuals develop independently. Arendt shows that groups may ground collective action in promise keeping and not in essential identities or experiences.

Dewey’s work often centers on the education of children, but he promotes the pursuit of growth throughout life and argues that the institutional fostering of growth should not only occur in schools; rather, he argues:

Government, business, art, religion, all social institutions have a meaning, a purpose.
That purpose is to set free and to develop the capacities of human individuals without respect to race, sex, class or economic status. And this is all one with saying that the test of their value is the extent to which they educate every individual into the full stature of his possibility. Democracy has many meanings, but if it has a moral meaning, it is found in resolving that the supreme test of all political institutions and industrial arrangements shall be the contribution they make to the all-around growth of every member of a society. (Reconstruction 186)

Shelters aim to take into account the ways that race, sex, class, and status influence individual battered women’s lives. They aim to assist battered women in addressing their problems and in developing strategies to face and change them. Shelters illustrate how an organization may take the circumstances of individuals seriously and help them gain the confidence, skills, training,
opportunity, and kinds of relationships that will encourage growth in the future. Shelters and the domestic violence movement work to help other agencies foster the growth of battered women.

The collective power of Arendt and Dewey’s theorizing plays an important role in the collaborative work of the domestic violence movement. Individual groups composed of women, men, domestic violence victims, families and friends of victims, feminists, and non-feminists work together to establish and maintain shelters, lobby local agencies, change laws, and educate the community. This movement does not find its foundation in every member’s having the same or similar experiences; rather, activists join together through the common interest in improving the lives of battered women and because they recognize that a political joining together may impact agencies, policies, and norms that affect these women. Individuals can take an interest in and promise to work toward improving the lives of battered women and to minimizing domestic violence in the future. Individuals would not make a promise to battered women without an interest in their circumstances. The movement’s work illustrates the significance of an interest in the lives of battered women.

Dewey emphasizes the importance of individuals’ determining their own goals and having the skills to pursue them. The significance of an individual’s direction in her own life signals the need for caution and reflection when working on behalf of another and taking an active interest in her well-being. Green argues that, for Dewey, “our central concern in promoting the general welfare must be the development of human persons within valued cooperative institutions, which requires the reliable availability of means to support their individual and mutual growth and flourishing” (267). If advocates aim to help individuals gain more control, then those advocates must take great care when they speak on behalf of battered women. In addition, an advocate must continually ensure that what she says on behalf of another
still applies and continues to reflect and improve battered women’s experiences. Members of a movement must take care that their work actually improves or assists the lives of others and is not just a means of self-advancement or a way feeling better about themselves.

Shelter staff and volunteers, survivors of domestic violence, and community members take part formally and informally in collectively inquiring into the conditions, norms, and factors that generate the prevalence of domestic violence and coercive control. They tackle the joint problem through inquiry (as one finds in Dewey) and collective response to instances of domination (as seen in Arendt). Collective inquiry takes on problems and addresses the factors, including conceptual factors, that shape the problem. Shelters and the feminist movement more generally challenge the norms that support the subordination of women in other agencies and society.

Dewey and Allen’s analysis of the significance of contextual factors may serve to remind those in the domestic violence movement of the importance of influencing these factors to achieve widespread change. The day to day needs of the women and children in shelter occupy most of staffs’ time; but, when possible, Dewey and Allen’s account of individuals as deeply influenced by and embedded in their communities indicates the importance of participating in, or educating and encouraging others to participate in, the social change mission of the domestic violence movement. Dewey’s work on the success of collective inquiry in social problems and

57 Jane Addams endorses the idea that all kinds of community members should come together to address their collective problems. This was one of the functions of Hull House, a Settlement Addams helped develop in Chicago (23, 27). Both Addams and her work at Hull House had a significant impact on Dewey’s work (Seigfried, Pragmatism).

58 Reemphasizing the connection between an individual woman’s experience and the structures of social interactions is significant when confronted with a study such as the one conducted by Amy Lehrner and Nicole E. Allen. Lehrner and Allen’s work indicates that younger shelter staff sometimes frame the work done in domestic violence shelters as work with individual women that is unrelated to gender relations within the society (663). If Dewey and Allen draw attention to the role of social norms in women’s experiences and the significance of contextual factors, younger shelter staff may understand the obstacles battered women face and the services that will assist battered women more clearly, potentially making their assistance more relevant and realistic.
Arendt’s suggestion that this collective inquiry can focus on domination support the domestic violence movement’s efforts to alter the social dynamic so that fewer women are susceptible to domestic violence.

7. The Possibility of Strategic Power within Shelters

The aim of achieving collaborative power relations does not rule out the possibility of strategic power within shelters. Foucault and Butler explore the dispersed, hidden, and continually present nature of power in all kinds of human interaction. Butler’s work indicates that individuals have the ability to subvert power, but the potential Dewey offers is that, through reflection, interaction, taking advantage of seeking disruptions, developing flexible habits, and testing ideas in experience, one may come to recognize and address problematic habits or interactions in a deliberate way. Dewey suggests that one may work to address problems reflectively, creatively, and intelligently. Theorists may now use his work to move away from strategic instances of power to communicative ones. Shelter staff aim to encourage women to make their own decisions, not to direct women’s lives. As battered women have already dealt with dominating power-over, staff work to assist, but not to control or to demand that women make particular choices. Merely stating these goals and training advocates to uphold them does not rule out the possibility of dominating power-over within the shelter itself. As power is dispersed, power may take place between staff, battered women, or an executive director and staff. Staff may fear for a woman, want to protect the woman or her children, or simply like to control others and aim to exert power-over a battered woman. The executive director or board may have the power to fire staff and may use that leverage for their own gain.

Shelter staff are aware of the possibility of dominating power-over in relationships and take steps to minimize domination. Shelter staff aim to enhance power-to and power-with and
are cautious of how these modalities of power impact power-over. Dewey’s promotion of growth through enhancing skills of inquiry and engaged socialization supports caution regarding the assistance of others. Prescribing what others do without concern for their personal development limits their ability to direct their lives and contribute to the larger community. It also hinders the prescriber’s ability to learn from others.

In an effort to curb power-over linked to prejudice, shelter staff train new employees and volunteers to recognize their own biases and the negative impact prejudice has on shelter residents and staff. Dewey and Allen support the self-reflective component of the work of shelter staff. Staff members aim to hold one another accountable and to address dominating power-over. They continually examine whether or not their programs and individual interactions promote empowerment. Allen’s identification of the interconnected modes of power and Dewey’s calls for continual reevaluation and testing of ideas support staff vigilance in examining their own relations of power. Shelter staff recognize power as a real danger and real injustice to anyone, but particularly to battered women, as many experience such dominating power-over from their partners. Looking for problem areas and developing methods for reflecting upon and addressing the problems one cannot eliminate illustrates a Deweyan approach to inquiry. In inquiry one accepts the limits of problem-solving and particular circumstances and develops a strategy to address the situation.

Testing efforts in experience is an important element of inquiry for Dewey and for the effectiveness of shelters’ efforts to combat power-over. Survivors of domestic violence and current residents play a vital role in the domestic violence movement, providing feedback on the assistance and information offered in shelters and on shelter staffs’ attempts to practice communicative interactions. Advocates aim to involve survivors of domestic violence in their
decisions by encouraging them to serve on boards, volunteer, become staff, and provide feedback on shelter procedures. While sometimes difficult to achieve, states and coalitions seek out survivors of domestic violence to ensure that the services a shelter offers help battered women leave violent partners and to make improvements in their lives. Shelters do not assume that all battered women have the same experiences, but including survivors in shelter work offers significant insight into the services shelter staff provide. This serves as an example of the kind of reevaluating Dewey recommends.

While shelter staff cannot eliminate the potential for instances of domination in their own interactions, they do take steps to identify and address instances of power-over through training, communicative models, and reflection on their own practices. Deweyan theory supports these efforts, and the work of shelter staff illustrates growth as a continual process. The next section further addresses Dewey’s strategies for working to promote mutual development in the midst of potential biases and blind spots.

8. Normative Considerations

Dewey argues that one should develop unified and interconnected moral interests that are likely to provide more long term satisfaction than unconnected interests and generally serve as a guide to action. Puzzling individual cases will arise, but one may act with some confidence in routine circumstances. Shelter staff help women develop stable goals, interests, and commitments outside of their partners’ demands. This assistance parallels Dewey’s theory of goals. An individual may set up an aim or goal and, while she may still evaluate that particular aim, it temporarily remains stable, so that she may focus reflection on some other concern. Shelter staff first help women develop somewhat of a routine, creating some stability in their own lives before tackling the larger issues of their commitments to their families, partners,
communities, and selves. Staff often help women see that they need to care for and protect themselves. In this process women may draw on theories of the Good, Right, and Virtuous, as they look to address the current circumstances. For women in crisis, this will often mean considering how to support and stabilize themselves, in order to examine other duties and commitments in the future.

Reflection on what is Good may convince a woman to alter her initial assumptions about the Good, which may then help guide her action. Considering something to be Good after reflection upon it serves as an indicator that it may be good. Considerations of the Right and the Virtuous may fall under the same test, though all three may not suggest the same end. For instance, Sue’s circumstances were problematic. She reflected on the situation and her own commitments and values. Her reflections did not all point to the same conclusion; rather, she had to consider each factor and its potential outcome in her situation, and even then reflection was not conclusive. Sue’s reflection on her circumstances led to some changes in her values. Her own well-being and that of her children increased in value in relation to that of her husband’s demands and moods. Sue no longer holds it as her duty to maintain her family as a unit, nor does she value the stability of the nuclear family as having highest priority. Shelter staff aim to help women reconsider some of what they hold as Good, Right, and Virtuous. Shelter staff offer alternatives and aim to help women critically reflect on those values. Shelter staff do not promote reflection out of a belief that battered women experience domestic violence because of the values they hold; rather, the values of society do not challenge domestic violence and, to the extent a woman holds such values, she may not recognize other options. The techniques of coercive control mean that, despite individual women’s values, batterers work to limit women’s choices and actions and influence a woman’s view of herself. Shelter staff hope women will
challenge the values that suggest a woman must be dependent upon her partner. In addition, shelters hope to show women that options for their sustenance and well-being exist apart from their partners.

Shelter staff assist a battered woman in considering positive changes for her future by encouraging her to consider her experiences and assess potential consequences. Dewey suggests that individual cases need independent evaluation because they have the potential to be very different. What has worked in the past may guide, but it is not a formula for what will work in every case. Staff do not know the answers for a particular woman’s case, but they may assist her in looking at potentially relevant factors and similar experiences of other battered women. Dewey endorses the idea of reflection centered on addressing a problem at hand and considering how to make improvements, but he does not endorse pursuing an ideal disconnected from experience. A woman staying in shelter receives the support to reflect on circumstances and determine how to approach the problems she faces.

Dewey’s flexibility with respect to aims or goals does not mean that a woman should fundamentally change her plans every day or every hour. Leaving a partner and establishing a life independent of that person will likely take months or years. This is a perfectly acceptable goal under Dewey’s theory. He endorses continual evaluation, but that may mean periodic evaluation of a fairly stable goal. A woman escaping violence has found something that may make her life better and is working to act upon it. Over time, she may reconsider her decision, have intermediate goals, and change the means of attaining that goal, but it may serve as a stable goal over many years. A woman can work toward the goal of living without her partner and later adopt a new goal.
Dewey’s critics may argue that his theory offers methods for examining problematic circumstances, but that he offers little by which to justify addressing a problem in a particular way. In regards to domestic violence, critics may suggest Dewey offers a way to think about consequences and results, but does not endorse a particular way of dealing with domestic violence, or even the tools to suggest that a life free from violence is better than one with violence. Dewey’s reply is that, while no obvious natural law, direction from God, or universally accepted principle exists to provide this foundation, individuals’ reports, correlations, and experiences can give some guidance. Through others’ experiences, research, and other tools, one can examine likely ways of improving life, and enough indication exists to support the assertion that a life without manipulation or abuse is more rewarding and fulfilling than the alternative. Dewey does not only point to experience as a source of justification but draws hypotheses from experience. Specifically, he hypothesizes that collective inquiry is beneficial and provides a valuable tool in solving problems. When individuals find meaning in their ability to reason and set goals, it indicates that freedom from domination provides access to a more promising life.

Evidence based on research, individual experiences, and other factors would not likely persuade a violent partner to end his violence or stop coercive efforts, nor does it have the same authority or claim to universality as the charge that domestic violence is categorically wrong, but the application of Deweyan theory remains useful and effective. Dewey argues that humans do not have access to universal principles and that no theory evades all challenges. He notes that one may glean from experience that more satisfaction and meaning occur when individuals direct their own lives, are not restricted by dominating power-over, and collaborate with one another. Individuals may look to the outcomes of experience to make generalizations that will guide action—these experiences, and others’ reports of these experiences, are the sources of evidence
available. Dewey’s theoretical picture endorses ethical principles that are held tentatively, justified by experience, and continually tested. His moral theory calls for increasing sensitivity to moral claims because of the role of interpreting experience in moral decisions. He holds that naturalistic obligations arise from experience, and, if the batterer or someone else does not agree with Dewey’s conclusions, the opposing parties may continue to engage one another in interactive dialog, argue, or take up arms. Without a definitive way to determine the absolute moral way, Dewey advocates dialog when possible; however, he does not rule out that some circumstances may justify confrontation.

The contextual aspect of Dewey’s work is particularly controversial. For instance, Naoko Saito summarizes that Allan Bloom, philosopher and author of *Closing of the American Mind*, “criticises the lack of moral virtues and fundamental principles in Dewey’s pragmatism,” and John Patrick Diggins, professor of history and author of *The Promise of Pragmatism*, criticizes Dewey for “refusing to define any specific ends toward which education should aspire” (“Pragmatism and the Tragic” 250). Dewey embraces the refusal of “fundamental principles” and “specific ends.” He suggests one consider growth as a goal, not because it represents some fixed and definite principle, but because, in experience, it has nurtured significance and meaning in individuals’ lives. Dewey calls individuals continually to submit even growth and its pursuit to reflection and to test its application.

Dewey's critics miss the idea that while Dewey does not prescribe the ends of growth, growth is grounded in rationality, sociability, and sensitivity to moral factors. His understanding of collective deliberation as useful in problem solving supports individual development and an openness to what one may learn from others. In conjunction with taking seriously the moral
traditions of the past, Dewey’s recommendations for growth do not prescribe particular ends, but also do not endorse aimlessness nor is growth without moral guidance.

Dewey aims to develop a theory that avoids the constraints of a fixed principle and the aimlessness of no morality, or as Heldke implies pragmatists take on a similar project to Richard Bernstein, that is moving “beyond objectivism and relativism” (Bernstein, Beyond xiii; Heldke, “Recipes” 16). The alternative to objectivism or relativism is the process of experience informing guides to moral action. This mode of theory production avoids the need for an absolute. A fictional battered woman named Casey illustrates this Deweyan process. Casey comes into shelter with the intent to gain safety for a few days and then to convince her partner to change his behavior. After speaking with a shelter staff member and meeting other battered women, Casey begins to conclude that her partner might not change. After returning to her partner for a few months, Casey attends a group session recommended by the shelter and hears survivors of domestic violence tell how their partners isolated them from family and friends, creating more and more dependence on the batterers and making the possibility of leaving their situations more difficult than before. Casey reflects that her partner still uses violence and that he became irate due to a surprise guest a few weeks before, so she begins to contemplate leaving more seriously. No guarantee exists that Casey will choose the best possible path, but her choice is not baseless either. She can use the experiences of others and her own feelings of lack of control to make a judgment. Casey and other battered women draw on the experiences of others that provide convincing evidence that their oppression is terrorizing and potentially worth leaving. They see or hear from other battered women the freedom and relief that occurs in leaving a violent relationship, but they also observe that these women’s lives are difficult. Women may decide, as did Sue, to try and make things work, or they may decide, like Casey,
that leaving is their only way to survive or to attain safety for themselves and their children. As a woman pursues the decision made, she may continue to evaluate its impact.

Rather than seeking truths, which he takes to be fixed principles that imply far more certainty than he takes to be justifiable, Dewey suggests seeking warranted assertibility. A principle with warranted assertibility has proven useful in approaching the world through experience and may serve as a guide to future action. While Dewey remains committed to continual testing and reevaluation, he is also committed to action when the circumstances justify a particular response in this case, working toward growth. Battered women may work with this principle. Battered woman’s relationships may no longer remain satisfying or sustainable. Through reevaluation, battered women may evaluate her own circumstances through the experiences of others and through the information provided by shelter staff to determine what has warranted assertibility.

Shelter staff may use a similar strategy to examine the success of efforts to promote communicative power. Shelter staff can examine the consequences of their work, consult with former clients and other battered women, and vigorously and collectively look for harmful outcomes. Shelter staff cannot guarantee the success or beneficence of their strategies, but shelter staff can examine past experience and the help they have provided in order to continue to support battered women with confidence. Collectively, shelters rely on tested techniques that change over time which they continue to test in experience.

Using Allen’s framework of background and foreground conditions, one can see that the conditions influencing domestic violence pervade society and social institutions. For many within the movement, society has clung to old ways of thinking about gender and the relations between men and women. Grounded in the experiences of women like Sue, Laura, and Casey,
advocates see the need for systemic change. Dewey calls such change *reconstruction*, the thorough and wide-reaching reconsideration of fundamental institutions throughout society. To enhance the possibility of reconstruction, Dewey calls for flexibility, interaction, and collective inquiry. He advocates for the development of these habits across the board, so that institutional reconstruction may occur when current processes no longer apply, and now a Deweyan theorist may add, specifically when current processes may dominate others. With Dewey, one can call for the examination of these institutions and, when needed, their reconstruction. Dewey also encourages promoting practices to improve the likelihood and effectiveness of going through the processes of evaluation and reconstruction. When his calls to enhance education, communication, and reflection exceed what is attainable given current circumstances, individuals must look for strategic ways to enhance education, communication, and reflection in the future or use Dewey’s techniques to address the current situation.

Returning to Sue, Allen’s framework and theory of power provide Sue with perspectives from which to reflect on her own situation. Dewey’s theory of inquiry provides methods for examining her situation and general guidelines about morality to evaluate and make decisions about how to proceed in the future. Allen’s framework and methodological tools provide resources for evaluating battered women’s experiences of power and for helping battered women and others understand their experiences of violence. Understanding these influences provides a battered woman or practitioner with the contextual analysis that makes Deweyan evaluation rich and capable of offering better solutions as she more clearly understands problems and their causes.

In contrast to Allen’s moral framework, which implied a distinction between moral and non-moral instances of power-over, power-to, and power-with, Dewey’s framework may now
include Allen’s work in moral reflection, but his theory also has the flexibility to consider a range of moral factors. Using the work of Dewey and Allen, battered women, like Sue, may examine the background conditions of their circumstances; use Dewey’s framework to reflect on multiple factors, conduct dramatic rehearsals, and address the impact on the Good, Right, and Virtuous; and consider the role of power-over, power-to, and power-with in their lives, taking Allen’s identification of domination, subordination, and resistance as guides.

Allen provides tools for examining issues of power. Sue was able to use Allen’s background and foreground conditions to justify further reflection on her relationships and to determine that their demands on her were morally problematic. With Dewey’s tools for weighing consequences, she was also able to develop ways to change her situation. Casey could use Allen’s framework to identify her own situation as problematic and potentially getting worse. She could define the power-over she experiences as wrong or dominating without justifying any instance of resistance. Dewey’s framework can help Casey develop possible solutions grounded in reality and in her well-being and that of others. Dewey’s framework goes beyond identifying potential problems, and, while not definitive of a simple calculation, he provides tools for addressing and weighing the impact of multiple factors. Additionally, his theory does not require that one comes to a definitive answer, but rather that one aims to make improvements, carefully examines, and then pursues justifiable courses of action. These additions to Allen’s framework bridge the gap for women facing a complicated array of factors and the need, not simply to identify instances of power-over, -to, and -with, but also to evaluate the problematic instances and develop a guide to action.
9. Evaluation of the Application

Bringing Dewey and Allen together in application to domestic violence shelters has begun to demonstrate the potential for a joint Dewey and Allen framework. Allen provides (and Dewey accommodates) a theory of dispersed, repressive, and productive power. Women in shelter have experienced this kind of power, and, through making such power explicit, shelter staff are helping women address it through empowerment techniques. These techniques illustrate the significance of Allen’s work in connecting the impact of power-over on power-to and power-with, but they also demonstrate the significance of power-with in addressing power-over and assisting individuals in developing power-to. Through collaborative power-with, shelter staff are able to help women resist the domination they have encountered and collectively address the common norms that impact relations of power. Dewey and Arendt suggest the potential for individuals to influence one another, but not in ways that are strategic or malevolent. In fact, they suggest that the individual and the collective may develop together in mutually edifying ways. Shelters aim to pursue interactions of this sort.

Dewey’s work on inquiry supports the empowerment technique of enabling, where staff assist women in making decisions, weighing consequences, and calling on contextual factors to inform these reflections. His normative framework is supportive of the contextual and experiential approach of shelter work and the continual testing of procedures against the experiences of battered women.

Bringing Allen and Dewey together supports the work being done in domestic violence shelters. They can draw attention to the interconnectedness of kinds of power, the development of individuals in connection with a supportive group, and the importance of examining the full context of circumstances for women in abusive relationships. The work of shelters illustrates
how Dewey’s theory may be modified to accommodate the unique circumstances of an individual or group in crisis, by altering his recommendations for communication to those that are supportive of interaction and growth.

10. Conclusion

The theories of Dewey and Allen are primarily supportive of the work and practices of domestic violence shelters. The theory of power and the methodological tools Allen provides (which Dewey accommodates, embraces, or supplements) support the understanding shelter staff have of battered women’s experiences. Both Dewey and Allen endorse the empowerment techniques employed by shelters. Dewey’s theory of education that supports building skills useful in the present and future, suggests that experts provide a useful resource in decision making, and his claims that moral significance resides in current action supports the empowerment technique of enabling. In characterizing individuals as in transaction with one another and emphasizing the possibility of positive and mutually beneficial interactions with others, Dewey and Allen endorse the technique of linking that encourages battered women to develop a supportive network. Catalyzing is supported as a temporary measure to meet women’s needs as they build stability. The works on collective power by Dewey and Allen endorse the ways groups and individuals have jointly worked together to enact change on multiple levels of society.

The work of domestic violence shelter staff primarily finds support in both Dewey's and Allen’s theories. In some instances, Dewey and Allen reinforce the efforts of shelter staff that may get lost in the overwhelming work of helping individual women gain safety. The emphasis on individuals in interaction with one another in Dewey's and Allen’s theory reminds shelter staff, particularly as they have become professionalized, that individual women may need more
assistance in developing supportive relationships. Dewey and Allen also remind shelter staff of the importance of participating in or supporting the domestic violence movement’s efforts toward systemic change, as cultural norms do not always challenge, and at times support, domestic violence. Additionally, Dewey’s call for continual evaluation and testing hypotheses in experience calls shelter staff to continue to engage battered women in the analysis of shelter work and to monitor whether their efforts have a positive impact on the lives of battered women. His emphasis on the significance of individuals directing their own lives reminds advocates for battered women to take care in speaking on behalf of battered women. That women need assistance in linking, that social change is important for combating domestic violence, that battered women provide insight to shelter practices, and that caution is important when speaking for battered women are all significant components of the aims and work of shelter staff. Dewey and Allen simply reiterate for shelter staff the significance of engaging in systemic change, as well as meeting battered women’s immediate needs. Dewey and Allen both indicate the significance of the community in supporting the work of shelter staff, as shelters are not isolated entities in a community.

The experiences of battered women and the work of shelter staff also assist in illustrating elements of Dewey's and Allen’s work. The experiences of battered women illustrate the physical and emotional danger of subversion in tightly controlled environments, which indicates the importance, not merely of the comfort, but of the potentially life-saving role of supportive groups that facilitate subversion. The work of shelter staff offers an example of how experts may play a role in the decision making process, how an individual may develop an end relying on her own and others’ experiences, and, despite Dewey’s critics, how education and communication play a significant role in addressing instances of power. The moral framework Dewey brings to
Allen's theory provides a structure for understanding how battered women may come to reconsider their values and use the experiences of others to make decisions. It also provides a framework for understanding a situation as not ideal and for working to make improvements, even if not every problem is resolved. The work of shelter staff illustrates how multiple experiences reflected upon may create the justification for challenging norms. The work of shelter staff aids theorists in gaining a better understanding of both Dewey's and Allen's theories.

This analysis concludes that the theories of Dewey and Allen primarily support the work of domestic violence shelter staff and are able to remind shelter staff of the importance of systemic change. Dewey and Allen may provide a comprehensive theory upon which shelter staff may draw in order to assess the consistency and the significance of individual practices. In addition, the theory provides advocates for battered women with rhetorical tools to help battered women, policy makers, community members, and new staff or volunteers understand the experiences of battered women and the conditions of domestic violence. Additionally, the experiences of battered women and the work of shelter staff illustrate some of the abstract concepts in the theories of Dewey and Allen. Dewey’s work clearly embraces, accommodates, and, at times, supplements Allen’s theory of power. His work, with Allen’s assistance, provides a powerful framework to support, encourage, and explain the work of shelters.
CHAPTER V. CONCLUSIONS

1. Introduction

Dewey’s work on personal growth and the flexible pursuit of goals suggests its possible application to the work of domestic violence emergency shelters. Dewey’s work, however, receives criticism for not adequately addressing or taking account of the influences, depth, and scope of power, which might hinder, even prevent, the application of his work to feminist issues and concerns. The dissertation undertakes examining the extent to which Dewey’s work embraces or accommodates the components of a feminist theory of power and then considers the possibility for application of his theory to the work of domestic violence emergency shelters. Amy Allen’s work, *The Power of Feminist Theory*, provides a comprehensive view of feminist theory with which to assess and supplement Dewey’s theory. The dissertation concludes that the work of Dewey and Allen supplement one another in considering the theory and practice within domestic violence shelters.

2. Bringing in the Theory of Amy Allen

Dewey’s work does not adequately address power and his theory masks the depth and ingrained nature of power. He does, however, accommodate many of the components needed for a feminist theory of power as outlined by Amy Allen. Allen brings together the work of Foucault, Butler, and Arendt to develop a comprehensive theory of power useful for feminists. Dewey accommodates the social structure in which dispersed, and repressive and productive power operates. Dewey contends that individuals are in interaction with others and that they mutually impact and influence one another. Once a Deweyan theorist explicitly incorporates power as potentially strategic, the social dynamics within Dewey’s work cohere with the account of power as repressive and productive.
Dewey’s work on habits and their disruption as moments for reflection complements Butler’s work on performativity. He helps make explicit that performativity is often habitually, thus unreflectively enacted and ingrained, making performance difficult to change on a whim. Butler aims to convey that one cannot simply choose to enact performance, but Dewey’s work on ingrained habits makes the enduring nature of performance more clear. Both suggest disruptions, for Butler in the enactment of gender norms and Dewey in the interruption of habits, have the potential to challenge norms and lead to changes in behaviors and ideology. Dewey, thus, provides a complementary account and supplements Allen’s account of agency in a feminist theory of power. Butler also alludes to the importance of supportive relationships, but Allen suggests Butler does not provide an adequate account of interactions to theorize supportive relationships. For this she turns to Arendt.

Dewey’s work supports the collective account of power Allen finds in Arendt. Arendt theorizes that power occurs in collective action toward a common aim through promise keeping. She also suggests the interaction between individuals creates the space for individual development. Dewey’s work supplements Arendt’s work on collective action with his emphasis on the significance of collective inquiry as a method for problem solving and improving circumstances. He also deepens the bonds of collective action, suggesting that individuals may develop an interest in the success of others. Promise-keeping and an interest in others likely work together to sustain the efforts and persistence needed in the work of changing norms and ideology.

Dewey supports the social structure needed to accommodate power as domination, resistance, and solidarity. He offers a complementary account of agency and of collective action to those Allen suggests are needed for a feminist analysis of power. While needing assistance
from Allen to diagnosis instances of power-over, Dewey offers valuable tools in addressing that power – agency and collective action that one can now direct toward challenging that power-over. The work of Dewey and Allen may then be applied to the work and practice of domestic violence emergency shelters.


Dewey and Allen’s theory helps explain and illustrate components of the work and practices of domestic violence shelters. Allen’s work on repressive and productive power may help frame the experiences of battered women and how the power exercised over an individual impacts her character and responses to her experiences. Dewey’s emphasis on the significance of individual experience also supports taking seriously women’s accounts. While Dewey recognizes the possibility of intrusive influences, he spends little time diagnosing these instances or exploring the depth of the problems they may cause. Allen’s work here provides the assessment of power as repressive and productive and may help shelters communicate that survivors of domestic violence do not suffer from an innate mental or emotional problem, but from traumatic and coercive experiences.

Allen also makes explicit, through Butler, that women in coercive circumstances have agency. The continual need for repetition indicates that any particular instance, whether intentional or not, is a potential moment of subversion. So, though the circumstances for a battered woman may be closely monitored, there are moments for resistance, which may include minimizing violence. Dewey’s work on habits highlights the possibility that the performance Butler describes is often not consciously enacted, so an interruption in performance may lead to reflection on her circumstances. Shelter staff assist women in that reflection process and in considering methods of subversion. Dewey and Allen provide a framework for recognizing
battered women’s agency and a range of subversive strategies. Their agency is evident in the, sometimes only occasional, moments of resistance they enact.

Dewey and Allen’s joint work supports the efforts of shelters in seeking collective power that also encourages the development of individual agency. Allen, through Arendt, indicates the potential for collective action, specifically to enact resistance to oppression, through promise-keeping. While Dewey does not address oppression, his theory indicates that individuals can have an interest in the good of others strengthening the bonds of collective interaction and providing a stronger motivator than keeping a promise. Their work on collective action supports the joint efforts of participants in the domestic violence movement. Dewey and Allen’s emphasis on the importance of positive influence in individual development also reminds the (increasingly professionalized) world of shelters of the importance of supportive relationships for individual development and resistance.

Dewey and Allen are primarily supportive of and endorse the works and practices of shelters. At the same time, shelters illustrate several components of Dewey and Allen’s theory. Women in shelters illustrate the development of goals from within circumstances and the possibility to develop ends through the potential improvements to the present that one envisions. Staff assist women in making improvements to their lives, not in pursuing some fixed ideal. The interaction between shelter staff and a battered woman also illustrates the potential for Deweyan experts to assist in understanding contextual factors and likely consequences, without determining a woman’s aims or goals.

The instances of battered women moving from a life of abuse and control toward one of more independence and mutually beneficial interactions provide an example of how interactions with others may consist of strategic or communicative interactions. Survivors of domestic abuse
potentially experience both intense strategic power from their partners, and communicative (or at least less strategic) power with staff, other survivors of domestic violence, and in other relationships. Battered women’s experiences reflect both the dangers of strategic interactions and the potential benefits of communicative interaction.

Shelter work also provides an example of a group joining together to change social conceptions of an issue and to provide a place of support and recognition for individuals that makes subversion of those norms easier and not a further isolating experience. Their work illustrates the importance of communication and education in challenging the conceptions and practices that hinder victims of domestic violence. Through the education of and communication with police, courts, and other social service providers, and the community, battered women’s advocates have impacted the way organizations address cases involving domestic violence. This work is not easy and does not happen quickly, but domestic violence victims’ advocates have made changes in their communities and joined together to create more widespread change.

When Dewey’s accommodation and endorsement of the various elements of power Allen describes are made explicit, a Deweyan theorist may work with Allen’s framework to support and supplement the work of domestic violence shelters. In addition, women in shelters illustrate the development of malleable goals grounded in future improvements of communicative interactions, individual resistance, and the possibility of collective action through education and communication. In the midst of shelter work, individual circumstances are different and contextual factors change.

The work of Dewey and Allen supports the work of domestic violence shelters and their goals in working with battered women. Dewey and Allen provide guidance and assistance in the
continued negotiation and reflection needed to impact social norms and individual behaviors in a continually changing environment.

4. Continued Reflection and Evaluation

Dewey and Allen encourage the pursuit of mutually beneficial interactions; recognize the significance of homogeneous groups in subverting norms and supporting individuals; and support developing interests that benefit others. Further reflection on these three areas will assist individuals, shelters, and groups in general negotiate their circumstances and develop possible improvements.

Dewey and Allen do not provide a formula for attaining mutually beneficial interactions. Dewey suggests that one address each circumstance and seek ways within particular situations that mutually benefit participants. How to pursue mutually benefiting interactions and to encourage institutional procedures that facilitate these interactions requires further contextual assessment in particular cases. Dewey suggests that the pursuit of these interactions is worthwhile and that progress is possible. Shelters demonstrate, not that they have fully achieved communicative and collective power, but that their efforts to encourage communicative interactions and social norms have some success. Dewey, Allen, and shelter staff have not determined how to encourage mutually beneficial circumstances. Theorists and practitioners need to consider further how to use past experiences to inform current pursuits, develop and promote policies and norms that facilitate these interactions, and make decisions when mutually benefiting options are not obvious or attainable, within shelters, with particular individuals, and in general application. Shelters do this through the development of best practices, forming coalitions, and sharing their experiences with one another. Further consideration on how to develop circumstances that encourage mutual flourishing will serve to guide their continued
pursuit. Circumstances will occur and likely occur often that do not permit mutual development or gain. That one may continue to pursue the improvement of circumstances when perfection is not attainable is an advantage of Dewey’s theory. Continuing to make decisions with an awareness of their impact and how context affects various participants means that not gaining beneficial results for all participants may still be educative.

Feminists have shown the significance of homogeneous groups in subverting oppressive circumstances and Deweyan theorists will likely recognize the importance of these groups in helping oppressed individuals resist oppression and in gaining the ability to direct their lives. Not only do theorists, practitioners, and individuals have to consider how to pursue mutually beneficial interactions, but also determine when interactions are limiting or detrimental to one party such that interactions or relationships should end or when space is needed for a homogeneous group. So, while Deweyan theorists may recognize the need for homogeneous groups, further consideration on when they should be developed is still needed.

Additionally, shelter staff are often required to speak on behalf of battered women and help others understand their experiences. Dewey’s emphasis on individual’s directing their own lives supports caution in this endeavor and his work on inquiry suggests advocates continually examine what they say and its impact on the lives of battered women. This weighty responsibility requires continued reflection and assessment to aid advocates in this work.

Lastly, Dewey highlights the potential for one to take an interest in the success or life of another. While this is important in motivating individuals in social change, one must still determine which interests to pursue and how to develop interests that benefit others and support the community. Individuals may need to change their interests or work to find an interest that is motivating and beneficial.
The areas of social interaction and helping others that still need reflection do not indicate a problem or weakness in the works of Dewey and Allen, rather they indicate areas that need continued reflection and negotiation in their pursuit. In some sense, this is where the dirty work then begins – in assessing past experience and potential improvements within particular contexts and individual circumstances. One must continually negotiate how to develop workable, but alterable, aims to pursue.

The Deweyan theorists will likely not appease the skeptic and will continually need to develop justifications for grounding moral theory in improving experience. The attention to individual and collective experience is significant for feminist theorists who found that mainstream society ignored their reports of experience. However, they may be less willing to fully endorse experience as the grounding for moral theory. The Deweyan theorists will also need to continue to have these conversations with more sympathetic audiences to consider how experience justifies aims and goals.

5. Instance of how Dewey and Allen May Help With Current Concerns

Dewey and Allen will assist in assessing and addressing the situations that domestic violence shelters face. Dewey’s likely support for the examination of the contextual factors of power and gender that Allen outlines and his theory of problem-solving that includes the consideration of moral factors, primarily endorse the work and aims of domestic violence shelters. Dewey, in general, and Allen, in relation to the subversion of gender, indicate that circumstances change and one must evaluate whether strategies have the desired impact. Dewey also indicates that the contextual factors change and calls for their continued evaluation. Dewey provides a theory-in-progress that supports the work of shelters, and organizations generally, in
aiming to influence changing social conditions. Dewey encourages one to investigate the relevant social conditions and then try to improve those that are problematic.

The hard work of domestic violence shelters and the domestic violence movement have impacted the visibility of violence against women and the social conditions for women have improved over the last 40 years. This does not mean that the problems are solved and women’s needs for assistance are no longer an issue. Shelter staff nor Dewey and Allen have the conclusive answers to what these changes mean, but they can assist one another in negotiating the strategies shelter staff employ as they look forward.

Advocates for battered women often get questioned about what services are available to men and why very few offer services for men. Advocates report feeling frustrated by this line of inquiry, interpreting it as the continual concern for and recognition of the problems facing men and in line with the tendency to ignore and not take seriously women’s experiences or the dangers they face. Dewey can help navigate and support the continued evaluation and hypothesizing that accompanies efforts to impact social change.

Allen highlights the potential for subtle and dispersed instances of power, such that the questions advocates receive about men may stem from an ideology that wants to keep women in positions of oppression and that do indicate a greater concern for the well-being of men. Because power is dispersed the questions about resources for men may also indicate genuine concern for the situations male domestic violence victims face. Dewey here reminds one to look at the contextual factors to shed light on how to address the issue of male victims. Allen’s work on power and shelter’s interpretation of violence as one tool in an effort to attain control, suggests that power-over is not solely something men try to attain, but that the social conditions in place support and mask instances of male violence against women. As social conditions
change, and feminists might say however slowly they change, the social support for and masking of male violence also shifts. Some feminist, such as Stark, discussed earlier, suggest that this drives controlling strategies away from overt public attempts at control to more subversive and hidden measures of control. Gaining control is thus more hidden from public view and more isolating for victims. The loosening of patriarchy in social life may lead to the potential for women to exert violence over male partners. Following Dewey and Allen in examining contextual factors, one may consider that men wanting to gain control and not finding it acceptable or endorsed in society may seek more subtle ways of gaining that control, and women may use violence to gain control over men. As men have used a variety of strategies to gain access to their partners, including claiming the wife abused them, shelter staff often find male claims of victimhood suspicious. The weakening holds of patriarchy make identifying the victims of domestic violence more complex; yet, where men’s options and growth are limited, Dewey will find their situations objectionable.

Dewey and Allen can continue to diagnose the social influences, conditions of power within a society, and impact on individual relationships. Examining context still means considering the ways that society favors men and the sometimes more subtle ways that women are oppressed, but it also includes the potential for women to have access to the coercive strategies of control. Shelters do not necessarily have to admit male victims into their shelters, especially since abusive men have tried to gain access to their partners by claiming abuse that did not occur. They may be, however, called to support efforts for men in their communities and partner with other agencies to address all kinds of domestic violence and inform the public of domestic violence as a method of control and one that for female victims may still be supported or masked through patriarchal notions. Allen’s work on identifying social conditions influencing
individual relationships will help shelters and the community address the different experiences of female and male victims.

Dewey’s theory of growth is useful for the work of agencies aiming to effect social change and improve individual’s lives. He does not offer fixed solutions, but that is not what these agencies need. As agencies work to provide services and effect change, they need an adaptable theory, grounded in continual investigation of and attempt to take seriously the changing experiences and needs of individuals. Dewey’s theory is of use because it allows and assists agencies in the struggle to meet individual’s specific needs in a continually shifting environment. His problem-solving and contextual approach supports agencies efforts to improve their methods and to address social conditions.

6. Conclusion

The previous chapter suggested the application of the theories of Dewey and Allen to domestic violence shelters would reveal one (or some combination) of the following: (1) The theories of Dewey and Allen are inconsistent or incompatible with the work of domestic violence shelters; (2) The theories of Dewey and Allen are supportive of the work of domestic violence shelters; or (3) The theories of Dewey and Allen offer substantial criticisms and/or suggestions to the work being done in domestic violence shelters. The evaluation suggests that Dewey and Allen are primarily supportive of the work of domestic violence emergency shelters and that they offer important reminders to shelters in their work with battered women. Dewey and Allen also serve as useful partners in the work of shelter staff and advocates for battered women as they meet the needs of battered women and help them make their own choices in supportive environments. The theories of Dewey and Allen also assist in continually evaluating the services and populations domestic violence shelters serve.
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