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Recipes for Reform: Americanization and Foodways in Chicago Settlement Houses, 1890-1920

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RECIPES FOR REFORM: AMERICANIZATION AND FOODWAYS IN CHICAGO SETTLEMENT HOUSES, 1890-1920.

by

Stephanie J. Jass

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
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requirements for the
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During the late nineteenth century as tens of thousands of immigrants flooded American cities, public debate among reformers—who tended to be middle-class, white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants—began to center on the best ways to assimilate these foreigners into American society. Although some Americanization groups stressed language and citizenship training, two major reform movements focused on foodways as an important tool of assimilation.

This dissertation examines how both the home economics and settlement house movements attempted to Americanize ethnic food practices. It describes why reformers saw foodways as a viable and meaningful avenue for reform, as well as the varied responses that reformers got from their intended audience. Through an analysis of different Chicago home economics and settlement house programs, this study investigates the motivations of reformers and reveals their attitudes towards assimilation and social conformity. Moreover, this work examines the ways that attitudes towards actual foodways practices became a contested terrain between reformers and immigrants. This study also explores the gendered messages implicit in foodways reforms, as almost all reformers and immigrants involved in the programs were women. By changing immigrant foodways,
reformers hoped to make foreign girls and women conform to a traditional American domestic ideal.
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Stephanie J. Jass
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1893, Jane Addams, the founder of Chicago's Hull-House settlement, opened a coffee house which she hoped would appeal to working-class immigrants in the Hull-House neighborhood. Based on home economist Ellen Richards' model New England Kitchen, Addams' enterprise was to serve as a restaurant and social center. In her address to the group assembled for the opening, Addams declared:

It is a part of the new philanthropy to recognize that the social question is largely a question of the stomach: temperance workers are coming to feel that they cannot ignore the importance of proper nutriment for the body for with monotonous food [one] is apt to go to whisky to whip up the digestion. Mission workers of all kinds are coming to feel that their weak point is the commissariat...The wage earner is ill-nourished on money that is all-sufficient [if] rightly expended, to buy him proper food. This is a serious question, because here there is the chance of more saving than in any other item of living and what can so easily be saved here can be appointed to better shelter, which is a more evident, if not more vital need.2

Addams' remarks indicate the growing interest that Progressive Era (1890-1920) reformers were taking in food as a significant avenue for reform. As Addams mentions, temperance workers, mission workers, and settlement workers like herself were linking the "social question" with concerns about

1 There is some confusion over the correct spelling of Hull-House. While many authors omit the hyphen, the original spelling used by Addams and still used today by the Hull-House Museum includes it. I will adopt the original spelling throughout.
2 "West Side Philanthropists Open a New Department," Chicago Daily Inter-Ocean, 24 August, 1893.

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food. The social question to which Addams refers is the question that many Progressive Era reformers were trying to address: what could be done to improve the lives of urban immigrants? This issue, brought on by the waves of European immigration to America during the late nineteenth century, was central to the missions of various reform movements, including the settlement house movement and the home economics movement.

Both the movements got their start in the late nineteenth century, both were female-dominated, and both sought to establish public professions in which women could use their talents to assist the underprivileged. Both sought to improve the quality of American life, especially for the working classes. And while Addams' remarks focus on such goals as better nutrition and temperance, assimilation was also an important underlying emphasis in each movement. As the foreign-born population increased in the late nineteenth century, social critics and reformers argued that the retention of old-world customs could be harmful if America were to thrive as a country. Nativism, described by historian John Higham as "intense opposition to an internal minority on the grounds of its foreign (i.e. "un-American") connections," grew significantly during the Progressive Era. Increasingly reformers and political leaders called for "Americanization": the assimilation of immigrant groups through the adoption of American customs, ideals, and manners. Americanization became the agenda during the Progressive Era, and this was usually pursued through English language and citizenship classes. However, advocates in both the home economics and settlement

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house movements felt that those efforts should be supplemented by reforms of immigrant "foodways."

Folklorists define foodways as "the customs, beliefs and practices surrounding the production, presentation, and consumption of food," or more broadly as the intersection of food and culture. Addams spoke for both movements arguing that food reforms might solve a host of problems, including malnourishment, intemperance, and wastefulness. In addition, some reformers hoped that by changing immigrant eating habits, they might imbue the working-class immigrants with middle-class values, assuming that the middle-class lifestyle was both desirable to immigrants and more authentically "American." Immigrants' reactions to these efforts varied: many struggled to negotiate their new identities as Americans, with some embracing Americanization and others holding on to traditional ethnic behavior and attitudes, including cuisine.

This dissertation will examine the dominant ideas and practices of both the home economics and settlement house movements, centering on foodways, during the Progressive Era. Using Chicago as its geographical focus, it explores the intersections between the two movements, especially on the ways that both proposed to use food and cooking practices as a tool for Americanization. It describes why reformers saw foodways as a viable and important avenue for reform, as well as the responses that reformers got from their intended audience. Through an analysis of different home

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This study investigates the motivations of reformers— who tended to be middle-class, white Anglo-Saxon Protestants—and reveals their attitudes towards assimilation and social conformity. This study also explores the significant roles that women played as both the agents in these reform movements and as the subjects of reform, working within the feminized context of cooking and domesticity. Moreover, this work examines the ways that attitudes towards eating habits and actual cooking practices became a contested terrain between reformers and immigrants, and illustrates the importance of foodways as a component of cultural identity. Thus, dietary reforms provide a framework for understanding the connections between reform, social control, Americanization, ethnicity, class, and gender in the Progressive Era.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Due to the interdisciplinary nature of this study, it will be useful to understand the historiography of various topics, including settlements, home economics, gender, immigration, and foodways. My research incorporates aspects of all of these fields and is one of the few studies that investigates their intersections.

Settlements

While travelling in England, American Jane Addams discovered settlement houses. Inspired by the dedication of reformers who lived amongst the poor in order to develop solutions to poverty, Addams decided
to establish her own settlement house back in the United States. She opened Chicago's first, Hull-House, in 1894. Hull-House and the other settlements that followed it were community centers designed to determine the needs of their particular neighborhood and then provide the solutions. The neighbors themselves defined neighborhood needs through research into local conditions. From the beginning, settlements employed social scientists to investigate such problems as housing, intemperance, and nutrition, and they considered these inquiries to be an integral part of their mission.

Literature about individual settlements as well as about the larger settlement movement sprang up almost immediately in the nineteenth century. Settlement workers wrote the earliest works themselves, and these tended to be narratives of neighborhood experiences or descriptions of the work carried out at the house. A few, like Jane Addam’s *Twenty Years at Hull-House* and Graham Taylor’s *Pioneering on Social Frontiers*, explained the settlement impulse and defined the movement’s ideology to a wider audience. Other works, like *Hull-House Maps and Papers* and Robert Woods and Albert J. Kennedy’s *Handbook of Settlements*, provided valuable quantitative information about urban conditions, settlement programs, and immigrant life, but only from the settlement point of view. As these initial works came from inside the movement, they were all sympathetic to the settlement cause and were uncritical of reform efforts.

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Because settlement reformers were often dynamic leaders, they understandably attracted biographers. Jane Addams, Lillian Wald, Graham Taylor, and Mary McDowell were all the focus of biographies that tended to be celebratory, rather than critical. Louise C. Wade’s book, *Graham Taylor: Pioneer for Social Justice*, is an example of this type of biography. It chronicles Taylor’s life, influences, and ideology, but rarely calls them into question.  

These early biographies were often written by people associated with the settlement movement, which explains the easy acceptance of the settlement agenda. The first biographical work to analyze the complexity of its subject was Allen Davis’ *American Heroine: The Life and Legend of Jane Addams*.  

Davis cuts through the hero worship that surrounded Addams, portraying her as a person who effected change, but was not without problems. At times Davis does overemphasize Addam’s supposed need for attention, arguing this desire was at odds with the popular image of Addams as a selfless philanthropist. However, the struggle between selfish and selfless impulses is not unique to Addams and did not corrupt her true desire to help people. But Davis’ arguments about Addams are well taken; she was human, and his book is the first biography of Addams to treat her as something less than saintly. This work is therefore a turning point in settlement literature, marking a shift from blanket acceptance and celebration of the settlement cause to a more sophisticated analysis of the movement.

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Davis' next work on settlements was even more pivotal; in *Spearheads for Reform: The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement, 1890-1914*, he turned his attention from Addams to the early years of the settlement movement in general.¹⁰ As Davis' title indicates, he sees reformers as the main actors in the settlement movement, motivated largely by philanthropy which was always well-meaning, if patronizing at times. In retrospect it is easy to criticize *Spearheads* as narrowly focused and traditional, with its emphasis on the large northern cities and WASP leaders that dominated the settlement movement. And Davis himself, in the preface to the second edition, argues that he would like to modify parts of the book to incorporate more criticism of the reformers' motivations.¹¹ But at the time in which *Spearheads* was written—1967—studies that sought to analyze the settlement movement as a whole were almost non-existent, and Davis' work was pioneering. It was left to subsequent historians to address the issues left untouched by Davis' work, and many did so, sparking a new interest in settlement history.

Since *Spearheads*, many scholars have analyzed the settlement movement, focusing on both the reformers and the reform impulse itself. Historical interest in reform and its motivating factors was established in earlier, larger studies of the Progressive Era, and it did not take long for students of the settlement movement to incorporate those ideas into their own scholarship. The "social control" thesis widely affected settlement

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research. Works like Frances Piven’s and Richard Cloward’s *Regulating the Poor*, Clarke A. Chambers’ "Towards a Redefinition of Welfare History," Anthony M. Platt’s *The Child Savers*, and Paul Boyer’s *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America* all argue that reform movements and reformers seek not to help those in need so much as to assert their own control over disadvantaged groups. These authors portrayed reformers as paternalist at best, with many seeming downright malevolent in their attitudes towards those they sought to "reform." Their desire to change immigrants reflected not so much a concern for their well-being, but rather the danger they might pose to American society if left unchanged. This scholarship stood in direct contrast to Davis’ works that posited reformers as benevolent activists that were seeking to better the world. In Davis’ analysis, reformers meant well, and even though their attitudes were often prejudiced or patronizing, they accomplished much good. However, according to the social control paradigm, reformers consciously pursued a prejudiced and patronizing agenda, with the hopes of conforming the masses to the reformers’ sensibilities. Only those results that reformers desired were deemed successful.

Spurred by this debate, subsequent scholars of the settlement house movement most often came down somewhere on the side of social control. Howard Jacob Karger and Rivka Lissak strongly supported the social control

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thesis. Karger's *The Sentinels of Order: A Study of Social Control and the Minneapolis Settlement House Movement, 1915-1950* argues that reformers were pursued a vigorous agenda of assimilation.\(^\text{13}\) Certainly Karger's evidence backs up his assertions, but his narrow regional focus leaves the reader wondering whether the settlement movement as a whole was as concerned as Minnesotans with the issue of assimilation and social control.

Lissak's *Pluralism & Progressives: Hull House and the New Immigrants, 1890-1919* goes even farther than Karger's by arguing not only that reformers pursued an agenda of assimilation and social control, but that the agenda of assimilation was prejudiced in itself.\(^\text{14}\) Focusing on Hull-House, Lissak argues that while Chicago reformers paid lip service to cultural pluralism, they were totally committed to Americanization on their terms. Lissak is indignant with these reformers who imposed their cultural standards on seemingly helpless immigrant groups. But this view is oversimplified. By siding with the "oppressed" immigrant groups, Lissak privileges their cultural backgrounds as somehow more worthy than the Americanized version of life espoused by reformers. Lissak fails fully to consider not whose cultural practices are best—an ultimately unanswerable question—but why reformers thought that their cultural practices should be taught to immigrants at all.


Lissak also overlooks the complexities of the immigrant population and their various motivations for emigrating. Some immigrants never viewed themselves as permanent residents of America; they planned to make some money and then return home. For these immigrants, becoming American was not important, for they never wanted really to be Americans in the first place. But for many other immigrants, the trip to America was one-way. They made the decision to settle permanently in America, and with that decision came some acceptance of a new way of life in a new country. These people negotiated their new lives in their own ways, but there certainly were those who eagerly sought to become Americanized. In addition, English language and citizenship classes were helpful to recent immigrants who wanted to find good jobs, and they responded enthusiastically to them. Lissak’s arguments allowed no room for the immigrants who wanted to change, even in small ways.

One important aspect of Lissak’s work is her attempt to tell the “other side” of the immigrant experience. While Lissak is not always successful in painting a complete portrait of Chicago’s immigrant community, this part of her research exemplifies recent trends in settlement history. Settlement history necessarily started by focusing on the reformers; they were the ones who produced the written records. But more recently, scholars have become interested in the “subjects” of reform, be they immigrants, African-Americans, or the native-born poor. Settlement scholars have also been edging away from the social control debate to take a closer look at different aspects of the movement, such as the connections between gender and reform.
Robyn Muncy, Mina Carson, Ruth Crocker, and Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn have all produced recent works on the settlement movement that indicate the direction of future research. Muncy's *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935* analyzes settlements from a gendered perspective. Instead of focusing solely on the reform agenda, Muncy seeks to understand why so many women were drawn to settlement work. Other authors have noted the dominant presence of women in the movement, but Muncy's work is the first to explore systematically the gendered characteristics of reform. Her conclusion is that settlements offered educated women opportunities to use their newfound knowledge in ways that were in keeping with traditional notions about womanhood. At the same time, women could work together in an environment where they were the majority, which allowed them a new kind of freedom. By choosing a career in social work, a woman was able to combine her supposedly natural nurturing impulses without having to be married or have a family. Muncy's work raises some interesting questions, especially about the role of women in the development of social work as a professional field. While she downplays the contributions of men to the settlement field, she makes important points about the feminization of social work. Certainly many women turned to settlement work, and their impact on the movement deserves further examination.

Mina Carson, who chronicles the evolution of settlement ideology in *Settlement Folk: Social Thought and the American Settlement Movement, 1885-1930*, focuses on the effect that gender ideology had on the development of social work.
the reform agenda. Like Muncy, Carson emphasizes the importance of women to the settlement movement, but she argues that the development of settlement ideology was also a product of Victorian-Era masculine ideals, which stressed public service and Christian compassion.

In *Social Work and Social Order: The Settlement Movement in Two Industrial Cities, 1889-1930*, Ruth Crocker shifts the emphasis from the major centers of reform—New York, Chicago, Boston—to examine the settlement movement in Indiana. By looking at smaller settlements, Crocker shows that the settlement movement was not as unified as most scholars assume. Her study of seven settlements in Indianapolis and Gary dispels the notions that the settlement movement was entirely secular and thoroughly feminized. Crocker asserts that well-known settlements such as Hull-House were not typical of the movement as a whole and that the settlements in her study are more indicative of national settlement trends. However, none of the settlements she examines were members of the National Federation of Settlements—the official group for the national settlement movement—which would have put them in contact with national trends in settlement work. If they were not a part of that network, it is difficult to know if these smaller settlements are truly more representative of settlement work as a whole than their larger sister houses or simply aberrations. Still, Crocker’s focus on smaller settlements is a welcome change from the usual settlement scholarship and provides a new avenue for future studies.

Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn also expands the boundaries of settlement scholarship in her work, *Black Neighbors: Race and the Limits of Reform in the American Settlement House Movement, 1890-1945*. Race was an interesting issue for settlement reformers, who had a great interest in helping foreign-born immigrants, but who, at least in northern cities, tended to ignore native-born blacks. Lasch-Quinn exposes the racist attitudes and practices of many larger northern settlements and contrasts them with southern settlements that catered to the black community. Her examination of racial conflict and the hypocrisy of many settlement leaders' attitudes about race indicates a new fruitful direction for settlement research, which has largely overlooked issues of race. As both *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform* and *Black Neighbors* make clear, gender and racial issues were an important component of the settlement movement and can no longer be easily dismissed as irrelevant to settlement scholarship.

Scholars are also becoming more interested in the immigrant perspective. In addition to race and gender, immigration has been a topic of interest to scholars. Various works, from Lissak's *Pluralism & Progressives* to Carson's *Settlement Folk*, have tried to understand and reconstruct the relationship between reformers and their neighbors. This is a difficult task, as most of the sources that deal with immigrants and settlements were produced by the settlement workers themselves. And even those memoirs written by immigrants about settlements tend to be favorable, leading one to

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question how representative they might be. But historians are trying to fill in these gaps where they can. An example of this type of scholarship is Judy Chesen’s doctoral dissertation, “It Was More Than Nourishment, It Was More Than Sustenance: A Study Of the Importance of Food to the Lives of Southern Italian Immigrant Women in Chicago, 1880-1930.” In this work, Chesen uses oral histories of Italian women to discover their side of the story. She chronicles the attempts of reformers to change the Italian women’s foodways, but in her account, the immigrants are the focus of the study, not simply the objects of settlement workers’ reforms.

This reconfiguration of immigrants from object to subject is significant and stands in direct contrast to those settlement scholars who espouse the theory of social control. One of the major shortcomings of the social control theory is that it discounts the agency of the neighbors. The contention that reformers were able to exert their will over immigrants oversimplifies the complex nature of the debate over assimilation and Americanization. Only by putting immigrants back into the equation can we begin to understand the negotiations over cultural identity that really took place. While it is valid to say that reformers often wanted to control and define the lives of their neighbors, it would be shortsighted to think that the neighbors themselves had no say in this matter. They often reacted to reform programs, both positively and negatively. In fact, the complex and diverse nature of their

19 Judy Arlis Chesen, “It Was More Than Nourishment, It Was More Than Sustenance: A Study Of the Importance of Food to the Lives of Southern Italian Immigrant Women in Chicago, 1880-1930” (Ph.D. diss., Miami University, 1999).
reactions underscores the need for further examination of the immigrant experience.

The question of social control is an intriguing one, but it is not the only question that needs to be asked and answered. My main concern is not just what the reformers wanted to achieve, but why they set those particular goals in the first place. Also, once those ideological goals were set, how did that play out in reality? By examining the specific reform programs of a variety of settlements, I hope to show how reform ideology was sometimes renegotiated—generally as a result of interaction between neighbors and reformers—when confronted with the reality of the neighborhood.

Like most other scholars of social settlements, I rely heavily on the writings of the reformers themselves, simply because their sources outnumber any others. But wherever possible, I try to incorporate the immigrant perspective in order both understand their side(s) and to highlight the debate that existed between their communities and reform communities.

The works by Karger and Crocker reveal the importance of examining smaller, lesser-known settlements. While my study does include such well-known institutions as Hull-House and the Chicago Commons, it also incorporates smaller houses like Gads Hill and the Abraham Lincoln House. By comparing the programs and agendas of both large and small settlements, I hope to provide a fuller picture of the reform agenda as pursued in the Chicago area. The Chicago focus is deliberate; Chicago had at least 30 settlements and two major home economics schools, hosted the influential world’s fair of 1893 and produced national reform figures including Jane Addams, Felix Adler, John Dewey, and Marion Talbot. Chicago’s influence
was widespread and its reform programs—especially those relating to eating
habits—are a major object of analysis in this study.

Home Economics

While several scholars acknowledge the connections between home
economics and the settlement movement, no study has yet focused solely on
that connection and the positions the two movements shared, such as their
attitudes towards food, gender roles, and ethnicity. The only work to
examine the two movements in tandem is Dolores Hayden's *The Grand
Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes,
Neighborhoods, and Cities*. Historical monographs on the home economics
movement are few and largely focus on its leaders, ideology,
implementation, and its evolution from a reform movement to an academic
field.20

The home economics movement remains less examined by historians
than the settlement house movement. The earliest works on home
economics are the writings of the home economists themselves, which were
numerous. They produced practical housekeeping manuals, cookbooks,
scientific studies, and technical works, as well as ideological pieces, all of
which document the evolution of home economics. Catherine Beecher,
writing in the mid-nineteenth century, emphasized the important role
housekeeping played in the continued success of the family and nation, and

20 The most comprehensive account of the home economics movement is Marjorie M. Brown's
*Philosophical Studies of Home Economics in the United States: Our Practical-Intellectual
Heritage* (East Lansing, MI: College of Human Ecology, Michigan State University, 1985).
her 1841 text, *A Treatise on Domestic Economy*, is widely credited as the first comprehensive housekeeping manual of its kind.\(^{21}\) Years later, Christine Frederick and Ellen Richards—both notable shapers of the emerging home economics movement—revived some of Beecher’s ideas in several that stressed the scientific aspects of housekeeping. Frederick’s important works include *The New Housekeeping: Efficiency Studies in Home Management*, and *Household Engineering: Scientific Management in the Home*.\(^{22}\) Richards, often called the “mother of home economics,” was a prolific writer and speaker. Two of her best-known texts are *The Chemistry of Cooking and Cleaning; a Manual for Housekeepers*, and *The Art of Right Living*.\(^{23}\)

Due to Richards’ untiring efforts to legitimize home economics as an academic field, by the 1920s it had secured its place in higher education and the subsequent generation of home economists began to turn a reflective eye on the short history of the movement. Ellen Richards died in 1911 and in 1918 her former student Caroline Hunt eulogized her in her book, *The Life of Ellen H. Richards*.\(^{24}\) While Hunt’s work is largely celebratory and hardly objective, it is one of the first works to examine Richards’ life and her impact as one of the founders of home economics. It details Richards’ groundbreaking career—she was the first woman to secure a degree from

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\(^{21}\) Catharine Beecher, *A Treatise on Domestic Economy, for the Use of Young Ladies at Home, and at School* (Boston: Marsh, Capen, Lyon, & Webb, 1841).


MIT—and her involvement with the Lake Placid conferences she helped to develop home economics. The next person to record the history of the field was Hazel Craig, also a home economist. In her brief volume, simply titled *The History of Home Economics*, Craig outlined the development of home economics, checking her facts with surviving home economists who participated in those early Lake Placid conferences. Her history provides a wealth of firsthand information on the movement, but it is brief and Craig herself hoped that it would “stimulate the preparation of a more complete record of the growth and development of home economics.”25 While a few home economists answered Craig’s call for additional works on the field, it was years before historians focused on home economics. The most comprehensive work on the history of the fields remains home economist Marjorie M. Brown's *Philosophical Studies of Home Economics in the United States*. While Brown’s work contains historical information, her text focuses on the ideology and applications of home economics and is not written from a strictly historical perspective.

The first historians to treat home economics did so within the larger framework of domesticity and housekeeping. Several books on domesticity appeared in the 1970s and 80s, including Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English’s *For Her Own Good*, Susan Strasser’s *Never Done*, Ruth Schwartz Cohen’s *More Work for Mother*, Laura Shapiro's *Perfection Salad*, and Glenna Matthews', *Just a Housewife.*26 Significantly, all of them depicted home

26 Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *For Her Own Good: 150 Years of Experts’ Advice to Women* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1978); Susan Strasser, *Never Done: A
economics as a limiting field for women because it focused on domesticity, a "traditional" female sphere of activity. These critics of home economics argue that it did not challenge the status quo of separate spheres present in the late nineteenth century and ultimately served as an academic ghetto for women who wanted to study hard sciences but were forced into home economics instead.27. Shapiro in particular sees the early home economists as anti-feminist, arguing that they "weren't interested in breaking very many rules, reordering society, or challenging men on their own turf."28 There are two things wrong with this statement; first it assumes that women must always break rules and reorder society in order to be truly feminist, and second, even using Shapiro's definition of feminists, many home economists qualify. Certainly Ellen Richards "challenged men on their own turf" at MIT, where she excelled as a student, usually outperforming her male classmates. Shapiro portrays Richards as a reluctant feminist, a woman who was happy to sew on buttons for her male classmates. But Richards, like many of her fellow female reformers, did not see domesticity as incompatible with feminism, and realized that if she were to be accepted at MIT at all, she would have to make compromises. At a time when college education for women

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27 See Matthews' "Just a Housewife."
28 Shapiro, Perfection Salad, 9.

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was still controversial, Richards provided domestic duties for male students so that "they can't say study spoils me for anything else."\textsuperscript{29}

What the negative treatments of home economics dismiss is the notion that feminism and separate spheres could be compatible. However, two important works on home economics dispute this claim. The most recent work is \textit{Rethinking Home Economics: Women and the History of a Profession}, edited by Sarah Stage and Virginia B. Vincenti. This volume is the result of a much-needed dialogue between home economists and historians. The contributors challenge the notion that home economics was "little more than a conspiracy to keep women in the kitchen."\textsuperscript{30} Instead, they argue that home economics was a feminist movement designed to professionalize the domestic sphere, which was part of a larger movement towards professionalism in the Progressive Era. While home economists were clearly most interested in traditional female activities such as housekeeping, childcare, and cooking, these interests were not mutually exclusive of feminism. Stage and Vincenti illustrate that early home economists—as well as female settlement workers—advocated the feminist strategy of "municipal housekeeping," in which women used traditionally feminized fields to make headway in public occupations and paid professions. By doing work that seemed compatible with their "female natures," such as ministering to the poor or improving living conditions for families, women were able to create public spaces for themselves that had previously been available only to men.


Dolores Hayden presents a similar argument that home economics, at least in its early years, was compatible with feminism in her work, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes*.

Hayden contends that home economics played an integral part in what she labels “material feminism,” which called for the revolution of women’s sphere by women themselves. Material feminists concerned themselves with “female” issues, but they advocated radical ideas that challenged the notion of appropriate female behavior and duties, such as cooperative kitchens and daycare centers. By planning to give women more freedom and flexibility in their private lives, material feminists hoped to find ways in which women might then have the freedom to pursue public lives. Most advocates of material feminism insisted that domestic duties needed to be communalized or compensated if women were to attain social equality.

Using the context of material feminism, Hayden illustrates the potentially radical nature of both the home economics and settlement house movements, which worked together to “increase women’s rights in the home and simultaneously bring homelike nurturing into public life.”

Hayden argues that both movements originally had strong feminist beliefs at their core, although the home economics movement as articulated by Ellen Richards eventually backed off from an overt feminist agenda in favor of reform of the larger society, becoming more conservative in practice than their rhetoric initially indicated. Richards, who had once hoped that

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32 Ibid, 5.
community kitchens could provide "much-needed relief to multitudes of overworked women," slowly abandoned that goal as her own public kitchen failed to appeal to many of those women. Eventually Richards turned her attention to promoting her own profession to schools around the country. That shift moved home economics away from its original feminist thrust aimed at helping poor women achieve some measure of relief. Instead, increasingly home economists criticized women without professional housekeeping training as ignorant and backwards and positioned themselves as the only trained professionals to fix the problem. Home economists still claimed to want to help women, and, by extension, the larger society, but they no longer focused on communal solutions.

Hayden is one of the few to explore connections between home economics and settlement houses, even though the two movements had much in common. Hayden links the movements in a chapter entitled "Public Kitchens, Social Settlements, and the Cooperative Ideal," highlighting the ways that they both worked, often explicitly together, to improve the situation of the "public environment." Nevertheless, while Hayden's observations are important, they are limited to a single chapter that does not comprehensively address the relationship between the two movements or the effects on their target audience. My study builds on Hayden's work, comparing their intersections in greater detail.

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34 Ibid, 152.
Americanization and social control remains largely unexplored in the literature of home economics. Among other things, home economists sought to change immigrant foodways while simultaneously establishing and codifying a nutritious, culturally appropriate American cuisine. But why did they—and settlement workers, alike—set this goal and pursue it with such fervor? Some authors have noted the anti-immigrant bias on the part of home economists, but no one has thoroughly examined this element of the movement. For example, Harvey A. Levenstein's *Revolution at the Table: The Transformation of the American Diet* discusses reformers' attitudes towards foreigners and their cuisine, but only as a small part of a larger chapter on the early home economics movement which raises as many questions as it answers.\(^{35}\) Shapiro also mentions ethnic bias in conjunction with home economists, but does not fully explore the interplay between the reformers and immigrants.

This study addresses these questions, exploring the focus on Americanization that permeated both home economics and settlements. It explains why Americanized eating habits were a high priority for reformers and remained so, even when foodways programs met with resistance.

**Immigration and Ethnicity**

An important aspect of my study is the interaction between reformers and immigrants. Settlement workers and home economists identified foreign-born people as the ones most in need of their help and designed their

dietary programs with them in mind. These programs can reveal much about the reform agenda and ideology of both movements but often do not give insight into the immigrant experience. How did immigrants react to these reform efforts? Did they have any opportunity to participate in the formation of programs? Did their reactions change the way reformers regarded culinary traditions, especially as an expression of culture? In order to answer those questions, I include immigrant viewpoints wherever possible, using such primary sources as autobiographies and transcripts of oral histories. In addition, this study builds on the work of many immigration and ethnicity scholars, especially those emphasizing assimilation and/or Americanization, women, and foodways.

Assimilation has been the focus of many immigration histories, starting with Oscar Handlin's seminal work, *The Uprooted*. Handlin's thesis, as suggested by the title, is that immigration was a disruptive, traumatic experience that alienated immigrants from their past and forced them to adopt American culture. Arguing that "peasants...did not bring with them the social patterns of the Old World," Handlin portrays immigrants as victims, subject to the pressures of Americanizers and unable to maintain cultural continuity between the Old World and the new. Instead, they became part of the melting pot of American society, which according to Handlin, helped their children to succeed as new American citizens.

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37 Handlin, *The Uprooted*, 27.
Not everyone embraced Handlin's thesis wholesale. Rudolph Vecoli challenged it in an article entitled "Contadini in Chicago" in 1964. Vecoli's analysis of Italian immigrants reveals the persistence of Old World cultural practices, even in the face of pressures to assimilate. In later works, Vecoli built on his critique of Handlin by arguing that not only did immigrants maintain their cultural heritage, but those customs actually helped them to adjust to American life. While Handlin is correct that immigration could be disorienting and even traumatic, Vecoli maintained that it did not cause newcomers to abandon their cultures. I agree with Vecoli's position; my research indicates that when immigrants felt displaced they often worked harder to replicate traditional cultural activities to preserve a sense of cultural identity and provide a sense of comfort.

Subsequent historians joined the acculturation debate, with most rejecting Handlin's melting pot imagery in favor of cultural pluralism. Among the notable works are Nathan Glazer's and Daniel Patrick Moynihan's Beyond the Melting Pot; Milton Gordon's Assimilation in American Life; and John Bodnar's The Transplanted. All of these authors provide compelling evidence that immigration did not inevitably result in a complete break with the past. Glazer's and Moynihan's research on the cultural identity of various ethnic groups in New York indicated that the notion of the melting pot was overly simplistic. Milton Gordon echoed their findings.

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urging scholars to acknowledge the importance of "structural pluralism" among ethnic groups.\textsuperscript{41} These positions are synthesized nicely in Bodnar's \textit{The Transplanted}. Challenging Handlin's description of uprooted immigrants, Bodnar presents the thesis that immigrants are more aptly described as transplants. Like transplanted vegetation, immigrants kept their cultural roots intact, but successfully grew in the new American soil.\textsuperscript{42} And where Handlin had portrayed immigrants as victims and objects of assimilationist forces, Bodnar depicts immigrants who were more active in the acculturation process, negotiating assimilation on their own terms and adapting American practices when and where they saw fit.

Another issue that has sparked debate amongst immigration scholars concerns volition. Author Gary Gerstle frames the debate in these terms: "Were individuals and groups free to fashion an American identity of their own choosing, or were they constrained by social structures and historical circumstances over which they had no control?"\textsuperscript{43} Such questions have been a feature of immigration histories since Handlin and continue to fuel scholarly debate.\textsuperscript{44} An important early work in this area is John Higham's \textit{Strangers in the Land}. Focusing primarily on the nativist impulse in America, Higham shows that many Americans pressured immigrants to acculturate vigorously and even violently.\textsuperscript{45} Among the Americanizers are settlement workers,

\textsuperscript{44} See \textit{Journal of American History} 84(1997).
\textsuperscript{45} Higham, \textit{Strangers in the Land}.
who Higham lauds as advanced in their approach to foreigners. Higham points to Jane Addams as proof that settlement workers were sympathetic to ethnic cultures and in fact embraced multiculturalism. He is right about Addams, but she was not representative of settlement workers and she herself was nativist when it came to eating habits. My examination of settlement food programs reveals the complexity of this issue; some reformers changed their points of view or adapted their practices, just as some immigrants adapted their lifestyles.

Gerstle agrees with Higham, arguing that coercion played a large part in the assimilation process. Some have interpreted Gerstle’s argument to mean that all immigrants assimilated and they were all pressured into doing so. But Gerstle simply asserts that vigorous pressure to assimilate existed, but not all immigrant groups were targeted in the same ways at the same time. Gerstle also concludes that some immigrants resisted the pressure, while some eagerly sought acculturation.46

Certainly my research shows that reformers wanted to compel immigrants to change their cultural food practices. But what it also shows is that this process included exchanges between reformers and immigrants. As much as reformers may have wanted to produce change, immigrants had a say in the matter and in some cases, they forced the reformers to shift or even abandon their agendas. So coercion was a tactic, but not always successful. Reformers were not all powerful and reactions were varied, with some foreigners embracing Americanization while others syncretized their

practices and American practices (i.e., by learning how to use white flour to make pasta).

While the previously cited works all contributed to the debate on acculturation, very few of them mentioned women, even though women were frequent targets of assimilation programs, especially those concerning foodways. Bodnar’s study did identify the family as one of the most important institutions that maintained cultural continuity. This focus on family acknowledged the important role that women played in ethnic communities and signaled a new direction for immigration scholars. In the 1970s and 80s several studies on immigration and ethnicity centered on the experiences of women and their roles in the acculturation process. These works reshaped the very conceptualization of the immigrant experience and serve as a base for my own research.

One of the first books to focus on women in the context of family was Virginia Yans-McLaughlin’s *Family and Community.*47 In this case study of Italians in Buffalo, New York, McLaughlin clearly shows that women played an essential part in forming ethnic and cultural identities and were instrumental as family members in maintaining those traditions. The continuance of patterns begun in the Old World meant that a family member “could find security in fulfilling his or her customary role.”48 This sense of security was reassuring to a community that was struggling to determine their place in the new world. However, as this was a case study of one

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48 Ibid, 18.
immigrant group in a specific community, it was unclear whether McLaughlin's conclusions about women's family roles were true for other groups in other areas. But her work called attention to the need for further examination of women's experiences as immigrants.

Another important early work on immigrant women came from Maxine Seller. Her work, entitled *Immigrant Women*, was a collection of primary sources from female immigrants, describing the "impact of change" and how they coped with that. 49 What Seller's selections reveal is that women's experiences of acculturation were often very different from men's. Female immigrants had different opportunities and responsibilities than males and were subject to different kinds of Americanizing forces, often domestic. Unfortunately, historians had previously ignored their stories. *Immigrant Women* indicated the need to rethink ideas about acculturation and cultural persistence that had been previously formulated using only men's experiences.

Fortunately, a growing interest in women's history resulted in more and more works focusing on immigration from a female perspective. These texts presented a more complete portrayal of immigrant communities and challenged the very notions of acculturation and assimilation that had been established using male standards of behavior. Among these important recent works are *Erin's Daughters in America* by Hasia Diner; *From the Other

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Diner’s work on Irish women is significant for a number of reasons. First, her research disputes the claim that immigrant women cannot be studied simply because they were not dominant public figures. While it is true that immigrant women produced less first-person accounts than their male counterparts, that does not mean that their stories are irretrievable. Diner uses diverse sources—quantitative social histories, government documents, charity and church records—to produce an effective analysis of Irish women’s lives. Secondly, her findings illustrate, like Yans-McLaughlin’s research of Italian families, that women were the guardians of cultural continuity in the private sphere, thus making them pivotal players in the acculturation process. And in the case of Irish women, the sex-segregated nature of their culture dictated that their experiences with assimilation were different from those of Irish men. Diner’s work confirms that any study that hopes to analyze the Americanization process needs to incorporate women’s experiences.

Donna Gabaccia has been instrumental in shifting the focus of immigration and ethnic history to women. She has often argued for the centrality of women in immigrant cultures and has analyzed their

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relationship to family, housing, work, and domesticity. In *From the Other Side*, she provides an overview of immigration from the female perspective. By privileging women's experiences, Gabaccia provides a new understanding on the formation of ethnic identity. She argues that women were "associated symbolically with cultural identity—indeed, with the very 'heart' of a culture." Immigrant women "became markers of the line dividing Americans from outsiders; as a result, they found their lives subjected to intensive scrutiny both from other immigrants and from Americans." My research confirms Gabaccia's assertion; settlement workers and home economists maintained that foreign women were the key to successful assimilation of the entire immigrant population. For example numerous reformers argued that training girls in Americanized housekeeping would insure a healthy and stable population.

Elizabeth Ewen's *Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars* also focuses on women while steering a middle course between the two sides of the assimilation debate. Ewen criticizes previous studies on Americanization that polarize and oversimplify the process. She argues historians have too often painted a picture of assimilation that is "either/or": either immigrants became completely acculturated or they successfully maintained their cultures. Ewen argues that the reality is somewhere in between, and both

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52 Gabaccia, *From the Other Side*, xi.

53 For an extreme example of this argument, see *Americanization Through Homemaking* by Pearl Idelia Ellis (Los Angeles: Wetzel Pub. Co., 1929).
groups and cultures, foreign and native-born, changed as a result of immigration. In addition, Ewen takes issue with the traditional concept of Old World culture versus New World culture. Instead, within the “new world” context, there were two types of cultures in dialogue with one another: ones created by immigrants and the existing Anglo-American culture. These New World immigrant cultures inherently differed from their Old World cultures because of their transference to a new setting. Ewen does not disregard the importance of Old World traditions or argue against cultural persistence; she simply calls attention to the fact that there was not a monolithic New World culture. Furthermore, the search for cultural identity was not the same for every immigrant. Factors such as gender, marital status, class and religion all influenced the ways in which immigrants acculturated.

I agree with Ewen’s conclusions about hybridized cultures, and my research highlights the complexities of acculturation, especially in relation to culinary traditions. Foodways provide valuable insight into the acculturation process for they can be easily adapted in ways that other cultural practices cannot. For example, a hybrid language of Italian and English is not as functional as a recipe that combines Americanized ingredients and traditional cooking methods. Through its examination of foodways, my study shows that the very notion of cultural identity was negotiated quite differently from person to person and community to community. Some culinary reformers recognized this and tried to accommodate the various responses they got from the immigrant population. The interesting thing is despite the very subjective responses that reformers encountered, they never wavered from their goal of assimilating ethnic cuisine. Their resolution is at the heart of my
focus on why Americanized foodways remained so critical to reformers even when their efforts were rejected.

As more immigration scholars turn their attention to women's experiences, some have begun to explore the importance of food to both gender and cultural identity. Women traditionally controlled food preparation. Their decisions about what foods to prepare impacted the entire family and could affect the acculturation process for subsequent generations. A new study by Judy Chesen highlights the relationship between women and food through a case study of Italian women in Chicago. Chesen contends that ethnic culinary traditions "brought stability and continuity to the migration process...[and] were one of the most important elements in [immigrants'] adjustment to life in America."54 Women became culture brokers through their use of food, and, in the case of Chicago's southern Italian community, diet served as a connection to their past.

Chesen's study breaks new ground in its emphasis on foodways and its presentation of the immigrant perspective. My study builds on her work by exploring how eating habits became a battlefield among reformers and immigrants, as both groups realized the important connection between food and ethnic identity. I also focus more on how food was used as an interpretive device for American culture. My study highlights the reciprocal nature of the Americanization process, especially as relates to diet. Ethnic foodways are the most persistent cultural practices for many communities.

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54 Chesen, "It Was More Than Nourishment," 1.
because they often remain after language skills have faded and religious practices have become less ethnic-based.

Foodways

As food is central to this study, I have incorporated the work of previous food historians. Unfortunately, until the 1990s, food and foodways were not analyzed thoroughly by American historians. As a result, there are gaps in the research, and hopefully my work will help illustrate the relationship between food and national identity as envisioned by Progressive Era reformers.

The earliest historical works on food in America focus on the evolution of American cuisine. Works of this sort include Waverley Root and Richard de Rochemont's *Eating in America* and Richard Hooker's *Food and Drink in America*. Both texts provide a comprehensive look at the types of food that Americans ate from colonial times to the present.55 Root and de Rochemont focus on the British roots of American cuisine, which they argue was a result of colonial dominance rather than culinary superiority. Similarly, Hooker emphasizes the major ethnic or geographical influences on prevailing American tastes. While acknowledging the importance of nutrition and the influence of the major food industries, Hooker's emphasis is "on what foods and drinks have reached the table."56

56 Hooker, *Food and Drink in America*, xi.
Implicit in that statement is the fact that some foods and beverages did not make the American table, and Hooker does address that question as well. He examines the various contributions of differing ethnic groups to the American cuisine, making suggestions as to why some groups were more influential than others. Hooker also posits the American landscape as a major factor in the development of a national cuisine. Certain foodstuffs were already present in abundance in North America (such as corn and squash) which shaped the diet of Americans, while the necessities of frontier living dictated certain crops and livestock over others. While not startlingly original, both *Eating in America* and *Food and Drink in America* describe the evolution of an American cuisine, providing a solid background for anyone interested in American eating habits.

The first scholars seriously to study food were folklorists and anthropologists, who were particularly interested in what food practices revealed about a culture. Folklorist Don Yoder introduced this term "foodways" to historical circles in the early 1970s in such works as his chapter entitled "Folk Cookery" in *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction.* Yoder encouraged folklorists and historians to study foodways as an important material cultural source.

Building on Yoder's work, anthropologist Charles Camp shifted the focus from food and foodstuffs to what he terms the "food event" in his *American Foodways.* According to Camp, the food event is any occasion in

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which food plays some part. In some cases the food is central; in others, the food is peripheral. For Camp, the food event is a more inclusive focus for foodways scholars because it encompasses behaviors and activities often ignored by scholars that are integral for an understanding of the intersections between food and culture. By focusing on the food event, Camp hopes to move foodways into a field that crosses most boundaries. As other scholars have noted, "preparing, serving, and eating food often provide a basis for interaction, serve as a vehicle of communication, and constitute a source of associations and symbolic structures." By incorporating various themes, Camp wants to "appreciate the full symbolic range and power of food in American life."

Camp's focus on the symbolic meanings of food is in keeping with his anthropological background and is useful for food historians. He reminds scholars not to overlook such seemingly insignificant details such as the architecture and implements of food preparation and even draws upon jokes, legends and tall tales about food. Camp's constant search for meaning behind food events goes beyond simple narrative to interpretation of practices and attitudes. One can hardly examine culinary traditions without giving some thought to the implicit meanings or belief systems behind them. My research illustrates that reformers understood the power of ethnic foodways, which is one reason they believed that Americanizing immigrants' diets was necessary if they were to be assimilated. However, reformers did not always anticipate the resilience of foreign eating habits among groups

59 Ibid, 15.
60 Ibid, 55.
who were trying to forge new identities in America, and as a result, there was conflict.

Another anthropological work, *Sweetness and Power*, by Sydney Mintz, provided direction for future work on foodways and highlighted the importance of a historical understanding of food. Mintz's research on the sugar trade indicated that those in power have used food as a way to increase or maintain their control over other groups. For example, Mintz shows that wealthy sugar plantation owners, who wished to further their fortunes, carefully cultivated the demand for white sugar. Expensive white sugar was promoted as more desirable than the cheaper brown sugar, and demand for the luxury item increased. White sugar eventually demarcated social boundaries and made the plantation owners rich.61

Mintz's assertion that food can be used to control is central to my own research. I examine to what extent reformers sought to Americanize ethnic diets in order to control immigrants. Did these overwhelmingly middle-class, native-born philanthropists hope to reinforce their cultural status through the promotion of their own food traditions? Or were their motivations truly altruistic? Did they really believe that Americanized eating habits would result in less poverty and a healthier populace? While other authors have debated the intentions of reformers, none has examined foodways programs in order to bolster their arguments. This study argues that reformers took food seriously, and their attempts to change ethnic dietaries illustrate their beliefs about "appropriate" American behavior, especially for women.

One of the few historians to recognize the importance of food in American life is Harvey Levenstein, who has written two excellent works on the subject. Both texts highlight the connections between class, ethnicity, and food that make foodways such a fertile subject for study. In his first book, *Revolution at the Table*, Levenstein argues that the American diet underwent a sizable transformation in the years 1880-1930, shifting from an emphasis on quantity to an emphasis on quality. He provides an account of this transformation, examining the social, economic, and technological changes that caused the change. An important part of Levenstein's narrative is the reaction of various ethnic groups to reformers who sought to change their eating habits. His research reveals that efforts to Americanize foreign cookery were often met with hostility and were not always successful, thus revealing the importance of unique and separate culinary practices to those groups. Food was a symbol to both the reformers and immigrants, and reformers viewed resistance to change as a rejection of America itself. Levenstein's work sparked my own interest in Americanization through foodways, and my study builds on his work by focusing on food as an instrument of assimilation.

Levenstein's next book on food, *Paradox of Plenty*, chronicles the changes in the modern American diet from 1930 to 1990, and again ethnic food plays an important part. This work, like *Revolution at the Table*, takes great care in contextualizing changes in food habits, thus emphasizing the dynamic nature of eating patterns. Levenstein includes an examination of

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62 Levenstein, *Revolution at the Table*. Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
gender, acknowledging at the outset that food has an "intimate connection with the changing role of women in America." But Levenstein's primary focus on such factors as science and technology overshadows the symbolic relationship between women and food that seems to be so central to American eating habits. Levenstein also makes tantalizing references to the symbol of America as the land of plenty, but does not fully explore that metaphor and its power for Americans. Despite these minor shortcomings, Levenstein's works are the most comprehensive examinations of American culinary practices and are unique for making even passing reference to the connections between eating habits and belief and symbol systems. His work legitimized the study of foodways for American historians, which has led to an influx of new works on food.

The studies that emerged in the 1990s are diverse, focusing on various time periods and geographic regions. But four works in particular have proved useful for my research: Arlene Voski Avakian's *Through the Kitchen Window: Women Explore the Intimate Meanings of Food and Cooking*; Donna Gabaccia's *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans*; and Michael Eula's "Failure of American Food Reformers Among Italian Immigrants in New York City, 1891-1897," and Hasia Diner's *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish, and Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration*. The first is


64 For an brief overview of the emergence of food studies, see "A Place at the Table," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* XLV, no. 44 (July 9, 1999), A17-19.

65 Arlene Voski Avakian, ed., *Through the Kitchen Window: Women Explore the Intimate Meanings of Food and Cooking* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997); Donna Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat*; and Michael Eula, "Failure of American Food Reformers Among Italian
a collection of articles edited by Women's Studies scholar Arlene Voski Avakian. The book is part memoir, part cookbook, part feminist analysis of the complex relationship between women and food. While not a historical work, this text informs my research in many ways. For example, feminists criticized Avakian for writing a book on food. A feminist herself, Avakian expected this:

Because cooking has been conceptualized as part of our oppression, liberation has often meant freedom from being connected to food. [But this book] is a critical interrogation of women's relationship to food, of gender and domesticity as it has been constructed in various cultures, and of the ways that race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality impact our relationship to food....Cooking is something that was and continues to be imposed on women, but it is also an activity that can be a creative part of our daily lives....If we delve into the relationship between women and food we will discover the ways in which women have forged spaces within that oppression.66

Avakian’s observations are similar to ideas expressed by Progressive Era home economists who were also criticized for concerning themselves with feminized work instead of establishing themselves in male-dominated fields. But what Avakian eloquently points out is that feminized work such as cooking often provided women with avenues for self-expression and power within their families. And that is just what home economists were trying to say; by concerning themselves with domesticity, they hoped to elevate women’s sphere, establishing it as an arena of work just as worthy as masculine fields. Avakian challenges scholars to reevaluate the links between food and gender, which is one of the primary objectives in this study.

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66 Avakian, *Through the Kitchen Window*, 5-6.
Donna Gabaccia is one of the leading immigration historians, and her latest work, *We Are What We Eat*, explores the ways that immigrants shaped American cuisine. Spanning the entire history of the United States, Gabaccia traces the culinary influence of immigrant populations, concluding that Americans have become "multi-ethnic eaters." Multiculturalists have recently put forth a new metaphor for America—the salad bowl, where distinct cultures and ethnic groups commingle, but do not lose their distinct flavor. But Gabaccia’s research on food prompts her to endorse the old standby, the melting pot metaphor:

The culinary melting pot produces multi-ethnic diversity, not all-American uniformity....It produces identities that are blended creoles, not the culinary equivalent of five (or twenty-five) isolated ethnic groups, each with its own foodways. It makes a multi-ethnic American gumbo or stew, not a multicultural salad of discrete ethnic groups.

Gabaccia includes a chapter on the Progressive Era, which vividly portrays the "food fight" that took place between immigrants and reformers. But she sees this time period as an anomaly in the overall story of American cuisine, which was otherwise characterized by culinary curiosity and general acceptance of ethnic cuisine. She attributes the culinary nativism and conservatism of reformers to the influx of immigrants that reformers saw as a potentially destabilizing force if not quickly Americanized. My research corroborates many of Gabaccia’s findings: reformers’ focus on food was a reaction to the turbulence of the times. But while Gabaccia argues that in comparison to other cross-cultural exchanges, "food fights seem laughably

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67 Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat*, 226.
68 Ibid, 228.
mild,” my study shows that for some groups, foodways were a significant source of identity and power, and they did not take efforts to change them lightly.

Michael Eula’s recent article on dietary reforms makes the same point: the reforms failed because reformers failed to understand the cultural importance of food. In his examination of New York public kitchens, Eula finds that reformers, well-intentioned though they might be, did not understand their “target audience” and presented programs that were unsuited to ethnic food traditions. For example, Ellen Richards hoped to improve the economic situation of immigrants by providing inexpensive carry-out meals at her New England Kitchen. The Kitchen offered sensible, “New England-style” cuisine designed to fortify at the lowest cost. However, Richards overlooked several important factors. First, this cuisine was not palatable to many ethnic groups, who preferred their own food. Also, while Richards hoped to save working class families money, she did not realize that some immigrants wanted to spend more money on food, having more access to food in America than in the Old World. In addition, the purchase of a carry-out meal would diminish the prestige that many immigrant women held in the family as meal-preparers. These women would not relinquish that role easily. So despite Richards’ good intentions, her public kitchen failed.

Hasia Diner echoes Eula’s conclusions in her work on immigrant eating patterns. In Hungering for America, Diner traces the distinct foodways of three immigrant groups: Italians, Irish, and Jews. In doing so, Diner reveals that the amount of retention of traditional recipes and practices in immigrant communities correlated to the importance of foodways in their
original countries and cultures. For example, Italians immigrants often worked strenuously to maintain culinary practices because food had been a very important part of Italian culture in Italy. But Irish immigrants did not have a lively food culture in Ireland, due in large part to poverty and deprivation. For the Irish, traditional foodways reminded them of past hardships, and as a result, Irish immigrants distanced themselves from traditional cuisine while retaining other ethnic customs such as music and dance.

Diner concludes that while these immigrant communities did adapt their eating habits once in America, those adaptations were often a reaction to the largely favorable dietary options that America provided. However, even when changes were made, they were done within the context of traditional foodways. For example, Italians added more meat to their diet, but they prepared it using traditionally Italian methods and seasonings, thus making it compatible with their existing food practices and creating a new ethnic tradition.

Diner’s, Eula’s, and Gabaccia’s works represent a growing interest in foodways as a marker of cultural identity. My work adds to this field by focusing on Chicago, which, despite its importance as a venue for reform in the Progressive Era, does not figure in their works. In addition, my study includes the perspective of Lizzie Black Kander, a Milwaukee reformer who had her feet planted in both the world of reform and the world of immigrants. As a second-generation German Jew, Kander’s experiences as a culinary reformer are unique in several respects. Kander, who did not keep strict kosher herself, agreed to teach strict kosher cooking classes at her
settlement house to the new Russian Jewish immigrants of her neighborhood. Instead of promoting the Americanized cuisine that she herself used, Kander taught them dietary practices that were, ironically, foreign to her. Her case uniquely illustrates the ways that different cultures use food to define themselves.

Even though food history is relatively new, the few works produced have already proven that it is a field with meaningful ties to gender and ethnic studies. This study hopes to add to that growing tradition by analyzing the ways reformers used food in order to define suitable gender and national identities.

METHODS

In its examination of dietary reforms in Chicago, this dissertation employs historical methods of research and analysis. It provides both qualitative and quantitative analysis and case studies of foodways programs in settlement houses. This study utilizes primary source material mainly from collections of various archives throughout the midwest. This particular focus allows for a "dense" study that, while limited geographically, furnishes much information about the important trends and ideas present in midwestern reform movements. And since Chicago was one of the most important American centers for reform, its practices may indicate national reform efforts. This study will therefore provide insight into larger issues of reform and power that were extant during the Progressive Era.

In order to illustrate the connections between the home economics and settlement movements, this study examines the programs of several
midwestern institutions associated with both the home economics and Social settlement movements during the Progressive Era, focusing primarily on those in Chicago, Illinois. These include the records of such settlements as Association House, Chicago Commons, Chicago Hebrew Institute, Gads Hill, Hull-House, Milwaukee Settlement, Northwestern University Settlement, and the University of Chicago Settlement, all of which offered foodways programs. The records of Lewis Institute and the University of Chicago, including bulletins, schedules, yearbooks, and minutes, shed light on the emerging field of home economics as it was practiced in Chicago. Materials from the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy (CSCP) provide valuable insights into the philosophy and motivations of the settlement movement as it developed into a professional field. Further information on the larger ideology and rhetoric of both movements is found in trade publications, including: The Journal of Home Economics, Boston Cooking School Magazine, New England Kitchen Magazine, The Survey, The Commons, and Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work. I also use records from the national and local meetings of various reform organizations such as the Chicago Federation of Settlements, The National Federation of Settlements, the Chicago Service League, The Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago, and the Lake Placid Conference of Home Economics. In addition, the writings of Chicago reformers like Marion Talbot, Mary McDowell, and Graham Taylor show that leaders of the two movements were in communication with one another and shared common goals.

Much of the source material comes from the settlement houses previously mentioned, including minutes, in-house publications, circulars,
newsletters, correspondence, organizational records, recipe booklets, and photographs. Also important are primary sources from Lewis Institute, CSCP, and the University of Chicago, such as yearbooks, course descriptions, alumni newsletters, correspondence, and faculty publications. I also use such material culture sources as photographs, architectural floor plans, and cookbooks. Additional primary sources include newspaper and magazine articles from the Progressive Era, biographies and autobiographies, government studies, prescriptive literature from home economists, and books written by the reformers themselves. These primary sources are supplemented by secondary sources dealing with American history, American studies, local history, women's history, material culture, ethnicity and immigration, foodways, and the history of reform movements and reformers.

Because this study focuses on an important aspect of cultural/ethnic identities, it will be important to understand the immigrant experience in Chicago during the Progressive Era. To accomplish this, I examine such quantitative data as census figures, population studies, government reports, biographies, and other contemporary accounts of immigrant life. Information on food habits, both ethnic and Americanized can be found in governmental dietary studies, biographies, transcribed oral histories, cookbooks, and notes of case workers and other reformers.

Due to the central role that immigrants play in this study, I also use works on ethnic history. While much has been written on immigration, ethnicity, and Americanization, a few recent works have incorporated research on food as a way to understand ethnic identity and cultural
continuity. For example, Donna Gabaccia argues in *We Are What We Eat* that an examination of food traditions and practices can enhance existing ideas about acculturation and assimilation and, in some cases, repudiate them. Gabaccia’s work and others provide a new and interesting approach to ethnic history and show that food is a vital component of ethnic identity.

Anthropologists have long argued that eating habits are a significant cultural marker comparable to language, religion, and dress. Their studies of foodways can also provide a useful framework for examining the importance of food to subcultures. Anthropological examinations of dietary customs have also revealed important connections between food and power. Placed in the historical context of this study, such anthropological methodologies will shed light on not only the relationship between foodways and ethnic identity, but the ways that reformers used food as a means to promote cultural hegemony and advance their own professions—and thus their own power.

To understand the focus on diet as an avenue for reform, this study also examines the national trends and larger ideology of the settlement and home economics movements. This information is found in the writings of reformers such as Ellen Richards and national trade publications such as the settlement magazine *Charities*, and home economics magazines *The Journal of Home Economics*, and *The New England Kitchen Magazine*. I also examine the speeches and programs from the participants of the Lake Placid Conferences on Home Economics who created home economics and debated about the ideology of the field yearly from 1899-1908.

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69 Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat*. 

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Also important, especially for midwestern reformers, was the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893, which, by facilitating a national dialogue among reformers, established Chicago as an important focal point for social change and experimentation. There are numerous excellent primary and secondary sources about the fair; for this study, I examined records of the Women’s Committee, accounts of the experimental kitchen, proceedings from the conference of settlement workers, and correspondence from participants to shed light on the fair's impact on Progressive Era reform movements.

The interdisciplinary nature of this study and its focus on cultural identities is indebted to American Studies methodology. As described by Gene Wise in his essay "Paradigm Dramas," American Studies embodies four characteristics: “a pluralistic rather than a holistic approach to American culture; an accompanying rediscovery of the particular; an emphasis on proportion rather than essence in cultural experience; and a cross-cultural, comparative dimension."\(^7\)

This study strives to embody these characteristics in both approach and method by analyzing the particular settlement programs and their meanings for all those involved with them, by focusing on the plurality of cultural experiences for those of differing ethnicities and by highlighting the complexities of the very term "American." It is hoped that such an examination will provide a greater understanding of the culture of America.

during the Progressive Era and how that culture was interpreted by diverse groups of Americans, both immigrants and reformers.
CHAPTER II

THE CHICAGO REFORMERS: THE “GREAT AMERICAN-MAKERS”

While elements of sociology may be studied in smaller communities...the most serious problems of modern society are presented by the great cities and must be studied as they are encountered in concrete form in large populations. No city in the world presents a wider variety of typical social problems than Chicago.¹

--Sociologist Frank Tolman

By 1890, Chicago was already the second largest city in the United States, and its combination of industry and immigrants made it a natural point of convergence for Progressive Era reformers. From 1890 to 1920, Chicago was a locus of reform in education, social work, architecture, and urban planning, and home economics. The 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition highlighted Chicago’s newfound prominence and drew reformers from a variety of professional fields to the World’s Congress Auxiliary held in conjunction with the fair. Chicago institutions such as Hull-House, the Chicago Commons, The Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy, and the University of Chicago gained both local and national recognition as important forces for change. In addition Chicago was home to less famous institutions that also promoted reform, including smaller settlements and schools.

Chicago was not always acclaimed as an important American city.

Indeed, for the first half of the nineteenth century Easterners considered it a rough, backwater town with little to recommend it. The climate was harsh and the geography swampy and dismal. It had taken the building of a canal that connected Lake Michigan and the Chicago River to make the town attractive to investors and laborers. Many immigrants found work building the canal from 1836 to 1848, and, as a result, Chicago’s population swelled from a mere 350 in 1833 to 30,000 in 1850. In a very short time, Chicago evolved from an isolated outpost to a bustling Midwestern town, with more expansion to come.²

While the canal had attracted workers, railroad development quickly made the canal obsolete. And the railroads transformed Chicago into a metropolis. Most eastbound and westbound train lines ended in Chicago, so riders—and materials—had to disembark in Chicago and transfer to additional trains if they wanted to continue their journey. This had an understandably positive effect on the economy of Chicago, and by 1860 the city claimed 110,000 residents, pulled in by the railroads’ boost to local businesses. Chicago’s economy revolved around four major industries: grain, lumber, meatpacking, and mail-order sales.³

These industries needed workers, and Chicago became a destination for immigrants, some of whom simply got on the train in New York and rode it until the line ended.⁴ Between 1890 and 1920, some 2.5 million

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immigrants settled in Chicago, changing the face of the city forever. The earliest European immigrants to settle in Chicago in great numbers were Irish and Germans working on the canal. Other groups quickly followed, including Scandinavians, Poles, Jews (initially German, then Russian or Slavic), Greeks, Bohemians, Ukranians, and Italians. These immigrant groups came to dominate the city’s demographics and settled in relatively distinct ethnic enclaves all over the city. In 1890, immigrants and their American-born children comprised 80% of the population of Chicago, with the largest group being German, followed by the Irish, Bohemians, and Scandinavians. By 1900, Chicago had more Poles, Swedes, Czechs, Dutch, Danes, Norwegians, Croatians, Slovaks, Lithuanians, and Greeks than any other city in the United States.5

This influx of people caused problems for the growing city. A housing crunch was exacerbated by The Great Chicago Fire in October of 1871. The fire had both positive and negative effects on the city’s development. It destroyed much of the city, allowing city planners to completely reorganize the zoning of the city, which had been largely haphazard. After 1871, Chicago was a more orderly city with distinct residential and commercial areas that included a new innovation, the skyscraper, which was honed and improved by Chicago architects.6 But the fire also displaced as many as 100,000 Chicagoans—one-third of the city’s residents. Builders quickly erected inexpensive housing to accommodate these new homeless as winter approached. Many of these houses were intended to serve as temporary residences, but as late as 1935 poor families remained crowded into these

5 Spinney, City of Big Shoulders, 71, 141.
6 Miller, City of the Century, 301-303.
"temporary" structures. Housing reformer Edith Abbott described how the situation developed:

[after the fire] the provision of "small but comfortable homes" for all the homeless... was the decision of the Shelter Committee of the Citizens' Aid Committee... The Committee, as they later looked back upon their work, thought that "the result of their labors was even more successful and encouraging than the most sanguine had anticipated." But with all their good intentions, they had erected great numbers of "jerry-built" frame cottages again with no provision for more permanent structures to take their place. Long rows of these old frame houses are still to be seen, still constituting a part of the housing problem of Chicago...7

While the prevailing view in Chicago was that the fire actually pushed the city's development forward, post-fire Chicago still had problems, particularly with housing. Unlike New York, which because of its geography built up rather than out, Chicago was situated on flat prairie lands. This allowed it to spread in all directions except east to Lake Michigan. As a result, Chicago neighborhoods consisted of numerous small houses, mostly one or two stories, with each intended for one family. But the constant flow of immigrants was overwhelming, and Chicago simply did not have enough places to put people, so those small single-family dwellings commonly housed anywhere from three to twelve families.8

Housing was not the only problem. Chicago's rapid industrialization resulted in poor sanitation, wage exploitation, child labor, and a growing crime rate. These problems keenly affected the working classes that were primarily first or second-generation immigrants or African-Americans. Moved to help these less fortunate neighbors, a coalition of upper and

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8 Ibid, 29.
middle-class Chicagoans reacted in multiple ways, creating an extensive network of reform that addressed issues ranging from public education to politics. In his book, *A City and Its Universities*, Steven Diner describes Chicago’s dominant role in the Progressive Era:

Similar [reform] activities went on elsewhere at the same time, but Chicago provided much of the initiative and leadership for what historians have dubbed “urban progressivism.” No single agency or set of leaders directed Chicago’s widely diverse campaigns; nor was there a single platform to which all elite reformers subscribed. Yet a network of interlocking directorates and personal ties among their leaders welded these diverse crusades into a distinct movement. Around a relatively small group of leaders, constantly interacting with each other, orbited a wide variety of political and social movements. These men and women constituted a reform community.9

As Diner mentions, Chicago’s reformers were a diverse lot and their work quickly established Chicago as a city to watch. They included famous philosopher and educator John Dewey, who spent ten years at the University of Chicago (1894-1904). Dewey’s work with pragmatic philosophy and its educational applications contributed to the new University’s growing reputation as an intellectual center equal to those in the East. Like most Chicago reformers, Dewey was involved in a variety of community reform groups, including Hull-House and his famous Laboratory School.

Another significant group of Chicago reformers consisted of the architects and urban planners who formed the “Chicago School” of architecture, including Daniel Burnham, Louis Sullivan, and a young Frank Lloyd Wright. Burnham was a Chicago architect responsible for the design of the renowned “White City” for the Columbian Exposition. He championed

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the “City Beautiful” movement, which promoted urban landscapes that combined industrial efficiency and order with natural beauty. Burnham influenced other Chicago architects, who responded with new forms that incorporated the City Beautiful ideals. Chicago designers developed the skyscraper and in the process changed the ways that city dwellers experienced their surroundings. Sullivan’s design for the Carson Pirie Scott department store influenced architects all over the country, and its use of glass for display windows transformed how retailers marketed and sold their goods. Sullivan’s young apprentice, Frank Lloyd Wright, pushed the innovations of the Chicago School even further, developing his own Prairie School of architecture. The Chicago School was important not only for its many contributions to design and aesthetics, but its strong commitment to social reform through urban planning. Burnham, Sullivan, and Wright all hoped that their work would improve the quality of American life. To achieve that end, they worked with sociologists and home economists to create city plans and home designs.

One of the most significant events for the Chicago School and other community reformers was the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893. Held on Chicago’s south side near the University of Chicago, it gave social progressives a forum in which to promote their arguments and established the city as a national center for reform. The fair was notable for a variety of reasons. It gave the Chicago School an unprecedented opportunity to showcase their ideas about urban development and they responded

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10 Miller, City of the Century, 367-371.
magnificently. Burnham's so-called "White City" housed some of the most ambitious structures ever built, and the public loved it. But the fair was more than a grand architectural exhibition; for reformers it was a tangible symbol of what their efforts could produce. As historian Robert Spinney argues,

'[the fair] was an attempt to show Americans and the world that urban harmony... was possible. Good planning and human willpower could in time perfect the city... The White City was by design a city of illusions, an answer to those critics who rejected urban life as hopelessly lawless, dirty, and unwholesome... [It] was a vivid display of the indomitable human spirit amid the people's deep reservations about the emerging city.'

Excited about the potential of the fair as a catalyst for change, the Exposition Corporation decided to hold a series of congresses in conjunction with the fair that covered almost every subject imaginable from literature to religion. The World's Congress Auxiliary was in session from May 15 to October 28, 1893, incorporating almost 6,000 papers and speeches. The Congress was "to receive from eminent representatives of all interests, classes, and peoples, suggestions of the practical means by which further progress might be made and the prosperity and peace of the world advanced." Included amongst the Congress' numerous sessions were conferences on women's rights, home economics, philanthropy, and social settlements.

The Congress of Women included sessions on home economics, bringing together women and men from across the country to discuss the

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12 Spinney, *City of Big Shoulders*, 122.
relationship between women and the home. As a result of these sessions, participants founded the National Household Economics Association to promote "sanitary houses...skilled labor...and schools of household science." In addition to the sessions, the fair hosted a public kitchen exhibit, modeled on an existing institution in Boston. The Rumford Kitchen, or New England Kitchen, was part of the Massachusetts state exhibit and was designed to demonstrate the potential of collective kitchens to remedy malnutrition, intemperance, and poverty. The newly formed NHEA endorsed the idea of public kitchens, making them part of their platform of action. Chicago reformers comprised a significant part of the NHEA membership, and the work at the fair established Chicago as an important center for the growing field of home economics. In fact, the Rumford Kitchen exhibit was dismantled and reassembled at the University of Chicago for use in their new program in Household Administration, which became the first doctoral degree-granting program in home economics.

Other Chicago post-secondary institutions soon embraced home economics curricula, including the American School of Household Economics, the Chicago Normal School, Northwestern University, Lewis Institute, and Armour Institute. Home economics was also widely taught in Chicago public schools and settlement houses. In addition, during the Progressive Era Chicago was home to at least two public kitchens (modeled after the Rumford exhibit), a food delivery service, and many model housekeeping apartments. By 1920, Chicago had established itself as one of the centers of

15 Wright, Moralism and the Model Home, 151.
16 Hayden, Grand Domestic Revolution, 151.
the home economics movement.

During this same period Chicagoans were also recognized for their work with social settlements. Settlements had their own division in the World's Congress Auxiliary of the Columbian Exposition, and two Chicago residents organized the Congress of Social Settlements: Charles Zeublin of the Northwestern University Settlement and Jane Addams of Hull-House. The settlement conference brought together reformers from across the country to expose the problems of urban America, particularly those of the host city of Chicago, and discuss solutions. While millions of visitors enjoyed the wonders of the White City, settlement workers tried to draw attention to the realities of city life for the working classes.

When the fair came to a close, Chicago experienced a serious depression. The jobs created by the fair were eliminated and the unemployed staged demonstrations that revealed that White City was indeed gone. In its place remained the "Black City"—a nickname Chicago had earned even before the fair for its air pollution, smoke, and smells. William Stead's 1893 publication, If Christ Came to Chicago, highlighted Chicago's pressing problems. Stead, an English journalist, came to the Columbian Exposition to explore both the White and Black cities. He spent time with settlement workers Addams and Graham Taylor and mingled with the working classes in order to see how they lived. His findings spurred him to write If Christ Came to Chicago in order "to illustrate how a living faith in the Citizen Christ would lead directly to the civic and social regeneration of

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18 Burg, Chicago's White City, 259.
His book indicted the upper classes that had the means to help the city, yet "did nothing and cared nothing for its welfare." Stead did approve of the work that Addams was doing at Hull-House and urged Chicagoans to pursue more of this type of reform work.

In response to Stead's enormously popular book, Chicago established the Chicago Civic Federation to address some of the immediate problems of the depression. In addition, Chicago's settlement house movement grew after the fair. Before the fair there were only five settlements: Hull-House, the Northwestern University Settlement, the Clybourne Avenue Settlement, the Forward Movement, and the Maxwell Street Settlement. But by 1911 thirty-four different settlements existed in Chicago, including the well-known Chicago Commons and University of Chicago Settlement. Wanting to support this growing movement, settlement workers established the Chicago Federation of Settlements (CFS) in 1894 to discuss citywide problems and brainstorm solutions. This was the first settlement organization of its kind, and its success encouraged the formation of similar groups in other cities. Addams and Taylor guided the CFS and served as the President and Secretary respectively. These two reformers dominated Chicago's settlement community and soon became leaders of the national settlement movement as well. Both were instrumental in the foundation of the National Federation of Settlements (NFS) in 1911 and served terms as presidents of the NFS and the

23 For more information on these various Chicago settlements, see Woods and Kennedy, *Handbook of Settlements*, 37-80.
National Conference of Charities and Corrections. Addams and Taylor also worked together to form the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy (CSCP), which trained college students in sociology and philanthropy—one of the only American institutions at the time to do so. In addition, Taylor published a settlement magazine, *The Commons*, which ultimately merged with a New York publication to become *The Survey*, which became the preeminent reform journal of its day.

Due in no small part to Addams' and Taylor's work, Chicago soon became the heart of the American settlement house movement, and Hull-House was the most prominent settlement in the country. But Chicago was home to more than just Hull-House; smaller settlements, such as Gads Hill Center and Association House, have often been overlooked. This study provides an examination of the programs of a variety of Chicago institutions and presents a more complete understanding of the impact of settlement reforms on immigrants. The general settlement agenda as well as specific settlement foodways and domestic programs will be explored further in upcoming chapters.

Interest in settlements and home economics continued to grow in Chicago, and the city's influence spread to other places in the Midwest. For example, one of the institutions included in this study is the Abraham Lincoln Settlement House in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, located 95 miles north of Chicago on Lake Michigan. During the Progressive Era Milwaukee shared many of the same problems as its neighbor to the south. It was less populous than Chicago (450,000 compared to Chicago's 2.7 million in 1920), but like Chicago

it had a large immigrant population, including Germans, Poles, Irish, Italians, Jews, Russians, and Scandinavians. Economic disparities and overcrowding led to similar problems in Milwaukee as in Chicago. Unsanitary water, dank and unsafe housing, unpaved streets, and unchecked disease concerned reformers. In response they formed numerous charitable associations, including several settlements. While Chicago settlements undeniably influenced those in Milwaukee, one of Milwaukee’s institutions became famous in its own right: the Abraham Lincoln House became familiar to millions of housekeepers as the publisher of the best-selling Settlement Cook Book.

During the Progressive Era Chicago confirmed its reputation as a dominant American reform city. It was home to celebrated educators, philanthropists, and social workers. Its residents helped to set the national agenda for reform, especially within the settlement and home economics movements. It was also during this time that these two movements became interconnected. Settlement houses provided the setting in which the ideas of home economists could be implemented. According to historian Dolores Hayden:

Social settlement houses represented the great success of urban cooperative housekeeping in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Here advocates of day care centers, public kitchens, and cooperative housekeeping for industrial workers, servants and professionals, gathered to build innovative residential communities.

The types of programs Hayden describes could be found in several

settlements in Chicago, including Hull-House, Chicago Commons, the University of Chicago Settlement, Northwestern University Settlement, Gads Hill Center, Association House, Chicago Hebrew Institute as well as the Abraham Lincoln House in Milwaukee [see fig.1]. These settlements employed several prominent reformers who were also involved with the home economics movement.

The most prominent Chicago settlement was Hull-House. Although Hull-House has been extensively treated in previous academic works, its foodways programs remain largely unexamined by scholars. This is surprising considering the prominence of cooking classes in the overall Hull-House agenda and the number of Hull-House residents associated with home economics. Hayden, one of the only scholars to explore dietary reforms at Hull-House, maintains that the domestic programs in place at Hull-House

...illuminate the ties between the residents of settlement houses, who developed many community outreach programs, and home economists, who were involved in research, teaching, and demonstration work in nutrition, child rearing, housing and sanitation.29

Founded in 1889 by Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr, Hull-House was the second settlement house opened in America and it quickly became synonymous with the movement itself.30 It introduced such groundbreaking programs as the first public kitchen, gymnasium, baths, and playground in Chicago. It was also the first settlement to offer college extension and citizenship classes and sponsor free art exhibits and a theater program.31

29 Ibid., 64.
30 Stanton Coit established the first American settlement house in New York in 1886. Davis, Spearheads for Reform.
31 Woods and Kennedy, Handbook of Settlements, 53-60.

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Hull-House eventually encompassed thirteen buildings, providing such services as daycare, preschool, music lessons, social clubs, and cooperative apartments for young working girls. It also provided several food-related programs including a public kitchen/coffeeshouse, a model housekeeping flat, and cooking and housekeeping classes.\textsuperscript{52}

Just as important as its pioneering programs was Hull-House’s commitment to “investigate and improve the conditions in the industrial districts of Chicago.”\textsuperscript{33} To achieve this end, many Hull-House residents spent time researching the problems of the neighborhood and publishing their findings, such as the famous \textit{Hull-House Maps and Papers} of 1895. By 1911, Hull-House residents had published fifteen local and federally-sponsored studies on subjects ranging from infant mortality to sweatshops.\textsuperscript{34} Their findings often resulted in the improvement of the conditions under investigation and confirmed the reputation of Hull-House as a serious research institution. Many famous reformers started their careers as Hull-House residents, including Edith and Grace Abbott, Sophonisba Breckinridge, and Caroline Hunt. These particular residents had connections to the home economics movement as well as the settlement movement and illustrate the common interests of the two.

The Abbott sisters worked together at Hull-House and at the University of Chicago. Edith was a prolific writer who published over one hundred articles on urban problems, notably housing and juvenile

\textsuperscript{52} Hull-House Association Records, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.
\textsuperscript{53} Woods and Kennedy, \textit{Handbook of Settlements}, 53.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid, 54.
delinquency. Her book, *The Tenements of Chicago, 1908-1935*, detailed Chicago's ongoing housing problems, providing valuable information about living conditions of the working classes. In addition, she taught at the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy (CSCP) and was instrumental in the establishment of the School of Social Administration at the University of Chicago, a department that had close ties to the Household Administration department. Edith Abbott lived at Hull-House for over twelve years working together with Addams, Breckinridge, and her sister Grace to professionalize the field of social work.

Grace, two years younger than Edith, followed her sister into social work, living at Hull-House from 1908 until 1917. Like Edith, Grace received a degree from the University of Chicago and went on to teach at the CSCP. While Edith was more interested in promoting social work as an academic field, Grace was concerned with immigrants' rights. She published numerous articles relating to immigration and was president of the Immigration Protection League of Chicago from 1908 to 1921. Her advocacy of cultural pluralism was in step with Addams' beliefs and helped to shape Hull-House's relatively liberal approach to the immigrant community.

Working closely with the Abbott sisters was Sophonisba Breckinridge. She earned an M.A., Ph.D., and J.D. from the University of Chicago and taught in several different departments, starting in Household Administration with Marion Talbot and ending up in Social Administration.

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with the Abbots. Breckinridge lived at Hull-House during her semester breaks and, like other prominent Chicago settlement workers, taught at the CSCP in her spare time. In fact, it was due to the efforts of Breckinridge and Edith Abbott that the CSCP finally was incorporated into the University of Chicago as the School of Social Administration. Breckinridge wrote extensively on women’s issues and social issues, often collaborating with her University of Chicago colleagues. Her two books on home economics were *New Homes for Old*, and *The Modern Household*, written with Talbot.

Another Hull-House resident with ties to the home economics movement was Caroline Hunt. Hunt did graduate work under Talbot at the University of Chicago, then lived at Hull-House for two years while she investigated the dietary standards of immigrant groups for the United States Department of Agriculture. She then joined the faculty of Lewis Institute as an instructor in Household Science where she taught for five years. Hunt left Chicago in 1901 to pursue her interest in home economics. After a brief tenure at the University of Wisconsin, she ended up working for the USDA in Washington and became a member of the Federal Bureau of Home Economics.

Of course the most famous resident of Hull-House was Jane Addams herself. Her reform work is well documented, but little attention has been paid to her interest in foodways reforms. After the Columbian Exposition, Addams was determined to establish a public kitchen at Hull-House, consulting with New England Kitchen founder Ellen Richards and her friends.

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protegee Marion Talbot about how to proceed.\textsuperscript{40} Addams also established cooking and housekeeping classes at Hull-House and was repeatedly invited to speak at the Lake Placid conferences on home economics.\textsuperscript{41} She published several articles dealing with domestic issues and argued that many social problems could be traced back to poor cooking practices.\textsuperscript{42} Under Addams' guidance, Hull-House set the standard for settlement activities, and its dietary programs were no exception. Other settlements in Chicago and around the country followed its lead, incorporating similar programming.

The second most prominent Chicago settlement was the Chicago Commons, founded in 1894 by Graham Taylor, a Protestant minister who came to Chicago to teach at the Chicago Theological Seminary. He was so struck by Hull-House that he decided to open a similar institution on Chicago's north side. Taylor raised his family at the Commons, and two of his children, Lea Demarest Taylor and Graham Romeyn Taylor, became social workers themselves.\textsuperscript{43} Under Taylor's guidance, the Chicago Commons became one of the most influential settlements in the country. Among other things, it provided visiting nurses, a lending library, music lessons, citizenship classes, athletic leagues, a kindergarten, and a summer camp. The Commons also offered a variety of foodways programs: a milk station, cooking and housekeeping classes, and nutrition lectures. Furthermore, Taylor published several articles relating to home economics in

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Jane Addams to Marion Talbot, 10 October 1892, Marion Talbot Papers, University of Chicago.
\item See Annie Roberts Godfrey Dewey to Jane Addams, 19 April 1907, Melvil Dewey Papers, Columbia University Libraries.
\item See "West Side Philanthropists Open a New Department," \textit{Chicago Daily Inter-Ocean}, 24 August, 1893.
\item Buenker and Kantowicz, \textit{Historical Dictionary of the Progressive Era}, 67, 474.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
his journal The Commons. While Taylor was one of only a few male reformers in the Chicago area, his ideas corresponded with those of his female colleagues. His opinions about settlement work and its relationship to domesticity will be discussed in upcoming chapters.

Several other lesser-known institutions played active roles in Chicago’s reform community, including the University of Chicago Settlement (UCS). The UCS was established in 1894 in affiliation with the university, but the university never owned or operated the settlement outright. It simply provided volunteers and raised money for its support. Instead, Mary McDowell, a young woman who had previously worked at the Northwestern University Settlement and Hull-House, ran the settlement. Jane Addams recommended McDowell for the position of head resident. McDowell spent the rest of her life at the settlement, which was located in the “Back of the Yards” district of Chicago, directly behind the Union Stock Yards. She worked tirelessly to improve the horrendous sanitation conditions of the area and was more politically involved than most of her settlement colleagues. Like Addams, McDowell had a relatively progressive attitude towards immigrant cultures and fought hard to secure safe jobs and housing for her neighbors. She served as President of the National Federation of Settlements from 1914 to 1915, becoming the second Chicagoan to hold that office. When McDowell died in 1936, the UCS acknowledged

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44 Taylor published The Commons, originally titled The Chicago Commons, from 1896-1905, at which time it merged with a New York settlement journal to become Charities and The Commons. In 1909 it changed its name again, this time to The Survey. Throughout this entire period Taylor and his son Graham Romeyn Taylor served as editors, contributing to the journal’s development into the premiere national social work publication.

45 Buenker and Kantowicz, Historical Dictionary of the Progressive Era, 269.

46 Addams was the first president of the NFS, and Taylor held the office after McDowell.

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her singular dedication to the settlement by changing its name to the Mary E. McDowell Settlement. Like the other settlements chosen for this study, the UCS offered a wide variety of activities, including cooking classes.

The UCS was not the only settlement loosely affiliated with a local university. The Northwestern University Settlement (NUS) had much the same status. The NUS was actually the second oldest settlement in Chicago, founded in 1891, two years after Hull-House. NU faculty member Charles Zeublin, who organized the settlement conference at the Columbian Exposition, founded the settlement as a community center on the northwest side of the city. As with the UCS, NU did not own or operate the NUS, but the university encouraged (and later required) students of sociology and social work to volunteer there. The NUS offered the standard component of settlement programs: manual training classes, social clubs, lectures, a kindergarten, and English language classes. It also had several popular foodways activities such as a coffee house, a milk station, a model housekeeping flat, and several cooking classes.47

The settlement had five head residents from 1891-1905, but in 1906, Harriet Vittum took over and stayed at the NUS until her retirement in 1947. Vittum was active in several reform groups, including the NFS. In 1917 she worked on a survey for the NFS on pre-adolescent girls which compiled detailed information about their home lives, domestic skills, relationships with other generations and their acceptance of American cultural practices.48 This NFS survey will be analyzed further in Chapter Five as its questions reveal the interest settlement workers had in the Americanization of

48 Harriet Vittum Papers, University of Illinois at Chicago.
immigrant eating habits.

These four settlements were the largest in the city, employing an average of thirty full-time residents and one hundred volunteers. But many smaller settlements also operated in Chicago, doing the same types of work as the larger organizations on a smaller scale. Interestingly, Woods and Kennedy's 1911 study of American settlements reveals that almost every one of Chicago's settlements offered cooking classes, but not all of their institutional records exist today. The other institutions selected here for study are those that have existing documentation of dietary programs. These two settlements, Gads Hill Center and Association House, typify more modest Chicago settlements, offering the same types of programs as their sister institutions.

Gads Hill Center opened in 1898 in southwestern Chicago with the objective of "[teaching] the duties and responsibilities of American citizenship," and "[presenting] the ideals and incentives which will make possible a better citizenship and home life for the future." Managed by Head Resident Leila Martin, Gads Hill Center had a paid staff of ten and ten to twenty volunteers as well. The settlement provided a playground, nursery, tuberculosis dispensary, and summer camp. From the very beginning it also offered several foodways activities, primarily cooking and kitchen garden classes. These programs were some of the most popular at the settlement, eventually necessitating a move to larger quarters and the employment of a full-time home economics resident.

Like Gads Hill Center, Association House was a smaller settlement, employing under twenty full-time residents and between thirty and forty volunteers. Started in 1899, this settlement was an offshoot of the local YWCA, and, unlike the other institutions in this study, it maintained a Christian religious affiliation that was reflected in its activities. In addition to such standard offerings as vocational training, a gymnasium, and a library, the Association House provided Bible classes, religious clubs, and church services.\textsuperscript{51} Its cooking classes, open to “any woman of good moral character, without regard to religious belief,” were extremely popular, and it employed a full-time Director of Domestic Science. Interestingly, as Association House’s neighborhood became predominantly Jewish, it eventually offered a Kosher cooking class.\textsuperscript{52}

Kosher practices uniquely illustrate the complex relationship between food and cultural identity. For that reason, it is useful to explore the how Jewish reformers approached food reforms at their own settlements. The Chicago Hebrew Institute opened in 1903 just a short distance away from Hull-House. Run by Jews for Jews, the Institute promoted the “social advancement” of the local Jewish population, emphasizing cultural retention. This emphasis at the Chicago Hebrew Institute stood in contrast to the more assimilationist programs offered at the other Jewish Chicago settlements, the Maxwell Street Settlement and the Henry Booth House, both of which had ties to Hull-House.\textsuperscript{53} Reformers at the Institute, particularly head resident

\textsuperscript{52} Association House Records, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois (hereafter cited as AHR).
Philip Seman, were concerned about the fracturing of the Chicago Jewish community and created a place where Jews could come together to reinforce their common beliefs and practices. Cooking classes were among the programs the settlement offered, and it eventually opened a Kosher restaurant, Blintzes Inn. Contrary to assimilationist reforms offered at other settlements, the Chicago Hebrew Institute worked hard to offer dietary programs that would improve the living conditions for neighbors while retaining Kosher practices.

However, not all Jewish reformers took the approach of the Chicago Hebrew Institute. In Chicago, both the Maxwell Street and Henry Booth settlements were more assimilationist. Another Jewish settlement in nearby Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the Abraham Lincoln House, was also interested in Americanization. This settlement provides an interesting case study as it had nationally-recognized connections to culinary reforms. The Abraham Lincoln House offered the first Kosher cooking classes in the midwest, and published *The Settlement Cook Book*, which was the best selling American cookbook for many years.\(^\text{54}\) Despite its fame as a Jewish settlement promoting Kosher cooking, reformers at the Abraham Lincoln House had an active interest in Americanizing its Jewish clientele, and it was only due to the insistence of the neighbors themselves that the settlement offered classes in Kosher cooking.

Initially known as simply “The Settlement,” the Milwaukee Jewish Mission officially changed its name to the Abraham Lincoln House in 1910

\(^{54}\) “Only Kosher Cooking School in West,” Mrs. Simon Kander Papers, Milwaukee Urban Archives, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

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when it moved to a larger facility.\textsuperscript{55} The moving force behind the settlement was Lizzie Black Kander, who had been active in other Milwaukee charitable organizations before opening the settlement in 1900. Kander, a Reform Jew of German descent, spent her entire life in Milwaukee, dedicating herself to the improvement of the local Jewish citizenry. The immigration of thousands of primarily Russian Orthodox Jews to Milwaukee concerned Kander, a member of the Americanized German-Jewish community. She established the settlement as a place where these new residents could learn American customs and acclimate themselves to American Jewish life. In this regard, Kander had the same agenda as the non-Jewish settlement workers in this study. Her reform efforts earned her the nickname “the Jewish Jane Addams,” which indicates Milwaukee reformers’ familiarity with Chicago reform efforts and Kander’s similarities with Addams.\textsuperscript{56}

Ironically, it was traditional Kosher cooking, which Kander did not practice, that made the Abraham Lincoln House famous and financially secure. \textit{The Settlement Cook Book}, originally published as a recipe book for the students in the Kosher cooking classes, became a nationwide bestseller that supported the settlement monetarily for the rest of its existence. This cookbook, significant for commingling Kosher and non-Kosher recipes, provides a fascinating glimpse into the world of food and reform and will be examined in greater detail in Chapter Five.

\textsuperscript{55} Apparently the Settlement leadership wanted to name the new building after Lizzie Black Kander, but she refused. See Marguerite Fowle, "Lizzie Kander’s Legacy: Milwaukee’s Settlement Cook Book," Milwaukee, November 1965, 41-46.

\textsuperscript{56} Victoria Brown, \textit{Uncommon Lives of Common Women: The Missing Half of Wisconsin History: A Project of the Wisconsin Feminists Project Fund, Inc., in Cooperation with the Commission on the Status of Women, the Kohler Foundation, the Oscar Mayer Foundation, the Cudahy Foundation} (Madison: The Fund, 1975), 40.
All of the settlements with foodways programs required someone to run them, and reformers turned to women with training in home economics. While Chicago had several institutions that offered such training, Lewis Institute provided most of the settlements' volunteers and full-time employees. Lewis Institute opened in 1896 as a coeducational polytechnic school, offering both secondary and post-secondary degrees. Lewis was what today would be called a "community college" and was one of the first schools of this kind in the country.\textsuperscript{57} Affiliated with the University of Chicago, Lewis offered students day and evening classes with degree programs in engineering, languages, economics, and sciences. Almost all of Lewis' female students were enrolled in the Domestic Economy Program, which required students to take two years of classes in English, chemistry, biology, and home economics. These students were trained largely to become home economics educators, and many served as settlement house volunteers during their time at Lewis Institute. All of the Chicago settlements in this study had Lewis students on their staffs at some point, and Lewis alumnae directed the home economics divisions of the Chicago Commons and Gads Hill Center. Furthermore, former Hull-House resident Caroline Hunt was the first chair of Lewis' Domestic Economy Program, teaching there from 1896-1901. Edith Abbott received a Collegiate Division degree from Lewis in 1898, and Graham Taylor's daughter Lea, who would later become president of the NFS, graduated from Lewis' high school division in 1900.\textsuperscript{58}


\textsuperscript{58} Lewis Institute Bulletin, 1904; Lewis Institute Annual Register, 1896-8, LIR.
Another Chicago institution with ties to both social settlements and home economics was the University of Chicago. The university was the first to grant a graduate degree in home economics and the first to have a sociology department. When the university incorporated the CSCP in 1920, it became the leading institution in the field of social work. The Departments of Sociology, Household Administration, Social Service Administration, and Education all had connections to both the settlement and home economics movements. Almost all of the significant reformers featured in this study had some relationship to the university. The Abbott sisters, Sophonisba Breckinridge, Jane Addams, Graham Taylor, and Mary McDowell served the university as faculty or guest lecturers. Caroline Hunt was a graduate student in chemistry and physiology while living at Hull-House. Alice Peloubet Norton, a pioneering home economist and student of Ellen Richards, taught in the Education Department and lectured at the CSCP. After leaving the University of Chicago in 1913, Norton served as editor for The Journal of Home Economics for six years. Marion Talbot, the organizer of the Rumford Kitchen exhibit at the 1893 World’s Fair, was the head of the Household Administration Department at the University and worked closely with the Abbotts and Breckinridge.

These myriad connections reveal the common interests of social workers and home economists, and Chicago provided the setting for both groups to pursue their interests. Teeming with immigrants, rife with poverty, reeling from rapid expansion, the growing metropolis became the focal point for reformers of every sort. All kinds of problems needed to be solved in the city, and all kinds of reformers gathered there to do their best.
One sociologist observed in 1902, "The city of Chicago is one of the most complete social laboratories in the world." In this social laboratory, reformers concocted and tested many recipes for culinary reform, hoping to find a way to improve life for poor immigrants while introducing them to American culture. One Chicago reformer, Northwestern University Settlement worker Daniel Lash Marsh, explained the mission of settlements in these terms: "the Settlement is a great American-maker. Here it has a mighty important work. . . . We are doing our level best to make good citizens out of these immigrants, many of whom are not the 'pick.'" Even with these inferior ingredients, Chicago reformers firmly believed they could make immigrants into "great Americans," and achieve that end, they developed recipes for reform that emphasized Americanized eating and domestic practices.

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CHAPTER III

BECOMING THE "HIGH PRIESTESSES OF RIGHT LIVING": IDEOLOGY AND GOALS OF THE HOME ECONOMICS MOVEMENT

A man must be thoroughly acquainted with the details of his business to make his business a success.... It is equally true in regard to the occupations in which women engage . . . . No woman is fitted to be a wife or mother, or to preside over a home, who has not practical knowledge of household science.1

-- Emma Ewing

These words by Emma Ewing reveal the shifting attitudes toward housekeeping and domesticity that took place in the early twentieth century. In response to an era in which observers lauded science and technology as the only means for progress, a dedicated group of women and men shaped a new discipline designed to apply scientific principles to the home: home economics. Home economists characterized housekeeping less as a haphazard set of chores and more as a serious job based on the principles of science.

Under the guidance of home economists, women would learn how to organize their homes in order to work efficiently, cook nutritious foods, manage budgets effectively and maintain healthy atmospheres in which their families could flourish. This changing approach toward housekeeping was in keeping with larger cultural trends, springing out of the Industrial Revolution.

and the subsequent modernization of American society that took place in the nineteenth century.²

In the 1890s, America entered the Progressive Era, a time of widespread reform movements encompassing health, suffrage, temperance, and labor interests. Many saw science and technology as the cure for the problems of society, and numerous reform groups made an effort to incorporate scientific principles into their approaches. The leaders of the home economics movement were no exception; they appropriated the methodology and language of science to legitimize their enterprise.

As an articulated movement, home economics had its origins in the eighteenth century. Englishman Benjamin Thompson, known as Count Rumford, performed numerous experiments on food and founded the science of nutrition. Thompson's research influenced many later home economists, including Ellen Richards, who named her public kitchen after Rumford.³ In America, the first notable interest in what was eventually called home economics came with the publication of Catherine Beecher's Treatise on Domestic Economy in 1841. Beecher's popular book encouraged women to embrace their unique female roles as mothers and housekeepers and see them as essential to the health and success of family life. She endorsed the idea of educating girls, especially in the household arts. Traditionally, girls had learned housekeeping skills from their mothers, but American society

²For a good analysis of how modernization changed the American middle-class family and paved the way for domestic scientists, see Mary Ryan's Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

was changing, and these changes—particularly the rise of industrialization, spread of public education, and elevation of scientific methods—strongly influenced the home and women's relation to it.

Beecher, who was dismayed by many of the changes she saw, became convinced that the American family was headed for ruin if women did not maintain their roles as housekeepers. But Beecher's work stood in direct contrast to the emerging women's movement, which at the 1848 Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention declared women to be fully equal to men. Feminist Elizabeth Cady Stanton eschewed the idea of separate spheres for men and women, arguing that members of either sex had the right to choose freely their own paths in life. For women, that meant freedom from the bonds of marriage and motherhood, if they so chose, and access to the professional world. These opposing positions on women's roles only intensified in the late nineteenth century, adding to the chaotic atmosphere of an America undergoing rapid change. It was in this climate that home economics developed, and its leaders struggled with the various issues of industrialization, urbanization, and feminism as they tried to define their purpose and direction.

One of the biggest catalysts for the development of home economics was the growth of women's education at the college level. The Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 established many state colleges that were by charter co-educational. These schools provided American women with new opportunities, and the government encouraged these colleges to provide classes for women that emphasized household activities.\footnote{Hazel T. Craig, \textit{The History of Home Economics} (New York: Practical Home Economics, 1945), 5.} Several of these
institutions were midwestern agricultural colleges that offered a practical curriculum in addition to the classics. For women, this meant coursework in home economics, such as cooking, housework, childcare, nutrition, sewing, laundry, and budgeting. Some schools initially required female students to perform domestic work for the school and most provided extracurricular home economics activities such as clubs or lectures. By 1900, thirty colleges had departments of home economics, referred to by many different names such as domestic science or household arts.5

In addition to college programs, interest in home economics was spurred by the establishment of professional cooking schools. Three influential home economists opened schools between 1876-1878: Juliet Corson in New York, Maria Parloa in Boston, and Sarah Tyson Rorer in Philadelphia. These schools initially intended to train servants for household work, but public demand led the schools to open their doors to women of all ages and classes. The Boston Cooking School was quickly recognized as a national authority on cooking, and they published a popular cookbook, The Boston Cooking-School Cook Book, and The Boston Cooking-School Magazine.

As more and more females became interested in what was then called “domestic science,” one woman saw the opportunity to use that interest for the public good. Ellen Richards, the first female graduate of MIT, was inspired by philanthropic kitchens in Europe and started her own public kitchen in Boston in 1890.6 There she served frugal New England-style meals to working class people to promote good nutrition at low cost. Richards’ New England Kitchen was the model for the Rumford Kitchen exhibit at the

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5 Ibid., 5-6.
6 Hayden, Grand Domestic Revolution, 159.
Columbian Exposition in 1893. The popularity of the fair’s kitchen exhibit spurred more and more people to turn their attention towards foodways as a reform measure, and Richards was chief among them.

Richards realized that the increasing acceptance of cooking schools, public kitchens, and college programs in domestic science produced a need for trained workers. This need created serious questions about the purpose and direction of home economics and how its instructors should be educated. To address these questions, leading home economists organized a yearly series of conferences in Lake Placid, New York. Led by Richards and hosted by Melville Dewey, the conferences lasted from 1899 to 1908, after which the American Home Economics Association was established.

Historians of the home economics movement recognize the Lake Placid conferences as the birthplace of the field, but analysis of the conferences reveals that it had a troubled childhood. In their work, *Definitive Themes in Home Economics and Their Impact on Families, 1909-1984*, Edna Anderson, Marjorie East, and Joan Thomson divide the conferences into two periods. In the first five years, the conference participants sought to define the field and determine its place as a potential academic discipline. During the last five years participants developed the curricula and worked for greater implementation of home economics at every level of education. But from the very beginning, conference participants were split about what home economics was and its direction.

Certainly the first order of business was finding a name and developing a definition for this field. Conference organizer Ellen Richards is

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often called "the mother of home economics," and the title is not unwarranted, as she was instrumental in its evolution as an accepted academic field and formulated much of the basic ideology of the movement. Richards proposed the name "home economics," which was both descriptive and scientific sounding. Her ideology dominated the Lake Placid conferences, and she often slighted those with differing opinions.

Richard's approach to home economics differed slightly from the ideas set out earlier by Catherine Beecher. Beecher's housewives enjoyed their housework because they knew it was their highest calling as women and it revealed their feminine virtue. For Richards, writing fifty years later, domesticity was no longer simply a virtue that was innately bestowed upon women, but a serious occupation that called for education and professionalism. Beecher had seen industrialism as a threat to home life, but Richards had seen the effects of industrialization play out over time, and realized that it could have a positive impact on family life. She argued that the health of an industrial society depended on home and family as an oasis from the rigors of public life. Instead of remaining household "drudges" (a word Richards loved to employ), women would now use all the benefits of modern industrial society to make their jobs easier. Curiously enough, home economists advocated the incorporation of modern technology into the home at the same time they pictured the home as a retreat from the frenzy of the modern world. The job of the successful housekeeper was then twofold: to run the household as efficiently and productively as a machine-operated factory while creating a quiet facade of serenity and seclusion.8

8 Shapiro, Perfection Salad, 40-41.
Richards, a "hard" scientist who studied chemistry at MIT, wanted home economics to be classified as a science, and she pushed for a categorization of the field that stressed the scientific aspects of inquiry. However, other reformers wanted home economics to be an interdisciplinary subject that incorporated research from the sciences and the humanities. The differing groups reached a compromise of sorts: home economics "was considered as a philosophical subject, a study of relations, while the subjects on which it depended, e.g., economics, sociology, chemistry, hygiene, and others, were considered empirical in their nature and concerned with events and phenomena." 9 Although this classification indicates an interdisciplinary focus, in practice home economics, particularly after the Lake Placid Conferences discussed below, continued to stress the scientific aspects of homemaking and never fulfilled its promise as a truly interdisciplinary field.

Developing a definition of home economics further divided conference participants along the same lines. While the classification of the field seemed to indicate a compromise between the humanities and the sciences, there would be no such compromise when it came to defining and practicing home economics. In her exhaustive work on the origins of home economics, Marjorie Brown describes the opposing viewpoints:

One was for home economists to educate for scientific management of the work of the home for efficiency and economy. The second aim ... was to educate for enhancing development of human capacities through the family so that individuals would develop into "fine," "strong," mature men and women and so that their participation in society would channel social institutions into directions that would advance

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Richards and Caroline Hunt (Lewis Institute instructor and Hull-House resident) first focused on the practical application of science to housekeeping and therefore endorsed coursework that would teach young women how most efficiently to manage their households. According to Richards,

"One of the greatest needs of the country was the appreciation of what science might do for the housewife . . . [in] making her work both easier and more efficient. The obstacle to satisfying those needs seemed the woman herself. One of the darkest spots in our civilization was the ignorance of the fundamentals of health which should be a part of the education of every woman."

Richards believed that industrialism and immigration had changed society and family life, leaving many women ignorant of how properly to care for their homes. The solution was practical instruction in proper housekeeping techniques, taught by professionally trained instructors in such settings as high schools, colleges, and settlements.

Some at the conference believed that this view of home economics was too utilitarian. They felt that home economics should be more concerned with elevation of the individual and promoting the collective good than simply teaching cooking and cleaning. Proponents of this more broad and humanistic approach included Marion Talbot of the University of Chicago, who had worked closely with Richards before the Lake Placid Conferences, but differed with her about the direction home economics should take. She asserted that "the activities of the home are far wider than physical well-

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being...home economics must always be regarded in the light of its relation to the general social system.”\textsuperscript{12} Talbot felt that by simply teaching housekeeping, home economics both limited itself and treated household tasks as something separate from other family activities. Talbot argued that family life was complex and intertwined; therefore, home economics needed to address all aspects of home and family life, not just the domestic work. In fact, she thought it impossible to teach housekeeping in isolation from the other aspects of home life, as housekeeping was always tied to the larger culture of the home. To ignore this fact was to ignore the very nature of home and family life and was, in her opinion, shortsighted and unrealistic. Talbot envisioned home economics as grander than did Richards: “a subject for developing, not mechanical or manual facility, not even hygienic habits, but the meaning of the physical, social, moral, esthetic and spiritual conditions of the home to the individual and to society at large.”\textsuperscript{13}

Richards and the other conference participants largely disregarded Talbot’s opinions. A few others shared her point of view, but most at the conferences endorsed Richards’ more scientific approach, which emphasized practical applications. As a result, home economics developed as Richards had hoped. However, that did not stop Talbot from pursuing her vision. Her work in home economics at the University of Chicago followed the ideology she supported at the Lake Placid conferences and will be discussed in following chapters.

Under Richards’ guidance, home economics seemed often vague and

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 23.
sometimes contradictory. Home economics historian Marjorie Brown points out several inconsistencies in early home economics ideology that were never clearly resolved. Even as conference statements promised that home economics would integrate all of the various interests and knowledge related to domesticity, in practice, following Richards' wishes, home economics' approach emphasized the hard sciences over the humanities and divided the home into separate areas of interest. In addition, there was a reluctance to deal with important theoretical problems at the heart of home economics. Brown found at the conferences,

a predominant evasion of the analytic work necessary for (a) formulating problems of the family which had been recognized as social in origin in the first four meetings and for (b) conceptual organization of the framework of the discipline to address the family. This evasion was reflected, among other things, in the continuous tendency toward expedience to get home economics accepted in schools, colleges, and universities.14

So even as home economists pitched their product to educational institutions, they had not clearly defined what it was they taught. Home economists stated that they wanted to improve family life and uplift the household, but they had never agreed on the basic issue of what constituted a family versus a household. They sought to make home life better, but they did not define the standards by which they might determine improvement. As a result, as Talbot had feared, many programs ended up doing nothing more than teaching practical housekeeping with a scientific emphasis.

Furthermore, the unanswered theoretical questions, focus on consumerism, and separation of housework from family life created some serious problems for home economists in the long run, making a field that had hoped to

14 Brown, 293-4.
empower women one that eventually served to keep them in their places.

To succeed, home economists needed to convince American women and girls that they had limited abilities to instruct each other in the proper ways of keeping house. Isabel Bevier, a pioneering home economist from the University of Illinois, was one of many who tried to educate women about the depths of their domestic ignorance:

Happily the days are passing when the feeling prevails that "anyone can keep house." We have been a long time in learning that housekeeping is a profession for which intelligent preparation is demanded. The woman who attempts to usurp the authority of the trained nurse in charge of the patient does so at the risk of the patient's life. Results quite as disastrous to the life of the household may be expected from the woman ignorant of the first principles of household management and care.\(^\text{15}\)

Home economists, of course, presented themselves as the experts who could provide the ignorant with "intelligent preparation."

Part of the allure home economics had for women was the potential for power it afforded them, for the new domesticity was not only validated by science, but by morality. Home economists hearkened back to older, traditional images of women as domestic angels, but saw a new opportunity for social activism and reform. One cooking teacher was blunt: "If we do our work well, we are the high priestesses of the new religion of right living."\(^\text{16}\)

Home economics was one more way for women to partake in municipal housekeeping, preaching the values of "right living" to both their families and society at large. It was also a means of bringing order to a


chaotic society and a sense of control to people unsure of their roles in an industrial society. "To be overcome by things – that shows weakness," said Richards, who argued that "home economics is the best subject yet found to teach power over things."17

Home economists believed that their field had tremendous appeal as one combining professional work with accepted feminine roles. It straddled the line between those who felt women had no place in public life and those, like Cady Stanton, who believed that women should have equal access to all public professions. Richards, herself a trailblazer, realized the continued resistance to women in the sciences and used her MIT degree to study the chemistry of the household. By turning her attention towards domesticity, Richards created an acceptable field for women who wanted to study science. She promoted home economics as the ultimate female profession, even—or perhaps especially—for unmarried college graduates who had no desire to become wives or mothers. Of course, not all women had to choose between a family and a career in home economics, but home economists reassured those women eschewing married life that they could pursue their professional aspirations without feeling that they were violating gender boundaries or abandoning established female roles. Cora Wichell said they could simply mother in a different way:

Whether it be as the wife and mother in the individual home, or as homemaker in an institutional home – a refuge for orphan children or the aged, or a communal home where business men and women find their . . . respite from the complexity of daily life – the homemaker of vision may serve her country along

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According to home economists, women who chose to pursue professional homemaking could elevate their entire gender and improve the health of countless American families. In addition, home economists sought to make women feel as though their domestic work was of vital importance to the success of the nation, as important, if not more so, than any male pursuits.

Started as a field that hoped to bring respectability to women's work and thereby elevate women's sphere, home economics eventually evolved into a reform movement with interests beyond scientific cooking. More and more home economists embraced the opinions of Dr. William Stillman, who said at the seventh Lake Placid conference in 1905:

> I earnestly believe that the next great revolution for human betterment, along the lines of health, effective usefulness and longevity for the individual and for the mass, will come in the direction of dietary reform. The need is great... Right feeding makes for right life. It is a surer source of happiness and prosperity for a nation than commercial or military supremacy. Right feeding makes destiny.

Correspondingly, home economics expanded its parameters, presenting itself as the cure-all for such larger cultural problems as malnutrition, poverty, intemperance, sexual immorality, and juvenile delinquency. Notice the strong language used by one writer in defense of cooking lessons:

> Why do many of our young people... haunt stores and street corners? Why are there so many crimes committed... what is the cause of the wretched homes that drive the children out into the world? Many times it is ignorance in cooking!... if food is impure the thoughts will be impure, and one can readily understand from this how good dispositions may be ruined by

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improper food . . . If we would have noble, strong and useful men and women, there must be carefully prepared food in the home.20

In 1929, Pearl Ellis also found a clear link between poor food habits and crime: "The noon lunch of the Mexican child . . . is not conducive to learning. The child becomes lazy. His hunger unappeased, he watches for an opportunity to take food from the lunch boxes of more fortunate children. Thus the initial step in a life of thieving is taken.\textsuperscript{21} The author goes even further in a section entitled "Nutrition and Crime:"

The pangs of hunger are accelerators of criminal tendencies. Forgery or stealing follows. The head of the family lands in jail. The rest of the family is helpless . . . If we can teach girls food values and a careful system of budgeting . . . we shall avoid much of [this] trouble . . . in the future.\textsuperscript{22}

Others argued that food practices had an adverse effect on the intellectual capabilities of children. Dr. E. Mather Sill wrote, "no doubt the so-called stupidity or backwardness of many children in the public schools is simply the result of neglect and underfeeding."\textsuperscript{23} Reformer Max Rubner painted a dire picture in 1913 of the poorly fed child:

How can hungry children be able to . . . follow instruction? . . . And so the impoverished child . . . leaves the school with an inferior preparation as compared with other children. He brings less knowledge with him into life, is mentally weaker, he feels his unfavorable social position and carries the seed of discontent and bitterness in him . . . From this source of an unhygienic youth, a great army of weaklings is thrown upon the state, who as workers do not count, and who have to be

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 30-31.
\textsuperscript{23} Dr. E. Mather Sill, "Malnutrition in School Children in New York City," The Journal of Home Economics, October 1909, 373.
According to Rubner, the reason for such problems was not just poverty but bad housekeeping practices. He accused some mothers of "carelessness and ignorance" and adherence to "irrational way[s] of feeding the children."25 Authors of other studies of malnourished families agreed that their condition was more a result of ignorance of nutritional ideals than poverty, and both home economists and temperance advocates pointed to bad eating habits as the root of alcohol abuse.26 Jacob Riis, the popular muckraking journalist, argued that much of the drunkenness found in New York City slums was attributable to "mismanagement and bad cooking at home."27 Researchers who studied the popularity of Chicago saloons concluded that many men frequented them for their cheap, hearty meals, because many of the wives of [Chicago's] foreign laborers know not the least of the art of cooking and hence spoils in attempting to cook the food which the husband provides. [But] their ignorance is far less their sin than ours for we do not give them an opportunity while young to learn the rudiments of housekeeping.28

If only lower-class foreign-born women could be divested of their own customs and taught the proper American way to cook and eat, living conditions would improve and America would literally be a healthier country.

25 Ibid., 22-23.
26 Mabel Hyde Kittredge, Housekeeping Notes; How to Furnish and Keep House in a Tenement Flat (Boston: Whitcomb & Barrows, 1911), 189.
27 Jacob Riis, Children of the Poor (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1892), 197.
Home economists suggested that a crisis surrounded families, homes, and therefore the nation. They wrote article after article bemoaning the current state of homemaking, arguing that if things continued in this way, the country could not progress. Eva White said:

The home stands supreme as the pivot around which whirls every activity and is the gauge of any given time. All kinds of schemes for advancement [of society] may be put forward but unless the home is functioning efficiently, efficiency is itself impossible, absolutely. There is not a single institution which can make up for the incomplete home.29

These were bold claims, but understandable for a field trying to prove its relevance in industrial America. During these early years of the home economics movement, rhetoric was urgent, as in this appeal by Marion Talbot for the inclusion of home economics in college curricula:

In spite of the many new forms of activity in which women are happily and successfully engaging, domestic life will always be a most important function of womankind . . . It is now generally believed that the degree of intelligence brought to bear upon [domestic life] will be a factor of no mean value in determining the progress and prosperity of the individual, the family, and the nation.30

Ellen Richards agreed that home economics instruction was vital to America’s success:

The family is the heart of the country’s life, and every philanthropist or social scientist must begin at that point. Whatever, then, will enlighten the mind and lighten the burden of care of every housekeeper will be a boon . . . The establishment of more homes and their right conduct when established, which results in the better utilization of time, money and strength, means the perpetuity, prosperity, and

30 Marion Talbot, "Domestic Science in the Colleges," Table Talk, 10, no. 9 (September, 1895): 289.
power of the nation.31

If left unschooled in the new housekeeping, women endangered the house, the family, and the nation. And perhaps most dangerous were immigrant women, who had brought with them their own housekeeping traditions which were neither professional nor American. These newcomers soon became the focus of home economists’ fervor. Home economists regarded foreign foodways with suspicion, and every effort was made to replace immigrants’ food traditions. An article in *The Journal of Home Economics* entitled “Homemaking as a Phase of Citizenship” represents the viewpoints of many home economists:

The silent influence of the good housekeeper, surrounded by neighbors from other lands who are eager to learn American ways, is a potent factor in the great work of Americanization. The simple house furnishings, the spotless window curtains, the well-laundered clothing, the careful ventilation, and the well-ordered household activities of the American homemaker will serve as a guide in helping the foreign housewife who observes them to adapt her methods of living to those of her foster homeland.32

The author reveals the bias many reformers held towards immigrants. The clear implication is that foreign homemakers had dirty, smelly, disorganized homes that they eagerly hoped to change. These assumptions formed the basis for many of the reforms directed at immigrants during the Progressive Era. Forthcoming chapters will reveal that these assumptions were not entirely correct, but that did not stop reformers from clinging to them.33

But how to disseminate their message? Home economists spread their

32 Wichell, 32.
33A good discussion of reformers’ attitudes towards foreigners and their cuisine is found in Levenstein’s *Revolution at the Table*, 98-108.
views through publications and education. Magazines such as *The Journal of Home Economics* and *The Boston Cooking-School Magazine* provided articles aimed at both professionals and housewives alike. In addition, home economists published cookbooks designed to familiarize the average homemaker with scientific cookery. Reformers argued that a proper cookbook was capable of "great educational and refining work" and "like the family Bible, has a shelf of its own in every household."³⁴ For women without access to home economics training, the cookbook functioned as "the family lawyer, doctor, minister, and even a professor of domestic economy."³⁵ Home economists also lobbied educators at every level of schooling to incorporate their new field and they succeeded. By 1914, over two hundred and fifty universities and colleges offered home economics courses, with some offering bachelor's and master's degrees. Secondary schools also eagerly embraced home economics as part of their curricula for girls.³⁶ However, many girls, especially recent immigrants, did not attend high school or college and could not afford to go to eastern cooking schools. It was largely for these girls that settlement houses established cooking classes.

Settlements were places where reformers hoped, with the help of neighbors, to address the problems of the neighborhood. As settlement workers got to know their neighbors, they could more fully understand their needs and develop ways to help them. Jane Addams asserted that settlement residents needed:

³⁵ Ibid., 344.
³⁶ Shapiro, 185.
a scientific patience in the accumulation of facts and the steady holding of their sympathies as one of the best instruments for that accumulation . . . [they] must be emptied of all conceit of opinion and all self-assertion, and ready to arouse and interpret the public opinion of their neighborhood. They must be content to live quietly side by side with their neighbors, until they grow into a sense of relationship and mutual interests.37

Because needs varied from place to place, settlements therefore developed into diverse enterprises that offered a variety of activities and facilities, including English classes, daycare, gymnasiums, social clubs, cooperative housing, community kitchens, vocational training, and theatre troupes. The unifying element behind these assorted activities was a concern for the neighborhood and the quality of life of its residents. As one settlement worker put it:

What is a Settlement House? The aim . . . is to bring about a new kind of community life. It is the home of friendly neighbors, and a center of information, organization, and service . . . It should also be the center through which can flow to the neighborhood the cultural life from outside the neighborhood . . . The House should organize the interests of the neighborhood . . . render services to families . . . [and] be the center where the neighborhood can find its own self-expression in thought and action.38

Even as settlements adapted their programs to the needs of the neighborhood, one thing remained constant: a desire to acculturate and Americanize their neighbors—largely recent immigrants. Graham Taylor described the work of the Chicago Commons as “interpreting America to the immigrants and the . . . more hazardous undertaking to interpret the immigrants to Americans.”39 Settlement workers, generally white, middle-

37 Jane Addams, Twenty Years at Hull House (New York: Macmillan, 1910), 126.
class, and college educated, wanted to impart their American
values—particularly their middle-class values of morality and citizenship—to
these newcomers, so that they might become "productive" members of
society. Reformers believed that the Americanization of immigrants was
crucial to the future of American democracy and the health of the country.
Meyer Bloomfield stated, "the work of Americanizing the immigrant . . . is
one of far reaching importance. Upon it depends the continuance of what has
been purchased with a century of struggle and sacrifice." This agenda of
Americanization was openly lauded, as when the Milwaukee Free Press
reported:

The Abraham Lincoln House . . . has become a valuable factor in
the development of good citizenship in Milwaukee . . . This fine
institution . . . serves to teach and Americanize the untrained
product of environment and heredity into noble types of men
and women and good American citizens.

Other settlements sought Americanization, but took a more moderate
approach: "our aims [are] to introduce the foreign-born to the American-
born, to prove that we are all alike under our skins . . ."

But how to Americanize and acculturate? Certainly by adopting
English as the primary language; and accordingly, almost every settlement in
America offered classes in English language, civics, and citizenship. But
settlements pursued Americanization through indirect means as well. They

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40 Of course, the definition of what made one a productive member of society was
determined by the reform community and was subject to debate. This issue will be revisited
in upcoming chapters.
41 Meyer Bloomfield, "Settlements and the New Americans," Social Service Magazine, 11,
no. 2 (April 1905), 48.
42 "A Jewish Settlement House and Its Practical Mission," Milwaukee Free Press, 10
November, 1912.
43 Mary McDowell, University of Chicago Settlement history, Mary McDowell Settlement
introduced young people to American sports, American dress, and American cultural practices through clubs, classes, and social gatherings. In addition, settlements used foodways as a means of acculturation. Reformers, including Jane Addams, saw food as an important component of cultural identity and an avenue by which they could influence the personal lives of immigrants. This emphasis on food is indicated by the fact that at the turn of the century, the majority of American settlements offered some kind of culinary activities, including cooking classes, housekeeping centers, kitchen gardens, coffee houses, diet kitchens, hot lunches, and milk dispensaries.

Settlement workers and home economists were not the only ones who recognized the relationship between Americanized eating habits and assimilation. Many of those who wanted immigrants to assimilate for political and social reasons believed that foreign attitudes towards work and society would only be abandoned when immigrants abandoned traditional diets and rituals. Unions and companies set up their own homemaking courses for immigrant girls in the hopes that by learning how to cook American-style, their families would quickly adopt other American habits. The measure of Americanization was often judged, then, by the food habits of those studied. One social worker described an Italian family as "still eating spaghetti, not yet assimilated." The importance of food as a tool of

44 Davis' *Spearheads for Reform* provides a good overview of typical settlement activities. For specific examples, see Addams' *Twenty Years at Hull-House.*
45 Woods and Kennedy's *Handbook of Settlements* lists all of the American settlements in existence in 1911, and 255 out of 334 settlements described (76%) had foodways programs of some kind.
46 Levenstein, *Revolution at the Table,* 104.
Americanization will be examined more closely in the next chapter.

If Americanization was the goal of settlement workers, the game plan depended on home economists. These professionals insisted only they could be trusted to teach American foodways and housekeeping. And they did just that, teaching in several venues including public kitchens, schools, and of course, settlements. Many Chicago reformers had ties to both movements. For example, Caroline Hunt spent a few years as a Hull-House resident before becoming an instructor in home economics at Lewis Institute. Once there she trained future home economists, many of whom did volunteer work at Chicago settlements. Winifred Collins, a Lewis Institute graduate, served as the director of the cooking school at the Chicago Commons for many years. Jane Addams, most often associated with settlements, was repeatedly invited to attend the Lake Placid conferences and was present in 1908.49 Addams' interest in home economics and the work of Ellen Richards inspired her to open the Hull-House Coffee House.50

The settlement house and home economics movements came together, then, on dietary reforms. Settlement houses became the place where home economists could put their ideas in motion. At the seventh Lake Placid conference, Isabel Hyams presented a paper entitled "Teaching of Home Economics in Social Settlements." She maintained that settlement food programs should serve as necessary supplements to public school programs, which were already overtaxed. And unlike public school curricula, which

50 Ellen Richards, Plain Words About Food: The Rumford Kitchen Leaflets (Boston: Whitcomb & Barrows, 1899), 148.
primarily focused on basic education, settlements' research into housing conditions enhanced their programs. Isabel Hyams said they could tailor their classes to the specific needs of neighborhood girls, "which was essential before the children could be intelligently helped [sic], as it was thru [sic] these little ones that we hoped to reach the home and the homemakers." 51

Many home economists saw settlements as the ideal setting in which to implement their ideas, especially as they were both female-dominated. Like home economics, the settlement movement interested college-educated women looking for an "appropriate" female profession. Jane Addams saw settlement work as a way for women to use their innate nurturing skills to improve society. Reformer Vida Scudder suggested that settlement work served to satisfy the "restless" feeling a woman had "unless she [was] taking care of somebody." 52 Settlement women, largely unmarried, portrayed themselves in a positive light as mothers to all of the neighborhood children. Addams herself referred to Hull-House as her child, reckoning that she had mothered thousands through her work there. Even though some settlement workers had a more radical feminist agenda than home economists—women at Hull-House pushed for suffrage and ran for political office—they shared many goals, including the improvement of living conditions. Settlement workers also embraced home economics as a tool for helping the immigrant girls in their neighborhoods adjust to American life. These two feminized movements worked together for many years, promoting a relatively conservative view of women's role in the family even as the reformers

52 Vida Scudder, A Listener in Babel, 57, quoted in Davis, Spearheads for Reform, 37.
themselves adopted non-traditional female roles.

Home economics and social settlements had much in common. They both got their start in the late nineteenth century, both were female-dominated, and both sought to establish public professions in which women could use their talents to assist the underprivileged. Both attempted to improve the quality of American life, especially for the working classes. Each movement also emphasized Americanization. As the foreign-born population grew in the late nineteenth century, social critics and reformers argued that the retention of old-world customs could be harmful. Americanization during the Progressive Era centered on English and citizenship classes, but both home economics and settlement house workers felt those efforts would be strengthened with foodways reforms.

Reformers expressly designed programs to improve the health of immigrants while simultaneously Americanizing them through exposure to American eating habits. While these reforms did not always succeed, the emphasis that both the settlement house and home economics movements placed on them was significant. Addams spoke for both movements when she argued that food reforms might solve a host of problems, including malnourishment, intemperance, and wastefulness. In addition, some reformers hoped that by changing immigrant diets, they might imbue the working-class immigrants with middle-class values, assuming that the middle-class lifestyle was both desirable to immigrants and more authentically "American." Immigrants' reactions to these efforts varied; many struggled to negotiate their new identities as Americans, with some embracing Americanization, whereas others held on to traditional ethnic
behavior and attitudes, including foodways. Clearly both immigrants and reformers viewed food as an important component of cultural identity. For reformers who believed the very future of the culture was at stake, immigrants' culinary practices became natural targets for change.
CHAPTER IV

"STILL EATING SPAGHETTI—NOT YET ASSIMILATED": AMERICANIZATION THROUGH FOODWAYS

We are located in the heart of a foreign community but the children of these alien peoples are born American citizens and will be a part of our American system. Shall they be American in ideas and ideals as well as by birth? That is the question which faces us who know no other than the American tradition, and upon its proper solution a great deal of our national stability depends.1

--Alfred Granger

Between 1877 and 1920, over thirty million people came to America. Immigrants had long flocked to this country, but these numbers were unprecedented; in 1890, immigration increased 40% from 1880 and continued to grow until immigration restrictions went into effect in the 1920s.2 Additionally, starting in the late 1880s, increasing numbers of immigrants came from southern and eastern Europe. By 1896, more of these so-called “new” immigrants arrived than those from northern and western Europe. These groups created distinct ethnic enclaves, concentrated largely in cities. These ethnic communities comforted immigrants but often disconcerted native-born Americans, who worried that their residents’ adherence to Old

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World traditions might have an adverse effect on what native-born Americans believed to be American culture and character.

This situation sparked a lively debate about Americanism and assimilation that in many ways continues today. Mainline Progressive Era reformers, who were often white, native-born, and middle class, argued that foreigners needed to be Americanized, but disagreed about how that might be accomplished. The adoption of the English language and official citizenship was universally advocated, but many reformers did not think that that was enough. For example, home economists and settlement workers argued that foodways needed to be a key component of Americanization, and they pursued that agenda even in the face of resistance from ethnic groups.

The push for Americanization was related to the immigration boom of the late nineteenth century. With so many new people entering the country, America was bound to change, and that prospect was alarming to some. General Francis A. Walker's 1899 argument in favor of immigration restrictions illustrates the prevalence of fear and prejudice towards new immigrants as well as the belief in Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic superiority:

Only a short time ago, the immigrants from southern Italy, Hungary, Austria, and Russia together made up hardly more than one per cent of our immigration. Today the proportion has risen to something like forty per cent, and threatens soon to become fifty or sixty per cent, or even more. The entrance into our political, social, and industrial life of such masses of peasantry, degraded below our utmost conceptions, is a matter which no intelligent patriot can look upon without the gravest apprehension and alarm. These people have no history behind them which is of a nature to give encouragement. They have none of the inherited instincts and tendencies which made it comparatively easy to deal with the immigration of olden time. They are beaten men from beaten races; representing the worst
failures in the struggle for existence. They have none of the ideas and aptitudes which fit men to take up readily and easily the problem of self government, such as belong to those who are descended from the tribes that met under the oak trees of old Germany to make laws and choose chieftains.  

Extreme critics of immigration proposed deportation or restriction laws and eventually some of those measures took place. Some native-born Americans accepted immigration as a necessary part of America's growth, as long as immigrants appeared to be serious about becoming productive members of society. Citizenship, gainful employment, and adoption of American customs all indicated commitment to their new country. And to aid in assimilation, reformers and educators established numerous of Americanization programs nationwide, addressing all facets of cultural identity. They created political clubs, civics classes, English classes, women's and men's groups, and employee-sponsored seminars.

Assimilationist policies were not new. The government had used them with Native Americans and other earlier immigrants, but these new immigrants posed different problems. First, where previous immigrant populations from northern and western Europe had assimilated rather easily, the subsequent immigrants from other areas had a more difficult time. There are several reasons for this: "old" immigrants were largely Protestant, Anglo-Saxon or Teutonic, literate, and from countries with constitutional

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5 Ibid., 3.
governments. Among the exceptions were Irish Catholics and European Jews, who did encounter problems in America. However, the new immigrants differed from earlier migrants. Many were Christian, but Catholic or Orthodox instead of Protestant. And those who were Jewish often clashed with both Gentiles and American-born Jews.

Early Jewish immigrants, largely from western Europe, adapted some of their traditions in hopes of becoming accepted members of American society. For example, Jews from the first wave of migration (1820–1880) developed Reform Judaism, which redefined Judaism in the American context. It was an innovation designed to keep Judaism alive in America, and many Jews who hoped to retain their Jewish identity even as they became Americans embraced it.6 This generation of Jews became largely assimilated and saw subsequent Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe as threats to their success. As a result, some Americanized Reform Jews, like Lizzie Black Kander, took a vested interest in introducing new Jewish immigrants to American culture. This was not well received by many of the new Jewish immigrants, who openly criticized American Reform Judaism, preferring to remain Orthodox.7 This adherence to traditional religious practices on the part of both Jewish and Catholic immigrants was a source of concern to many nativists. The growing numbers of ornate cathedrals and temples across the country served as visual reminders that American religious life was no longer exclusively Protestant.

These "new" immigrants also differed in that some had no intention of

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7 Ibid., 231-4.
permanently settling in America, hoping instead to make enough money to return home and establish themselves. Italian, Greek, Chinese, Mexican, and Slavic immigration patterns reveal many more young men emigrating than women or family units. Many were uninterested in becoming American citizens; they simply wanted to use American opportunities to improve their situations in the Old World. While the majority of these men never returned home, their original attitudes would have made them more reluctant to assimilate quickly, and their large numbers frustrated assimilationists.8 But these so-called “birds of passage” were not the only problems. Reformers soon discovered even those immigrants who intended to stay in America did not always want to adopt American cultural practices.

Moreover, the sheer numbers of culturally and regionally diverse migrants made any unified approach to Americanization difficult. Some immigrants wanted to assimilate, but reformers found that they could not easily provide programs that appealed to all immigrants regardless of nationality and religion. Instead, they frequently had to have separate clubs and classes for Italians, Greeks, Slavs, Russians, etc., all taking into account their cultural heritages.

All of these factors made the task of Americanization costly and difficult, yet reformers persevered. This indicates just how vital they thought assimilation was to the success of the country. But why did they hold this belief so dearly? Why did they see immigration as a problem that needed solving? Why did they not advocate a multicultural approach to

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acculturation? Why was their definition of Americanism predicated on acceptance of WASP cultural practices, including foodways? The answers are complex, but they reveal a belief in Anglo-Saxon cultural superiority combined with a genuine concern for the health and vitality of Americans, especially immigrants.

One of the most hotly debated concerns about immigration was how all of these new residents might affect the racial makeup of America. Many Americans of Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic descent believed in the exceptionality of their racial backgrounds and cultural practices. It was unclear how immigrants of different ethnic backgrounds might change the American character, especially if they intermarried. Some already believed that the influx of new “races” brought on by immigration would be detrimental. Alfred Reed, a doctor for the United States Public Health and Marine Hospital Service, argued that certain ethnic groups were by nature reluctant to assimilate and would have an adverse effect on American character:

Only those peoples should be admitted...whom experience has shown will amalgamate quickly and become genuine citizens... No race is desirable which does not tend to lose its distinctive traits in the process of blending with our own social body. It would seem from history that the Jew only blends inadvertently and against his conscious endeavor and desire. Hence the process of true assimilation must be very backward... In general, immigrants from the Mediterranean countries should be excluded, especially those from Greece, South Italy, and Syria, as well as most Hebrews, Magyars, Armenians, and Turks.9

"Racial purity" was the primary controversy in the immigration and

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Americanization debate. However, there was also widespread belief that immigrants caused an increase in crime and disease. Even though a few researchers disputed these claims, the image of the unhealthy, degenerate immigrant was endorsed by many other reputable scholars and continued to have cultural currency with native-born Americans. Robert M. Yerkes, president of the American Psychological Association and a Harvard Ph.D., pointed to U.S. Army intelligence tests that indicated lower intelligence levels for immigrants than native-born Americans as proof that immigrants were detrimental to American society. Without immigration restrictions, Yerkes warned Americans that they could expect "high taxes, full almshouses, a constantly increasing number of schools for defectives, of correctional institutions, penitentiaries, hospitals, and special classes in our public schools."10

Additionally, there was concern that immigrants' continued acceptance of low-paying jobs was adversely affecting the American standard of living.11 Historian Maxine Seller argues that these concerns were secondary to the larger sentiment that immigrants generally represented "a morally, culturally, and intellectually inferior species, which, if left un-Americanized, would destroy the American city and menace the middle-class Anglo-Saxon way of life."12 No less of an authority than Woodrow Wilson addressed the deficiencies of "new" immigrants in his 1901 work, History of the American

now there came multitudes of men of the lowest class from the south of Italy and men of the meaner sort out of Hungary and Poland, men out of the ranks where there was neither skill nor energy nor any initiative of quick intelligence; and they came in numbers which increased from year to year, as if the countries of the south of Europe were disburdening themselves of the more sordid and hapless elements of their population, the men whose standards of life and of work were such as American workmen had never dreamed of hitherto.\textsuperscript{13}

Until immigration was restricted by law—which it was, starting in 1921—Americanization of foreigners was promoted as the only way to insure the health and welfare of America.

Americanization therefore became the order of the day in the Progressive Era, but how should Americanization be defined and accomplished? On one end of the spectrum lay those who endorsed total cultural assimilation including language, citizenship, religion, lifestyle, and cultural practices. This position is reflected in Alfred Reed’s quotation, with its insistence on the abandonment of all “distinctive traits” associated with ethnic groups. Those Americanizers on the opposite end of the spectrum accepted diverse cultural practices, as long as they did not promote anarchy or anti-Americanism. Many proponents of Americanization held a middle ground, wanting to assimilate immigrants but not at the total expense of their own cultural heritage. No matter what the position, all Americanizers agreed that some sort assimilation was critical to America’s well being.

Reformers who worked directly with immigrants were on occasion more liberal in their interpretations of Americanization and assimilation.

practices. It is not surprising that as reformers got to know people with different cultural practices than their own, many of their prejudices fell away and they started to see beyond ethnic stereotypes. Jane Addams was certainly one of the most tolerant Americanizers. She helped to keep immigrants connected to their heritages by encouraging such ethnic traditions as dancing, song, festivals, and handiwork. She was particularly concerned about the alienation that she observed between first generation immigrants and their American-born children. To address this concern, Addams established the Hull-House Labor Museum, hoping to “build a bridge between European and American experiences in such wise as to give them both more meaning and a sense of relation.”

Addams believed that Americanization should help immigrants to adjust to America while not stripping them of their culture:

The process of Americanization ought not to be the stamping of colonial America upon the present.... But it ought rather to bring together all the forms and capacities of all groups, coordinate them, wring from them their own living hopes. The Italian must be wholly himself before he can become an American. We do not want the Italian to be a New Englander. America is bigger than its past.... America must live in the present, and out of the present build its hopes and plans for the future.

Addams’ broad-minded approach was echoed by her Chicago colleague, Sophonisba Breckinridge, who argued that “Americanization [does not] mean persuading families of other national origin to do what Americans have done, or what foreign groups have been encouraged in the past to think

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14 Addams, Twenty Years, 235-6.
15 Jane Addams, President’s Address, Report of the Sixth Conference of the National Federation of Settlements, Lea Demerest Taylor Papers, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.
not inconsistent with American standards.” Meyer Bloomfield of Boston
also advocated moderate assimilation:

Where the settlement has tried [to help] the new comer adjust
himself to new conditions, without causing him to lose the best
of what he brought with him, and with tender regard to his
traditions which no degree of Americanization can afford to see
him lose; where it has attended to the work of naturalizing him,
protecting him, and showing him his sights, it has invariably
won the desired response.

Even so, many of these liberal reformers maintained a sense of cultural
superiority that is revealed in their often patronizing and paternalistic (or in
many cases, maternalistic) approach to immigrants. Both Addams and
Breckinridge, while very sympathetic to the poor, urban immigrant, believed
that their middle-class Anglo-Saxon lifestyle was the model to which all
would naturally aspire. Chicago settlement worker Josepha Kodis reveals
this subtle bias: “The [University of Chicago] Settlement has very well
understood its cultural role and wishes to take all different nationalities as
they are, to agree with their ideals and try only to purify and clarify them.”

Others’ disdain for foreigners was more subtle. Mabel Hyde Kittredge
of the Association of Housekeeping Centers of New York exemplifies this
position. In her 1913 article, “The Need of the Immigrant,” Kittredge
criticized those reformers who had developed programs to educate
immigrants without any knowledge about them, yet could not hide her
condescension towards “ignorant” immigrant practices:

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16 Sophonisba Breckinridge, “Education for the Americanization of the Foreign Family,”
The Journal of Home Economics, May 1919, 188.
17 Meyer Bloomfield, “Settlements and the New Americans,” Lea Demerest Taylor Papers,
Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois.
18 Josepha Kodis, The Foreigners and the University Settlement,” Graham Taylor Papers,
Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois (hereafter cited as GTP).

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The well-meaning altruistic men and women of this country have been too content to decide what is best for the foreigner who comes to our shores, and then having decided and having worked out their knowledge into laws, wonder that the result is disappointment... Have we considered the fact that these dazed people have no knowledge of how to use the comforts we are giving them?... Why should we think, for example, that the Ruthenians, filled with such superstitions as that a pregnant mother must not bathe, that if the top of a child’s head is washed before the second birthday he will be bewitched, why should we think that such foreigners as these will appreciate and put to good use our bath tubs? We have to do more than put a bath tub in such a home. We have to make these people see the benefit of bathing and the result of dirt.19

In an age where science was privileged, any non-scientific beliefs and practices were seen as backwards. And in some cases those practices could have a deleterious effect, particularly concerning health and the spread of disease. But reformers did not often differentiate between truly unhealthy foreign practices and the merely distasteful or unfamiliar ones, which is one of the reasons that the Americanization process proved so problematic. In her critique of the welfare state, *The Wages of Motherhood*, Gwendolyn Mink points out that even though some reformers questioned rapid Americanization, it was ultimately "reformers, not immigrants, [who] determined which changes were 'socially necessary' and chose the cultural contributions immigrants should make. Social workers and nutritionists discouraged 'garlicky,' spicy, mixed foods like spaghetti and goulash, for example, while welcoming handicrafts, pottery, and folksongs."20

Despite its popularity among the native-born citizenry,

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Americanization was not pursued in any unified manner largely because of the differences between reformers about what constituted Americanization. There was a general view that immigrants needed to adapt to American culture, but as revealed above, just what that meant was a subject of great debate. At the very least, assimilationists favored citizenship training and adopting English as the primary language. After that, reformers disagreed. But both home economists and settlement workers agreed that one important venue for Americanization was the home. Understanding the cultural power of food and home, reformers hoped to make their ethnic identities more suitably American.

Of course, Americanization was not the only reason that reformers sought to change foreign domestic practices. As discussed in the previous chapter, both home economists and settlement workers believed that poor food practices caused—or at least intensified—intemperance, crime, juvenile delinquency, sexual immorality, and infant mortality. The *Boston Cooking-School Magazine* argued that "badly cooked food" was one of the main reasons for drunkenness and endorsed "good, wholesome, satisfying food [that] anticipates and prevents the desire for stimulants. The mission of diet reform... is a crusade against intemperance in both eating and drinking."21 In a report on the popularity of saloons, Chicago reformer William Harrison highlighted the connection between bad cooking and alcohol use and advocated domestic education for immigrant girls as a solution. In his view, it was not the wives' faults, "for we do not give them an opportunity while

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21 *The Boston Cooking-School Magazine*, 7 (August/September 1902), 71.
young to learn the rudiments of housekeeping.” Only when that situation was rectified would public health improve.

Even this interest in public health had a connection to Americanization, for a healthy populace was necessary for the continued success of the country. If immigrants wanted to insure a productive future for America, they needed to adopt proper American housekeeping practices. One writer contended that “if [America] would have noble, strong and useful men and women, there must be carefully prepared food in the home.” She then provided the Roman Empire as an example of how improper foodways might destroy an entire civilization: “The Romans... made a fatal mistake when they became slaves to luxury. Highly seasoned food ruined them and the nation fell.” Marion Talbot and Sophonisba Breckinridge believed that among immigrants “the lack of... regular feeding... and the loss of regular family life, and especially the family meal” was one of the main sources of juvenile delinquency. The only remedy was dietary reforms, for if alien practices remained unchecked, the problems that already plagued the urban working classes would continue unabated.

Culinary reforms also had a gendered dimension; these were reforms developed by women for women. Most reformers directed other Americanization efforts largely at men, as women did not yet have equal rights as American citizens. Women’s citizenship was tied to men’s, either

22 William Harrison, “The Social Function of the Saloon,” Chicago Commons (July-September, 1898), CCCHS.
their husbands or fathers. If directly related to an American male citizen, a woman shared his status. Conversely, if a female citizen married a foreigner she took on his legal identity, losing her claim to American citizenship.25 Under this system, it was clearly more important to concentrate citizenship drives on men than women. However, many female reformers called this approach to Americanization shortsighted. Americanization was about more than citizenship. True cultural assimilation of the entire family would have to be firmly rooted in the home, which home economist Marion Talbot called a microcosm of larger society. Lasting social change could only take place if the home as well as the larger culture transformed.

There was also a practical reason for making women a part of the Americanization agenda: the very presence of female immigrants (whether wives or daughters) in an ethnic enclave indicated a commitment to lasting settlement in America. As previously mentioned, many young men came to America with no intention of staying forever. If they had their own families, they left them at home, hoping to return to them at some point. However, if whole families emigrated, they were more likely to become permanent residents. Therefore, reformers approached immigrant women with more assurance that their efforts would not be wasted; these women were here to stay. And as it was generally their responsibility to transmit a variety of cultural practices, they became natural targets for Americanizers.

By making the home a central focus of Americanization, female reformers also created a space for their own efforts. They advocated what has been labeled “social feminism,” a position that promoted women’s

participation in the public arena in accepted female fields of interest, such as home economics. Settlement workers and home economists added to the social feminist movement by changing the Americanization movement from one that had been exclusively male to one in which women took a central place as both actors and subjects.\textsuperscript{26} But women’s experiences with Americanization varied greatly. Female reformers who promoted Americanization often lived different lives than those they espoused for the women they tried to assimilate. Reformers were largely middle or upper-class single women, while the women they wanted most to reach were poor immigrant wives. Interestingly these reformers did not encourage foreign women to follow in their footsteps; instead they trained girls for lives as wives and mothers of working-class men. Historian Maxine Seller contends that this was intentional: dietary programs provided “a means of...social control... [intended to keep] immigrant women and their families ‘in their place,’ that is, in the lower socioeconomic classes.”\textsuperscript{27} This dissonance between the roles reformers advocated and their own lived experiences is striking.

Foodways consequently became part of the Americanization agenda for a variety of reasons. Reformers believed that there existed genuine health concerns that could be ameliorated with changed eating habits and it seemed to be an ideal pursuit for female reformers. But there was also a larger and more fundamental reason: the belief that food practices displayed clear markers of ethnic identity that needed to be supplanted in order for

\textsuperscript{26} See McClymer, “Women in Americanization” for more on women’s impact on Americanization efforts.

assimilation to occur. Despite their varied attitudes towards Americanization, all of the reformers in this study favored changing immigrant eating habits as part of a larger assimilationist agenda. Some reformers made explicit references to the connection between food and Americanization such as “still eating spaghetti – not yet assimilated.”28 Others were subtler, such as Graham Taylor, who criticized Americanization reforms that “discourage[d] and even repress[ed] [immigrants] in cherishing the value of their own speech and song, their folk-lore and their folk-games, their love of liberty.”29 Notice that Taylor does not include foodways in his list of what Americanizers should not do. In fact, at the same time that he was proposing a level of acceptance for certain ethnic traditions, Taylor was working to change immigrant diets through cooking classes at his settlement. Clearly Americanizers understood the cultural significance of food and therefore believed that adaptation to American eating practices was a necessary component of assimilation.

Food’s relationship to cultural identity has long been recognized. Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin in his 1825 work *The Physiology of Taste* famously stated, “Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are.” But for reformers of the Progressive Era, Savarin’s axiom was interpreted culturally, not physiologically. They believed that eating habits defined more than just body type; they determined one’s national identity. Food was—and is—a key component of ethnicity. One interesting and commonplace indicator of

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29 Graham Taylor, “Developing the American Spirit” in *America and the New Era*, by Elisha M. Friedman, 53, GTP.
this is the number of ethnic slurs that are foodways-related. Terms like “kraut,” “frog,” and “coon” have been directed at specific ethnic groups that supposedly eat those foods. Historian Donna Gabaccia contends:

food and language are the cultural traits humans learn first, and the ones that they change with the greatest reluctance. Humans cannot easily lose their accents when they learn new languages after the age of about twelve; similarly, the food they ate as children forever defines familiarity and comfort....Food... entwines intimately with much that makes a culture unique, binding taste and satiety to group loyalties. Eating habits both symbolize and mark the boundaries of cultures.

For immigrants to America, then, culinary customs furnished a way to stay connected to the place they left behind and maintain traditions that had meaning beyond the foodstuffs involved. In fact, ethnic foodways may have taken on greater importance in America as a means of asserting power and control in a country that was utterly unfamiliar. Gabaccia argues that this “feeling of mastery [of traditional cooking] may have initially overwhelmed any normal, counterbalancing interest in the varied foods of their new homeland.”

Faced with immigrants’ generally conservative attitudes towards food, reformers had their jobs cut out for them. Yet it was that very conservatism that made their task so urgent. They believed that if they did not actively work to change the immigrant diet, immigrants would not do so on their own. And reformers feared that unchanged eating habits might have dire consequences. Historian Gwendolyn Mink asserts that Americanizers

31 Donna Gabaccia, We Are What We Eat, 6-8.
32 Ibid., 48.
“believed that ethnic cooking proved the persistence of moral, social, and political difference – that immigrants would never relinquish old-country mores until they abandoned old-country cooking.”\textsuperscript{33} In an article in \textit{The Journal of Home Economics} two reformers voiced this very concern: “[immigrants’] first thought on landing is something to eat, and this fact places food in the first rank of importance in our plans for Americanization.”\textsuperscript{34} Reformers needed to act fast if Americanized diets were to take hold. But in order for Americanization to take place, reformers had to address how to best change cooking practices and what the content of those practices should be.

The first concern was addressed by home economists, who advocated three basic programs by which immigrant foodways could be Americanized: public kitchens, cooking classes, and housekeeping flats. These types of programs were the most commonly implemented by settlements and public schools around the country, but institutions supplemented these with school lunches, milk dispensaries, kitchen garden clubs, and women’s groups that promoted American domestic ideals. The centerpiece of these programs was the cooking class. Gwendolyn Mink posits that “it is not too farfetched to treat the homemaking class as the fulcrum of the [maternalist reformers’] Americanization strategy. The class was not only a means of social reform—of fighting poverty disease, and malnutrition—but was ‘nothing less than an effort to save our social fabric from what seems inevitable disintegration.’”\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{33} Mink, \textit{Wages of Motherhood}, 90.
Cooking classes initially targeted foreign-born women, but settlement workers and home economists quickly realized that many of these women had little interest in Americanized diets. Instead of abandoning their goals, however, reformers turned their attentions to immigrants' daughters, many of whom were born in America. Classes for these girls intended to supplant their immigrant mothers' domestic instruction with American methods, with the hope that if the girls did not succeed in getting their mothers to change they would at least adopt Americanized foodways when they married.36

In addition to cooking classes, settlements often offered housekeeping classes or "model flats." Reformers designed these programs to work in conjunction with cooking classes, although plenty of girls did not participate in both. Housekeeping classes were less controversial than cooking classes among the immigrant population, perhaps because their American housing often differed from what they had experienced in Europe. Reformers taught girls how to keep house through cleaning, decorating, shopping, and even budgeting. The model flats consisted of actual apartments or sets of rooms where the girls could practice housekeeping skills and occasionally even live for short periods of time. (Both cooking and housekeeping classes will be discussed in much greater detail in the following chapter.)

Some settlements and communities had public kitchens. Modeled on Ellen Richards' original New England Kitchen, these places provided people with nutritious and inexpensive food. While established more to rectify malnutrition and intemperance than to Americanize immigrants,

Americanization was certainly a by-product of their efforts. Public kitchens like the one at Hull-House offered very few ethnic foods and reinforced American ways of preparing and serving food. While public kitchens meant to help, their presence insulted some immigrant women who felt that there was nothing wrong with their own recipes and did not want reformers to strip them of their power as food preparers. Additionally, many of the potential patrons of public kitchens did not care for the foods on the menu, or hesitated to risk the appearance of poverty associated with those who frequented public kitchens. Public kitchens failed across the country, although their function was reproduced in some respects by public restaurants and soup kitchens, both of which continue. Despite its downfall, the public kitchen experiment sheds light on the interest in assimilation via foodways and will be examined further in Chapter Five.

Settlements also had auxiliary programs with nutritional emphases such as kitchen gardens, milk dispensaries, and school lunches. Reformers designed kitchen garden classes to introduce very young girls—four and five-year-olds—to concepts of domesticity. Students were given miniature household items with which to practice rudimentary housekeeping skills such as sweeping and dishwashing. Settlements developed milk dispensaries to provide infants with sterilized milk, and they served to reinforce the American emphasis on dairy as an important part of a child’s diet, even

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37 For more on women’s access to power through foodways and their rejection of foodways reform, see Michael Eula, “Failure of American Food Reformers Among Italian Immigrants in New York City, 1891-1897,” *Italian Americana* 18 (2000): 86-99.
38 Ellen Richards, *Plain Words About Food: The Rumford Kitchen Leaflets* (Boston: Whitcomb & Barrows, 1899), 139.
though some ethnic groups eschewed milk consumption. Horrified reformers found children drinking coffee and wine in the home, and they pressured immigrant mothers to use the dispensaries. Reformers also Americanized children through the growing lunch programs offered at settlements and schools alike. Like public kitchens, lunch programs provided nutritious, economical lunches for children, and in the process they promoted American food preferences and practices such as separate dishes and meat-heavy menus.

It was clear to reformers that foreign culinary practices must be changed. But what should they become? One of the interesting results of dietary reforms was the debate they produced about what constituted the American cuisine. Before the Progressive Era, not much had been written about a unified American palate, and foodways in this country remained regionalized. But in their efforts to assimilate the “other,” reformers had to define themselves. Laura Shapiro has argued that it is in this time period (1870–1920) that American cuisine became truly “American” as demarcated primarily by home economists.40

Foodways reformers in search of a distinctive American menu turned first to New England. This was due in part to New England’s prominence in the home economics movement. Boston was home to the most significant cooking school in the country, and Ellen Richards worked in Massachusetts. But New England cuisine had a larger appeal to home economists. It was a simple and unadorned way of cooking that emphasized substance over style. New England cuisine, with its codfish, johnnycake, and Indian pudding,

40 Shapiro, Perfection Salad, 304.
embodied the core values that Ellen Richards was promoting: "self-control, self-denial, regard for others, good temper, good manners."\textsuperscript{41} Certainly southern or southwestern cuisine, with buttermilk or chiles, were too rich or spicy to meet with Richards' approval. She favored the New England diet, and by and large dietary programs nationwide adopted it.

Americanizers further defined national foodways by contrasting them to foreign traditions that they clearly found inappropriate. In fact, reformers said as much or more about what American cuisine was \textit{not} that what it \textit{was}. Oftentimes they criticized specific foods such as garlic or cabbage. Certainly spiciness was taboo, and reformers harped on those groups that considered taste before nutrition. As one reformer noted, "With most nationalities, when no financial limitations exist, the diet is likely to contain too much protein and to be too rich and hearty and too highly seasoned."\textsuperscript{42} Home economists wanted to shift the emphasis in culinary practices away from the sensual pleasures of eating to the strict appreciation of nutritional values. Certainly their recipes promoted bland and simple foods that many ethnic groups literally found distasteful.

Reformers also criticized the ways people prepared and ate their food. Home economics articles reveal a preference for multi-course meals with distinct food items. A typical supper menu might call for meat, a vegetable side dish, potatoes, and a light dessert. Ethnic groups who preferred one-dish meals that might even be eaten out of the pot distressed reformers. Even

\textsuperscript{41} Ellen Richards, \textit{The Cost of Living as Modified by Sanitary Science} (New York: John Wiley, 1900), 67.

though these practices might have been practical, considering the kitchen facilities of many immigrants, reformers repeatedly stressed the American style of eating and serving food.

Some reformers, especially in the face of resistance to change, eventually took a closer look at foreign foodways and found acceptable practices. One home economist praised the Hungarian housewife for her "careful shopping" and use of "homely vegetables and meat" which, although "despised by American housewives," under her preparation became "things of beauty and joy to the palate."43 Another reformer admitted that "Jewish women are as a whole good cooks...Thus the problem is not to get them to adopt American cooking but to modify their own style of cooking so as to eliminate its harmful features while preserving its beneficial qualities."44

Most Americanizers struck a balance between advocating an American diet and adapting ethnic traditions. In the process, some reformers realized that foreign food practices or ingredients might have benefits for American cuisine as well. The conclusion of a study of the Italian diet conducted in 1922 displays this attitude:

it is evident that the Italian kitchen is a fertile field for education in the proper selection of foods. The Italian diet has features which may well be incorporated into our experience and in return the nutrition specialist will do real 'Americanization' work when she aids the Italian women in the adjustment of old dietary customs to the new environment.45

Those who willingly acknowledged the positive aspects of foreign foodways could likely be more successful in approaching immigrant women with their programs. Specific programs and approaches to Americanization will be discussed in the upcoming chapter, where it will become apparent that reactions to reform were as diverse as the immigrants themselves.

Perhaps the biggest challenge that Americanizers faced, unbeknownst to themselves, was the development of a national cuisine in a country divided by regionalism and flooded with immigrants. They sincerely hoped to improve the health of impoverished urban immigrants, but underneath their desires lay a complicated web of beliefs about foreigners, class, and food that permeated their reform efforts, informing their judgments about what was “best” for the people they wanted to help. Through Americanization, they projected their own middle-class values and standards onto a group of people they naturally assumed wanted them. On the other hand, they designed few programs to help immigrants become upwardly mobile. Instead, they focused on “appropriate” activities for the working classes, which for the girls meant homemaking and vocational training. What they did not anticipate was the resistance they encountered, particularly with eating habits. Historian Gabaccia argues that foodways reformers “succeeded in creating a vast program for culinary change among the poorest Americans, but without convincing many enclave eaters anywhere to accept the national cuisine it promoted.”46

In the final analysis, dietary reforms were not a rousing success, but they continue to be significant because of the passions they aroused in both

46 Gabaccia, We Are What We Eat, 131.
reformers and immigrants. During the Progressive Era, reformers pursued the Americanization of foreign diets with a vigor that is surprising to the modern reader. At the turn of the century, the very notion of multiculturalism was odious to Americanizers, who predicted the demise of the country if immigrants did not abandon or adapt their ethnic customs.
CHAPTER V

FROM COOKING CLASSES TO COMMUNITY KITCHENS: AN EXAMINATION OF CHICAGO FOODWAYS REFORM PROGRAMS

During the Progressive Era, foodways reforms became an important part of a larger Americanization campaign aimed at recent immigrants. Reformers designed these programs to improve health conditions and supplant foreign domestic practices with American ones. In doing so, they hoped to create a stronger and more homogenized American populace that would provide stability in a society unsettled by rapid industrialization, urbanization, and immigration.

Developed largely by home economists, dietary programs spread across the country, concentrated initially in urban areas and eventually reaching into rural settings. Chicago was a hub for prominent food-related institutions and programs including home economics schools, settlement classes, community kitchens and coffeehouses. Chicago reformers like Caroline Hunt, Marion Talbot, and Jane Addams played a central role in developing and disseminating culinary reforms.

In individual programs and institutions the reform agenda was pursued differently depending on setting, attitudes of reformers, and the reaction of immigrants. The descriptions of programs from place to place may sound similar, but in practice they often differed. These differences reveal not only the complex relationship between food and cultural identity, but highlight one of the central debates of the Americanization campaign:
what makes someone an American? Eating habits became a point of contention in that debate, with most reformers saying that "good" and "healthy" American families ate American food, as defined by the proper arbiters of taste. While seeming to be simply about food and health, foodways programs expose a deeper concern about the effects of industrialism on the future of the country and its ability to successfully assimilate large groups of foreigners.

Most nutritional reforms emanated from the emerging home economics movement. Home economics was initially dominated by New Englanders, but the movement also included Chicagoans, and by the end of the Progressive Era they had established Chicago as a leading national center for the study of home economics. Chicago hosted the Columbian Exposition of 1893, which through exhibits and lectures gave the new field of home economics international exposure. After the Expo ended, Chicagoans remained interested in home economics, establishing associations and implementing school programs around the city and state. Both the Lewis Institute and the University of Chicago established nationally recognized home economics programs. These schools, serving as the training grounds for many reformers, provided a direct link between home economics and the settlement house movement.

Lewis Institute, named for benefactor and founder Allen Lewis, was established in 1896 as a vocational school loosely associated with the University of Chicago. Initially Lewis had a four-year course of study for high-school age students and an additional two-year program of college-level courses. It also offered several night and weekend courses for adults who
wished to continue their education. Eventually Lewis offered bachelors degrees in several fields including home economics. While not specifically labeled a junior college, Lewis Institute is believed to be the first institute of that kind in America. The Director of Lewis was George Carman, a protégé of Dr. William Rainey Harper, the president of the University of Chicago. Under Carman’s leadership, Lewis developed a reputable academy for high schoolers and a successful technical school known best for its programs in engineering and home economics.

The home economics program was as old as the school itself and proved to be an integral part of Lewis’ success, particularly with female students. Home economics was still a developing field in 1896, with the first Lake Placid Conference held two years later. But Institute leaders realized the potential of home economics as a vocational path for women and embraced it wholeheartedly. A 1906 article entitled “What Lewis Institute Is,” said the school provided “practical means of aiding women to earn an honest livelihood.” According to Agness Kaufman, writing about Lewis in 1946, the school founders believed that the most productive way of achieving that goal was by providing instruction in home economics.

Among Lewis’ founding faculty members was Caroline Hunt, who taught home economics and managed the Institute’s lunch room. Hunt, a Chicagoan, was an associate of Ellen Richards, eventually becoming her biographer. She had studied chemistry and physiology at both Northwestern University and the University of Chicago, and in 1895 she lived

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at Hull-House while conducting research into Italian dietary practices for the United States Department of Agriculture. During her tenure at Lewis from 1896 until 1902, Hunt became an important contributor to the Lake Placid Conferences. She left Lewis in 1902 to pursue other interests in home economics and remained one of the most prominent home economists in the country, publishing her own views on the field in her 1908 work, *Home Problems from a New Standpoint.*

Hunt was not the only person with connections to both Lewis and settlement work. Graham Taylor's children Lea Demarest Taylor and Graham Romeyn Taylor both graduated from the Lewis Institute high school program and went on to become settlement workers. Notable Chicago reformers Edith Abbott and Amelia Sears also held degrees from Lewis Institute. Additionally, as more and more settlements incorporated foodways programs, the need for qualified home economics instructors grew. Lewis Institute became the training grounds for volunteers that fed directly into Chicago settlements. At least four Lewis Institute graduates went on to direct domestic science departments at local settlement houses, and countless more served as volunteers. Also, Lewis' Household Arts Club for home economics students frequently invited local reformers like Addams, Talbot, and Alice Peloubet Norton to speak to their organization about careers in settlement work and procured four scholarships from the Chicago

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4 For example, *The Lewis Annual* of both 1911 and 1912 reveal that the Association House and the Emerson House employed three Lewis alumnae in paid positions. See also "Lewis Institute Bulletin" (LIB), April 1910, 29, LIR.
Caroline Hunt's presence at Lewis undoubtedly helped the school's positive reputation as an important center for home economics instruction. In 1904, only eight years after the school had opened, the *Lewis Institute Bulletin* noted that "there is a large increase this year in the number of advanced women students in domestic economy. Though Lewis is primarily a local institution, the reputation of its scientific work in domestic economy is bringing students in considerable numbers from afar." The addition of a Bachelors of Science in Domestic Economy degree in 1911 prompted the editors of *The Lewis Annual* to put the school "in the front rank of Domestic Science schools in this country...[and the new B.S. program] will be second to none as a Domestic Science college."

Named "Domestic Economy," the home economics program was initially designed to appeal to women of different classes and vocational needs. There were courses for three separate divisions: girls in the "Preparatory Division" of the high school, "housekeepers and domestic cooks," and "advanced students in the Science Group who wish to prepare for teaching household science, or for a medical course, or for caring intelligently for the health of others either in homes or in institutions." The cooking courses for the future home economics professionals required a greater understanding of science than those designed for working-class women employed as housekeepers or cooks. For example, the introductory

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5 See "The Lewis Annual," 1905, 71; 1906, 60; 1907, 67; 1914, 52.
6 "The Autumn Attendance," LIB, October 1904, 4, LIR.
7 "The Lewis Annual," 1911, 30, LIR.
8 First Annual Register of Lewis Institute, 1897, 54, LIR.
course “Cooking and Food Study” combined “three lessons a week in cooking and two in science.”9 The next course in the sequence was entitled “Household Science,” and included “chemistry, physics, and physiology, which are studied with reference to their bearing upon the art of cooking and upon hygiene.”10 In contrast, “Housekeepers’ Course in Cooking” includes no science; only “the study of different methods of cooking and of the preparation of plain and economical dishes,” including meats, vegetables, breads, salads, and desserts. Housekeepers also learned how to serve a luncheon.11

Apparently women could be taught to cook effectively without learning chemistry, physics, or physiology, but they would then only be fit to work as domestics, not professional home economists. This attitude was endorsed by Ellen Richards, who always stressed the scientific aspects of food. Taste and the sensual pleasures of cooking took a back seat to nutritional and budgetary considerations. Lewis Institute courses encouraged domestic economy students to regard food in this rational, detached manner. For example, the “Food Study” course includes a section on “specific articles of food, with regard to their nutritive value, digestibility, etc.”12 Flavor is never mentioned. A photograph of a cooking class taken while Hunt was still at Lewis depicts young women at laboratory tables equipped with gas jets. One of the instructors, apparently a bacteriologist, is peering at something

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9 Ibid., 54.
10 Ibid., 54.
11 Lewis Institute Annual Register, 1898, 48, LIR.
12 “Circular of Information of Lewis Institute,” 1897, 29-30, LIR.
under a microscope (fig. 2).\textsuperscript{13} Clearly this cooking class focused on food preparation as a science rather than an art.

![Domestic Science Class, Lewis Institute, Chicago, Illinois, Circa 1897](image)

While science instruction remained a required aspect of the home economics department, students seemed to prefer cooking to science. Lewis student Anna Ronning declared, "We girls do not think [the chemistry in cooking lessons] is as interesting as it is on cooking days, but we must know

\textsuperscript{13} A caption to the side of the photo states, "Dr. Cook at microscope, teacher of bac [sic]" which is most likely bacteriology, as this was a class offered at Lewis and one important to the Domestic Economy program.
the experiments as well as our Latin or algebra."¹⁴ In 1899, Girls in cooking classes at Chicago’s Armour Institute, which would merge in 1940 with Lewis Institute to become the Illinois Institute of Technology, also complained about the inclusion of science classes, much to the amusement of their male classmates:

How they have struggled and sighed over Physics. “What is the use,” they would ask one another, “of knowing about the mechanics of solids or about the action of a dynamo? Such things have nothing at all to do with cooking.” ... The chemical laboratory certainly had terrors for most of them. A slight explosion would cause faint screams and a great commotion in their midst; evil smelling gases, they never could get used to. Being housekeepers, the dust in the laboratory distressed them greatly.¹⁵

While their scientific knowledge was questionable, apparently the Armour students were good cooks, as they produced an “attractive and successful” minister’s luncheon and made tasty “ice cream and other dainties” in class. These girls proceeded to practice their newfound skills in settlements, missions, and public school classes.¹⁶

In addition to its cooking classes, Lewis had a lunchroom that was staffed and maintained by the Domestic Economy Department. Located next to the cooking laboratory, the Lewis lunchroom served daily lunches to hundreds of students. As no lesson plans for the cooking classes exist, the lunchroom menus are the only clues as to what types of foodways Lewis Institute emphasized. However, as the Domestic Economy Department ran the lunchroom, it is reasonable to assume that its practices reflected the

¹⁴ “The Cooking Class,” Lewis Institute Catalog, 1901, 8, LIR.
¹⁶ Ibid., 192.
Domestic Economy classroom curricula. In fact, lunchroom work intersected directly with classroom practices starting in 1911, with a new course entitled “Institutional Management.” It provided dietetics training and required its students to prepare and serve daily meals for thirty to forty students in the cafeteria.17

The lunchroom menu featured “soup, milk, chocolate, sandwiches, fruit, a warm dish such as meat-pie, and usually a salad and a light dessert,” and was almost exclusively American. Sample menus from 1905 feature creamed fish, ham sandwiches, baked beans, brown bread, and scalloped potatoes.18 The only vaguely foreign item was macaroni and cheese, which was an Americanized version of an Italian pasta dish. The lunches ranged in price from five to ten cents, with the assertion that “nowhere can more food of the same high quality be had for less money.”19 Again, the emphasis was on economy instead of taste. This is not an unreasonable emphasis, as students paid for lunches themselves and needed good nutrition to help them function well in class. But it also reveals Lewis’ position not as a culinary institute, but a school teaching home economics modeled after the ideology of Ellen Richards.

As home economics developed nationally, Lewis Institute shifted its program to reflect the professionalism of this new discipline. It offered fewer and fewer classes for housekeepers, dropping them entirely in 1907. In 1911, Lewis developed a four-year course of study leading to a degree of Bachelor

17 LIB, October 1911, 32, LIR. This course was the first ever offered in cafeteria management nationally.
18 LIB, July 1905, 11-12, LIR.
19 Ibid., 11-12.
of Science in Domestic Economy. At that point, Lewis Institute became one of a growing number of colleges and universities to offer bachelor’s degrees in home economics. As the program evolved, Lewis strengthened its ties to the settlement movement, realizing that settlements offered occupational opportunities for home economists. After 1910, Lewis required its domestic economy students to teach classes in cooking and sewing, with these classes “usually formed in the neighboring settlements.” Almost every Chicago settlement with domestic programs employed a Lewis student at some point.

Lewis Institute’s close working relationship with numerous Chicago settlements exposed many young immigrant girls to home economics as envisioned by Ellen Richards and her followers: a scientific and rational field with practical applications. Those practical applications of cooking, cleaning, and housekeeping mirrored most of the domestic programs offered at settlements. While all dietary customs did have a practical aspect, home economists’ strict emphasis on food’s nutritive or medicinal properties completely discounted the cultural import of foodways, so reformers did not understand immigrants’ resistance to their programs. For home economists, food was reduced to calories and nutrition. But for many immigrants, cooking and eating could express cultural beliefs, bolster family relationships, and grant women power. By discounting the deeper cultural significance of food, home economists practically insured that their programs would be controversial.

However, as discussed in Chapter III, not everyone agreed with Richards’ scientific vision for home economics. Marion Talbot, herself a close

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20 LIB, April 1910, 29, LIR.
personal friend of Richards, emphasized the theoretical and interdisciplinary nature of home economics. Marion Talbot and her colleagues at the University of Chicago also trained graduates to work in settlements, but other graduates concentrated on research or political activism instead of teaching practical home economics.

The University of Chicago was reestablished in 1892 after going bankrupt in 1886. Funded by John D. Rockefeller, the new university sought to become an institution equal to eastern Ivy League colleges, and under President William Rainey Harper’s guidance, the University of Chicago quickly became an elite Midwestern school. As detailed in Chapter II, the university was central to the Chicago foodways reform movement. Faculty members included prominent home economists Marion Talbot and Alice Peloubet Norton and social reformers Edith and Grace Abbott and Sophonisba Breckinridge. Additionally, Jane Addams, Graham Taylor, and Mary McDowell frequently lectured at the university. Talbot even had the World’s Fair Rumford Kitchen exhibit dismantled and reassembled at the University of Chicago for use in their new program in Household Administration, which became the first doctoral degree-granting program in Home Economics.21

Home economics at the University of Chicago was not a unified curriculum. There were two separate programs, one lead by Talbot and one by Norton. Talbot headed the department that would eventually become Household Administration, which had a broad, sociological emphasis.

Norton taught Home Economics for the School of Education, which had a more practical approach. This division of the two programs frustrated both Talbot and Norton. In the Journal of Home Economics, Norton wrote that even after she was invited to teach for Talbot's Household Administration Department, she still supervised home economics courses for the School of Education. Norton in Talbot's program "brought about a certain unification of the two departments," but Norton said it "introduced administrative problems that were sometimes difficult."22 Despite their institutional divisions, Talbot and Norton frequently collaborated on campus and off. Both charter members of the Lake Placid Conferences, they had worked together with Richards at MIT before coming to Chicago. Norton also assisted Talbot and Richards with their book, Home Sanitation: A Manual for Housekeepers, in 1887.23 Interestingly, even though they had been students of Richards, both Talbot and Norton shared theoretical, interdisciplinary approaches to home economics, which differed from Richards' more utilitarian approach. They expressed their views at the Lake Placid conferences but were generally disregarded. However, at the University of Chicago, they produced programs based on their common vision.

In the ongoing theoretical/utilitarian debate outlined in Chapter III, and the University of Chicago became the leading educational institution supporting theory. This is not to say they had no practical housekeeping classes; the university offered such courses as house decoration, dressmaking,

23 Sarah Stage, "Norton, Alice Peloubet"; http://www.anb.org/articles/09/09-00545.html; American National Biography Online Feb. 2000, Access Date: Thu Apr 25 02:03:10 2002 Copyright (c) 2000 American Council of Learned Societies. Published by Oxford University Press, all rights reserved.
and household accounting.24 Talbot described courses similar to those found at Lewis: "the study of foods and household economics [including] food analysis, food adulterations and dietaries, with a discussion of the scientific principles of the application of heat to food materials, the chemistry of cleaning, domestic service, and other problems included in household administration."25 But these courses did not constitute the main focus of the university's home economics program(s). Even in the School of Education, where the emphasis was on teacher training, Norton refused simply to teach housekeeping to her students. The university challenged her beliefs in 1913 when it hired a new dean who believed that home economics should be synonymous with household skills. Norton resigned in protest, and when Talbot was not able to secure her a job in Household Administration, Norton became editor of the Journal of Home Economics. Under Norton's guidance from 1915 to 1921, the Journal endorsed her wider vision of home economics, including articles on social work, family relations, and sanitation issues.26

Like Norton, Talbot defined home economics broadly and promoted her approach as chair of the Department of Household Administration. According to Norton, Talbot "related her work definitely to the social sciences," and consequently Talbot's department emphasized research, granting the first graduate degrees in home economics in the country.27 Talbot's ideas about home economics were well-known; she was an active and vocal participant at the Lake Placid conferences and published and

24 Dye, History, 16.
26 Stage, "Norton."
27 Norton, "Marion Talbot," 481.
presented numerous pieces. One theme permeates all of her work: home economics encompassing more than housekeeping skills. In an 1896 article entitled “Sanitary Science and its Place in the University,” Talbot noted approvingly that at the University of Chicago, home economics courses belonged to the sociology department (the Household Administration department was not established until 1905). She asserted that:

Sanitation and sociology must go hand in hand in their effort to improve the race. . . . As the individual is the essential element of society, so his social value depends largely on his health, while in turn his health is partly determined by the conditions which society imposes. . . . It is then the duty of sanitation to show what steps must be taken by society collectively and individually to secure the best conditions of living not only for today but for coming centuries.28

Talbot believed that home economics, in order to make the world a better place, should not be taught “solely [from] the practical or material side, as it might be in a technical school, but . . . from an intellectual and ethical standpoint as befits a subject given a place in a university curriculum.”29

Her association with trusted colleagues within the university undoubtedly influenced Talbot’s approach to home economics. Prominent Chicago reformers Edith Abbott, Grace Abbott, and Sophonisba Breckinridge were social scientists, writers, and legal advocates, but they all worked closely with Talbot and often taught classes in Household Administration. The Abbott sisters received advanced degrees at the University of Chicago. Both Edith and Grace lived at Hull-House for twelve years and taught at the university, primarily in social work. Sophonisba Breckinridge earned an M.A.,

28 Talbot, "Sanitary Science and its Place in the University."
29 Ibid.
a Ph.D., and a J.D. from the University of Chicago and taught in several different departments, starting in Household Administration with Marion Talbot and ending up in Social Administration with the Abbots. She also lived at Hull-House during her breaks from the university. All three women taught at the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy (CSCP), an institution formed by Graham Taylor of the Chicago Commons to train future settlement workers.\textsuperscript{30} Edith Abbott and Breckinridge actively promoted the professionalization of social work. It was due to their efforts that the CSCP was finally incorporated into the University of Chicago as the School of Social Administration, becoming the first university graduate program for social work.\textsuperscript{31} Breckinridge also wrote extensively on women’s issues and social issues, often collaborating with her University of Chicago colleagues. She wrote two books dealing with home economics: \textit{New Homes for Old}, and \textit{The Modern Household} with Talbot. Grace Abbott worked as an advocate for immigrants’ rights and was president of the Immigration Protection League of Chicago from 1908 to 1921.

Breckinridge and the Abbots worked outside the spectrum of what Ellen Richards would call home economics, but Talbot felt that their research and experiences contributed to a more complete understanding of the home and its relationship to American society. Together these women broadened


the definition of home economics and sought to make it a field that had both practical applications and theoretical significance. In the process, they helped to develop not only home economics, but the new field of social work, which in their minds had clear connections to home economics.

But Talbot did recognize the practical applications of home economics, and therefore her program had a dual emphasis. In her article "Instruction in Domestic Science in Chicago," written for The House Beautiful magazine in 1904, Talbot describes the "two considerations" behind the establishment of the Household Administration Department. The first consideration is theoretical: the study of the evolution of industrialism and its impact on "home and family life, and the consequent injury of the larger social interests of which it is the foundation." The other consideration is more utilitarian: as more and more universities shifted towards job training for male students, so "similar provision should be made for the training of women in the direction of their probable activities." The function of the program was, then, twofold: "to give students a general view of the place of the household in society, training in the rational and scientific administration of the home, and preparation to serve as teachers of domestic science or as social workers in institutions whose activity is largely expressed through household administration."32

The University of Chicago home economics program therefore exposed its students to the larger, theoretical issues of home economics while training them to teach other women and girls. Their jobs dictated which approach to home economics they taught. College-level home economics

32 Talbot, "Instruction in Domestic Science in Chicago," The House Beautiful, August 1904.
courses likely included an interdisciplinary approach that incorporated theory and research. But at high schools and settlements, home economics was largely practical application. Pupils tended to be under eighteen, and reformers deemed practical lessons most appropriate for their age level. But even in their classes for older girls, settlements emphasized practical housekeeping, leaving the theoretical aspects of home economics to colleges and universities. This reveals beliefs that practical lessons were exactly what immigrant girls “needed,” considering their generally low socioeconomic status and their “alien” cultures. Little evidence suggests that settlement workers pushed their students to pursue home economics on a higher level, perhaps because they did not really believe them capable of success in higher education. Instead, it may have made more sense to reformers to teach immigrant girls the skills that reformers assumed that the girls would use as future housekeepers, paid or otherwise.33 The examination of individual settlement culinary programs reveals the stereotypical beliefs of some reformers towards those of other cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. It also highlights the growing concern at the turn of the century about the nature of American identity, due to the influx of immigrants.

Almost all Chicago area settlements offered some sort of foodways programs, ranging from cooking classes to public kitchens. The Chicago Commons had programs representative of those employed by other local settlements and provides a good starting point for this examination. Second in prominence only to Hull-House, the Chicago Commons was founded by

Graham Taylor in 1894. Taylor and his family actually lived at the settlement, where he served as head resident until 1922 when he handed the reins to his daughter, Lea Demarest Taylor. As a male and an ordained minister, Graham Taylor was unusual among Chicago settlement leaders. In spite of Taylor’s religious ties, the Commons was a secular settlement that did not offer religious instruction or ally itself with any particular Christian denomination. Taylor’s faith did inform his approach to settlement work, which he viewed as a Social Gospel form of Christian ministry. But Taylor felt that churches and settlements should remain separate institutions; instead he promoted the Chicago Commons as a place where people of disparate faiths could come together as neighbors.34

Despite the irregular head resident, the Chicago Commons did not differ significantly from its local counterparts; it had the same goals and offered the same types of programs. Like other Chicago settlements, it was located in a working-class district populated by poor immigrants. The Commons was on the north side of Chicago, close to the Northwestern University Settlement and Association House. Chicago Commons’ neighborhood was initially populated largely by Germans, Irish, and Scandinavians, many of whom spoke English.35 But by 1912 the demographics had shifted: Polish-speaking immigrants from the Austro-Hungarian Empire dominated, followed by Germans, Italians, Russians, Norwegians, Hungarians, and a smattering of Irish, Swedes, Danes, Greeks, English, Canadians, Turks, French, and Dutch. According to one Commons

35 Wade, 117.
worker,

more than half the population is foreign-born – 57%. Of the remainder 38% were born in this country but have foreign-born parents, and only 5% are American born with American parents. The Poles, Italians and Russian Jews are supplanting the Scandinavian element which predominated when we first entered the ward.36

These changes to the neighborhood concerned some settlement residents, who worried in the 1908 annual report about “the racial transformation of the population which continues to bring us the more needy and less assimilable [sic] Italians, Armenians, Poles and Greeks in place of the Norwegians, Germans, and Irish, who are far more easily approached and united.”37

Americanization of these people was a primary focus of the Chicago Commons, and it instituted a number of programs designed to “[interpret] America to the immigrants,” including a large number of dietary programs.38

Over the period from 1894-1920, the Commons offered cooking classes, housekeeping classes, a housekeeping center, kitchen garden classes, and a milk dispensary. The Commons included cooking classes from the very beginning of the settlement, adopting a scientific home economics approach. One of the first cooking instructors at the settlement was “an eminent woman physician [who] offered to give weekly clinics to housekeepers in the chemistry of food.”39 Other early instructors included

36 Chicago Commons Annual Report, 1912 – 1913, Records, Chicago Commons, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois. (hereafter cited as CCCHS)
37 Chicago Commons Annual Report, 1908, p.1, CCCHS, emphasis mine. In a letter to Jane Addams, Graham Taylor also referred to the newer immigrant groups as “less assimilable.” Graham Taylor to Jane Addams, 10 May 1910, CCCHS.
38 Ibid.
39 “Chicago Commons, Social Settlement of the Chicago Seminary,” pamphlet, 1894, Chicago Commons, Graham Taylor Papers, Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois. (hereafter cited as GTP)
women from the Boston Cooking School, Armour Institute of Chicago, and the Philadelphia Cooking School, all respected institutions that endorsed conservative views of home economics as described in previous chapters.  

Perhaps because of the connections to prominent cooking schools, the settlement referred to its cooking classes as a cooking school. However, the cooking school at the Chicago Commons was not comparable to other professional cooking schools. Instead, it presented a curriculum similar to that being offered to young people at settlements all over Chicago—basic home cooking skills in Americanized foods. Initially it provided classes for older women employed as housekeepers and cooks with the hope that training at the Chicago Commons cooking school might provide a “solution [to] the domestic servant problem.” For unknown reasons, the cooking school refocused its attention on young women and girls, dropping the vocational classes for older women.

The cooking school was a very popular part of the Chicago Commons during the Progressive Era. In 1899, only five years after the settlement opened, there was already a need for expanded facilities. Even after the school received bigger and more suitable quarters in the new Chicago Commons building, the classes quickly filled with more students on a waiting list. In 1904, the cooking school offered thirteen classes for both children and adults, with over two hundred students enrolled, and residents described

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40 Chicago Commons Plymouth Winter Night College, Schedule of Classes, Clubs, and Lectures, 1894 – 1895 and 1897 – 1898, GTP.
41 The Commons, No. 65, Vol. VI (December 1901), 6, GTP.
42 Hearst's Chicago American, 14 December 1902.
the classes as the "most popular" at the settlement.\textsuperscript{43}

The Chicago Commons initially presented two types of cooking classes: practical cookery and fancy cookery. The majority of classes focused on the former, but in the early days of the cooking school, several courses and lectures featured the latter. A lesson booklet from the early 1900s featured multi-course dinner menus that were quite different from the inexpensive New England cuisine favored by many other home economists. Dishes included Cream of Lettuce Soup, Planked Fish with Potato Border, Sweet Potato Croquettes, Stuffed Peppers, Sweet Bread and Almond Salad, Aspic, and Vanilla Charlotte.\textsuperscript{44} While not difficult to prepare, these dishes were far from basic fare and would require kitchen facilities that not all neighbors might have had.

These classes were the exception at the cooking school; most classes had some practical and/or economical aspect. In 1900, The Commons magazine noted that while "there was an interested class in fancy cookery," the cooking school curriculum was "characterized by effort to achieve the maximum of interest, practicability, simplicity and nutritious result."\textsuperscript{45} Certainly after the hiring of Lewis Institute alumna Winifred Collins in 1906, practical cookery dominated the cooking school curriculum. This is presumably not a coincidence, considering the emphasis on scientific home economics at Lewis. But even prior to Collins' tenure, the cooking school emphasized traditional home economics lessons. A 1903 – 1904 Commons

\textsuperscript{43} "Chicago Commons: A Social Center for Civic Co-operation," pamphlet, December 1904, p. 30-31, GTP.
\textsuperscript{44} Isabella Bond, "Demonstration Cooking Lessons, Dinner Course" recipe booklet, circa 1902 – 1904, GTP.
\textsuperscript{45} The Commons, No. 41 (January, 1900), 10.
cooking class booklet contains thirty lessons beginning with water and its uses and ending with ice cream and cake (see figs. 3-4).

Each lesson consists of a series of experiments, questions, and finally, dishes to prepare to illustrate the lesson. For example, in the lesson on water, students test water as a solvent, find the boiling point of water, discuss whether water should be used freely in the home, and then make beverages such as coffee, tea, and lemonade. The lessons featured predominantly American dishes and foodstuffs, the one exception being a lesson on pasta featuring macaroni. The description of pasta admitted that French or Italian macaroni was superior to that made in America and praised it as a cheap and

Figure 3. Cover, Chicago Commons Cook Book, 1903-1904, personal collection of the author.

46 “Chicago Commons Cook Book,” 1903 – 1904, GTP.
nutritious food, particularly when combined with cheese. The recipes for this lesson do include macaroni with tomato sauce—an Italian method of preparing macaroni—but also macaroni and cheese (an American invention) and macaroni with oysters and cream.47

The inclusion of questions and experiments demonstrates that these classes provided more than just cooking lessons—they also taught scientific

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**LESSON VII.**

**FUEL OR STARCHY FOODS.**

Macaroni is made of a flour prepared from a wheat rich in gluten. The wheat flour is made into a dough with boiling water; the dough is worked under heavy rolling, shape till it is the right consistency. It is then forced by a powerful plunger through perforated two cylinders. It is afterwards broken into bits. If the cylinders are large the macaroni is macaroni, if finer it is macaroni; if very fine macaroni. Good macaroni is tough, elastic and hard. Its color is a yellowish gray, never dirty. French macaroni is made from a flour enriched with gluten, and is considered as good as the Italian macaroni, but that made in the United States is best in gluten, starchy and breaks easily when cooked. If cooked in boiling salted water it is increased at least four or five times and does not split.

**EXPERIMENTS.**

1. Composition of flour; make in a cloth to obtain gluten.
2. Test gluten for starch.
3. Make gluten paper.

**DEFINITIONS.**

1. Why are cooked starchy foods more digestible than raw ones?
2. What food principle in macaroni is supplied by the cheese?

**LESSON.**

Macaroni with cheese. Macaroni with tomato sauce. Macaroni with oysters and cream. Macaroni soup.

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**LESSON XXVII.**

**VEGETABLES IN SALADS.**

Vegetables, valued chiefly for the salts they contain, are essential to health and are frequently seen raw in this class: lettuce, endive, escarole and all other "salad plants." The salad of salad greens was always a dish of green herbs mixed with vinegar, oil and salt, and a very few other spices, often some kind of meat, fish, fruit, and almost all kinds of vegetables, cooked as well as raw are used.

"A salad made from a selection of green vegetables and French dressing is a useful dish to be served on the dinner table of every well regulated house and times a year. These green vegetables contain the salts necessary to the well being of our blood; the oil is an easily digested form of fatty matter, the lemon juice gives an sufficient acid control, wine and orange salad are exceedingly wholesome."—Mrs. Ferris.

**EXERCISES.**

1. What makes a good dinner salad for evening party?
2. Name vegetables suitable for salads, and tell how to serve them.
3. Why should ears be taken to cut off tops of beets about two inches above the roots?

**LESSON.**

French dressing, mayonnaise dressing, salad dressing with oil; salads of potato, fruit, celery and vegetables. How to serve salads.

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Figure 4. Lesson VII, Fuel or Starchy Foods and Lesson XXVII, Vegetables in Salads, Chicago Commons Cook Book, 1903-1904, personal collection of the author.

47 Ibid., 21.
methods and encouraged students to understand various foodstuffs and their relationship to good nutrition. Because the Commons went to the trouble and expense to print up booklets for their cooking school students, it is probable that instructors used these lessons in more than just one cooking class. They are likely representative of the other cooking classes at the Commons.

The Chicago Commons cooking school should provide "the young wife, the untrained housekeeper and the growing girl . . . [with] a practical knowledge of the value and preparation of foods." By teaching home economics, reformers hoped to improve several problems, including malnutrition and intemperance. In 1903, Graham Taylor referred to the cooking school as 'Our gold cure for the drink habit,' and the reporter to whom he said it agreed:

This statement was entirely true. The Commons believes that a great deal of the craving for strong drink springs from bad nourishment of the body, from improperly prepared and improperly served food. It believes that to teach the wife or daughter of a man addicted to the habit a cleanly, attractive and wholesome way of preparing food is to put into his home a powerful foe of intemperance.

Commons workers believed that properly taught girls would produce healthy, Americanized families. One foreign observer, after inspecting the cooking school, gave this endorsement: "I saw the kitchen where they are taught to prepare good meals. Where they are taught the nutritive value of foods, at low cost. Where order and cleanliness are instilled. Is this not the way to make good housewives, amiable wives, neat, clean, [and]"
Given their focus on good housekeeping, it was not surprising that the Commons established a housekeeping center in 1911 where students could conduct practical lessons in household sanitation and cooking (see fig. 6). In letters sent out to solicit funds for the center, settlement workers argued that "nothing seems more important or pays better than practical training of young women and girls in home making and house keeping."\footnote{51 Letter to unnamed potential donor, 1911, General Papers 1894-1926, CCCHS.} The housekeeping flat was a four-room tenement adjacent to the main Commons building and similar to many of the neighbors' homes. It was seen as the economical?"\footnote{50 "Practical Education Imparted at Chicago Commons," translation of Signor Faut's article in L'Italia, 26 April 1911, GTP.} (fig. 5).

Figure 5. Grand Avenue Cooking Class, Chicago Commons, circa 1920, [G1980.0125, box 2], courtesy of Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois.
perfect adjunct to the cooking school: the place where girls could learn how
to take care of an entire house, including cooking, cleaning, and furnishing.
Girls learned marketing, meal planning, and laundering. After a year, the


Annual Report called the center an important tool for "bringing the 17th ward further along in the scale of civic and family ideals."  By 1917 the domestic science department claimed 650 students, with an average attendance of 475 that year.

Considering the Chicago Commons' emphasis on interpreting

52 Chicago Commons Annual Report, 1912 - 1913, CCCHS.
53 Winifred Collins, Report of Housekeeping Center Work, 4 May 1917, Trustees' Minutes, 1894 - 1936, CCCHS.
America to its neighbors, an important auxiliary function of the cooking school and housekeeping flat was Americanization. Graham Taylor maintained in his 1920 retrospective on the mission of the settlement "The training of foreign-born men, women and youth for participation in American life and citizenship has the first claim upon our personal and financial resources...." Because women did not get the vote until 1920, their initial introduction to American life came not through citizenship classes, but through home economics. Reformers encouraged girls to use their lessons at home and then proudly reported "success" stories of Americanized households. One report on the Young Italian Mothers Club in 1918 described the members as women who had been coming to the Commons since their childhood. They had all participated in settlement foodways programs over the years, with the following results: "They have broken away from some of the old Italian customs and are managing their homes according to the American idea." This was quite a victory in the eyes of reformers, considering the widespread perception among settlement workers that Italians resisted Americanization more than any other ethnic group.

Despite its promotion of American food and housekeeping, the Commons did celebrate the ethnic cuisines of their neighbors once a year at their May Festival. This celebration highlighted such Old World traditions as song, dance, crafts, and even food. In addition to displays of Americanized food prepared by the cooking classes, there was a "nationality table,"

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54 Chicago Commons Annual Report, 1920 "Retrospect and Prospects by the Head Resident," CCCHS.
55 Report, Young Italian Mothers or Knitting Club, 1918 – 1919, Chicago Commons Clubs and Groups 1915 – 1939, CCCHS.
featuring ethnic cookery. In 1911, sixteen different ethnic groups—Italian, German, Armenian, Polish, Greek, Jewish, French, Swiss, Norwegian, Swedish, Austrian, English, Scotch, Canadian, Irish, and Ruthenian—appeared. Interestingly, the dishes were "prepared at home and brought to [the settlement] for exhibition," revealing that the Commons was not teaching these types of dishes to their students and that many mothers still cooked dishes at home that derived from their European roots.56

The May Festival notwithstanding, the Chicago Commons continued to advocate Americanized diets in its classes, and there were certainly practical reasons for this. Considering that many cooking classes had students of various ethnicities (fig. 7), it would have been difficult for instructors to

Figure 7. "Eight Nationalities in Our Cooking School," Chicago Commons Spring News Letter 1907, p. 22; Folder: Chicago Commons, 1907, Graham Taylor Papers, Midwest Manuscript Collection, The Newberry Library, Chicago.

56 "Chicago Commons 1894-1911," booklet, 26-28, GTP.
privilege one cuisine over another without conflict between students and teachers. There was also the question of familiarity. Most of the instructors were native-born, so American food was what they knew. Many teachers had also been trained at home economics institutions that favored American cuisine, so they simply taught those same lessons to immigrants. But practicality and convenience were not the only reasons for Americanized eating habits. In keeping with its larger agenda of assimilating its neighbors, the Chicago Commons, like other Chicagoland settlements, used its foodways programs as a means of introducing American domestic practices to the neighborhood.

While Gads Hill Center was not as well known as other Chicago settlements such as Hull-House and the Chicago Commons, it had a flourishing home economics program that rivaled those of the larger settlements. Gads Hill Center was established in 1898 as an extension of a local Methodist church and Women’s Christian Temperance Union Chapter. Located on Chicago’s southwest side, the settlement was in the heart of the lumber district. The ethnic makeup of the neighborhood was diverse—Germans, Irish, Swedes, Italians, Lithuanians, Poles, and Bohemians—and most residents had some association with the lumberyards or factories. Gads Hills’s statement of purpose reveals a primary interest in teaching American citizenship "by promoting social intercourse, industrial pursuits, temperance, and the mental and moral uplift of humanity... [and presenting] ideals and incentives which will make possible a better citizenship

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57 Woods and Kennedy, Handbook of Settlements, 51.
and home life for the future." One way that Gads Hill Center sought to improve future home life was through cooking classes. Considering its initial connections to the W. C. T. U., not surprisingly the settlement promoted dietary reform as a tool for temperance.

The earliest record of culinary programs at Gads Hill Center is from the 1901-1902 Program of Clubs and Classes, which listed one cooking class. But by 1903, it had eight cooking classes with 108 total attendees. In 1904 the settlement even offered a cooking class for deaf children, and the cooking classes had more participants than any other settlement program save the kindergarten. For the next ten years, cooking classes for both children and adults were among the most popular programs, averaging over one hundred students per year. Gads Hill Center maintained cooking classes for diverse age groups and both genders: in 1909, the settlement offered its first boys’ cooking class, and they would continue this practice throughout the years depending on demand. One annual report describes the variety of cooking classes featured at the settlement: “Six large cooking classes meet each week, two for young ladies, three for girls, and one, on Saturday mornings, for the boys. This last is particularly popular and successful, the embryo chefs being enormously proud of their white caps and aprons and their culinary exploits.” Gads Hill Center also offered Kitchen Garden classes and a “Little

58 Ibid., 51.
60 Gads Hill Center Pamphlet, 1904, GP 1901 – 1914, GHHR.
61 GP 1901 – 1914, GHHR.
62 Ibid. The records specifically indicate boys’ classes in 1909, 1911, and 1916. Otherwise it is unclear whether courses listed simply as cooking classes included boys or not.
63 Ibid., GHC Annual Report and Pictorial Survey, 1911.
Mother’s Club” in 1908, in which “girls from 11 to 14 years of age [were] taught to care for the babies in their homes” by a nurse. The girls used dolls to stand in for babies.⁶⁴

Cooking classes became so popular at Gads Hill that by 1903, the settlement recommended the hiring of a resident dedicated solely to teaching home economics.⁶⁵ Again the call went out in 1912 for a trained home economist to run both the classes and the “domestic affairs of the Settlement.” The job required “tact, skill and peculiar fitness . . . [and] should be filled by a woman of education, who will be a welcome member of the ‘family’."⁶⁶ It was not until the settlement moved to larger quarters in 1916 with more space dedicated solely to home economics that it finally secured a full-time “Domestic Science and Industrial Worker” in Dorothy Hess, who was replaced in 1918 by a Mrs. Desing. Prior to 1916 Gads Hill Center relied on volunteers, largely from Lewis Institute, to lead their foodways programs.

Early in its history, the demand for cooking and housekeeping classes exceeded the capabilities of settlement’s facilities. Gads Hill Center changed locations in 1903 and 1908, and even though the latter building had a room devoted to domestic science, it was not big enough to accommodate more than a few classes a week, as it had to share the space with the sewing class. This problem was brought to the Executive Board of the settlement in 1915, when Head Resident Ruth Austin lobbied for expanded cooking and housekeeping programs:

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⁶⁴ Club Data, 1908 – 1932, GHHR.
⁶⁵ Suggestion for General Outline of Work for GHC for Winter Season of 1903-4, Minutes, 1898 – 1969, GHHR.
⁶⁶ Julia Rosslow, Report on GHC, 27 January 1912, 7, GP 1901 – 1914, GHHR.
we feel a special need [for a] community industrial room with sewing machines and rug looms to which the women may come at any time of day and work together. [Also] as many classes in good housekeeping and cooking as our model flat in the basement will allow. (I often think the cold sausage and bakery stuffs which comprise the supper of most of the working men might be responsible for many of the cases of wife beating in the neighborhood).  

The Executive Board listened to Austin’s plea and, with the help of a monetary gift, moved the settlement in 1916 into larger facilities designed in part to meet the demands of the dietary programs of the settlement. After the move Gads Hill offered daily cooking classes in both afternoon and evening in addition to sewing, housekeeping, and kitchen garden work.

Club records from 1920 to 1924 reveal cooking lessons favoring New England cuisine and lacking any easily identifiable foods representing the ethnic origins of the neighborhood residents. Dishes included Swiss steak, meatballs, creamed carrots, scalloped potatoes, beef stew, tomato soup, applesauce, tapioca pudding, oatmeal cookies, strawberry shortcake, muffins, and custard. As at Lewis Institute, the only seemingly non-American dish listed was macaroni and cheese. Gads Hill teachers regarded their curriculum as standard contemporary home economics lessons, stating that they followed “a regular Domestic Science outline.”

Of the eight classes detailed in club reports, the student population—seventy-eight girls and sixteen boys in all—included Poles, Germans, Irish, Italians, English, Lithuanians, Swedes, and Americans, with

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67 Ruth Austin, Report to GHC Executive Board, July 1915, GP 1915 – 1919, GHHR, emphasis mine.
68 Cooking Class Reports, 1920 – 1924, Club Data 1908-1932, GHHR.
69 Industrial Department Report, 1918, GP 1915 – 1919, GHHR.
Poles being the most prevalent.\textsuperscript{70} The criteria for judging ethnicity is unknown, but considering the presence of the designation “American,” it is likely that those not listed as American were first generation immigrants, perhaps even born overseas, while “Americans” might be third or fourth generation immigrants.\textsuperscript{71}

As suggested by Ruth Austin’s plea to the Executive Board, many at Gads Hill Center felt that the pressing problem of poor housekeeping practices needed to be addressed. One volunteer complained that “it was not out of the ordinary to find a mother feeding sausage to her sick children.”\textsuperscript{72} Another related ruefully that “much of the money spent by [neighborhood] mothers goes into vile bakery pastry and cold meats, as well as badly made clothing.”\textsuperscript{73} Settlement workers believed in foodways reforms. In a report to the Gads Hill Center Board of Trustees from 1916, one reformer hoped that “through these classes and those for mothers we . . . make a beginning in better home-keeping in our neighborhood.”\textsuperscript{74} Aiding the settlement in this cause was the United Charities of Chicago, which made home visits to residents of the Gads Hill neighborhood. Settlement records indicate that United Charities workers referred women whose dietary practices they deemed inappropriate to Gads Hill Center for proper training in American cooking:

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{71} As the instructors filled out the reports, one wonders how they determined ethnicity. They may have guessed based on surnames or language, but it also seems likely that they asked students to identify their own ethnicities, which makes the designation of “American” even more suggestive. At what point did students consider themselves American?
\textsuperscript{72} Report to GHC Board of Trustees, May 1919, GP 1915 – 1919, GHHR.
\textsuperscript{73} Anonymous letter to Mrs. Harlan C. Betts, 10 August 1926, GP 1920 – 1927, GHHR.
\textsuperscript{74} Report to GHC Board of Trustees, August 1916, GP 1915 – 1919, GHHR.
The mothers, sent by the United Charities, have conceded that, when cocoa and oatmeal are 'made right' the children like them and we hope this may do away with the coffee and bread breakfast they are so apt to have. One morning a Mothers' Pension Officer found this assortment left by a pension mother for the breakfast of her five children: half a loaf of dry bread, a jar of mustard, a pot of black coffee and part of a 'store' jelly roll. The pension officer called us up and arranged to have this mother take cooking lessons here, especially the 'breakfast practice.'

Clearly Gads Hill Center posited itself as the institution that would make foreign eating habits "right," starting with a good American breakfast that most certainly did not include coffee for children. Instead, the settlement taught children to make more suitable foods such as cocoa, oatmeal, scrambled eggs, cream of wheat, muffins, and baking powder biscuits.

However, at the same time that Gads Hill Center was Americanizing ethnic foodways, they were promoting other aspects of non-American ethnic identity, primarily those related to the arts such as music or dance. In her 1928 article about the settlement, reformer Mildred Miller asserted that settlement workers sought not to "[stamp] out national pride [or] national spirit . . . [but] to conserve these elements and use them in their great educational, social and Americanization program." Gads Hill workers believed that Americanization did not require an acceptance of all American cultural practices; one could retain certain ethnic customs such as folksongs and still be successfully assimilated. But considering Gads Hill’s home economics programs, it seems that reformers did not include cuisine on their...

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75 Report to GHC Board of Trustees, October 1916, GP 1915 - 1919, GHHR, emphasis mine.  
76 Grace Blixt, Cooking Class Report, 1920, Club Data 1908 - 1932, GHHR.  
list of elements of ethnic identity worth conserving. Instead, reformers portrayed foodways as traditions that potentially caused more harm than good, a charge not usually leveled at folksongs. Therefore they actively sought to Americanize foreign food customs, citing examples of neighbors’ poor nutrition and housekeeping habits to justify this agenda.

The Gads Hill Center food reforms had a definite gendered quality. Settlement workers promoted cooking, housekeeping, and parenting classes for females but provided courses for boys only when boys themselves requested them. Boys’ classes are mentioned in the records with an air of novelty. Some boys saw this attitude as unfair, arguing that professional chefs were overwhelmingly men. Their argument apparently was successful, as the settlement gave the boys their own class in response to their demands. However, even when boys got their classes, the emphasis was slightly different than those for girls, and the classes were segregated by gender. The one existing cooking class report from a boys’ course reveals that the boys, unlike the girls, spent several sessions on outdoor cooking and campfire building. The dishes taught corresponded to those in the girls’ classes, but the boys journeyed twice to Jackson Park in Chicago to cook meals outdoors. Gads Hill leaders held a narrow conception of males’ relationship to food preparation. For Gads Hill reformers, it seemed that the only time that a boy might need to cook was on a camping trip when females might be absent.

Gads Hill Center was not the only Chicago settlement to offer cooking

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78 Report to GHC Board of Trustees, October 1916, GP 1915 – 1919, GHHR.
79 Florence Beaneau, Cooking Class Report, 1923 – 1924, Club Data 1908-1932, GHHR.
classes for boys. The Northwestern University Settlement had similar culinary programs. Founded in 1891 in the West Town neighborhood of Chicago, the Northwestern University Settlement was the second oldest settlement in Chicago. Loosely affiliated with Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, it was never an official part of the university. The founders of the settlement included Northwestern University President Henry Wade Rogers and NU sociology professor Charles Zueblin. Zueblin had spent time at London’s Toynbee Hall, which was associated with Oxford University. He and Rogers supported the university settlement ideal represented by Toynbee Hall and decided to start their own settlement. Therefore Northwestern University Settlement “became the first in Chicago to use an established connection with a university; however, its founders agreed that the Settlement would not rely on the university for direct support . . . [but] would depend more on personal commitment from individuals” within the university community.80

As was the case with most settlement neighborhoods, West Town was rundown, neglected, and teeming with immigrants. In 1890, this neighborhood’s death rate was the highest in Chicago.81 Northwestern Settlement workers noted the serious need for “breathing spaces and playgrounds, paved streets and alleys, and for the enforcement of health, building and police regulations.”82 The presence of numerous dilapidated

81 Ibid., 10.
tenements also caused concern. A settlement circular from 1908 described West Town as the most densely populated ward in Chicago, with 85% of the residents being foreign born, including Germans, Poles, Scandinavians, Bohemians, Swedes, and Irish. Another settlement publication stated that “within a mile radius from the Settlement sixteen languages are spoken.”

Among such disparate ethnic groups, settlement workers hoped to solve “the problem of Americanization of foreign peoples [by bringing] these divided peoples together to soften the asperities of national, religious, race, and political prejudices, and to aid in the development from these diverse types and habits . . . a common standard of enlightened American citizenship.” Like the other settlements in this study, the Northwestern University Settlement viewed Americanization as a primary purpose, and home economics would achieve that goal. Settlement resident Daniel Lash Marsh makes this point in a 1906 article, “Settlement Makes Americans:”

The Settlement is a great American-maker. Here it has a mighty important work. . . . Right in the center of the Polish district of Chicago is located our Settlement. We are doing our level best to make good citizens out of these immigrants, many of whom are not the “pick.” We are trying to train the girls for the holiest office of womanhood, by teaching them how to sew and how to cook. We are trying to train the boys and the men to see privileges and the duties of American citizenship; and to realize the sacredness of manhood, the illimitable horizon of its hopes, the immeasurable capability of its powers.

According to the Head Resident Harriet Vittum, reformers primarily targeted young children for Americanization because “the mothers and

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83 Ibid.
84 Ibid., 5-6.
fathers are too busy, too ignorant and too tired to care much about being Americanized, but the children are eager [and] susceptible and will reflect just what we give them. 86 Or, as another Northwestern University Settlement worker stated, "the hope of the Settlement worker is in the children . . . [who] have no prejudices to overcome."87 This attitude, which was echoed by many Chicago reformers, is expanded in a 1912 article in the Northwestern University Bulletin:

The new Americans among whom the Settlement works are mostly peasants. . . . Answering the call of freedom, they come to America, bringing to her all their hopes and faith and religious devotion, and best of all, bringing their children—potential citizens, clean of blood and strong of limb, and they are ours for the making. . . . To seek out such people and help them is the aim of the Northwestern University Settlement. . . . By making their home among these less fortunate Americans, the settlement workers take upon themselves to some degree their burdens. . . . Standing as neighbors to the people about them, they know the greatest need of the new Americans is a knowledge of their adopted country—her language, her laws and her customs, and the mission becomes that of an interpreter. They must interpret every phase of the social and political life to the foreigners. The little people . . . are taken into the Settlement Kindergarten, and taught phases of home life and national customs they can never learn in their tenement homes. . . . Through the babies it is easy to enter the homes of their neighbors, and boys and girls of all ages are brought into club and class relationship. There are sewing and cooking and housekeeping classes for girls big and little. . . . Fathers and mothers are offered English classes and classes in housekeeping, and social and civic clubs. Most of them, however, are too firmly intrenched [sic] in the old ways, and too busy earning a living in the new way, to avail themselves of the opportunities offered them, and it is toward the children and young people that the Settlement directs its greatest efforts.88

The settlement offered neighborhood children the standard clubs and

86 Annual Report of the Head Resident, October 1909, p.2, NUSR.
87 The Neighbor, Vol. 1, No. 5 (March 1900), 5.
classes common to most settlements, including cooking classes for "Little Girls," "Girls," "Young Women," and occasionally boys. Some years the settlement also held cooking classes for "Mothers." Through these classes, settlement workers hoped to meet several needs, both direct and indirect. The obvious problems in the neighborhood were food adulteration, malnutrition, and infant mortality, and cooking classes set out to improve those problems through instruction in "what really nourishing food is and how to prepare it." However, while seeking to solve those issues, cooking classes at the settlement also taught students to assimilate culturally and assume appropriate gender roles.

The initial mention of cooking classes in Northwestern University Settlement records is 1898, and by the next year the settlement had established a separate Domestic Science department. In 1902 the settlement was able to provide a furnished "Domestic Science Room" complete with "four domestic science tables, four gas stoves and a gas range [in which] a class of ten can work comfortably." By 1910, the popularity of home economics classes warranted a move to larger quarters, which accommodated up to eighteen students at a time (fig. 8—while photo is dated 1907, it appears the students are already in the larger space).

89 The Yearly Bulletin for 1910 (NUSR) lists classes for all of the above categories of children, including boys. In 1900, The Neighbor contained an article about the Mother's Cooking Class (Vol. 1, No. 5, March 1900, 11).
90 Yearly Bulletin, 1908, p. 13, NUSR.
91 Club and Class Schedules, 1894 – 1925, NUSR.
92 The Neighbor, Vol. 3, No.10 (September 1902), 5.
93 Annual Report of the Head Resident, 22 November 1910, NUSR.
The Northwestern University Settlement operated from three to eleven cooking classes in any given year, and from 1912-1922 cooking classes involved 67-102 students of various ages and genders.94

Although there is no specific mention of the lesson plans, the description of the classes as teaching the “nutritive values of foods; their scientific and hygienic preparation” with an emphasis on “practical” and “plain dishes” is in keeping with the scientific home economics curriculum.

94 See Report of Miss McKern, 13 January, 1912, Records of Girls' Department, 1912 – 1935, and Records of Domestic Science Department, 1921 – 1922, NUSR.
taught at Lewis Institute. Indeed, Lewis Institute students and graduates were employed as cooking teachers at Northwestern University Settlement as early as 1902 and thereafter consistently worked with the settlement.\textsuperscript{95} It is also likely that the cooking classes taught similar foods to the New England fare offered at the Settlement Coffee House.

A coffee house was established at the settlement to serve as a public kitchen, offering nutritious prepared food at reasonable prices. It moved into expanded quarters in 1901.\textsuperscript{96} While in operation, the Coffee House served simple lunches such as meat sandwiches, cold ham, bouillon, soup, and baked beans, and provided box lunches for delivery to schools or workplaces (fig. 9-10). The Coffee House also operated a bakery, selling fresh bread, rolls, and candies.\textsuperscript{97} More than just a cafeteria, the settlement promoted its Coffee House as a safe and wholesome place for neighborhood socializing.

Optimistic settlement workers initially spoke excitedly about the restaurant's potential in 1900:

\begin{quote}
The general testimony seems to be that well cooked food and excellent meals at a low price are served at the Settlement Coffee House. One of the frequent patrons has said that after trying many places she thinks the best meals are served here for the price. . . . This is as it should be. Its aim is to serve the best food at the lowest prices. The health and, in a measure, the happiness and success of people depend upon what they eat and drink. The Coffee House has as important a field of work as any other, and it is a real source of satisfaction that it is doing
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{95} The Neighbor (Vol. 3, No. 12, Nov. 1902, p. 6) introduces cooking instructor Mrs. Leach, who was also a teacher at Lewis Institute. In her Annual Report for 1910, Harriet Vittum states that the settlement is indebted to Lewis Institute "for a large corps of cadets" (Annual Report of the Head Resident, 22 November 1910, NUSR).
\textsuperscript{96} Emery S. Bogardus, History of the NUS from the Beginning – 1891 to May 1909, p. 55, NUSR.
\textsuperscript{97} "The Settlement Coffee House and Bakery," undated menu, NUSR.
Figure 9. Menu exterior, Northwestern University Settlement Coffee House and Bakery, no date, courtesy of the Northwestern University Settlement Association Records, Series 41/1: General Administrative Records, [box 58/folder 19], Northwestern University Archives, Evanston, Illinois.

Figure 10. Menu interior, Northwestern University Settlement Coffee House and Bakery, no date, courtesy of the Northwestern University Settlement Association Records, Series 41/1: General Administrative Records, [box 58/folder 19], Northwestern University Archives, Evanston, Illinois.
its work well.98

However, despite the claims at the settlement that the Coffee House was “the most attractive restaurant in the vicinity,” it was never a money-maker for the settlement. It barely broke even in its best year, and by 1904 it had closed.99 Despite this failure, the Northwestern University Settlement remained committed to domestic reforms, including a milk dispensary and a model housekeeping flat.

The milk dispensary was a popular service in the neighborhood. The settlement sold fresh milk several times a week in an attempt to improve nutrition among babies in particular. But this involved more than simply distribution; by 1910 a nurse made home visits in order to evaluate the health of local children and promote milk consumption.100 Even this program, which would seem to be straightforward health work, had elements of assimilation and Americanization. According to Vittum, the nurse was critical to the program as she was “competent to judge the conditions of the babies” in ways that apparently their mothers were not.101 The settlement also tried to teach mothers of the “milk babies” how to care for their infants. Perhaps the fact that immigrants willingly fed their babies beverages other than milk was enough of a reason for reformers to intervene. Ultimately, the milk dispensary gave the Northwestern University Settlement one more opportunity to change family and home life.

The settlement's model housekeeping apartment, or flat, was

98 The Neighbor, Vol. 2, No. 1 (November 1900), 5, NUSR.
99 The Neighbor, Vol. 1, No. 10 (August 1900), 3, NUSR.
100 Harriet Vittum, Annual Report of the Head Resident, March 1910, NUSR.
101 Ibid.
established during World War I, offering neighborhood girls a utilitarian hands-on example of American housekeeping, fully furnished and ready for use. The kitchen of the apartment was also used for cooking classes for both girls and mothers, and the settlement occasionally allowed those students to hold social functions at the flat.\textsuperscript{102} The model apartment had a positive effect on several of the neighborhood women who, after working there, deemed it "swell."\textsuperscript{103} This was, of course, the result that reformers hoped for.

Workers at the Northwestern University Settlement saw immigrant mothers as largely ignorant and negligent, putting their children at risk by continuing to practice traditional customs and refusing to learn Americanized housekeeping. Head resident Harriet Vittum argued that the need for foodways programs for girls was great, as many of the girls came from "homes where the mothers know more about farms and the care of cattle than the care of home and children."\textsuperscript{104} It was only through the intervention of some assimilating institution—the public school, the church, or in this case, the settlement—that girls could be properly taught how to establish and manage healthy households. Settlement workers believed that girls might assimilate future generations. Despite females' lack of political or legal authority during the Progressive Era, reformers believed that girls held a tremendous amount of influence because of their future work as homemakers. Settlement workers believed that true Americanization needed to encompass home and family life, in which the wife and mother dominated. Therefore Americanizers pursued girls with vigor. Vittum's

\textsuperscript{102} Vittum, Annual Report of the Head Resident, 1 April 1918, p. 11, NUSR.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{104} Vittum, Annual Report of the Head Resident, October 1909, p. 5 NUSR.
Annual Report from 1915 makes this clear:

Some one has said, “If you wish to reform a man you must begin with his grandmother”; we can’t always do that, but we can begin with the little girls, and if we hold tight to their tiny hands year after year . . . perhaps we can lead them safe into clean and useful and happy womanhood, even here, where dangers and pitfalls are so numerous.105

Vittum’s attitudes also appear in a study she conducted for the National Federation of Settlements in 1917 (see fig. 11). This survey on pre-adolescent girls ages six to fourteen collected data from various settlements in order to develop better and more effective programs for young girls. The survey was extensive, with several sections of questions, but it is notable that the very first section is entitled “The Pre-Adolescent Girl in Her Home,” revealing the reformers’ conviction that home and family life exerted the primary influence on young girls. The first three questions inquired about the impact of living conditions on local girls. The fourth question related directly to the question of Americanized eating habits:

What influence does the little girl have upon the regularity of meals and the proper cooking of food? To what extent does the immigrant family adopt American food? Is the tendency toward undernutrition in school girls due to poor food, insufficient food, or to lack of control of eating and living habits? Is the school and Settlement domestic science training practiced in the home?106

In a section entitled “Relations with Other Members of the Family,” the survey framers asked “to what extent does the mother act as a teacher . . . of housekeeping?”107 Clearly Vittum was concerned that girls, even when

105 Vittum, Head Resident’s Annual Report, 30 September 1915, p. 6, NUSR.
106 Schedule for the Study of the Pre-Adolescent Girl to Be Conducted for the National Federation of Settlements, 1917, NUSR.
107 Ibid.
taught Americanized housekeeping, might be discouraged from using that knowledge in their homes. It was a concern shared by other settlement workers and one that will be discussed in the upcoming chapter. In order to combat this tendency, reformers encouraged children at the Northwestern University Settlement to volunteer to cook a dish or two from their lessons at home. One cooking course even held classes in girls' homes so that they
might "learn to do the work under the conditions in which they live." Instructors also allowed girls to take the finished dishes from their cooking classes home with them to share with their families.

Clearly Vittum and her coworkers felt that Americanized foodways revealed evidence of an assimilated family and that the best agents to achieve long-term cultural changes were girls. The settlement did offer cooking classes for boys which exposed them to American foods, frequently labeling them "scout cooking" and offering an outdoor component (see fig. 12).

Figure 12. Scout Cooking Class, 1919, Northwestern University Settlement, courtesy of the Northwestern University Settlement Association Records, Series 41/7: Scrapbooks, [box 18], Northwestern University Archives, Evanston, Illinois.

As with other Chicagoland settlement programs for boys, these classes taught boys basic cooking skills apparently so that they could survive in

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108 Vittum, Annual Report of the Head Resident, October 1909, p. 5 NUSR.
109 Program and Plan for 1920 – 1921, p. 3, Records, Boy's Department, 1914 – 1921, NUSR.
settings—such as camping—where girls might not be present to cook for them. Instead of promoting a new American domestic ideal in which men and women shared cooking and housekeeping responsibilities, settlements continued to endorse traditional domesticity. While they conceded boys’ interest in cooking by offering separate classes, they did nothing to develop that interest in terms of increased home responsibilities, and they never taught courses with male and female students. While that may have been for modesty or discipline, boys’ and girls’ classes most likely had different emphases on account of gender.

Like the Northwestern University Settlement, the University of Chicago Settlement was a settlement with a loose university affiliation. However, despite its seeming connection with the University of Chicago, the University of Chicago Settlement did not emphasize home economics in its programs. Though not the settlement’s primary focus, it did maintain cooking classes, illustrating that during the Progressive Era foodways programs were de rigueur. In a very short time, home economics had established itself in reformers’ eyes as a necessary part of girls’ education and a useful tool for Americanization.

Established in 1894, the University of Chicago Settlement was an outgrowth of the Philanthropic Committee of the Christian Union of the University of Chicago. This group consisted of faculty, spouses and friends of the University. The settlement itself made clear that “The University of Chicago Settlement is so called because it was founded and has been largely supported by the faculty and students of the University, though it has no official connection with the latter and has never had any support from the
funds of the University.”¹¹⁰ In fact, University of Chicago faculty were just as involved with other Chicago settlements as with the University of Chicago Settlement.

In keeping with settlement ideology, the University of Chicago Settlement took its inspiration from its surroundings. One University researcher, Josepha Kodis, described the ethnic makeup of the south side neighborhood as “composed of representatives from almost every nationality” including Irish, Germans, Poles, Bohemians, French-Canadians, Belgians, Lithuanians, Jews, Finns, Serbs, Slavs, Magyars, Scandinavians, Chinese, and African-Americans.¹¹¹ Located within the stockyard and packing-house district, the settlement was surrounded by “unpaved [streets], many ditches with green scum,” and the local garbage dump, which “produces in August a heavy death rate of babies.”¹¹² In addition to sanitation issues, neighbors, largely employed by Union Stock Yards, worried about poor working conditions and wages at “the yards.” Labor and sanitation issues, which were both directly connected to the Stock Yards, took precedence over all others for the settlement. Mary McDowell, head resident of the University of Chicago Settlement until her death in 1936 (when the settlement was renamed after her), explained the importance of securing basic services for her neighbors:

Good housing, good industrial conditions, sanitary surroundings, recreational facilities—all of these are cultural and essential to Americanization. Without these, the teaching of English and Americanization become a danger rather than a

¹¹⁰ UCS pamphlet, University of Chicago Service League Records, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois. (hereafter cited as UCSL)
¹¹² Mary McDowell, quoted in Woods and Kennedy, Handbook of Settlements, 69.
safeguard... good will and good understanding... have distinctly proved to be a true method of Americanization and led the Settlement's neighbors to a real desire for English and for other good things which the Settlement offers. Every child in this neighborhood becomes by the fact of birth an American citizen. These children are the Settlement's chief obligation.¹¹³

For McDowell Americanization could only come after neighbors felt secure and accepted, so she made that her priority, working tirelessly to improve sanitation, obtain safer working environments and higher wages and expose the problems of poor housing.¹¹⁴

While McDowell believed that Americanization best came through bettering living conditions, her settlement also promoted Americanization through other means. Josepha Kodis argued that the settlement needed to mediate and disseminate American culture to the diverse local population, providing:

> a neutral terrain where they can meet with each other and the better part of the American people. It is the place where they can care purely for the intellectual and moral interests, and develop the feeling of social responsibility. *For all immigrants the social settlement must replace all the influences which were exercised upon them by the educated part of their nations in the old countries.*¹¹⁵

The University of Chicago Settlement also tried to replace Old World influences with its foodways programs, including cooking classes and kitchen gardens.

As early as 1895 the settlement offered two Kitchen Garden classes, and a program of clubs and classes for 1896-1897 lists one “Women’s Club

¹¹³ Mary McDowell, "From Day to Day," n.d., p. 80, GTP.
Cooking Class” and one “Junior Cooking Class.” The latter was taught by a Miss Allen of the Kitchen Garden Association, an organization started in 1883 to promote “the training of little girls in all branches of household industry . . . whether [they] use it simply in [their] own [homes] or in the homes of others.” Additionally, University of Chicago School of Education volunteers—sponsored by home economics instructor Alice Peloubet Norton—taught other courses.

In 1897, the University of Chicago Record noted approvingly that “three cooking classes did good work. One composed of working girls was most appreciative, while the class of little girls taught by one of the University women was the most interested.” Reports of the Visiting Committee of the University of Chicago Service League from 1907 – 1911 reveal yearly cooking classes for women and girls involving between 40 and 75 total students per year. In 1908, cooking classes cost five cents a lesson, considered inexpensive by the Service League. This materials fee, judging from the reported popularity of the classes, was not prohibitive. Settlement pictures reveal a cooking site complete with burner stations. One photo from 1899 shows girls dressed in caps and aprons befitting domestic servants (see fig. 13). The students ranged in age from adult women to very young girls, but settlement workers most eagerly wanted to reach young girls. Members of the Service League believed:

116 “University of Chicago Settlement” (1895) and “Program of Clubs and Classes for 1896 – 1897” pamphlets, GTP.
117 Emily Huntington, The Kitchen Garden, 1 (October 20, 1883), 1.
118 Report of the Visiting Committee, 1910 – 1911, UCSL.
119 University of Chicago Record, 13 August 1897, p. 3, GTP.
120 Reports of Officers and Standing Committees, 1907-1911, UCSL.
121 Report of the Visiting Committee, 19 May, 1908, UCSL.
The care and training of the youngest children contains the most promise for the future, and the access to the lives of the mothers and the homes opened up through the children affords in many cases the best opportunity to the settlement workers to bring to bear the ideas and the practices for which they stand which they most desire to set in operation.\textsuperscript{122}

![Figure 13. Girls Cooking Class, University of Chicago Settlement, 1899, [G11908:163, box 2], courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois.](image)

One of those aforementioned practices was Americanized dietary practices, as the habits they discovered in immigrant homes disturbed settlement workers. Gertrude Stone, director of the University of Chicago Settlement kindergarten, was shocked to discover that the only milk some of her students drank was that which they received while at school. She felt the

\textsuperscript{122} Untitled Report, 1908 - 1909, UCSL.
kindergarten was "doing much towards nourishing the children who come to
[it]."123 Likewise, the University of Chicago Settlement Woman’s Club, the
most popular club for females at the settlement, was praised in 1897 for its
interest in learning about home economics. The purpose of the Woman’s
Club

is to associate women of different nationalities and different
creeds together in a fellowship that helps each woman to be a
better mother, wife, sister, neighbor, and citizen. . . . This club
maintained a cooking class during the winter and have [sic]
showed much interest in the discussion of cheap and healthful
foods, also of house sanitation.124

The instructors’ connections with such established groups as the
Kitchen Garden Association and the University of Chicago School of
Education indicate a familiarity with the ideas of home economics as shaped
by Marion Talbot and Ellen Richards. The University of Chicago Settlement
offered cooking classes two years before the first Lake Placid Conference,
perhaps because of its association with the University of Chicago, which had
been offering home economics since 1892. In addition, by 1896 other
settlements around the country, including a few in Chicago, also offered
home economics classes. Considering McDowell’s close relationship with
Chicago settlement leaders, she was presumably influenced by the types of
foodways programs offered at other local institutions.

McDowell’s approach to Americanization was liberal for the day. She
maintained that settlements should “take all different nationalities as they are,
agree with their ideals and try only to purify and clarify them."125 One wonders whether she acknowledged a difference between cultural ideals, such as the American beliefs in freedom and individual rights, and cultural practices like language or cooking. The presence of Americanizing foodways programs at the settlement indicate that for McDowell, cultural practices were fair game for change, otherwise why have culinary programs at all?

Like Gads Hill Center, the Association House was a smaller Chicago settlement with active food-related programs. Association House was founded as the Y. W. C. A. Settlement in 1899 by the North Side Young Women’s Christian Association.126 Initially established to provide services to girls and young women, the settlement ultimately instituted programs for both genders of all ages, at which point it severed official ties with the Y. W. C. A., becoming the Association House. Located on the North Side of Chicago, Association House served a diverse neighborhood which included Poles, Jews (area of origin unstated), Bohemians, Italians, English, Greeks, Germans, Irish, Danes, Norwegians, Swedes, and Dutch. It maintained a standard array of settlement programs, such as a kindergarten, playground, manual training, music lessons, social clubs, and public lectures.127

As with other Chicago settlements, Association House was interested in Americanizing immigrants. A settlement publication from 1909 describes a sewing class: “Jewish, Polish, German, Italian and Swedish faces predominate,

126 The Young Women’s Christian Association was founded in the late 1850s to address women’s concerns. The group was not affiliated with any particular Christian denomination, but was Protestant in orientation.
but here the future mothers of America are being trained. In the education of
the child lies the American secret of the assimilation of the incoming
millions.”

Foodways reform was a subtle yet important component of Americanization at Association House. As one reformer noted in 1916:

Many of our neighbors are from foreign countries. They do not
know our language nor customs nor opportunities very well.
We have classes to teach English to foreigners, and to teach
cooking to those who are receiving county rations. We try to
help in every way possible, in every neighboring home.

Combining English classes and cooking classes in a statement about teaching customs to foreigners is hardly coincidental. Until 1920 the cooking classes taught a solidly Anglo-Saxon menu and instructors “expected [students] to practice [their cooking lessons] at home,” it seems that Association House hoped to replace foreign eating habits with—in its view—more appropriate Americanized ones.

Among the first programs offered at the settlement, cooking classes featured instructors from Armour, Pratt, and Lewis Institutes and the University of Chicago School of Education, all institutions promoting traditional home economics curricula. A 1900 pamphlet describes cooking as the most popular class at the settlement, noting that “it has been impossible to supply the demand for the cooking amongst the juniors.” Courses required a fee, but apparently prices—anywhere from thirty-five cents to one dollar and twenty-five cents for a term—were not excessive, as classes always filled up (fig. 14). In 1909, the settlement engaged forty volunteers in their

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129 AH pamphlet, 1916, AHR.
130 AH Domestic Science and Art Department pamphlet, November 1900, AHR.
131 AH pamphlet, November 1900, AHR.
Domestic Science Department serving 145 students in nine classes. From time to time Association House offered segregated cooking classes for boys, but never as many as for girls. One observer noted with surprise that "the keen interest, which the boys especially exhibit and the ardor with which, after the cooking is over, they scour their boards and wash the dishes, is delightful." As was the case at other settlements with foodways programs

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132 *Association House Review*, February 1909, AHR.
133 AH pamphlet, 1906, AHR.
for boys, Association House reformers viewed domesticity as a primarily female trait. When boys embraced it, it was surprising or even "delightful," but not portrayed as typical or indeed altogether desirable.

While Association House had similar programs as other Chicago settlements in this study, it also had a significant difference: a Christian affiliation. Association House’s main goal was to provide "a place where the Lord Jesus is the center of all life." This Protestant religious emphasis disturbed many neighbors, the majority of whom from 1899 to 1920 were Polish Catholics and Jews. The proselytizing sensibilities of the settlement undercut some of its efforts, making programs and classes less appealing to some than those at secular settlements. One local Catholic priest complained of the "troubles with Association House" caused when young parishioners attended settlement classes and came home with "questions regarding religion and ... religious pamphlets. The parents and church [resent] it very much but there has been nothing else in the neighborhood for the children." Some Catholic children preferred purely secular programs offered at the Northwestern University Settlement, but it was far enough away that "only a few could go."

As Association House’s neighborhood became more predominantly Jewish in the 1920s, religious differences between neighbors and the settlement became more contentious. An account of the history of the settlement from 1899 to 1949 identified this demographic change as the

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135 Association House Study, 1922, p. 38, Association House, Records on Social Settlements, WCR. In the same study, a United Charities worker also states that many Polish Catholics preferred the secular NUS to the AH.
settlem ent’s biggest “test”:

Could the house absorb [Jews] too, with its neighborliness and understanding? . . . The Jewish boys and girls proved to be alert, acquisitive, good leaders, with inquiring minds that demanded the best their clubs and classes could give them. Perhaps the Gentiles were the group that learned the most, but at least the Jews came to realize that there is a difference between a mere Gentile and a Christian, and they respected our religion as we did theirs.136

Apparently the settlement survived this culture clash, but not before altering some programs. A 1922 study on the Association House asserted that due to the influx of Jews, “the activities of the house have definitely changed. The equipment for sewing and cooking classes, once so important to the life of the house, have almost disappeared to make room for clubs.”137 In fact, from 1923 until 1926, cooking classes ceased entirely.138 This shift was clearly due to Jewish Kosher practices, not previously included in the cooking curriculum at the settlement. But by the late 1920s, Jews comprised the majority of people using the settlement, and Association House finally acknowledged their cultural practices by instituting a Kosher cooking class in 1926. This acquiescence reveals Association House’s willingness to revise its programs in the face of popular demand, even when those programs conflicted with the leaders’ Christian orientation.

Association House was not the only settlement that demonstrated an ability to adapt to neighbors’ demands. Hull-House, run by Jane Addams, also eventually liberalized its approach to dietary programs. Hull-House committed to Americanization through foodways but also recognized that

136 History of AH 1899 – 1949, p. 2-3, AHR.
137 Ibid., 76.
138 AHR, 1923 – 1926.
the only successful reforms were those accepted by the neighbors. When neighbors did not accept all of their culinary reform efforts, Hull-House reformers adjusted their expectations and programs accordingly.

Hull-House was the most famous settlement in Chicago, if not in the entire United States. It earned its reputation not just because it was the city’s oldest settlement but because Hull-House was at the forefront of the entire American settlement movement, establishing such services as public baths, playgrounds, child care, and adult education that quickly became the standard for settlements everywhere. Hull-House was also a leader in home economics programs. It offered cooking and kitchen garden classes and ran a combination diet kitchen and coffee house that was modeled on the New England Kitchen. However, Hull-House’s forays into dietary reform were not always popular with its neighbors, and Addams’ reactions to these conflicts reveal the complexity of the Americanization agenda pursued by reformers.

The story of the founding of Hull-House has been well documented. Jane Addams, inspired by a trip to London where she saw Toynbee Hall, came back to Chicago determined to start a settlement of her own. Together with Ellen Gates Starr, Addams acquired a house on the near West Side of Chicago originally built for Charles Hull, and thus Hull-House was born. Hull-House had a threefold purpose: to improve the civic and social life of the neighborhood, to provide necessary philanthropic services, and to research the conditions of the neighborhood in order to chronicle its ongoing needs and problems. In order to meet this purpose, Addams instituted a host of

programs, including art exhibits, public lectures, English classes, athletic teams, theatrical groups, music lessons, vocational training, cooperative apartments, public baths, and social clubs. Amidst these diverse activities were several cooking and domestic programs. From the very beginning of the settlement, Addams had seen what she considered a need for improved housekeeping in the neighborhood. Two investigations sponsored by Hull-House—one on sweatshops and another on Italian eating habits conducted by Caroline Hunt—concluded that local families were not eating well. Addams described the problem: because of low wages, sweatshop women had to work long hours to make any money. As a result, “women during the busy season paid little attention to the feeding of their families . . . and they bought from the nearest grocery the canned goods that could be most quickly heated, or gave a few pennies to the children with which they might secure a lunch from a neighboring candy shop.”

Addams’ solution to this problem was to open a coffee house that served as a public kitchen. The coffee house received much more public attention than cooking and housekeeping classes perhaps because of its lofty goals and experimental nature. The story of the rise and fall of the Hull-House Coffee House illustrates the intricacies of trying to Americanize ethnic eating practices.

The inspiration for the Hull-House Coffee House was Ellen Richards’ New England Kitchen, opened in Boston in 1890. Addams was impressed by the Rumford Kitchen Exhibit at the Columbian Exposition in 1893 and hoped that the success of that venture might bode well for a public kitchen at Hull-
House. Even before the fair opened, Addams had contacted Richards about her plans for the coffee house. In a letter to Marion Talbot in 1892, Addams asked if she could "borrow" Richards while in town visiting: "I had a letter from Mrs. Richards this morning saying that she would be your guest . . . and [she] would be very glad to look over the plans of our new building and give us suggestions upon our New England Kitchen. I hope very much that she can also see something of our cooking classes."\(^{141}\) Apparently the visit went well, as Addams subsequently sent Hull-House resident Julia Lathrop to Boston to train at Richards' New England Kitchen.\(^{142}\)

In 1893, the Hull-House Coffee House opened with some attention from the press.\(^{143}\) Three different Chicago newspapers covered the story, all favorably. One reporter declared that the kitchen "is calculated to prove a great benefit to the people of the neighborhood," and swore that "he never in his life ate a nicer pea soup or Boston baked beans."\(^{144}\) Another reporter referred to the Coffee House cuisine as "delicate palatables [sic] cooked on strictly scientific principles," and stated that after two months of operation, "Miss Addams is pleased with the success."\(^{145}\)

The Coffee House featured New England style cuisine, similar to what Richards served in her kitchen. Addams decried working Americans' increasing reliance on processed foods, worrying that these types of foods

\(^{141}\) Jane Addams to Marion Talbot, 10 October 1892, Marion Talbot Papers, University of Chicago.

\(^{142}\) Addams, *Twenty Years*, 130; Hayden, *Grand Domestic Revolution*, 165.

\(^{143}\) Originally the Hull-House Coffee House was called a public kitchen, but it had a coffee house component from the very beginning. Hull-House records refer to it as the Hull-House Coffee House from 1895 on, so that is the name used here.


\(^{145}\) "Hull-House Kitchen Opened," *Chicago Record*, 24 August 1893, JA.
were rapidly becoming the national cuisine:

What are the national dishes of Americans? It is astonishing how few still partake of the simple fare known as New England. It seems to be a part of these restless and hurried life of this generation in large cities to have abandoned the cheap and simple foods that need long cooking and a little skill to make them palatable. This reduces the fare to chops and steaks and tea with bread and cakes to be picked up at the bake-shop. Are these our National foods? It would almost seem so. Certain it is that home cookery is decreasing in amount and not improving in quality more or less dependence being placed on the bake-shop and restaurant. Now what is the result? The wage-earner is illy nourished on money that is all-sufficient. [sic] If rightly expended, to buy him proper food.146

To ameliorate the situation, the Coffee House offered inexpensive meals consisting of “simple fare”: cold roast beef, mutton stew, pork and beans, codfish balls, corned beef hash, ham and eggs, Boston brown bread, oatmeal, rice pudding, and soup.147 They did offer “weiner-wurst,” and fish dishes on Fridays, which indicate slight concessions to cultural and religious food preferences.

The Coffee House was more than a public restaurant; it sold baked goods and delivered lunches to schools, places of business, and social clubs. It hosted Hull-House cooking classes and food demonstrations. It also provided catering services and offered the space for use as a banquet hall or for private meetings. It was in fact as a meeting place that the Coffee House had its greatest success. Addams had hoped that the restaurant would become an alternative to the local saloons, but, while the Coffee House never put any neighborhood bars out of business, it did become “something of a

146 “West Side Philanthropists Open a New Department,” Chicago Daily Inter-Ocean, August 24, 1893, Hull-House Association Papers, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, Illinois. (hereafter cited as HHAP)
147 Hull-House Cafe and Lunch Room menu, 1894, HHAP.
social center to the neighborhood.” This popularity led Addams to campaign for an addition to the building. In 1899 she got her wish, and the Coffee House was expanded to hold one hundred and ten people, making it more useful as a banquet hall.

While the Coffee House succeeded as a social hub, it did not succeed as a public kitchen. Hull-House records from 1907 mention that the New England kitchen “has never been popular.” Addams identified the source of the problem as cultural differences in food preferences:

We did not reckon, however, with the wide diversity in nationality and inherited tastes . . . perhaps the neighborhood estimate was best summed up by the woman who frankly confessed, that the food was certainly nutritious, but that she didn’t like to eat what was nutritious, that she’d like to eat “what she’d ruther.”

Despite the lack of enthusiasm for the public kitchen, Hull-House continued this service, mostly providing hot lunches to neighborhood factories and schools. Addams was clearly disappointed by the failure of the public kitchen, but determined to learn from the experience. She always maintained that a settlement should be flexible, adaptable, and ready to change. She brought equanimity to her analysis of the failed kitchen:

The experience of the coffee-house taught us not to hold to preconceived ideas of what the neighborhood ought to have, but to keep ourselves in readiness to modify and adapt our undertakings as we discovered those things which the neighborhood was ready to accept. Better food was doubtless needed, but more attractive and safer gathering places were

148 Hull-House Year Book, 1906 and 1907, p. 40, HHAP.
149 Hull-House Bulletin, Vol. 3, No. 12, November/December 1899, HHAP.
150 Hull-House Year Book, 1906 and 1907, p. 40, HHAP.
151 Addams, Twenty Years, 130-131.
152 Hull-House Year Book, 1906 and 1907, p. 40, HHAP.
153 Addams, Twenty Years, 126.

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also needed, and the neighborhood was ready for one and not the other.\textsuperscript{154}

Addams conceded defeat with the public kitchen, and she was not alone. Richards' New England Kitchen had the same problems, and the public kitchen movement never caught on nationally as Richards hoped it would. But despite the setback, Addams did not relinquish the goal of improving immigrant foodways and Americanizing their households. She simply pursued that goal in other ways.

Hull-House continued to offer cooking and housekeeping classes and opened a model housekeeping apartment in 1908.\textsuperscript{155} Addams, who on the one hand was an ardent supporter of cultural traditions such as song, dance, and handicrafts, also believed that Americanized diets would help immigrants to assimilate. She was concerned about the "isolation of immigrants" in the neighborhood who, because of their limited funds, restricted themselves to the immediate vicinity of their homes. These neighbors did not fully experience American culture and hesitated to become part of a culture that they did not completely appreciate. Cooking classes would "connect the entire family with American food and household habits."\textsuperscript{156} Ideally, participation in Hull-House dietary programs resulted in happier families as Addams reported in this story:

\begin{quote}
I recall [a young working woman] whose husband had become so desperate after two years of her unskilled cooking that he had threatened to desert her and go where he could get "decent food," as she confided to me in a tearful interview, when she followed my advice to take the Hull-House courses in cooking,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{154} Ibid., 132.  
\textsuperscript{155} Hull-House Yearbook, 1 January 1913, p. 53, HHAP.  
\textsuperscript{156} Addams, Twenty Years, 253.
and at the end of six months reported a united and happy home.157

While not all neighbors were as receptive as the desperate wife above, that did not stop Addams from supporting assimilation through foodways. She was pragmatic enough to recognize when neighbors did not want reform efforts, as with the public kitchen, and was not afraid to adapt programs to suit the needs of her neighbors. Although she was more liberal than many reformers in her attitudes towards Americanization, Addams believed that immigrants benefited from assimilation if it made their lives in America easier. For her, culinary reforms meant better living through improved nutrition and temperance. It also meant becoming part of American culture through the adoption of American eating habits. She accepted the reluctance on the part of many immigrants to embrace those changes, but she believed that immigrants' lack of desire for reforms did not mean that they did not need them. Instead of changing her beliefs, she changed her approach. Even after the failure of the public kitchen, Addams continued to be involved with the home economics movement, and Hull-House offered Americanized cooking and housekeeping programs throughout the Progressive Era.158

The Chicago Hebrew Institute was established in 1903 as a Jewish community center: "the rallying place of the immigrant in search of true American citizenship" and a place where "the strong individuality of the Jew" and "the noble features of the American" could be blended to help neighbors

157 Ibid., 438.
158 See Hull-House Yearbook, May 1, 1910 and January 1, 1913, HHAP.
“become American Jews.” The Chicago Hebrew Institute was not the only Jewish settlement in Chicago; the Maxwell Street Settlement had been established in 1893. Maxwell Street served an important role in Chicago’s Jewish community, but some Jews felt that it adopted policies and practices that were too assimilationist. The Institute, in contrast, posited itself as an institution committed to traditional Judaism and the maintenance of Jewish cultural practices in America. To that end, they offered lectures on Jewish history, Yiddish classes, and a Hebrew library. While its mission statement refers to a blending of Jewish and American culture, the Chicago Hebrew Institute worked harder than the other settlements in this study to maintain traditional immigrant cultural and religious practices. This was no doubt easier for it to accomplish, as the settlement appealed only to those of the Jewish faith, which provided commonalities between neighbors and reformers that were not always present at other institutions.

The settlement did not initially offer cooking classes, but when head resident Philip Seman joined the staff in 1913, he quickly noted the need for such classes and in a 1914 report refers to the likely reason the Chicago Hebrew Institute had not offered them previously—lack of space:

It requires skill and a real ability to manage nowadays for the housewife of the poor or even middle class family to make both ends meet. The solution to such a problem to a large degree would be that the girls and the young women and the near-to-be wives be given instruction in domestic economy, be taught how to make their own clothes, how to cook and the relative value of foodstuffs...We should have such a department. It should be run on a large state and should attract many

160 Ibid.
hundreds of girls, and particular attention should be paid to the young girls who are about to enter married life. This naturally would require space much more than we can, under the present physical cramped conditions, afford.\textsuperscript{161}

Despite the lack of facilities, the settlement did open a milk dispensary in 1914. The dispensary was very popular with neighbors and operated for several years.

Spurred by the interest of neighbors and his perception that the neighbors needed domestic instruction, Seman lobbied for a home economics department over the next few years. He argued that many neighborhood girls knew very little of housework, and as they were “the future women and mothers of America upon [whom] depends the happiness and the stability of the home, it [was] of incalculable importance that these women be given every opportunity to prepare themselves effectively for the duties of wifehood and motherhood.”\textsuperscript{162} Seman also believed that “simplicity in our food, in our homes...indeed in our lives, is the greatest factor in making up a perfect and happy existence.”\textsuperscript{163}

Seman’s lobbying worked. The Institute established a home economics department in 1917, offering a model kitchen “consisting of four rooms – kitchen, dining room, parlor, bedroom...The kitchen has been furnished in approved style—with a gas range, kitchen cabinet—with its necessary utensils, and a sink w/ hot and cold running water”\textsuperscript{164}(see fig. 15). In these facilities, trained volunteers taught both girls and women Kosher

\textsuperscript{164} Seman, “Report of the Superintendent,” Observer 5, No. 6 (May 1917), 16.
cooking. Seman assured neighbors that even though the curriculum emphasized practicality and nutrition, pupils learned in a home-like atmosphere, not a scientific classroom setting common to many other settlement classes. In this setting, an instructor could relate to a student "in a manner of an intelligent mother imparting valuable information to her young daughter, whom she is training for future life."\footnote{Ibid., 18.}

Figure 15. Housekeeping Class, Chicago Hebrew Institute, circa 1917, \footnote{[G1980:175, box 2], courtesy of Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois.}
Even though Seman stressed in 1917 that neighborhood children took settlement cooking class “BECAUSE THEY WANT TO,” it was clear by the next year that the new facilities were not as much of a draw as hoped.\(^{166}\) Apparently older girls and women did not find the windowless basement rooms appealing, and their small size limited the number of people settlement workers could instruct.\(^{167}\) The settlement remained committed to home economics but was not able to conduct the types of classes it hoped for until it moved to a new building in 1927. The rooms for home economics were larger, less home-like, and more scientific, with individual burner stations in a schoolroom setting.\(^{168}\)

Like other settlements in this study, the Chicago Hebrew Institute eventually opened a public cafeteria. This Kosher restaurant, called Blintzes Inn, opened in 1923, and was intended to serve the entire Jewish community. Blintzes Inn offered Kosher dining with separate meat and dairy menus. Some of the dishes were traditional, such as gefilte fish and cheese blintzes. Others, like wiener schnitzel and herring catered to a more Germanic palate. Managed by a professional dietician, Blintzes Inn provided nutritious and economical Kosher meals in a “rendezvous of the sturdy and vigorous, as well as the meek and hungry.”\(^{169}\) It also was marketed as one of the only Jewish catering services in the city, available for weddings, banquets, and

\(^{166}\) Ibid., 20, emphasis in original.
\(^{167}\) Seman, "Report of the Superintendent," Observer 5, No. 6 (May 1918), 23.
\(^{169}\) Observer 12, No. 2 (November 1923).
The Kosher orientation of both Blintzes Inn and the cooking classes indicates the Institute's commitment to preserving Jewish heritage in the face of Americanization efforts. Course materials often refer to Kosher traditions, asserting that it is in "the interest of the young Jewish girl to keep up the Jewish home ideals." Seman believed that the problem in local Jewish homes was primarily poor nutrition due to ignorance of economical housekeeping. But he did not believe that Jewish immigrants had to abandon Kosher traditions in order to improve their eating habits. Mothers who were referred to settlement cooking classes by Jewish Social Service Bureau workers were instructed in "proper home-making" according to Jewish standards. Seman believed in helping Jewish immigrants to adjust to American society, but not by assimilating at the expense of their religion or culture. He saw home economics as an appropriate example of "the proper kind of Americanization, for the instructor, after all, tends towards decency and a better understanding and appreciation of each of the members of the family to one another."

The Jewish identity of both reformers at the Institute and their neighbors did provide common ground that was unlike situations at other settlements. The renaming of the Chicago Hebrew Institute to the Jewish People's Institute in 1922 in order to reflect Seman's belief that the settlement

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170 Blintzes Inn pamphlet, Scrapbook 3A, JCC.
171 Description of Courses and Activities, General Bulletin, Jewish People's Institute, 1930-1931, p. 18, JCC.
172 Philip Seman, Education and the Community, The Program of a People's Center, 1922, p. 28, JCC.
173 Ibid.
was for all Jewish people regardless of social status or ethnic background. The Chicago Hebrew Institute’s foodways programs were similar to those in other settlements in Chicago; they advocated a scientific approach to nutrition and hoped to alleviate neighborhood hardships. But the reformers at the Institute were not as concerned with Americanization as other Chicago reformers.

Based on the experiences at the Chicago Hebrew Institute, one is tempted to assume that Jewish settlements would be more invested in maintaining traditional ethnic practices than secular settlements that appealed to diverse immigrant groups. But some Jewish settlements were interested in Americanization and pursued that goal more vigorously than the Institute. In Chicago, the older Maxwell Street Settlement seemed assimilationist to many in the Jewish community. In Milwaukee, Lizzie Black Kander—an American-born assimilated Jew called both the “Jewish Jane Addams” and “Jane Addams of Milwaukee”—was similarly interested in Americanization. Kander’s experiences working with Jewish immigrants reveal that a common religious affiliation between reformers and immigrants did not preclude differences in attitudes towards assimilation and cultural identity.

A native Milwaukeean, Elizabeth “Lizzie” Black Kander and her husband Simon were upper-class Americanized Jews who came from Germany. Their families had been part of the second major wave of Jewish immigration to America starting in 1820. This group of Jewish immigrants were assimilationists who willingly changed certain Jewish beliefs and practices in order to Americanize themselves.174 While this is an

174 Hasia Diner’s *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880* (Baltimore:
oversimplification, Kander is representative of many Jews of her generation and social standing who were more concerned with their American identities than their Jewish identities.

As the Kanders had no children, Lizzie devoted herself to charity work, focusing primarily on Milwaukee’s Jewish community. She was president of the Ladies Relief Sewing Society and started the Keep Clean Mission to provide public baths for immigrants without access to running water. Kander cleverly convinced a local brewing company to pipe the hot waste water produced by sterilizing its bottles into a building fitted with showers.175 Spurred by the success of the showers, Kander added a night school, including classes in reading, woodwork, sewing, English, manual training, and cooking. This larger facility was incorporated as “The Settlement” in 1900.176 When it moved to a bigger residence in 1910 it was renamed the Abraham Lincoln House after Kander refused to have it named for her.177 The settlement neighbors consisted of largely Eastern European Jews, but there were some Gentiles as well who Kander welcomed to use the settlement.

One of Kander’s prime motivations for establishing the Abraham

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177 As the name “Abraham Lincoln House” is more identifiable and specific than “The Settlement,” I will be referring to the Milwaukee Settlement as the former throughout, even though that was not its name prior to 1910.
Lincoln House was Americanization. One of Kander's biographers asserted that Kander and other assimilated, well-off Milwaukee Jews like her worried that the influx of Eastern European Jews in the late 1800s would "unleash a wave of anti-Semitism toward the entire Jewish population. To stave off that wave, Milwaukee's German Jews instituted a raft of social betterment programs designed to 'Americanize' their Russian cousins. Lizzie Black Kander was at the forefront of this movement."  

Kander's settlement became a place where local Jews could socialize while bettering themselves through clubs and classes. The Abraham Lincoln House was soon recognized in the community as a place that "[served] to teach and Americanize the untrained product of environment and heredity into noble types of men and women and good American citizens."  

The most famous of Kander's programs at the settlement was the cooking school. Like other cooking classes at settlements in Chicago and elsewhere, it taught proper nutrition and economical methods of cooking and introduced young girls to American-style housekeeping and foodways. However, Kander ran into a problem similar to that faced by the Association House in Chicago: her students were predominantly Jews who observed Kosher dietary rules. Kander stated in 1899 that "we were obliged to conduct the lessons on the 'Kosher' plan—as the children adhered strictly to the

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orthodox rules of cooking.” Though Jewish, Kander no longer kept strict Kosher, nor did any of her friends. But her students, unwilling to attend cooking classes that did not teach Kosher cooking, forced Kander to make adjustments. First, she had to find recipes and lesson plans for Kosher cooking. She asked some East Coast Jewish charities for assistance, but discovered that no Kosher cookbooks existed for use in the classroom. Her only solution was to appeal to the local Jewish community for their family recipes, which, cobbled together with lesson plans from the Milwaukee public schools, formed the curriculum for the cooking school.

Finding recipes was not the only problem. Cooking instructors, including Kander, were often unfamiliar with all of the strict regulations involved in keeping Kosher and had to learn them quickly. The resulting classes provided several incidents that revealed the ignorance of teachers. One instructor, a graduate of the famous Boston Cooking School, made basic mistakes that “horrif[ied] the children, who instantly correct[ed] her.” For example, wanting to add some color to an all-white table setting, Miss Pattee used a red napkin as a centerpiece. However, the napkin was a fleishig (for meat) cloth and the meal was to be milchig (dairy). As fleishig and milchig are never to mingle under Kosher guidelines, Miss Pattee’s seemingly simple gesture had serious implications. The napkin was removed before the meal began. And even though it was the focus of her class, sometimes Miss

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182 “Only Kosher Cooking School in West,” Undated Clippings, KPUW.
183 Ibid.
Pattee "for[got] about the ‘Kosher’ and mix[ed] up the custard and the bouillon spoons, but there [was] always a small girl with large dark eyes and a wealth of coal black hair to point out the mistake."\textsuperscript{184}

These mistakes were bound to happen when non-Kosher cooks took on the task of teaching Kosher cooking to girls from families who kept strict Kosher. Despite the problems, Kander felt she was doing more good than harm by taking responsibility for Kosher cooking instruction. After all, her classes included more than just cooking; they introduced girls to American foods and standards of cleanliness. Kander’s description of the classes reveals her hope that the classes would improve the entire neighborhood:

[The classes offer] practical lessons in housekeeping such as scrubbing and dish washing; the preparation and the actual cooking of food; setting the table and serving the meals properly. . . . If [the pupils] will only practice what we try to teach they will be ideal little housekeepers and will make home beautiful, make home pleasant, and thus carry out the spirit of the Milwaukee Jewish Mission.\textsuperscript{185}

Even though the classes involved Kosher methods, the recipes and menus were clearly American. A Cooking Lesson Book from 1898 for the Kosher Cooking School introduces the basic guidelines for Kosher practices, then employs those guidelines to make such dishes as hasty pudding, gingerbread, creamed cod fish, Boston browned potatoes, pot roast, and sponge cake. Lessons often alternated between \textit{fleishig} and \textit{milchig} foods in order to avoid commingling the two.\textsuperscript{186} The 1901 Lesson Book has many of the same dishes. The sole recipe to allude to Kander’s own German heritage

\textsuperscript{184} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{185} Lizzie Black Kander, Milwaukee Jewish Mission Annual Reports, 1899-1900, KPUW.

\textsuperscript{186} Cooking Lesson Book, 1898, KPUW.
was for *Kuchen*, a coffeecake. The cooking class curriculum reflected none of the students’ traditional Eastern European dishes. Kander, while conceding to ethnic traditions by teaching Kosher cooking, was also Americanizing through the instruction of Americanized foods and menu planning.

This Americanized approach to Kosher cooking was also evident in Kander’s most successful venture: *The Settlement Cook Book*. This book, which eventually became a national best-seller, brought together foreign and American recipes, some Kosher, some not. The cookbook was initially proposed as a time saving measure. Kander, frustrated at the amount of time it took students to copy down all of the recipes involved in the cooking lessons each week, thought it would be more expedient to have a preprinted booklet containing all of the recipes and instructions. The price for printing was more than Kander felt she could pay, so she proposed making the cookbook a fundraising device. She persuaded friends and locals to donate family recipes and included advertising in the book to cover the cost of printing. Once printed, she hoped to sell the books to other settlements or cooking schools because of the complete lack of Kosher cooking textbooks available. Kander presented her ideas to the Abraham Lincoln House Board of Directors, but they refused to pay for the enterprise with settlement monies. Kander, undeterred, went ahead with the project herself. The first edition of *The Settlement Cook Book*, including “Lessons in Cookery” as well as five hundred individual recipes, was published in 1901, with an initial run of

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187 *Cooking Lesson Book, 1901, KPUW*
one thousand copies. The book was an immediate success in Milwaukee, and by the end of the year it had spread to Chicago. In less than a year, all one thousand of the books had sold, over half of them to Chicagoans. A second edition appeared in 1903, with several more editions and printings appearing in subsequent years. The Settlement Cook Book has sold over two million total copies, and is still in print today. The latest edition, The New Settlement Cookbook, was published in 1991, 90 years after the first edition. Several recipes remain unchanged from the earliest editions. Profits from cookbook sales allowed the settlement to purchase new facilities in 1910.

The contents of The Settlement Cook Book provide examples of the Americanized ethnic cookery employed by Milwaukee's older, established Jewish community. There are recipes for such traditional German dishes as Hasen Pfeffer, Lebkuchen, Blaetterteig, and pickled meats, but there are also recipes with pseudo-French overtones, like Shrimp a la Creole in Casserole and Frog Legs a la Newburg. The latter recipes represent a common trend in cookbooks of the period equating French cuisine with fine cooking. Practically the only foreign cuisine that Americans respected, French foodways were so popular that any dish given a French name was thereby given a measure of acceptability among American diners. A recipe in The Settlement Cook Book for spaghetti is called "Spaghetti Italienne." Presenting this dish as a French interpretation of an Italian classic presumably made it

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188 Mrs. Simon Kander, "The Story of the Abraham Lincoln House, Part Second," The Lincoln, p. 6, KPUW.
189 Ibid.
more palatable to American readers.\textsuperscript{191}

Even though the cookbook was compiled by a Jewish woman for use in a Kosher cooking class, the collection of recipes from Kander and her friends did not adhere to Kosher rules. The 1901 cookbook contained recipes for oysters, lobster, and crawfish, all foods forbidden under orthodox Kosher rules.\textsuperscript{192} The second edition from 1903 has recipes combining white sauce (which contains dairy) and meat, and the third edition from 1907 has pork dishes. Many of the recipes in these early editions are clearly German, but the third edition includes two Russian Kosher recipes for beet soup—one \textit{fleishig} and one \textit{milchig}—that more accurately reflect the ethnic background of Kander's neighbors at the ALH. However, the predominance of German recipes indicates that Kander favored her own culinary traditions and that of her close friends over the recipes of neighborhood immigrants.

\textit{The Settlement Cook Book} was called in later editions "The First Classic Collection of American Ethnic Recipes."\textsuperscript{193} Certainly including classic German dishes and Kosher cooking lessons was a novelty in cookbooks of the time. But Kander did not set out to fashion an ethnic cookbook; she simply wanted to compile lesson plans and turned to the Germanic Jewish population for additional recipes. While the recipes may have seemed exotic to Italian or Greek Americans, Milwaukee's sizeable German population would have found them commonplace. Ironically, Kander used the profits from this

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{191} By the same token, canned Italian food was marketed under the brand name "Franco-American" in order to make it more acceptable to the American public. See Harvey Levenstein, \textit{Revolution at the Table}.

\textsuperscript{192} Mrs. Simon Kander, \textit{The Settlement Cook Book} (Milwaukee, WI: The Settlement Cook Book Co., 1901).

\end{footnotesize}
“ethnic” cookbook to continue Americanizing neighborhood girls.

By providing Kosher cooking lessons with an Americanizing influence, Kander hoped to make her immigrant neighbors into respectable members of Milwaukee’s Jewish community:

It is a selfish motive that spurs us on; it is to protect ourselves, our own reputation in the community that we must work with tact, with heart and soul to better the home conditions of our people....This can only be accomplished through the children. We must extend to them the hand of good fellowship, and teach them habits of industry and cleanliness.\(^{194}\)

Apparently, outsiders felt that Kander’s work succeeded. One of them wrote in 1910 that assimilation was a “vexing problem,” but “here, in a quiet way, that very assimilation is taking place. [The neighborhood] has been transformed into a place of perfect cleanliness. These improvements have been brought about by the settlement which mothers the neighborhood.”\(^{195}\)

Kander’s experiences at the Abraham Lincoln House reveal several things. Clearly, religious affiliation was an important common bond between native-born Americans and immigrants, but that commonality did not exclude differences of opinion about Americanization. Kander and other German Jews of her generation had abandoned certain Jewish traditions like keeping Kosher. But subsequent Jewish immigrants relinquished those traditions more reluctantly, forcing Kander to develop an approach to Jewish eating habits that did not preclude Americanization. Instead of abandoning her plans of Americanization through diet, Kander changed her tactics.

In this respect, Kander, like other reformers profiled in this study,

\(^{194}\) Lizzie Black Kander, Annual Reports, Milwaukee Jewish Mission, 1899-1900, March 27, 1900, KPUW.

offered some culinary programs at their institutions, hoping that those programs would allay such problems as malnutrition, drunkenness, domestic violence, and cultural isolation. Americanized homemaking, if properly adopted, seemed to ensure future generations of happy and healthy assimilated American families with clearly defined gender roles. At a time when the country was rapidly changing due to industrialization, immigration and urbanization, and the feminist movement was gaining momentum, home economics and foodways reforms were a comfortable palliative to those changes. The reformers' dogged pursuit of this agenda indicates both their concerns about the impact of immigration on home life and American culture and a conviction that they knew best how to address the situation. What is fascinating is that even in the face of sometimes outspoken resistance from neighbors, reformers maintained their belief in the importance of Americanized diets. This resistance and the reformers' reactions to it is explored further in the next chapter.
CHAPTER VI

"WE DON'T WANT ANY OF THEIR --- SLOP AT OUR HOUSE": REACTIONS TO REFORM EFFORTS

The years 1890–1920 were active ones for foodways reformers. The home economics movement was growing, public kitchens were springing up across the country, and cooking schools and settlement houses were teaching Americanized housekeeping to thousands of immigrants. This activity might suggest the successful and smooth implementation of the reform agenda, but, in fact, immigrant communities did not always welcome foodways reforms and often actively resisted reformers' efforts.

Reformers approached food practices from a largely scientific perspective, downplaying or even ignoring the cultural and sensual dimensions of food. They saw all foodstuffs as neutral items that could be easily interchanged with others they deemed more economical or nutritional. But for many immigrants, like for the reformers, food meant more than mere nutrition and could not be easily replaced by Americanized substitutes. Their often negative responses to foodways reform reveals the intense relationship between food and cultural identity—and in many cases, gender identity—that made foodways reforms such a difficult and complex endeavor.

As detailed in previous chapters, reformers embraced foodways reforms for many reasons, but the underlying attitude was that "foreign" foodways were inferior and inadequate. According to reformers, this
inferiority resulted from a combination of ignorance on the part of immigrants and the hardships caused by living in poor urban conditions. Only the acceptance of American foodways would improve immigrants’ home lives.

Some reformers laid the blame squarely at the feet of immigrant women. Chicago Commons worker William Harrison observed that “many of the wives of foreign laborers know not the least of the art of cooking and hence [spoil] in attempting to cook the food which the husband provides.”\(^1\) Amelia Sears, a social worker and graduate of Lewis Institute, argued: “it is impracticable to expect the immigrant family to have the wisdom, the forethought and the intelligence in buying necessary to secure [an adequate] diet.”\(^2\)

Some reformers recognized that more complex factors existed than women’s ignorance of Americanized cooking, indicating inadequate housing conditions that made preparation of any meals difficult. Others pointed out that not all foreign foods were inherently bad and promoted a few items like Italian pasta as nutritionally and economically sound. One observer grudgingly praised the kosher diet as “[based on] certain sound principles, perhaps not so necessary to physical well being as in the days of Moses, but still of hygienic value.”\(^3\) But even the less critical reformers advocated an Americanized diet as a healthier option than ethnic foodways. Liberal home economist Lucy Gillett, presenting research on the foodways of Italian

\(^1\) William B. Harrison, “The Social Function of the Saloon,” *Chicago Commons*, July–September, 1898, CCCHS.

\(^2\) Amelia Sears, *The Charity Visitor: A Handbook for Beginners,* Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy, 1913, CSCP Papers, GTP.

\(^3\) “Only Kosher Cooking School in West,” Undated Clippings, KPUW.
immigrants, said:

Many people have been sceptical [sic] about changing the food habits of various nationalities. We see no reason why the habits should be changed except in so far as to make them consistent with health, and perhaps of greater convenience to the people. It may be difficult for them to get in our markets the foods to which they have been accustomed, and they, not knowing how to substitute, will provide a diet far removed from what the children need. We believe it possible to build upon the good already in the diet so that the new foods will be appreciated and accepted. We know that the children ask for American foods as soon as they begin to eat away from home. . . . These people are laboring with great handicaps. They have families larger than they can support...they live in congested unsanitary quarters, with inadequate sleeping accommodations, they are ignorant of the importance of the care of the child if he would become a strong man, they are emotional by nature...[and] they have come to this country from a land where milk, vegetables, fruit, and coarse bread are abundant and cheap.4

Gillett, who acknowledged positive aspects of Italian foodways, nevertheless saw Italian immigrants as backward, “handicapped,” “emotional” people who could be helped by the intervention of wiser, more rational reformers.

As many reformers patronized ethnic foodways, some immigrants responded negatively to reform efforts. Unfortunately, not many documents reflect the immigrant point of view on foodways. Many Chicago immigrant women were too busy, tired, or disinterested to keep journals, and those who did often did not choose to write about foodways.

By contrast, settlement workers took copious notes and conducted many studies, thus leaving numerous records behind. These records occasionally include immigrant perspectives, but as they are conveyed by the settlement workers, one is forced to interpret the immigrant perspective through these documents, realizing that reporting is subjective and may only

vaguely represent the actual feelings of immigrants about the reform agenda.

Optimistic reformers' reports presented sanguine hopes for foodways programs. They believed in the importance of Americanized foodways and any positive response encouraged them, no matter how small. As a result, their documents are sprinkled with "success" stories, reinforcing their convictions that reforms were both improving neighborhood life and eagerly embraced by the locals. One such report from the Chicago Commons described the Young Italian Mothers club, the members of which had been coming to the Commons since childhood. All had participated in home economics classes at the settlement, and now that they had their own households, they had "broken away from some of the old Italian customs and [were] managing their homes according to the American idea."5 The Commons also reported that "scarcely a day passes that we do not receive a report of the good work done at home by some child in the cooking school, and the parents often tell us how much they have learned from the children."6 Another interesting "success" story was that of domestic science instructor Marie Hansen of the Northwestern University Settlement. According to the settlement publication, The Neighbor, Miss Hansen "found her inspiration for domestic science [as a student] in the Settlement cooking class and afterward graduated from Lewis Institute."7 She returned to the NUS to teach cooking to younger immigrant children, including a class for scouts that made "the domestic science kitchen the mecca of boys."8

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5 Report of the Young Italian Mothers Club, 1918–1919, Chicago Commons Clubs and Groups, 1915–1939, CCCHS.
6 Chicago Commons 1894–1911 booklet, p. 26–28, GTP.
7 "Miss Hansen and Her 'Cooks' from Troop 11," The Neighbor, Vol.5, No. 20 (17 May 1919), NUS.
8 Ibid.
But Miss Hansen seemed to be the exception, and the reformers sensed this. Aware of resistance to their foodways programs, reformers—in true settlement fashion—tried to ascertain the root causes. Surveys and questionnaires included pointed questions about foodways practices in immigrant homes. Chicago settlements conducted three such surveys between 1917 and 1920, well after the settlements in this study had established foodways programs. The first was a "Study of the Pre-Adolescent Girl," conducted by NUS head resident Harriet Vittum for the National Federation of Settlements. She developed an extensive bank of questions to determine both the influences acting upon young girls and their current interests. Vittum's survey included several questions about foodways and home life that indicate reformers' concerns that their foodways programs were encountering opposition. In the section on "In the Home," the survey asks:

What influence does the little girl have upon the regularity of meals and the proper cooking of food? To what extent does the immigrant family adopt American food? Is the tendency toward undernutrition [sic] in school girls due to the poor food, insufficient food, or to lack of control of eating and living habits? Is the school and Settlement domestic science training practiced in the home?9

While the National Federation of Settlements never published the survey results, the Chicago Federation of Settlements saved the responses collected from its members. The responses from Gads Hill Center reveal varied immigrant reaction to cooking classes. Cooking classes were among the most popular classes at the settlement, and, according to the survey, "the lessons are simple enough and inexpensive enough to be worked out at

home and with few exceptions the children are allowed and encouraged to make things for the family.”10 But in Polish and Bohemian families, respondents noted little adoption of Americanized food.11 The Association House, which also served a significant Polish population, reported similar resistance:

In these Polish families . . . the little girl is not often allowed to bring her cooking class ideas into her mother’s kitchen unless occasionally to “show off” what she can do. “American” cooking is not greatly favored. Undernourishment is largely due to lack of quality of food, rather than quantity, which in turn is due to ignorance of food values. Same amount of money usually expended for food would provide ample nourishment if skillfully used.12

Likewise, the Northwestern University Settlement noted that cooking classes had little influence because “mothers seldom permit [the girls] to mess around at home. Bread and cocoa seem to be about the only things which the mothers are willing to learn from the children, and on the whole, the immigrant families do not adopt American food and American ways of preparing it.”13 Evidently, even girls interested in Americanized cooking encountered resistance from more traditional mothers.

Not all girls wanted to attend cooking classes. A survey conducted for the NFS on older girls (ages fourteen to eighteen) revealed some girls’ preferences for settlement programs other than cooking. The Chicago Commons noted that while “it is needless to add that a sanitary, cleanly, attractive home and good nourishing food are essential” for developing a

10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 National Federation of Settlements Survey on the PreAdolescent Girl, 1920, NUSR.
"good family life," there was indifference to cooking classes. They had "reached and interested many girls through the Housekeeping Center at Chicago Commons whom [they] did not interest in the cooking and sewing schools." Commons workers felt that the model flat was more successful because:

the work in their own homes is perfect drudgery to them. Fit up a flat in an attractive manner and show the girls how housework is done in a well regulated home. Let them give dinners in the flat and take care of it as though it were their own, and you will find that the girls will become greatly interested...and decide to do housework.

Interestingly, the flat was not solely meant to teach immigrant girls about keeping their own homes; it was also used as an inducement to get them out of factory work and into domestic service. In fact, Chicago Commons’ housekeeping center was not modeled on tenement flats like those the girls already lived in, for the reformers found them as “not attractive enough to the girl[s].” Instead, the practice flat was purposefully superior than the local tenements in order to attract more girls who aspired to something “swell.” The flat was a nicer, roomier apartment that showed “the difference between a home fitted up in refined style and one furnished in cheap, tawdry furniture.” The housekeeping center was about more than just improved health; it was also about aesthetics. Clearly reformers were hoping to educate girls in middle-class American tastes by showing them the

14 Schedule of the Problem of the Adolescent Girl Between 14 and 18 Years of Age, National Federation of Settlements Study, GTF.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Schedule of the Problem of the Adolescent Girl Between 14 and 18 Years of Age, National Federation of Settlements Study, GTF.
19 Ibid.
gaudiness of their lower-class notions of style.

Another Americanization study conducted shortly after World War I contained revealing exchanges between reformers and immigrants. Foodways and housekeeping had their own section of the survey. The first question asked, “What are the chief articles of family diet?” It then asked the questioner to note the use of milk and the use of coffee by children, the latter of which reformers felt was a disgusting, unhealthy habit. The next question asked, “In what way does this diet differ from diet in the old country, and why were changes made?” There was also a question asking whether the mother had any cooking or buying instruction in America.20

There are three responses to the survey, all from Italian families. The first respondent was the father of the Centracchio family. He maintained that “Italian cooking [was] not much different from American.” He said that the family diet was “practically the same as in Italy except now Mazola oil [was] used instead of olive oil and Argentine cheese instead of Italian cheese because that food is not being imported.”21 Mrs. Centracchio shopped at both American and Italian grocery stores and had taken no American cooking classes, although one daughter had two weeks of classes at school. The father was dissatisfied with his experiences in America and found it difficult to support his family on his salary. Mr. Centracchio told the investigator Americans “brag” about what a wonderful country it is—the greatest in the world—overlooking the fact that Italy and other countries have poetry, literature, forms of government, scenery which is equal to and sometimes surpasses anything in America. [Americans] do not appreciate the history and traditions of other countries... [Americans think] no one not born in

21 Ibid.
The next family, the Buoscios, had not changed their foodways at all. The investigator noted, “Italian cooking methods retained by mother, who cannot cook American style. Macaroni and olive oil prominent part of diet. Olive oil imported from Argentine [sic] and bought by the barrel.”23 One of the daughters of the family had cooking lessons at school and occasionally baked at home, “but in general old country methods and dishes used because mother does not know American methods.”24 The Buoscios had more positive feelings about emigrating, and Mr. Buoscio stated that he never expected to return to Italy. Like Mr. Centracchio, Buoscio was critical of many American practices, but felt that he was a success in America, whereas he might not have been in Italy.25

The last family, who is not named, was also culturally conservative. Even though the mother and children were exposed to American dishes at both settlement and school, the mother shopped at neighborhood Italian stores and baked her own bread because it was “cheaper and better.”26 The investigator noted that the family diet had changed somewhat, but “they had spaghetti three or four times a week for supper and meat and vegetables other times. Family likes both, but seem to prefer spaghetti.” In addition, they drank coffee for breakfast.27

These surveys revealed that the chief opponents of Americanization diets seemed to be an older generation of women unwilling to change. The

22 Ibid., emphasis theirs.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
following section from an analysis of foodways programs makes the point:

It has been suggested . . . that the housekeeping . . . class work is carried into the homes more readily than the cooking. This can be traced to the fact that many children come from homes in which "old country" food still predominates. . . . Poles, Italians, Lithuanians adopt [American food] very slowly; they like their own food better. A story is told of a group of Italians invited to a beautiful home and served with a delicious luncheon. Immediately on tasting the sandwiches they threw them on the ground and stamped and spat on them. Their love for the highly seasoned has not been catered to. Even the girl in the cooking classes fails to enjoy dishes at first and often makes some remark such as, "It ain't like we have at home." However, the same girl growing up may express herself as being ashamed to take American friends into her home for a meal and on being married will definitely choose the American foods and methods of preparing them.28

Despite the resistance of the older generation, reformers continued to forge ahead with the agenda, hoping that the younger generation might embrace Americanized food practices once they had their own homes.

They nevertheless recorded stories of immigrant resistance to foodways change, making the immigrants appear unreasonable and ignorant for stubbornly clinging to their traditions. Ellen Richards, when faced with the failure of her New England Kitchen due to disinterest in the menu, concluded, "the number of those who are intelligent enough to appreciate the nature of the food is too few."29 One settlement worker caught what she considered to be a revealing exchange between family members: "I stood outside an Italian home and could not help hearing the mother and daughter arguing about the girl's coming to the Settlement cooking class. I heard the mother say, 'What do you want to go there for? We don't want any of their

28 National Federation of Settlements Survey on the Pre-Adolescent Girl, 1920, p. 18, NUSR.
29 Ellen Richards, Plain Words About Food: The Rumford Kitchen Leaflets (Boston: Whitcomb & Barrows, 1899), 139.

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— slop at our house.” Sophonisba Breckinridge complained that even after teaching Americanized foodways, “constant supervision was essential, [for] as soon as [reformers] relaxed their efforts at all the families dropped back to their old habits.”

This depiction of immigrants as ignorant and recalcitrant disregarded many reasons why immigrants did not always embrace foodways reforms. For example, not all immigrants had the kitchen equipment needed to cook Americanized meals. Some neighbors, like the Italian woman above, simply felt that their food was more tasty and satisfying. Others used foodways to maintain a connection to the Old World in an otherwise unfamiliar place. Reformers did not always acknowledge such physical, cultural, and emotional factors, which added to the sometimes antagonistic or patronizing relationship between immigrants and reformers.

The inability to duplicate Americanized cooking successfully at home was not a small problem. Most cooking classes were conducted in either classroom settings or large industrial kitchens, which had modern cooking equipment and easy access to running water. Home economists preferred these settings because there foodways could be treated in the scientific, rational, sanitary manner that they preferred. Even the model housekeeping flats established at many Chicago settlements, which reformers designed to give girls practical, hands-on experience in housekeeping, were often markedly different from the tenements where most of the girls lived.

Reformers’ desire to teach in modern, sanitary settings may have

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30 National Federation of Settlements Survey on the Pre-Adolescent Girl, 1920, p. 14, NUSR.
31 Sophonisba P. Breckenridge, New Homes for Old (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1921), 293.
actually hampered the adoption of their lessons. It could not have been easy to prepare some of those dishes in homes that had no hot or running water, little natural light, no refrigeration, small stoves, and few kitchen implements. One Chicago immigrant related the problems that occurred when there was no hot water and only one pot: “During the first years we came we had to have a boiler to...boil our clothes. After we’d wash em we’d boil in this boiler and that was the pot that they go around and they make the pasta fazul.”

Even if girls had wanted to cook American-style, they might not have been able to if their homes did not have the proper equipment. It was likely easier to continue to prepare the dishes from their former country, where many of their mothers had cooked under similar conditions.

Kitchen difficulties accounted for only part of the resistance. Some immigrants resented condescension by foodways reformers. Harriet Vittum of the Northwestern University Settlement noted that immigrant women “could not accept” the “domestic science that we tried to teach [them]...because [they] knew that we were patronizing [them], however hard we tried to avoid the appearance of doing so.” Many women did not like to be told what to do, as was the case with the woman who wanted to eat ‘what she’d rather.’ While these are only two examples, it is not hard to imagine that many more immigrants were put off by reformers who barely concealed their disdain for other’s foodways practices. It is one thing to express distaste for unfamiliar food; it is quite another to imply that only

32 Carmelia Zoppetti, interview from Italians in Chicago Project, University of Illinois, Chicago, quoted in Judy Chesen’s “It Was More Than Nourishment,” 179.
33 Ibid., 170-180.
34 Harriet Vittum, Report of the Head Resident, October 1-April 1, 1918, NUSR.
35 Addams, Twenty Years, 131.
ignorant cooks prepared that dish.

Patronizing reformers annoyed those immigrants who firmly believed in the superiority of their own foodways. Clearly the Italian women who spat out their sandwiches and stamped on them preferred their own cooking. Likewise, the woman who referred to settlement cooking as "slop" did not have a high opinion of Americanized foodways. Chicago Commons workers reported that in their experience, "Poles, Italians, Lithuanians adopt [American food] very slowly; they like their own food better."36 Ellen Richards realized that "good food means to the average person that to which he was accustomed in his childhood. All else is an acquired taste."37 Even so, she hoped that immigrants could be taught that the New England diet was more nutritious and economical than their preferred foods. Unfortunately, after years of struggle with the New England Kitchen, Richards opined: "The poor of our cities ... whether they be Irish, Scandinavian, North or South German, Russian, or Italian, have brought with them strong national tastes. They like the dishes to which they have been accustomed, and they like no other."38

Some of the prejudice against American cooking came from a misunderstanding of the foods Americans ate. One Italian guest at a Hull-House dinner was surprised to see more than potatoes and beer at the table, which he believed to be the sole components of the American diet. "A little inquiry showed that this conclusion was drawn from the fact that he lived next to an Irish saloon and had never seen anything but potatoes going in

36 National Federation of Settlements Survey on the Pre-Adolescent Girl, 1920, p. 18, NUSR.
37 Richards, Plain Words About Food, 127.
38 Ibid., 137.
and beer coming out.” Another Italian boy expressed his disdain: “We [Italians] were sure ours was the better way.”

Another perceived problem with the diet promoted by foodways reformers was its blandness. Ellen Richards took a predictably scientific approach to the flavor of food, studying its relationship to appetite and nutrition in her work *The Chemistry of Cooking and Cleaning*. She concluded that an “appetizing flavor” was necessary in order to stimulate hunger, but that overstimulating flavors could be harmful to the digestive tract. As a result, she promoted a New England diet that was suitably austere and simple with spartan seasonings or spices. Many immigrants used to more savory cooking found this bland diet unappealing. Reformers recognized this, as in the case of the Italian women who spit out and stamped on their flavorless sandwiches.

But instead of incorporating more spices and diverse tastes into their approved diet, home economists continued to advocate the plain New England foodways as more appropriate than the spicier fare found in ethnic cookery. Home economists downplayed the sensual aspects of food, going so far as to portray highly seasoned food as potentially dangerous. Ellen Richards advocated restraint as the proper approach to eating:

> We all consider that food good which we like to eat—that which looks attractive and which pleases our palate for the time, while we ignore in the most ostrich-like way the consequences of such

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39 Addams, *Twenty Years*, 130.
42 National Federation of Settlements Survey on the Pre-Adolescent Girl, 1920, p. 18, NUSR.
Author Laura Shapiro argues in her work on home economics that reformers also routinely disregarded the pleasurable aspects of eating because polite women were not supposed to show a healthy appetite, and any acknowledgement of food as more than strictly nutritive would have violated good taste and breeding. Any discussion of the sensual nature of eating would have gone against the rational, detached emphasis of home economics. Spiciness had connotations of sensuality and sexuality, and reformers certainly believed that many immigrants were already dangerously oversexed and earthy. Their job was to remove food from the realm of the sensual and place it firmly in the realm of the scientific. By doing so, they hoped to convince immigrants to adopt more staid, respectable, restrained lifestyles that would elevate and separate them from the working classes.

Faced with this strict diet and the reformers' cultural imperialism, many immigrants adhered to their own foodways. For some, that choice sprang out of a simple reluctance to change what they knew. It was easier for many women to keep cooking the meals that had been cooked in their families for generations instead of adopting new methods and ingredients. Certainly the predominance of groceries carrying ethnic foodstuffs in Chicago facilitated the continuation of Old World foods. In fact, it was

\[43\] Richards, *Plain Words About Food*, 124.
\[44\] Laura Shapiro, *Perfection Salad*, 72.
relatively easy to find the ingredients needed to maintain traditional ethnic foodways. All the women in the previously mentioned Americanization study shopped at Italian grocers. One mother reported that she was taught how to market at the local ethnic grocers by her Italian neighbors, and shopped there daily. It was only the food shortages of World War I that finally drove some immigrant women to the settlements for cooking classes. The Chicago Commons reported that "Our Italian women did not know the use of these substitutes the government recommended," so they organized a cooking class for Italian mothers to help them understand how to use the substitute ingredients. Even then, they wanted to learn which substitutes might be used to make their traditional dishes like bread and pasta. Settlement workers happily helped, but they did not convert many women to Americanized cooking; they simply assisted them in making the same ethnic dishes with different ingredients.

Continued waves of immigration also kept Old World foodways alive. Adding to that impact was the persistence of ethnic enclaves with similar foodways practices. In this atmosphere, neighbors exchanged recipes and practiced some foodways rituals communally. For example, in the Italian neighborhood surrounding the Chicago Commons, women worked together during the summer to prepare tomato paste, which they dried in the sun on boards perched on any available surfaces in local alleys. The continual presence of newly emigrated boarders and families in the neighborhood also undoubtedly reinforced traditional foodways.

46 Report, 1918-1919, Chicago Commons Clubs and Groups, 1915-1939, CCCHS.
47 "The Clothes and the Catsup," Chicago Commons Bulletin, August 1898, CCCHS.
As a link to the past, food could provide comfort in an otherwise unsettling atmosphere. Immigrants trying to adjust simultaneously to changes in living conditions, geography, language, and work, found traditional foodways a powerful remedy for homesickness. By eating foods from their homeland, immigrants could feel like they were still at home and briefly forget the hardships of adjusting to a new life in a strange land. For example, Mary Antin, a Jewish emigrant to Boston, was horrified by her first meal in America, which consisted mostly of canned foods bought by her father. Antin was only reassured when her mother resumed cooking the foods she had been used to in Russia.48

Unlike the home economists' sterile, scientific approach to food, immigrants often used food to express a variety of emotions and beliefs. Foodways historian Donna Gabaccia argues that for immigrants, "food initiated and maintained traditional relationships, expressed the extent of social distance between people, demonstrated status and prestige, rewarded and punished children's behavior, and treated illness."49 In her study on Chicago's Italian immigrants, Judy Chesen found that:

Food and activities related to food comprised one of the most important parts of Italian life. Food was the product of the economic work of the family. Food was placed on the table after planning and resource management by Italian women. . . . Food brought families together and became the focus of social and life cycle celebrations. Of all the memories connected with Italian holidays, food memories tend to be the strongest.50

One of the reasons for strong resistance to foodways was that reformers deemphasized the cultural aspects of food so central to many

48 Mary Antin, The Promised Land (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1910), 185.
49 Gabaccia, We Are What We Eat, 51.
50 Chesen, "It Was More Than Nourishment," 103.
immigrant communities. Michael Eula's recent article on New York public kitchens argues that reformers, well-intentioned though they might have been, did not understand their "target audience" and presented programs unsuited to ethnic food traditions. This is exactly the problem that the Hull-House Coffee House faced; they sold food that neighbors found unpalatable.51 Also, while Richards hoped to save working-class families money, she did not realize that some immigrants wanted to spend more money on food, having more access to food in America than in the Old World. In addition, a carry-out meal would diminish the prestige that many immigrant women held as family meal-preparers. These women would not relinquish that role easily. So despite Richards' good intentions, her public kitchen failed.52

Eula is not the only historian to emphasize the significant relationship between food and gender roles. Chesen also points out that Chicago’s Italian women relished their roles as cooks, which accorded them a measure of power and respect within the family and the larger community. For an Italian woman, cooking was part of what identified her as female, and she felt duty bound to pass her foodways knowledge to her daughters:

The transmission of traditions from one generation to the next was important in keeping the Italian family together....Teaching a daughter to cook served a number of purposes. First, it guaranteed that an Italian woman's legacies would live through the next generation. Second, it helped bond mother and daughter in a way that was unlike other relationships.... Third, the daughter was taught a skill that she would possess for the rest of her life... Cooking gave [women] the opportunity to be

52 Ibid.
the center of attention and to control what people consumed and the manner in which they ate it.\textsuperscript{53}

In a society in which women were otherwise largely powerless, cooking allowed many immigrant women to command respect and feel useful. In this context, it is easy to see why many women might have been reluctant to abandon those roles and felt threatened by proposed foodways reforms. Unfortunately for reformers, many of their basic ideas conflicted with the cultural ideals of immigrant groups. For example, one of the purposes of the Hull-House Coffee House was to save working women time and effort by providing fully-prepared meals. But for some women, cooking complex, time-consuming meals expressed love and concern for their families. Employing shortcuts like prepared foods might send the message that they were not good mothers or housekeepers. For some, homemade dishes were seemingly irreplaceable symbols of pride and love.

Some women reluctantly accepted change, usually brought on by their daughters’ exposure to foodways reforms. Chesen’s study reveals gradual changes in Italian foodways in Chicago, especially “those things that did not threaten their basic ways of preparing and eating food.”\textsuperscript{54} For Italians, this included the admission of more meat in their diet, particularly roast beef—now called “Italian beef”—and the serving of “platter meals” alongside “gravy meals.” Platter meals were American-style and included a meat, starch, and vegetable. But these dishes were always accompanied by gravy meals, a long-standing staple of the traditional Italian diet consisting of tomato sauce and pasta. Even while making concessions to life in America,

\textsuperscript{53} Chesen, “It Was More Than Nourishment,” 183-184.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 210.
Italian-Americans in Chicago retained the foodways practices that they believed to be the most important part of their ethnic heritage.

As Chesen reveals, reformers did make some inroads with the immigrant population, particularly with younger generations. Certainly the popularity of the classes described in the previous chapter indicates girls, and some boys, interested in Americanized foodways. Reformers were hopeful about this and presented stories of responsive students as proof of the success of their classes. But even the presence of immigrant children in cooking classes does not necessarily indicate the success of the Americanization agenda. Students may have attended classes to be with their friends, or because they wanted to eat the food at the end of the lesson. And as reformers well knew, even those students who eagerly embraced the curriculum might be prevented from using their knowledge at home.

Undoubtedly some children did welcome Americanization, particularly those who wanted to distance themselves from parents that they viewed as backward or provincial. Some immigrant girls eagerly hoped to exchange their old-fashioned ways for American housekeeping:

The same girl [who shows initial misgivings about cooking classes] growing up may express herself as being ashamed to take American friends into her home for a meal and on being married will definitely choose the American foods and methods of preparing them.55

Classes were designed to be helpful, and many of them actually proved beneficial to the families that participated. Settlement workers believed that their classes could enhance the role that food played as a bond between generations, as reported by the Commons:

55 National Federation of Settlements Survey on the Pre-Adolescent Girl, 1920, p. 18, NUSR.
Perhaps the most valuable result [of cooking classes] appears in
the increased interest in the home as such.... Mothers have
gained new joy in their daughters, daughters have begun to
find point of contact and sympathy with their mothers.... These
classes were gathered with a good deal of difficulty at first, but
now there is great eagerness to return...and applications for
instruction are in excess of our ability to supply the
opportunity.\textsuperscript{56}

This bonding could also apply to mothers and sons, argued one Chicago
Commons worker. By taking cooking classes, boys "will know the time and
strength and mind it takes to cook for a family. This knowledge and ability
will not make a boy less manly, or effeminate." Indeed, the reformer went
so far as to say:

Teaching boys cooking may...help to solve the question of
"votes for women".... For if, in the future, all our boys learn to
cook, the mother may be able to leave the home long enough
to deposit a vote...while the husband or sons see that the dinner
is not spoiled.\textsuperscript{57}

Several women at the Chicago Commons saw their sons helping more
around the house after taking settlement cooking classes.\textsuperscript{58}

Differing immigrant reactions to reforms revealed many complex
components, including ideas about gender, power, change, and identity.
They actively chose to embrace certain aspects and reject others. For
example, one of the families in the Americanization study revealed that they
had made "changes and Americanization [in their] diet due...to instructions
[about] health, etc." learned at a settlement.\textsuperscript{59} They retained gravy meals
three to four times a week but also served some American-style platter

\textsuperscript{56} "Helps in Homemaking," \textit{The Commons}, Vol. 5, No. 41 (January 1900), 10.
\textsuperscript{57} Mrs. Otto H. Matz, "The Boy's Dinner," \textit{Chicago Commons Council}, Vol. 1, No. 14, June 1,
1910, Chicago Commons Records, GTP.
\textsuperscript{58} "Chicago Commons 1894-1911" booklet, p. 26-28, Chicago Commons Records, GTP.
\textsuperscript{59} "Study of Americanization," n.d., Sophonisba Breckinridge Papers, University of
Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.
meals. Some girls attended other settlement classes like sewing instead of cooking, thus avoiding the foodways debate altogether.

In the face of these diverse reactions, reformers persevered. Buoyed by the demand for cooking classes, they remained convinced that even if their impact on immigrant homes was not tremendous, their mission was worthy enough. What is particularly significant about this determined pursuit of Americanized foodways is that it seemed so crucial to reformers. At a time when Americanization was emphasized in settlements all across the country, reformers had to define what Americanization meant. Chicago reformers clearly determined that in order to be an American, one should eat and talk like an American. Reformers also decided that immigrants did not have to renounce all aspects of their former cultures in order to be American. Settlements all over Chicago had programs that fostered such traditional cultural expressions as dance, song, and handicrafts. One of the questions on the National Federation of Settlements survey specifically asked how settlements were promoting the heritage of younger neighbors. The NUS replied that it believed that:

old traditions should be preserved, for they add the charm and picturesqueness [sic] which our comparatively modern, prosaic American customs lack, and the Settlement can help to make this possible through pageant, folk-dancing classes, and story hours which will weed out the undesirable and conserve the really artistic and constructive portions.\textsuperscript{60}

Apparently settlements considered dancing and theatrics “constructive”

\textsuperscript{60} National Federation of Settlements Survey on the PreAdolescent Girl, 1920, NUSR, emphasis mine.
customs, while traditional foodways were "undesirable" and therefore a destructive force. This suggests that, at some level, reformers knew that foodways had deep cultural significance for many immigrant groups and feared that adherence to those traditions might make assimilation difficult, if not impossible. They believed that only by stripping food of deeper meanings and treating it as strictly alimentary could they hope to Americanize immigrants successfully.

While this nutritive approach to food is still adopted by nutritionists and diéticians, there are many cultures and groups for whom food has a deeper cultural meaning; it is used as a form of expression or even power. For these groups, foodstuffs are not often easily interchangeable based on nutritive qualities. For example, the now-traditional Thanksgiving Day menu of roast turkey, stuffing, potatoes, cranberries, and pumpkin pie could be broken down into nutritional categories of meat, bread, vegetables, fruit, and fat. A concerned Progressive Era home economist might plan a Thanksgiving menu that uses those categories and is healthier and more economical, but for many Americans, a Thanksgiving Day menu without those dishes—or ones embraced by their families—would not have the same meaning or resonance. By privileging only the nutritive aspects of foodways, reformers practically insured controversy. While their desire to improve food standards was understandable, foodways reformers' insistence on this approach to food was shortsighted. If they had succeeded in their mission, they would have robbed immigrant groups—and by extension, the larger American society—of important cultural and interpersonal exchanges in which food played a central role. While seeking to improve the lives of the
poor, they would have actually created a group of people partially stripped of their cultures.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Between 1890 and 1920, the eight settlements in this study operated over 100 cooking, housekeeping, and kitchen garden classes, four model flats, three milk dispensaries, and two public kitchens. In at least three settlements, the domestic science program was the most active or prominent settlement activity. With the others, even though home economics classes were not always the most popular, the settlements remained committed to foodways programs.

Reformers firmly believed that foodways would solve a number of problems in their neighborhoods, including intemperance, malnourishment, domestic violence, wastefulness, and poverty. Perhaps more importantly, foodways reforms were designed to address the perceived problem of cultural diversity. Reformers—as well as the general public—were concerned that immigration would disrupt the country and the culture in dangerous ways. One settlement worker argued in 1921 that the goal of Americanization was one on which “our national stability depends.”1 Foodways reforms hoped to introduce a measure of stability to immigrant communities, and by extension the city and country, by homogenizing American domestic practices. Ellen Richards asserted that a well-taught cooking class was “nothing less than an effort to save our social fabric from

1 Alfred Granger, NUS Annual Meeting, October 1, 1921: 6; Records, NUSR.

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what seems inevitable disintegration."² Foodways programs were an important component of a larger Americanization campaign taking place nationwide at settlements and other social service organizations. While citizenship and English classes sought to teach immigrant men how to be public Americans, home economics programs reached out to immigrant women active in the private realm. Reformers believed that Americanization would only be truly successful if it changed the home and family. Thus it was important to teach immigrant women about American households and cooking, and if they were not receptive, pursue subsequent generations of immigrant girls.

There are also indications that reformers pursued foodways reforms as a means of social control. Certainly some home economists believed that their field would bring order to chaotic homes and a chaotic society disrupted by industrialization, urbanization and immigration. Richards felt that "home economics is the best subject yet found to teach power over things."³ Settlement workers also believed that it was their duty to bring a sense of order to urban neighborhoods and to interpret American culture to immigrant groups.

Although reformers did want to control immigrants by assimilating them, individual reformers defined assimilation and Americanization differently. Some were more liberal than others; Jane Addams and Sophonisba Breckinridge, for example, believed that immigrants should not have to embrace all American traditions in order to become Americans

themselves. However, even the more liberal reformers pursued some degree of Americanization, and maintained a sense of cultural superiority to their immigrant neighbors. Even so, the desire to Americanize the foreign-born did not always spring out of a desire to subjugate them—reformers truly believed that assimilation was in the best interest of neighbors. However, in their attempts to elevate, reformers often actually repressed immigrants' expressions of culture.

But to portray reformers as controlling tyrants exercising complete power over their neighbors discounts the agency of the neighbors themselves. They interacted with reformers in diverse and complex ways. Immigrants affected the settlement agenda in some significant cases. If a settlement's intent was to serve immigrants, it could not do so without the complicity of its immigrant neighbors. Lizzie Kander's kosher cooking classes and the evolution of the Hull-House Coffee House from a public kitchen into a social space are such examples of the neighbors exerting influence over settlement activities.

Settlement workers have also been accused of promoting socioeconomic divisions by teaching girls "class-appropriate" lessons instead of encouraging them to become upwardly mobile. It is indeed curious that a group of women who were themselves gender radicals—single, educated, career women often living communally—advanced such a traditional gender paradigm to their neighbors. Instead of cultivating immigrant girls who might follow in their footsteps and better themselves through higher education and careers, reformers prepared girls for a conventional life of marriage, motherhood, and domestic service. This could indicate a desire to
keep immigrant women “in their place” as some scholars have argued, but it could just as easily reveal a class-biased lack of affiliation with working class women. I believe that Chicago reformers promoted a conservative concept of gender and domesticity to their working-class neighbors because they felt it was the most practical approach for the lives that they believed immigrant girls would lead. Reformers were also likely skeptical that poor immigrant girls were capable of or interested in pursuing higher education, so they did not actively push neighborhood girls in that direction. While this is a prejudiced attitude, it does not necessarily indicate a desire to dominate immigrant girls or keep them in the working classes. In fact, when neighborhood girls did embrace higher education or loftier goals than domesticity, reformers praised their accomplishments.4

Reformers were largely patronizing in their approach to immigrants, but they were clearly products of their environment. Many settlement workers and home economists were white, middle-class, college-educated Anglo-Saxons who believed—as did the larger WASP American public—that their values were synonymous with American values. As discussed in Chapter IV, many Americans also believed that immigrants were culturally and intellectually inferior to them, and reformers were no exception. Believing that these foreign-born peoples were a threat to the stability of the country, reformers pursued an agenda of Americanization that privileged their own Anglo-Saxon culture over the cultures of immigrant groups. They truly wanted to improve the home life of their immigrant neighbors, but

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4For example, domestic science instructor Marie Hansen of the Northwestern University Settlement was lauded as a girl who, coming from within settlement ranks, became a Lewis Institute graduate.
they defined those improvements in their own terms, without much empathy for the desires of their neighbors.

Immigrants were caught up in this movement regardless of their concerns. But because of the diversity of the Chicago immigrant community, immigrants did not uniformly react to reform efforts. Some immigrants embraced foodways reforms; they attended classes and adapted their diets. But not all immigrants eagerly changed; some refused to participate at all while others embraced only parts of the agenda. Regardless of the reaction from neighbors, reformers committed to the idea that foodways programs were both necessary and beneficial. This persistent pursuit of foodways reforms indicates a lack of regard for the desires of the neighbors and a belief in the rightness of the reform cause, even when rejected by locals. When faced with negative reactions, reformers either ignored them and went after other groups of girls, or redoubled their efforts to appeal to reluctant neighbors. Instead of praising them for retaining pride in their heritage or for wanting to pass down family traditions to their children, reformers portrayed immigrants who were not interested in Americanizing their ethnic foodways as recalcitrant, ignorant, or pathetic. Those who rejected the reform agenda were misguided foreigners who did not know how to properly care for their families.

Some scholars have criticized reformers for their insular approach and denounced them for overlooking or misunderstanding the cultural impact of food. They point to such attempts as the New England Kitchen movement, which was roundly rejected by immigrant groups, as an indicator that foodways reformers had little knowledge of or respect for the ways that
foodways conveyed cultural and familial identity. This interpretation is understandable, given the reformers' attempts to downplay the cultural aspects of food in favor of nutrition and their largely condescending attitudes towards ethnic foodways. But a closer examination of foodways reforms reveals that it was precisely because they recognized the strong relationship between food and cultural identity that reformers pursued an agenda of change and Americanization so fervently.

Home economists and settlement workers realized at some level that foreign foodways kept immigrants connected to their ethnic backgrounds and experiences in the Old World. Therefore, many reformers firmly believed that the maintenance of ethnic foodways would both prevent immigrants from fully assimilating into American culture and preclude them from embracing changes in their diets that might make them healthier. Worried about the effects of massive immigration on American society, they thought that the very future of the country depended on the successful assimilation of immigrants. And if immigrants were to become good Americans, they needed to act, talk, and eat like the reformers themselves. In order for this to happen, foodways needed to be divested of their cultural import and seen solely as sustenance. Only then could health problems be improved and neighborhoods be unified. When their efforts failed, as with the New England Kitchen or the Hull-House Coffee House, reformers expressed disappointment and a bit of surprise—not because people clung to their old ways of eating, which they expected, but because people did not seem to understand the obvious rightness and importance of their cause. For

5 See Eula, “Failure of American Food Reformers,” and Shapiro, Perfection Salad.
example, settlement workers were baffled and frustrated by families who chose to eat expensive imported food such as olive oil or Parmesan cheese when cheaper American alternatives would have saved them money to spend on rent or clothes or more food. It seemed obvious to reformers that by accepting simpler American foodways, immigrants’ lives could be improved, at least by their definition of “improvement.”

However, immigrants’ priorities were not always the same as reformers’ priorities; homesickness, maintenance of gender relations, familiarity with recipes, personal tastes, or transmission of knowledge lay behind immigrants’ traditional foodways. If reformers were shortsighted, it was in their belief that everyone would embrace their agenda. They did not anticipate that some immigrants might choose traditional foodways for their cultural and familial value, even if they were more time-consuming or expensive than reformers’ alternatives.

The struggles over foodways programs reveal conflict between reformers and immigrants, tension between different generations of immigrants, strong and lasting connections between food and cultural identity, and a complex definition of what it meant to be American. But as this nationwide struggle over food continued, ideas gradually changed about foodways’ place in the Americanization agenda. By the end of the Progressive Era, some reformers started to promote a less strident attitude towards assimilating ethnic foodways. The desire to improve health conditions remained the same, but the approach evolved. Whereas early home economists and settlement workers endorsed a strictly New England

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6 See Donna Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat*, 178-180.
diet as the most healthy and economical, subsequent reformers began to recognize that ethnic diets were not all bad simply because they were unfamiliar. Two articles in *The Journal of Home Economics* in 1920 suggested that foodways reformers were unduly prejudiced about ethnic foodways and could make immigrant families healthier by learning about their traditional foodways and suggesting more nutritional ways of cooking those dishes instead of substituting American menus unequivocally. In subsequent years, the *JHE* also ran articles highlighting the positive nutritional aspects of certain ethnic foodways and suggesting that lasting dietary improvements needed to be made within the context of traditional foodways. This gradual change in attitude is due in no small part to the cultural persistence of immigrant communities and a recognition on the part of reformers of the intense and ongoing relationship between cultural groups and their food practices.

Did home economists’ eventual concessions to popular ethnic tastes indicate a failure of the original Americanized foodways movement? The answer is both yes and no. As discussed in Chapter VI, each settlement had “success” stories involving immigrants who adopted Americanized cooking or housekeeping practices. And while cooking classes sparked controversy in some ethnic groups, they were also extremely popular and well attended at every settlement profiled in this study. In general, immigrant groups did adopt many American foodways practices. For example, Chicago area Italians—as well as Italians around America—incorporated meat into their

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diet that had been unavailable to them in Italy. However, even those groups that changed their foodways usually made changes within the context of their traditional foodways. Italian-Americans integrated American ingredients like beef but cooked them in Italian ways, creating such Italian-American hybrids as Italian beef sandwiches and spaghetti with meatballs. This type of Americanization was not exactly what foodways reformers envisioned, but it was the way that many ethnic groups adapted to American food culture.

If reformers' wanted to get immigrant groups to adopt a uniform American diet, they failed. Regional and ethnic food differences survived throughout the Progressive Era, even as gradual Americanization and assimilation of foreigners took place. Faced with this reality and yet still determined to make a difference, some reformers revisited the original goals of foodways reform, which were improved health and assimilation. Some more open-minded reformers changed their tack; they realized that traditional foodways did not necessarily need to be changed in order for them to achieve their goals. Immigrants' health conditions and diets could be improved within the existing framework of their own traditions, as argued in the JHE articles. And, as was becoming apparent in urban neighborhoods in Chicago and across the country, immigrants could and would assimilate—becoming citizens, voting, learning English, joining the military—even while retaining ethnic foodways.

This last point was the one that concerned the original foodways reformers. 

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8 See Judy Chesen's "It Was More Than Nourishment" and Hasia Diner's, Hungering for America for thorough discussions of the ways that Italian-Americans adapted their diets.  
9 See Diner, Hungering for America and Gabaccia, We Are What We Eat.
reformers the most; they could not imagine how America could function as a truly multicultural society, perhaps because of the conflict between ethnic groups in Europe and other parts of the world. Concerned about how diverse ethnic groups would interact in America—and perhaps fearful of losing their place as Anglo-Saxons at the top of the cultural hierarchy—reformers championed Americanization as the only solution to the immigration “problem.” They believed that the future of America depended on immigrants discarding old cultural ties in favor of unified American cultural practices. This belief disregarded the fact that American culture and the American population was already quite diverse and multicultural, considering the presence of African-Americans, Native Americans, and earlier immigrant groups; it also assumed that America needed a homogenous culture in order to survive. What foodways reformers’ efforts reveal, although the reformers themselves did not always recognize this, is that American identity was not dependent on uniform cultural practices or ethnic backgrounds. Immigrants kept many of their old cultural ties intact, including foodways, but that did not prevent them from adopting American identities and ideology or embracing American culture as their own.

There was a genuine aspiration to improve the living and dietary conditions of immigrant neighbors combined with a fear of the unknown and distrust of multiculturalism. Reformers’ concerns about the effects of immigration led them to promote their own cultural values as the proper American values that immigrants had to embrace if America were to survive. Their persistent pursuit of foodways reforms sprang from the sincere belief...
that American culture hung in the balance, and their efforts were necessary to keep that culture intact. While these beliefs might not have been clearly articulated by every Chicago foodways reformer, they are apparent in the programs carried out at all the institutions in this study. If reformers were only interested in improving health, they could have done that in a number of ways that would not have had to include Americanization. Clearly fears about foreign culture and the convictions of WASP cultural superiority were part and parcel of the foodways reform agenda. It was not enough that immigrants eat well; they must also eat like Americans.

Considering Chicago's importance as a center for reform, it easy to assume that the programs and ideas that Chicago reformers espoused were echoed by others across the country (as they were by Lizzie Kander Black in Milwaukee). However, it would be useful to conduct further study into nationwide foodways programs during the Progressive Era, to see if these attitudes were as widespread as they seemed, and if they were not, why that was the case. It would also be useful to follow the evolution of foodways programs after the Progressive Era especially after immigration restrictions were passed. Some scholars such as Harvey Levenstein, Donna Gabaccia, and Hasia Diner have discussed foreign foodways during the twentieth century, but there is more to be examined, particularly considering the xenophobic cultural climate of the 1920s and 1930s.10

Given the historical context of the Progressive Era, reformers' fears and hopes are understandable. America had never seen so many migrants in

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10 See Levenstein, Revolution at the Table, and Paradox of Plenty; Gabaccia, We Are What We Eat; Diner, Hungering for America.
its short history, and everyone, including the immigrants themselves, was concerned about how this mass influx of people would relate to each other and their new country. These concerns led to a nationwide debate about Americanization, which many felt was necessary to ensure America's continued growth and success. Home economists, positing that the home was the center of all familial and therefore cultural formation, argued that if immigrants were to be successfully assimilated, reformers needed to focus on home life. Changes there would be transmitted from generation to generation, having a profound impact on immigrant communities, or so reformers hoped.

What the Americanizers did not anticipate was the flexibility of American culture and identity that allowed for the rise of multiculturalism. As the years passed, ethnic groups forged a new identity for themselves, becoming American while retaining certain aspects of their former ethnic affiliations. Being an American, it seemed, was not about acting or looking or eating the same ways; it was about embracing ideals like democracy and individual rights, which could be done without completely abandoning old traditions. Immigrant communities showed reformers that one could speak English and Yiddish; join a union and the Bohemian Women's Club; eat turkey and pasta for Thanksgiving dinner. Reformers' fears about immigration and multiculturalism proved unnecessary; cultural diversity did not threaten America. If anything, American culture was strengthened by that diversity, becoming more complex and adaptable. American cuisine certainly benefited from immigrant foodways traditions. Instead of a homogenized New England menu, Americans now claim a great variety of dishes, many
adaptations of ethnic foodways. It is indicative of how far America has come from the days of Progressive Era foodways reformers that Americans' favorite food is pizza, an Italian hybrid routinely topped with such diverse ingredients as pepperoni, pineapple, peanuts, or bean sprouts. This type of cultural amalgam seemed inconceivable to original foodways reformers, who sought to erase diversity instead of embracing it. Perhaps if Ellen Richards had ever had a piece of Thai chicken pizza, she might have felt differently.
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