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Crafting Industrial Manhood in the Manual Training Movement, 1876-1920

James Jonathan Rick
Butler University

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Introduction

“Tagaste,” Elbert Hubbard wrote in the *Philistine*, “at one time, was the very hub and centre of civilization.” Yet Hubbard’s story is not of the city’s ascendance, but of its decline. The men of Tagaste, like those of the Hubbard’s America, were not what they used to be. They had become either members of a class of “dispirited, dissipated, and vicious” men, with “little inclination to use their heads,” or members of a more insidious class of men who, “flockt to the cities” and “thought it disgraceful (or at least very bad form) to use their hands.” This division led directly to the deformity of bodies and minds as well as to the decline of society. Hubbard’s description of a world where the coming generations were made up of “sad-eyed girls bent over machines, and yellow humpbacked boys,” resonated with many *fin-de-siècle* American men. These men worried about manhood in crisis at a time in which the way Americans lived and worked underwent profound change. Many of these men, including Hubbard, would turn to craft labor as a method by which complete manhood could be inculcated within all boys. American schools were the chosen institutions to reintroduce boys to the lost virtues of labor through a new philosophy of education peculiar to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; the philosophy of manual training. Instruction in the use of tools and in craft labor was the core of the manual training curriculum and an adaptation of manhood to industrial life was the core of the manual training spirit.1

The gendered identity of manhood has seldom been free from anxieties about crisis and deterioration. While maleness is something many people are ascribed at birth,  

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1 Hubbard, Elbert. “City of Tagaste.” *Philistine* 9, no. 1 (June 1899): 1, 5, 8.
manhood has often been posited as something to be achieved and American men have seldom tired of worrying about the capacity of new generations of men to achieve it.

Scholars of masculinity have noted how different types of manhood have been presented throughout American history, often in response to social, political or economic change. Throughout American history, men have sought to ensure that future generations would be able to cultivate those attributes which fit their definitions of manhood. This is what the advocates of manual training sought to do by introducing wood and metal craft work into school curricula. Many historians of gender have written about the “crisis in masculinity” which worried many men in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Some have also located the importance of the relationship between manhood and labor therein. This paper will seek to expand upon those analyses of American manhood and to identify an adaptation of manhood at the root of the manual training movement. As the ways in which late nineteenth century Americans worked, grew up, and performed and understood their gender identities underwent rapid change, ideas about manhood often conflicted with the realities of men’s lives. The reformers and educators of the manual training movement sought to adapt American manhood to an industrial economy and a modern polity by presenting a vision of industrial manhood which was well-rounded, independent, democratic and productive. Different interest groups within the movement built upon this vision of manhood and presented several adaptations of it, each of which

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affected the trajectory of the movement and the place of manual training in America. This paper will explore those visions of manhood.

Although the incorporation of manual labor into school curricula had occurred at a few American schools earlier in the nineteenth century, manual training was never as widely supported in popular, commercial and pedagogical opinion as it was in the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century. The economic, political and social conditions of the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century impressed many Americans with both hope and anxiety for the future of the nation and its people. Manual training was lauded as a cure for the social and moral problems of modern, industrial and urban life, including, perhaps at its center, a crisis in manhood.

Some historians of education, pointing to the rapid rise and relatively short preeminence of manual training, have described it as an, “educational fad” of little consequence. Others have maintained that although manual training was intended as a part of general education and not as direct preparation for any specific career, it nonetheless played an important role in paving the way for the rise of vocational education in the twentieth century and also in shaping the thought of prominent progressive educators, including John Dewey. However, the movement’s significance stretches beyond its effect on the school curriculum. This paper will concern itself with the ideology behind the pedagogy. Several historians have placed manual training within

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4 Good and Teller, 421.

the context of rapid social and industrial change, often looking at its role in adapting nostalgia for old ideals to the realities of modern life. Jackson Lears has argued that the manual training movement, in conjunction with the arts and crafts movement, helped accommodate nostalgia for preindustrial production and craft labor to the realities of industrial life while James Gilbert argues that manual training advocates sought to save Americans from industrial alienation through a revitalization of the work ethic. The movement’s long-standing effects are also wrapped in discourses surrounding labor. Herbert Kliebard argues that manual training served as a precursor to the vocational education movement which itself served as a reconciliation of old ideals of labor to emerging industrial conditions. These historians wrote about the manual training movement in relation to other movements and have left space both for a more focused analysis of the movement itself and the role of gender constructions therein.6

This paper will engage with the work of gender historians who have analyzed late nineteenth century adaptations of masculinity to industrial capitalism. Gender is a fluid concept and subject to molding of time and culture. Gender historians and scholars of masculinity have traced a plethora of different visions of manhood which have been advanced and held on to at different points in American history and the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century have often been treated as a pivotal point in the history of American manhood. Gail Bederman describes a “reinvention of masculinity” in these decades, in which the association between men and their physical

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power and innate passions was stressed. Brian Lusky traces how dry goods clerks in the second half of the twentieth century adapted their own ideals of masculinity to fit the new kinds of labor required of them in an increasingly corporate economy. Steven Gelber has pointed to the role of the manual training movement, in conjunction with the arts and crafts movement, in crafting a new domestic masculinity based on a ‘do-it-yourself’ ethos for the twentieth century. Building upon the work of historians who have noted the role nostalgia for craft labor played in accommodating old ideas to new realities and upon the work of historians who have documented shifting ideas of masculinity, this paper will explore the manner in which manual training was an adaptation of American manhood to changing conditions in the industrializing United States. Looking both nostalgically to an imagined manhood of the past and hopefully to the promises of the future, the manual training movement sought to craft an industrial manhood.

In founding new schools and introducing new subjects to the curricula of existing schools, manual training advocates were responding to the disparities between social ideology and emerging realities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Jane Bernard Powers and Rima Apple have argued that the early home economics movement was motivated by concerns about the moral as well as economic condition of young women in industrializing urban areas and, “brought together educators and reformers worried about conditions of modern life,” and sought to preserve a vision of womanhood—one rooted in domestic femininity—in the midst of modern challenges.

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7 Bederman, 18-19.
8 Lusky.
The same was true of manual training for boys. Herbert Kliebard has argued that the vocational education movement, which grew out of manual training, was a form of “symbolic action,” which included the, “dramatization of ritualistic myths about America and its values played out on the proscenium of the public school,” and took up the task of, “reconciling potent symbols associated with the established Protestant work ethic, such as the dignity of labor, with the new reality of the degradation of labor which now characterized the modern workplace.”\(^\text{11}\) I argue that the manual training movement was also a form of symbolic action. Manual training educators sought to adapt nostalgia for pre-industrial life to industrial labor and to craft a vision of industrial manhood. Reformers and educators sought to cultivate a vision of well-rounded, independent, democratic and productive manhood influenced both by nostalgia for older masculinities tied to labor and by a belief in the progress of industrial civilization.

Ideas about the possibilities of manhood in fin-de-siècle America can be found within the pages of periodicals, books and other publications of manual training advocates of differing stripes. Their aspirations and anxieties can be located within their published works and within the records, publications and yearbooks of manual training schools in cities across the country. It will draw most particularly from schools in the urban Northeast and Midwest, including C.M. Woodward’s school in St. Louis, Emmerich Manual High School in Indianapolis and Felix Adler’s Ethical Culture School in New York City. Regional variations existed but schools throughout the country generally presented a similar vision of manhood which stressed certain key traits.\(^\text{12}\)

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\(^{12}\) Midwestern schools often had a connection to immigrant populations. Emmerich Manual High School in Indianapolis, for instance, was originally established by the German-American community before
Looking both nostalgically to the past and hopefully to the future, they sought to adapt manhood to the social and economic changes wrought by late-nineteenth-century industrial capitalism. Tracing the origins of the American manual training movement, this paper will demonstrate its promotion of a whole, independent and democratic manhood tied to production and its attempts to bridge the gap between “head work” and “hand work.” It will then outline several disparate visions of manhood presented by manual training advocates and their influence on the development of the movement.

**Beginnings of the American Manual Training Movement**

In 1902, a writer for the *Craftsman*, a periodical associated with the American arts and crafts movement, declared, “manual training is now generally recognized. There is scarcely a city in the United States that has not its manual training school.” Yet the pedagogical instruction of manual training, which often included work with wood, metal and machines had not always been so popular in the urban centers of the United States. Calvin M. Woodward, founder of the vanguard Manual Training School of Washington University in St. Louis, and a member of a committee within the National Educational Association constituted to promote manual training in 1875, was reported to have addressed only twelve people when the matter was first brought before the association. Upon introducing a speaker to the association the following year who lamented, “there is little use in giving this address as there are so few interested,” Woodward was said to

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have retorted, “Go on! When I read a paper on the same subject, last year, there were only twelve present, and you have an audience of sixteen!”

Despite the apparent lack of early enthusiasm at the NEA, private manual training schools would be founded in cities throughout the country, particularly in the Northeast and Midwest. The public school boards of many of these cities responded to the demands made by education reformers, local industry and the general public for manual training by introducing manual training and domestic arts to their own general curricula, intended for all children whether their future careers lied in offices, workshops or the home. By 1903, interest within the NEA alone had risen to a point which allowed a writer for *Manual Training Magazine* to boast in his account of an annual conference of the Department of Superintendence of the NEA that so much time and energy was being devoted to manual training that, “one might have mistaken the meeting for a manual-training conference, conducting its business in several sub-conferences.” The rapid rise of manual training in educational prominence behooves historians ask why these subjects were seen to be so important at a time when curricula were already seen as overcrowded and time in the classroom scarce.

Manual training educators and leaders often pointed to the exhibition of the Imperial Moscow Technical School at the 1876 Centennial in Philadelphia as the beginning of their movement. Under the headship of Victor Della Voss, the Imperial Moscow Technical School instructed students mostly on the use of tools through the

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guided construction of set craft projects, principally with the intention to prepare them for industrial careers. It was at this exhibition that John D. Runkle, president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and considered one of the founders of the American manual training movement, was introduced to what came to be known as the Russian system of manual training. Thoroughly impressed with what he saw, Runkle wrote a report to the Massachusetts State Board of Education which was circulated as a pamphlet and began advocating for the incorporation of manual training into general education.\textsuperscript{18}

In the late 1870s, as the reports of the Russian exhibition written by Runkle and others circulated around the pedagogical circles of the country and Massachusetts experimented with manual training courses. However, interest in manual training grew outside of Massachusetts, even in areas which are not known for their role as a vanguard of educational reform. In 1879, Calvin M. Woodward, an engineering professor at Washington University in St. Louis, took the next step and formed, with the help of several prominent St. Louis manufacturers, the St. Louis Manual Training School as an affiliate of the University.\textsuperscript{19} St. Louis’s geographically unique position within and between the South and Midwest makes it a curious stage for this school.

While the manual training movement was sparked by the Russian exhibition at Philadelphia, contemporary historian (chronically) of the St. Louis school, Charles Penny


Coates nevertheless maintained that, “the influence of the Russian school on American education did not extend beyond the original impulse.” In fact, Woodward went so far as to write of Runkle’s 1876 report to the Massachusetts State Board of Education that, “it is obvious from this report that Dr. Runkle looked further into the problem than had Della Voss; he saw that shop instruction, essential to a mechanical engineer, had elements of value in a general education.”

Francis A. Walker, Runkle’s successor at M.I.T. also took to the idea of making room in the general curriculum for the new system of manual training with enthusiasm. He would eventually serve on a Massachusetts State Board of Education committee which determined in 1885 that,

> It would be a better general training to our children if we would curtail several hours a week from the time now given to unnecessary problems in arithmetic and the teaching of names of villages in Siberia, if by this means we can teach every child a little of that manual faculty which is the ABC of all the arts in the world.

In addition to the Russian system of manual training, the Swedish Sloyd system gained popularity in United States during the 1880s. Aimed more specifically at younger children and concerned with general, rather than vocational, education, the Sloyd system helped to expand manual training into schools for younger children. However, the so-called Russian system, which referred to the system introduced in reform-oriented Massachusetts and pioneered at Woodward’s St. Louis school more than anything else,

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20 Coates continues, “There never was any American drawing on Russian education in Russia; moreover, there is no evidence that anything written in Russian or by a Russian except Della Voss’s description of the Philadelphia exhibition was ever consulted by American educators. Yet in the early years of manual training, prior, say, to 1880 the ‘Russian system’ is referred to again and again.” Coates, Charles Penny. “History of the Manual Training School of Washington University, St. Louis MO.” Washington, D.C.: Department of the Interior, 1923. Eric.gov. 57.


22 Gilbert, 99.; Barlow, The Vocational Age Emerges, 46.


remained the more prominent form of manual training instruction in the United States throughout the movement. The St. Louis school would have a rather direct influence upon the opening of manual training schools in Baltimore, Toledo and Cleveland and inspired others in cities throughout the United States.25 The manual training idea developed by Woodward at the St. Louis school was spread around the country by educators’ publications, periodicals like *The Manual Training Magazine* and exhibitions of student works, including one of St. Louis school students’ works at the 1893 World’s Fair in Chicago.26 A renewed interest in pedagogical theorists Friedrich Froebel and Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi could be added to the list of European inspirations for the American manual training movement as well.27 Nonetheless, the American manual training movement was rooted in a desire to reconcile standing American values with emerging American realities, particularly to cultivate a vision of American manhood in response to industrial capitalism.

Manual training included among its proponents not only educators, with whom it achieved widespread popularity in the 1880s and 1890s, but also the two most influential voices on child psychology of the gilded age and progressive era as well as a sitting
United States president.\textsuperscript{28} Its advocates were not only successful in opening public and private manual training schools but also in lobbying existing schools to include manual training in their curricula. Francis A. Walker illustrated the ambitious goals which many manual training advocate held for the movement when he wrote, “it is not so much the creation and endowment of separate schools of this character which is in view as the gradual conversion of all the existing schools of the land to this use by the grafting of certain studies upon the traditional curriculum.”\textsuperscript{29} By the turn of the century, the manual training movement had made elements of hand work a recognized part of American education which would continue far into the twentieth century under the banners of progressive and vocational education.\textsuperscript{30}

The most obvious part of the general vision of manhood set out by manual training advocates was that of his place as a breadwinner, itself a term originating in the nineteenth century. Men and women were thought to occupy separate spheres in the late nineteenth century, with women preserving the virtue of the home and men venturing out in the market to provide for their families.\textsuperscript{31} The separate spheres were delineated even in the classroom. While domestic science and home economics ultimately, as Jane Bernard Powers writes, “reminded students of women’s place in the economic and social order,” by teaching skills associated with homemaking and the feminine industries, manual


\textsuperscript{29} Walker, Francis A. “Industrial Education,” in \textit{Clarke}, 800.

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Gilbert}, 106-107.

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Kimmel}, 15.
training shop classes reminded students of men’s place as workers and providers.\textsuperscript{32} C.M. Woodward emphasized the gendered connection between manual training and domestic science saying,

> If our young men are to be trained to be better home-builders, better providers, more generous givers, our young women must be trained to be better homekeepers and better house-wives. [...] In every large city and in nearly every large town in this country, manual training and domestic science have been introduced side by side, and they are very popular.\textsuperscript{33}

While manual training advocates maintained that a manual training school could prepare students for any range of occupations without “limiting them to any one field of activity,” they focused on preparing men for profitable and productive careers and giving their students, “a sure call to desirable positions.”\textsuperscript{34} Chris D. Wolff, a graduate of the 1902 class of Woodward’s St. Louis school affirmed his role as a breadwinner by making a pun on his own name in a book compiled to honor the class’s fiftieth anniversary in 1952 saying he had spent his life striving, “to keep the wolf from the door and a roof over the Wolffs.”\textsuperscript{35}

There was more, however, to the vision of manhood presented by the manual training movement than breadwinning. Unlike most of their European counterparts in industrial education, American educators sought a perfect combination of manual and mental instruction for general education. They were opposed to both strictly mental and

\textsuperscript{33} Woodward, Calvin M. “Address of Professor Woodward at the Laying of the Cornerstone of William McKinley High School, St. Louis, Mo. November 1st, 1902.” Manual Training Magazine 4, no. 2 (January 1903): 111.
\textsuperscript{34} Manual Training School Bulletin. Vol. 3. St. Louis, Mo.: Manual Training School, Washington University, St. Louis, 1899. 15
strictly physical education on the basis that, “each of these defeats the ends of education, which is to make a full, round, independent manhood.”36 The vision of manhood which manual training advocates advanced was one of balance between the body and mind, where neither was overlooked. They believed that the traditional system of education had overlooked the training of the body in favor of that of the mind and sought the perfect combination of physical and mental education. By this philosophy, early manual training educators sought to divide instruction between craft work and instruction in traditional subjects more or less equally.37 This combination of physical and intellectual education was reflected in the poetic motto carved above the door of the St. Louis school, which began instruction in 1880 and led the way as pioneer school of the movement.38 The inscription read, “Hail to the skillful, cunning Hand, / Hail to the cultured Mind! / Contending for the World’s command. / Here let them be combined.”39 In their efforts to “head-train the hand worker and hand-train the head worker,” manual training educators sought to allow boys to develop into “whole, large, noble men,” rather than “misshapen and distorted men, too much grown in one part, too little in another” which they saw as the result of the modern system of education and the specialization of labor.40

37 The St. Louis Manual Training School under C.M. Woodward, whose example was followed at many schools throughout the country, divided class time between drawing, wood working, metal working, and instruction in traditional areas including English, Latin and mathematics. Over time as the need to include new subjects to satisfy college entrance requirements was felt more heavily, curricula tended towards a greater portion of academic instruction. Woodward, Calvin M. The Manual Training School. (D.C. Heath and Co. Boston: 1887), 16.; Coates, 31-34.
39 Coates, 1.
40 Blake, 1, 8.
Head-Training Hand Workers: Crafting manhood for the working class.

Productive labor, conducted according to the Protestant work ethic as means of building self-control and ‘character,’ had long been a defining feature of American manhood. However, the labor of many men had changed profoundly over the second half of the nineteenth century. The specialization of industrial labor, brought about by new technologies in factory production, separated hand workers not only from the product of their labor but often prevented them even from creating an entire product. Head workers, for their part, were increasingly filling commercial positions in urban offices which seemed hardly tied to production at all, but I will return to them later. Amidst this alienation, Blake worried that, “machinery is making men into machines at such a rate that humanity is becoming seriously alarmed at the result,” and he was not the only one to make a comparison between industrial laborers and characterless machines. C.M. Woodward went so far as to formulate a diagram to represent at what point a productive

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41 Bederman, 12.; Gilbert, 3-13.; Kimmel, 72.
42 Gilbert, 54-57; Lears, No Place of Grace, 60.; Trachtenberg, Alan. The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Guilded Age. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 42.
43 Luskey, 13. Trachtenberg, 52.
task becomes repetitive to the point of being ‘mechanical.’

Figure 1: Woodward believed that children should be instructed in activities along a progressive scale so that each new thing they learned would require more mental power and prevent them from mindlessly performing machine-like tasks. The relationship between time spent learning a task and a student’s interest in the task is illustrated in his table above. Woodward, *The Educational Value of Manual Training*, 51.

The comparison of men to machines represents a significant concern during a time in which, according to one historian, “the familiarization of American society with machinery represents one of the major cultural processes of these years.” It also represents a nostalgia for a time in which production was less machine-based. The increasing mechanization of production had a profound impact on the way Americans understood men’s relationship with labor. Manual training advocate often directly blamed the advance of machine production technologies for what they saw as a crisis in manhood. C. Hanford Henderson wrote in *Popular Science Monthly*, “I so warmly disparage industrialism as an ideal of life. It produces, and must produce, fragments of

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44 Blake, 36.
45 Trachtenberg, 42.
men and women, automatic machines, instead of complete men.”46 Frank Hill of the Massachusetts Board of Education further illustrated the challenge this type of machine-like factory labor posed to American manhood saying, “if he remained forever a boy, doing his tiny fraction as a machine, nothing would suit the factory better.” In Hill’s words we see that the impetus for manual training was not to train better industrial workers for factory production—a process he referred to as, “dwarfing and stupefying,”—but rather to develop boys into complete, well-rounded men. “Nature,” he wrote, “puts the thinking and the doing together; the manual training school aims to keep them together.”47 The implication here is that modern system of production artificially separated head and hand work, and that one of the ultimate goals of the manual training movement was to bring them back together. It would do so, its advocates hoped, by teaching boys to create a whole product and by equally stressing mental and manual development.

Men of the urban working class were more likely to perform industrial labor which might be deemed ‘mechanical,’ leading a writer for Manual Training Magazine to declare that, “The trained hand is nothing but a machine and it is that that the skillful average journeyman mechanic has. Among no class of people are thoroughly trained minds needed more than among those who represent material development, the so-called laboring class.”48 While anxieties about the intelligence and independence of working class men were nothing new in America, they took on a heightened tone amidst fears of

48 Here the author betrays his own class bias by parenthetically adding, “(as if forsooth we did not labor at all),” referring likely to his own position among the middle class. Gilbert, Charles B. “Manual Training in Public Schools” Manual Training Magazine 3, no. 3 (April 1902): 130.
industrial alienation in the late nineteenth century. As the writer noted, the training of minds was meant to save the industrial worker from losing his manhood to drudgery. The manual worker simply wasn’t required to do enough thinking and manual trainers sought to introduce him to the cultured world of the mind without neglecting the necessity of training him for his future occupation. By making the working man a thinking man also, manual trainers sought, as Woodward wrote in an article for *Popular Science Monthly*, “the elevation of manual occupations from the realm of brute, unintelligent labor to one requiring and rewarding cultivation and skill.”

Rather than becoming, “almost part of an automatic mechanism,” or, “utterably narrow, mentally worthless, and but a shred or shadow of a man,” the hand-worker would join the head-worker in social politeness and standing as well as in perfect manhood with, “the ideal, well-rounded mind.”

Manual training educators hoped to reconnect the body and the mind by using hand work as a method to of training minds. G. Stanley Hall wrote of the connection between the education of the hand and mind saying, “the hand must simply be used as an instrument for opening the intellect, and even the imagination, and therefore be predominately humanistic.” President David Starr Jordan of Stanford University stated this point more bluntly when he said, “training of the hand is really training of the mind,” in an address to the California State Teachers Association. Students at the manual training school were thus supposed to sharpen their minds through the use of their hands.

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Educators and advocates also sought to unite the training of the head and hand by attempting to draw more working class boys into formal, intellectual education through manual training programs. Henderson wrote, “Perhaps the most notable thing about the curriculum is the amount of work which is not manual training” and stressed that this non-manual work played an important role in manual training schools’ curricula.\footnote{Henderson, Charles Hanford. “Manual Training.” \textit{Popular Science Monthly}, November 1894, 48.} Industrial labor often began undermining the development of whole men early in their lives. Many urban working class children, both boys and girls, worked long hours to support their families and spent less time at school than middle-class reformers would have liked.\footnote{Illick, Joseph E. \textit{American Childhoods}. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007),79-82; Mintz, Steven. \textit{Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood}. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 142.} This lack of schooling and abundance of drudgery was seen as a factor in inhibiting their development. Manual training advocates sought to develop boys’ minds while nonetheless teaching them techniques of tool use and manual labor. They hoped that parents would be more likely to send their children to school if they saw a practical, economic benefit in it. In fact, some parents and children apparently did hope their children would gain practical work skills through the school. Nevertheless, instructors continued to maintain that the economic benefits of manual training were to always remain secondary to the educational benefits. These conflicting concerns sometimes came to a head in St. Louis over the schools’ policy that a student could not progress in manual work if his progress in intellectual work was not satisfactory.\footnote{Prospectus of the Manual Training School. (St. Louis, Mo.: Manual Training School, Washington University, St. Louis, 1904), 23.} One parent wrote to Principal Vickroy in 1906 complaining of his son being held back from advancing to courses in electrical engineering due to a failure to pass composition. He wrote,
When he entered Manual Training, I explained to you that the object was to educate him along the line of electrical engineering. He has been there now nearly three years without touching that part of the work and if he cannot advance now and take up that branch, then I would want him to drop out and endeavor to get his training along that line in some other way.56

Many boys applied to the school, “because of the amount of manual work,” and “to pursue the manual training course.”57 Charles R. Henderson, a sociologist at the University of Chicago was confident enough that manual training would be popular enough with children and parents that, “there will be little need of compulsory school laws, […] if the manual-training idea once takes full possession of our public schools.”58 C.M. Woodward also expressed the opinion that manual training was so important to any school’s curriculum precisely because, if it was included, “boys would stay in school.”59

More boys in school would mean more boys being properly guided in their development into well-rounded, complete men.

Returning to Elbert Hubbard’s 1899 story of societal decline, we see further anxieties about working class populations. Tagaste, “had gotten itself into two distinct classes—those who workt with their hands, and those who workt with their heads.” Those who worked with their hands, “had no energy left or inclination to use their heads; and they often grew dispirited, dissipated and vicious.”60 At a time in which one historian has asserted, “class differences were more pronounced than at any time in the history of industrial America,” the supporters of manual training worried about the possibility of working class unrest as well as about the manly wholeness of individual

In rebutting a report which criticized the efficacy of manual training in education, C.M. Woodward reminded the authors of the critical report who claimed, “they went among the rioters of a great city, all of whom were ‘excellent in manual training,’ but wanting in all the characteristics of good citizens and good neighbors,” that “hands without brains are as worthless as brains without hands.” Woodward further recommended that civics classes, which would make teaching, “the maintenance of individual independence,” an important part of their subject matter, be made a mandatory part of the curricula of manual training schools. Woodward and other manual training instructors asserted that manual training would inculcate within working men the intelligence, culture and civility which would allow them to be whole and independent men. He wrote,

Without going into the perplexing questions of labor and capital, I feel sure that the only way to prevent such conflicts in the future is to properly train the children of the present generation. The men who make up mobs are deficient in either mental or manual training, or both. They never had a chance to get both side by side in a public or private school.

Independence and proper, democratic political participation through intelligence and education was an important part of nineteenth century manhood, especially for working class men who might be led astray by demagogues, and was an important part of the vision of manhood presented by the manual training movement. Intelligent manual

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laborers would, they believed, have a greater capacity, “for independence, for manliness, for power over circumstance.” This was an intriguing promise to many Americans who shared the concern that, “for where there is no mind, hand worker and serf-worker mean the same thing,” and feared that, without an education, a manual worker could become, “a mere serf to capitol.” The fact that manual training was broad and general training across manual and intellectual skills was further meant to allow workers the independence afforded to a man with a number of abilities. This independence and connection to production was called upon to foster a strong individual identity and sense of respect for the work and property of others. “Manual Training fosters individualism,” C. Hanford Henderson argued. He continued to say that a manual training education’s effects of “increased personality, deepened individuality, mean increased respect for the personality and individuality of others.” Intelligent, roundly educated workers, manual trainers hoped, would be less likely to be manipulated into mobs by demagogues or be held at the mercy of their employers and were therefore capable of political participation in the republic. The vision of intelligent and independent manhood manual training supporters envisioned for hand workers was placed within a frame of a democratic manhood which looked nostalgically to a republican past.

Concerns about both the personal and social development of working-class men were heightened by concerns about the identities of working class populations. Differences in regional geography would play a large part in determining which populations manual training advocates from different parts of the country were most

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65 Blake, 21.
66 Blake, 8, 36.
concerned about. The large portion of urban working class boys born of first or second
generation immigrants in Northeastern cities particularly worried educators in New York
and New Jersey. Immigration to the urban centers of the United States exploded in the
second half of the nineteenth century and by 1870 one out of every three industrial
workers was an immigrant. This dramatic shift of the demographic landscape prompted
one Chicago clergyman to observe that while, “not every foreigner is a workingman, […]
It may almost be said that every workingman is a foreigner.”68 With immigrants came a
desire to ‘Americanize’ them and their children in the values and conduct of American
manhood. In annual report to the State Board of Education of New Jersey recommended
the expansion of manual training in school curriculums, “from a disciplinarian point as
well as a physical,” maintaining that as New Jersey was home to “many children of
foreign birth,” who, “must be made patriotic.”69 Manual training would help to inculcate
within these boys American values of manhood including a diligent work ethic and a
rational and healthy mind.

Manual training schools in the Midwest, on the other hand, were often directly
tied to immigrant populations. Emmerich Manual High School, for instance, was
originally opened as a private school by several prominent members of the German-
American community in Indianapolis and catered largely to that population before being
incorporated into the public school system.70 While nonetheless concerned about the
Americanization of growing immigrant populations, they also sought to adapt working
class boys displaced from the countryside to life in industrial cities. Elbert Hubbard

68 Trachtenberg, 88.; Mintz, 143-144; Illick, 80-81.
69 “Annual Report of the State Board of Education and of the Commissioner of Education of New Jersey,
1916.” (State Board of Education of New Jersey, 1917), 15.
70 “Manual to Observe Anniversary Today.” Indianapolis Morning Star. February 18, 1916
expressed concerns about this population in a piece entitled “hoodlumism.” “There is an idea,” he wrote, “in the minds of many to the effect that the country is an idyllic place to bring up children.” He sought to correct this misunderstanding, “there are a dozen boys hanging around the railroad station in East Aurora who can give pointers in depravity and general cussedness to any set of city youngster.” Hoodlumism, Hubbard contended, was not something which only affected city boys, but rather develops, “when the conditions are ripe. The right conditions are idleness and a lack of incentive towards the higher life.” Manual training is Hubbard’s recommendation to combat these conditions in the lives of rural populations displaced to the city as well as those of urban origins.  

Another type of hand-worker was of particular concern to Southern educators. Regional differences in how manual training was conceived and carried out were particularly pronounced in the South. While manual training in the Northeast, Midwest and West was intended for boys of all races and classes, in the South the largest movements for any kind of industrial training were focused upon the education of freed people. While industrial capitalism was reshaping life throughout the country, particularly in the North, emancipation constituted a social change to which Southern visions of black manhood needed to be adapted. Booker T. Washington, a black educator who was born a slave in West Virginia in the late 1850s, led the charge. As a young adult he found character and meaning in hard work and was later inspired by his education at Hampton Institute under the tutelage of General Samuel Chapman Armstrong. Washington envisioned a work ethic which would drive freed people to industrial success.

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and racial uplift.\textsuperscript{72} After working for a short time as an instructor of Indigenous Americans in industrial arts at Hampton, Washington was presented with an opportunity to open his own school, which would become the Tuskegee Institute, in 1881. Reflecting Southern anxieties about a lagging work ethic among freed people and working under the assumption that, “the race had been worked in slavery, but the great lesson which the race needed to learn in freedom was \textit{to work},” Washington set about teaching trades and professing the values of an industrial education.\textsuperscript{73} Washington sought to provide young black men with the tools to become what Frederick Douglass had earlier described as “Self Made Men.” Douglass, like Washington, believed the work was the means by which black men and America would advance. He wrote, “we may explain success mainly by one word and that word is WORK!”\textsuperscript{74}

Like manual training advocates across the country, Washington sought to combine the education of the hand and the head and so elevate the status of manual labor by teaching, “men and women to put brains into the labour of their hand, and to show that it was possible for one with the best mental training to work with the hands without feeling that he was degraded.” Washington set the example of this himself by being the first one to get his hands dirty as the students and faculty set about erecting their new school buildings.\textsuperscript{75} Washington’s brand of industrial education was different than the manual training of northern states. Influenced by a desire to craft young black men into Self Made Men like himself and Stephen Douglass, Washington aimed his courses more


\textsuperscript{73} Washington, Booker T. \textit{Working with the Hands}, 16.


\textsuperscript{75} Washington, Booker T. \textit{Working with the Hands}, 40-41.
directly at preparing students for specific trades.\textsuperscript{76} The honest prosperity to be gained from these trades was an important first step on the pathway to Self Made Manhood. However, these courses often prepared black men for lives of labor, rather than introducing labor into their otherwise liberal education, as manual training schools for white students sought to do. Washington’s industrial education turned out to be more deterministic than the manual training schools of the North and West because it reinforced freed people’s position in society as manual laborers. It sought to instill the Protestant work ethic and an enthusiasm for free labor among a population freed from slave labor. According to this philosophy of racial uplift, “all the Negro race asks is that the door which rewards industry, thrift, intelligence, and character be left […] wide open.”\textsuperscript{77} This statement is reminiscent of Douglass’s answer to the question ‘what is to be done for the negro,’ when he said, “Give the negro fair play and let him alone. If he lives, well. If he dies, equally well. If he cannot stand up, let him fall down.”\textsuperscript{78}

Washington’s philosophy was very popular among white Southerners who were glad to see Negroes working diligently rather than fussing about the vote. Washington, for his part, wrote, “there are few things more dismal and discouraging sights than the men of a community absorbed in idle gossip and political discussion,” and lamented that the two things most agitating the minds of black men were, “the craze for Greek and Latin learning” and, “a desire to hold office.”\textsuperscript{79} Washington deemed such desires to be a lazy and misguided attempt to skip important steps on the latter to Self Made Manhood.

\textsuperscript{76} The industrial courses taught at Tuskegee were more aligned with trade education that manual training schools in the north, whose manual training courses were more general. Courses as specific as ‘bee-keeping’ were offered at Tuskegee. These specific courses had directly economic, rather than liberally educational, results in mind. Washington, Booker T. \textit{Working with the Hands}, 69-70.

\textsuperscript{77} Washington, Booker T. \textit{Working with the Hands}, 245.

\textsuperscript{78} Douglass, “Self Made Men.” 557.

Tuskegee and the Negro Industrial schools which followed it cultivated a vision of black manhood associated more with diligent labor than with political participation, although Washington himself continued to press for protection of black suffrage in private.\textsuperscript{80} This vision appealed to many white Southerners and Northerners, who are perhaps most responsible for Washington’s fame after his 1895 “Atlanta Compromise” speech, including one of Washington’s greatest patrons, Teddy Roosevelt.\textsuperscript{81} Many were drawn to Washington’s belief that, “it is at the bottom of life we must begin, not at the top,” and his display of a politics of respectability rather than resistance.\textsuperscript{82} However, it must have appealed, in accessibility if nothing else, to the thousands of young black men and women who sought to enroll each year.\textsuperscript{83} Industrial education, receiving generous funding from northern philanthropists and often offering students the possibility of paying their way through school by practicing a trade as they learned it, made trade training the most accessible form of higher education for young black men and women in the South.\textsuperscript{84}

Manual training instructors wanted to save the manual occupations as a pathway to well-rounded, independent and democratic manhood tied to labor. The prospectus of the St. Louis school states, “it is highly desirable that a larger proportion of intelligent and well-educated youth should devote their energies to manual pursuits or to the development of mechanical industries, both for their own sakes and for the sake of the

\textsuperscript{80} Moore, 62.
\textsuperscript{82} Washington, Booker T. Up from Slavery, 107.; For more on Booker T. Washington, the Tuskegee Institute and the schools throughout the South which followed its example see, Lears, Rebirth of a Nation, 131-132.; Brands, 232-253.; Blight, 324-333.
\textsuperscript{83} Moore, 35-36.
\textsuperscript{84} Moore, 29-31.; Washington, Booker T. Working with the Hands, 80-81.;
occupations and society.” Nevertheless, manual training advocates understood that many young men would continue on their paths towards manhood in commercial business or other ‘head work.’ While trying to elevate manual workers into the prestige which came with liberal education and complete manhood, they also sought to shape men headed for careers which were characterized by mental rather than manual labor.

**Hand-training Head Workers: Crafting manhood for the urban middle class.**

While manual trainers attempted to narrow the gap between head work and hand work, which had been opened by industrial capitalism by attending to the minds of laborers, they also sought to combat the problem from the other side, by attending to the bodies of counter-jumpers and paper-pushers. Hubbard’s city of Tagaste was home not only to crowds of angry and confused hand workers but also to lopsided head workers. These “yellow humpbacked boys,” Hubbard wrote, “suffered from Bright’s Disease, Paresis and Nervous Prostration,” a diagnosis which sounds akin to the contemporary epidemic of neurasthenia. American neurologist George Beard coined the term neurasthenia to describe a nervous malady peculiar to modern society and characterized by a collection of symptoms including fatigue and lack of will power or ‘nerve force’ which was seen as a result of the strain modern white-collar work placed on the mind. Beard and others believed that individuals had a finite amount of ‘nerve force’ which they could draw upon and that the hustle and drive of commercial life was sapping more than many middle and upper class men could bear to lose. While neurasthenia, as a

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disease of the increasing population of urban white-collar men, was in some ways a badge of distinction, signifying that the afflicted was intelligent and important enough to have worked themselves out, it nonetheless undermined important aspects of nineteenth-century American manhood.\footnote{Rotundo, 186-187 and; Lears, No Place of Grace, 47-51, 69.; Bederman, 88-91.; Trachtenberg, 42.} Head workers were losing their ability to make decisions and their ability to act on those decisions due to an abundance of strain on their minds and thus their ability to achieve well-rounded, independent and productive manhood was undermined.\footnote{Women as well as men were diagnosed with neurasthenia, but doctors were more likely to cite biological causes, typically associated with a woman’s reproductive system, for the fatigue and lack of ‘nerve force’ among women while they attributed the disease in men to overwork or mental labor. Rotundo, 189.}

Manual training advocates sought to reinvigorate the will, which was long tied to diligent and productive labor in the Protestant United States, by reintroducing members of the urban middle class to productive manual labor. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, an increasing number of ambitious middle class men found employment as clerks and bookkeepers in commercial establishments. Many Americans questioned the manly bona fides of this class of young workers with little or no connection to production.\footnote{Luskey, Brian. On the Make: Clerks and the Quest for Capital in Nineteenth-Century America. (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 13.} Curiously these positions, which were often portrayed as ‘unmanly’ in popular culture, were common among graduates of the St. Louis school, who repeatedly showed higher numbers of recent graduates working as clerks or bookkeepers than most other positions.\footnote{See Figure 2.} Ambitious young men sought these sorts of positions in hopes of rising in the social and economic hierarchy by dint of hard work. Clerkships, often located in cities, gave inexperienced young men the chance to work for the proprietors of successful businesses, hoping to perhaps become proprietors of their
own. Brian Lusky writes, that for many young men—including likely the graduates of manual training schools—“a clerkship seemed just the humble berth from which dreams of advancement could be realized.”

Those manual training school graduates who took positions as clerks at bank, railroad, manufacturing and merchant offices found themselves in the position of Herman Melville’s tragic “pallidly neat, pitifully respectable, incurably forlorn,” Bartleby the Scrivener. Bartleby, who goes about his work copying legal documents, “silently, palely, mechanically,” is a literary representative of the class of white collar clerks which arose beginning in the nineteenth century and was a well-known part of American life by the time the manual training movement emerged in the last decades of the century. “Counter-jumpers” and bookkeepers were typically not within the vision of whole and complete manhood which manual training advocates sought to foster. They sought to push young men away from unmanly careers as, “counter-tenders and hangers-on of the professions,” hoping that with the rise of manual training in public school curriculums, “more and more it will be held shameful and a confession of incompetence in young men to rush for clerkships and salesmen’s places.”

Charles B. Gilbert, with nostalgia for the days when labor was a part of striving young men’s occupations, aimed a heavy criticism directly at dry goods clerks in the pages of Manual Training Magazine saying,

Many and many a boy with vigorous frame, accurate eye, and good muscles who might accomplish great things if he had been trained to put his thoughts into material form, wears out his life selling ribbons by the yard or making trial balances (drudgery of drudgeries) simply because he has a fancy for clean occupations that let him wear his best clothes every day and has never felt that

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91 Lusky, 23
93 Melville, 6.
94 Blake, 17.
ennobling enthusiasm for the making of things, the actual production of the article, which a course in manual training would have given him.95

Bartleby and other entry-level white collar workers represented a crisis of manhood in a couple of important ways, the first in his alienation from production and the incompleteness of his manhood and the second in his state of dependence as an employee. It is this first ailment which manual training advocate sought to cure white-collars workers of through the marriage of the education of the head in the hand. The prospectus of the St. Louis school reveals the desire of manual training advocates to foster a connection to production among their students when it says, “all that need be said of the conditions from which it sprang apparently full-armed is that St. Louis was at that time a growing city of mercantile rather than productive importance.”96 The manual training school was established with the intention of making it easier for boys to connect with production in an increasingly commercial world.

Frank A. Hill criticized traditional American schools for being, “of too often a sedentary, bookish and inert a type,” and sought to invigorate education with action.97 Contemporary psychologist, Edward W. Scripture, supported this push for active education and asserted that, “all exercises that develop the strength of action, also develop the strength of will for the particular activity concerned.”98 Manual training was thus meant to train the will and develop character—which Woodward referred to as, “the finest fruit of education,”—just as diligent work had done for Americans according to the

Protestant work ethic in the past. Manual training adapted a version of manhood which relied upon work as a part of manly character-building to the realities of men who inhabited what one historian has referred to as the, “burgeoning structure of business offices increasingly removed from the machines and labor in the factory itself.”

Woodward illustrated the connection between manual training and the Protestant work ethic when he wrote, “the moral influence of occupation is very great. A sphere of labor congenial and absorbing, that fully occupies one’s thoughts and energies, is a strong safeguard of morality.” C. Hanford Henderson did likewise when he wrote in an article for *Popular Science Monthly*, “I am nevertheless disposed to believe that an essentially good workman is also a good man, for a love of good workmanship must beget a love for all else that is good and true.”

Connection to labor was also intended to help develop boys into whole, well-rounded men. They feared many young “head workers” like Bartleby, who seldom slept, moved, ate anything other than ginger cakes, or did anything other than transcribe legal documents, were too narrow in their range of activity and life. Felix Adler said that in a manual training school, “children are taught that work is essential to their complete development,” and one former student of the St. Louis school shared the instructors’ enthusiasm for mental and manual training saying, “when I entered I was rather weak, and my head was in advance of my body. The work at the school developed my body, and gave to my mind a clearer and more practical view of things.” Thus it seems that

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100 Trachtenberg, 52.
103 In fact, Bartleby’s first conflict with his employer arises when his employer wants to begin a new, different task, when Bartleby would prefer to continue mechanically transcribing. *Melville*, 6-7.
some manual training students as well as instructors envisioned manhood as something two-sided and incomplete without both mental and physical development.\textsuperscript{104}

Manual training advocates were interested in connecting boys to the product of their labor and the physical world around them. Ideally, students in manual training schools achieved a connection to material production even if their future careers were in other areas. One writer for \textit{Manual Training Magazine} saw a benefit in manual training’s effect in, “correlating the thought of the child with the actualities of his environment,” and another sought to foster, “an intimate acquaintance with material things.”\textsuperscript{105} Luther Hatch, principal of the De Kalb Normal School, wrote of this connection, “He works independently, and hence has a tendency to be independent. He learns wherein his strengths and weaknesses lie. His thought is objectified so that he may see himself through the thing he has made.”\textsuperscript{106} An ideal of manhood as tied to the physical world and the product of one’s labor was thus to be imparted even on those who would be furthest removed from production in adulthood.

Like the problems of ‘hand workers,’ the separation from labor and production among the ‘head workers’ of the middle class began early. Historians of childhood have noted that the late nineteenth century was, as Steven Mintz says, “(the) very moment that modern childhood was invented,” among the urban middle class. While childhood in the early republic and the first half of the nineteenth century had been characterized by


\textsuperscript{106}Hatch, Luther A. “Manual Training in the Practice School at the De Kalb Normal School.” \textit{Manual Training Magazine} 3, no. 4 (July 1902).
unpredictability and inconsistent delineation between growing up and being grown up, middle class parents of the second half of the nineteenth century would craft childhoods characterized by predictability and separation from adult life.107

Middle-class parents of the second half of the nineteenth century choose to have fewer children and to focus more time and energy on those they did have. In order to protect the innocence of children, parents erected barriers between children and the adult world, which included sheltering them from economic production. No longer regarded as sources of labor, children became what Mintz describes as ‘social capital’ which required expensive and time-consuming investment, including education. While, as Jacqueline Reinier writes, “in the early American republic, children were valued for their labor and expected to work,” childhood in the second half of the nineteenth century was increasingly expected, “to be free from labor and devoted to schooling.”108 Parents in the second half of the nineteenth century removed their children from the adult world of labor and instead devoted childhood to education and development. Childhood institutions were also an important part of this reality, as children no longer received their education through apprenticeships—which had declined throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century—or other forms of non-formal training, but from child-centered educational institutions.109

While the middle class reformers leading the manual training movement found child-labor for the sake of production abhorrent, they reacted also reacted nostalgically

107 Illick, 55-60. Mintz, 75-76.
109 Apprenticeships and agricultural labor remained important parts of learning while growing up in the country, but by the late nineteenth century, the responsibility for urban education had been placed decidedly on formal educational institutions. Mintz, 77, 87.
against the removal of labor from childhood. They agreed with some child-labor supporters that child labor was safer than child idleness but were nonetheless operating within a ideal of middle-class childhood removed from productive labor. Hubbard contends with the same emerging middle-class conception of childhood in blaming “hoodlumism” most acutely on, “the vacant mind, and idle hands,” of young people who are not given anything of value to work towards. Charles Henderson agreed with him writing, “much of crime and pauperism is the result of defects in our methods of education. Young men steal because their hands have not been trained for productive activity.”  

Hubbard’s response—as well as that of the manual training movement—to the moral problems of youth was not the separation of children from labor but the connection of children to better labor. He wrote, “the cure for hoodlumism is manual training, and an industrial condition that will give the boy or girl work—congenial work—a fair wage, and a share in the honors of making things.” Manual training advocates also generally presented a vision of manhood in which, “early labor was also nostalgically defended as the irreplaceable stepping stone in the life course of American self-made men,” as Viviana Zelizer asserts it was for child labor supporters.  

Nevertheless, manual training reformers did not advocate for child labor. They sought to shelter and delineate childhood within the space of child-centered institutions and to make education and development its object. The work boys did in these schools was designed to be strictly educational, in fact it was supposed to be, “as broad and

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112 Zelizer, 67.
liberal as intellectual education.”¹¹³ Blake illustrated the child-centered nature of the manual training school in defining the distinction between shop-work and the work of the manual training school saying, “the apprentice in a shop is (…) the last and least important individual in the shop. In the manual training school on the contrary, the boy is the most important thing.”¹¹⁴ By placing productive labor within the child-centered institution of the school and making education its primary purpose, manual training educators were able to foster a connection to production for children and develop boys into whole, well-rounded men while nevertheless adhering to emerging middle-class conceptions of childhood as a time devoted to education and development.

There was another strike against the manhood of entry-level white collar workers like Bartleby beyond their one-sidedness and lack of connection to production: their dependence upon their employers. While managers and proprietors were able to make claims to manhood based on their independence and work managing others, dependent employees like Bartleby were left without manly independence as well as without a connection to labor.¹¹⁵ Bartleby’s lack of will as a dependent employee leaves him with only the ability to say, “I prefer not,” in response to his employer’s requests rather than the ability to actually refuse. The great absurdity of the tale comes in part from the fact the Bartleby actually does not do the things he would prefer not to. Bartleby is representative of a class of men who formerly dreamed of proprietorship, but upon whom the door seems to be closing. When Bartleby locks his employer out of his own building, his employer challenges him saying, “What earthy right have you to stay here? Do you

¹¹³ Prospectus of the Manual Training School. (St. Louis, Mo.: Manual Training School, Washington University, St. Louis, 1904), 37.
¹¹⁴ Blake, 63.
¹¹⁵ Luskey, 113.
pay any rent? Do you pay my taxes? Or is this property yours?’ He answered nothing.”

Brian Luskey reminds us that, “in popular perception, clerks did no manly work. In reality, they did, but they dared not brag about it: to highlight their porters’ work was to reveal how dirty their white collars were,” and that it was, ironically, their very quest for proprietorship and middle-class gentility which caused them to hide their connection to physical labor, despite the fact that they, “risked acknowledging that they were not producers, not citizens, not men,” in doing so. Yet when, as was increasingly the case in the second half of the century, they could not predictably aspire to proprietorship, the manhood of white collar workers was challenged further. While earlier in the nineteenth century clerks had sought proprietorship and took it for granted that one day they would achieve independence, in the later part of the century, simply keeping one’s job and aspiring to managerial positions became the more feasible goal.

Nevertheless, many young men had their sights set on working in commercial enterprises. A rise through the ranks from rags to riches or from clerkship to proprietorship was often included as part of the image of the “Self-Made Man,” the vision of manhood which Michael Kimmel maintains was most revered, particularly among middle class men. Like the version of Self Made Manhood which Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington offered to black men, the Self Made Manhood which many middle class white men aspired to was rooted in a respect for work as the determinant of success. In another work of fiction, written about a quarter-century after *Bartleby*, Silas Lapham embodies the image of Self-Made Manhood by rising to business

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117 *Luskey*, 82, 88.
118 *Bederman*, 30; *Luskey*, 234.
119 *Kimmel*, 15-16.
success through entrepreneurship. The commercial world was fashioned as a place wherein manhood could be pursued and obtained through dint of hard, if not always manual, work. He speaks of an unemployed young fellow who is courting his daughter saying, “I like to see a man act like a man. I don’t like to see him taken care of like a young lady” and maintains, “I could make a man of that fellow, if I had him in the business with me.”[120] The young man’s chance at manhood does in fact come in the form of a clerkship with Lapham’s paint company, and is kept alive by the possibility of advancement or even eventual partnership. Many young men outside of fiction likewise chose to take their chance at manhood in the commercial sphere by seeking advancement and the possibility of proprietorship. Manual training schools sought to help them get there.

Manual training advocates often remarked on the benefits of an education of the head and hand for those pursuing business careers. Many boys and their parents sought enrollment at the St. Louis school because of its reputation as a ‘tough’ school that could get them places.[121] Kliebard notes that early manual training programs, “exhibited a rigor and even a high status,” which behooved students like Eno Compton to apply for admission at what they saw as, “a better school,” than their nearby choices of public schools.[122] Students from Emmerich Manual High School expressed the hope that their training at the school might help them better secure a job, in whatever field, and that the

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[121] Coates, 41.
training would at any rate make them more independent, as a passage in the 1900 *Manual Annual* read,

> It has happened time and time again that the fact that a young man graduated from this school proved to be the ‘open sesame’ to employment. The pupil who takes up the manual training course does not have to follow in that line as a trade, but, no matter what pursuit he follows, will always feel more self-reliant and capable in his knowledge of the use of tools.\(^{123}\)

C.M. Woodward pointed out that many leading, self-made men in business had the experience of manual work in their youth, whether they got it from schools or elsewhere, and his school’s Bulletin in 1897 celebrated the efforts of three former students to establish an, “enterprising firm,” in iron working.\(^{124}\) Many students who sought careers in business would attend college first, and colleges often advertised in various forms in the yearbooks of manual training schools like the *Mirror* and the *Manual Annual* of Emmerich.\(^{125}\) Students of the St. Louis school who went on to careers in business also sometimes considered their manual training education and important part of their development and success. One former student wrote, based upon his experiences, “To a person intending to go into business, I think the training secured by the combination of mental and manual labor is almost invaluable.”\(^{126}\) Many manual training students who began their careers as clerks and bookkeepers did eventually achieve managerial positions and others even became proprietors or partners in their own

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125 Students graduating in 1899 and 1908 were set to be enrolled in college courses at colleges in Indiana including Indiana University, Purdue University, Wabash University, Butler University and the University of Notre Dame as well as out-of-state schools including the University of Wisconsin, the University of Michigan and Princeton University. *Mind and Hand*. Indianapolis, IN: Emmerich Manual High School, 1899.; *The Mirror*. Vol. 16, no. 3. (Indianapolis, IN: Emmerich Manual Training High School, 1908), 13; *Manual Annual*. (Indianapolis, IN: Emmerich Manual High School, 1900), 67.
ventures.127 1902 graduate, Edward W. Flohr illustrated the independent manhood exemplified by proprietorship when recalled at his 1952 reunion that although his Seattle business was small, he took pride in the fact that, “we don’t owe a cent to anyone.”128

Figure 2: Between 1899 and 1909—years for which the above reported numbers represent—the number of graduates of the St. Louis school who reported to be employed as bookkeepers or clerks fell from 153 out of 862 to 72 out of 1099 while the numbers of merchants, manufactures and general managers combined rose from 1099. 1899: Manual Training School Bulletin. Vol. 3. (St. Louis, Mo.: Manual Training School, Washington University, St. Louis, 1899), 16. Catalogue, 1909-1910. (St. Louis: Manual Training School, Washington University, St. Louis, 1910), 67. This change resulted likely in part due to the advancement of former clerks to management or partnership positions. Such advancement was achieved by several alumni whose stories are told in Biography of the Golden Anniversary of the 1902 Class. (St. Louis, Mo.: Manual Training School Alumni Association, 1952).

Manual training reformers also attempted to reconcile the divisions between the classes, which were perhaps wider during these decades than at any other point in

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127 See Figure 2.

American history, by fashioning a democratic manhood among middle and upper-class boys as well as their working-class brothers.\footnote{McGerr, 6.; Brands, 197-198.; Lears, Rebirth of a Nation, 79-91.; Trachtenberg, 70-100.} While attempting to cultivate independence and intelligence among future hand workers, manual training schools also sought to cultivate, “a higher appreciation of the value and dignity of intelligent labor and the worth and respectability of laboring men.”\footnote{Prospectus of the Manual Training School. St. Louis, Mo.: Manual Training School, Washington University, St. Louis, 1904. 40.} They would do so both by bringing boys from all classes together for common education as well as by introducing future head workers to the manly virtues of manual labor.

Felix Adler’s Ethical Culture School in New York, which embraced manual training as a means of instilling democratic values in its students, was described by a writer for the \textit{Craftsman} who said,

Right in the heart of New York City, where aristocracy is striving with anarchy, capital with labor, opulence with simplicity, there is a school with five hundred pupils all working together to train heads and hands to become good citizens, whether boys or girls; to become good workers, whether lawyers or carpenters; to become earnest home-makers and State builders, whether rich or poor. There are no class separations in this school, no money distinctions; creeds are not recognized nor color lines permitted. The boy from the tenement district, who enters on a scholarship, has no more and no fewer privileges than the boy from Fifth Avenue who is brought up to study by his valet; the girl from the negro quarter works side by side with the perfectly groomed little heiress. Small scholars and big scholars, normal pupils and kindergarten babies work and play together, have gymnasium exercises, ethics, manual training and grammar school lessons, all as children of one family, with the same interests, the same ideals, and the need to understand one another in order to succeed in life.\footnote{“Learning to Be Citizens: A School Where Boys and Girls of All Creeds, Races and Classes of Society Work Together.” \textit{Craftsman} 9, no. 6 (March 1906): 774.}

The article went on, quoting Adler himself as saying,

To be democratic, […] children must be taught in their infancy […] to pay respect to merit, worth, manliness and achievement wherever they exist. Let the son of the banker work with the son of the mechanic […] and prove, not talk about, which is the ‘better man.’ When a boy lives in an atmosphere by his personal
endeavor, in competition with children of all grades of life, he has learned the first principle of true democracy—understanding people by working with them.  

Most manual training schools did not share the Ethical Culture School’s focus on racial equality—it is hard to imagine such an attitude in a former slave state—but they did share its focus on the bringing together of the children of the rich, poor and middle class so that they may grow to respect and understand one another. While emphasis was particularly strong in New York where, as the article notes, class divisions were particularly severe and noticeable. The St. Louis school also cultivated a vision of democratic manhood and Woodward noted that in the St. Louis school, “whatever may be the social standing or importance of the fathers, the sons will go together to the same work, and be tested physically as well as intellectually by the same standards.”

Proximity to the children of other classes alone, however, was not the only part of the manual training school which was meant to foster a respect for laboring men as part of a democratic vision of manhood. Rather, the experience of the manual work itself was meant to cultivate within the sons of head workers a respect for hand workers by making them recognize the intelligence required in craft. An 1886 graduate of the St. Louis school agreed with his schools founder when he wrote that an education at a manual training school, “makes a true feeling for honest labor and good workmanship whenever you see it.” The prospectus of the St. Louis school reads,

A boy who sees nothing in labor but mere brute force despises both the labor and the laborer. To him all hand work is drudgery and all the men who use their hands are equally uncultivated and unattractive. With the acquisition of skill in himself comes a pride in its possession, and the ability and willingness to recognize it in

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his fellows. When once he appreciates skill in handicraft or in any manual art, he regards the possessor of it with sympathy and respect.135

While these attempts to inculcate a respect for manual labor among future white-collar men were aimed at all future head workers, they nonetheless were particularly aimed at the children of the rich. The ‘leisure class,’ as Thornstein Veblen described them, were seen as out of touch with democratic manhood and in need of reintroduction to labor not only so that they might properly develop into well-rounded men with a connection to production but also so that they might better understand and respect laboring men.136 James Vila Blake, who chastised the rich for their, “foolish, unrepublican and inhumane shows of wealth,” rejoiced to see a child of a wealthy family in a Pennsylvania steel foundry, “coarsely clad in overalls, smutty as to hands and face with a highly ethical (as I will call it) grime.”137 He saw the introduction of the sons of the rich to labor as part of the, “elevation of the rich—that is, the lifting up of them from their adulation of mere possessions to appreciation of the greater dignity of skill and workmanship.”138 This same respect for labor was meant to be inculcated within all students of manual training schools, although the sons of the rich may have needed it most.

Further, manual labor was meant to be incorporated into the study of civilization so that all children would better understand its relevance to the advancement of all culture and civilization. Felix Adler’s Ethical Culture School, among others including Dewey’s experimental school in Chicago, incorporated manual training into its history curriculum

136 Kimmel, 71-72.; Gilbert, 53-55.;
137 Blake, 44, 66.
138 Blake, 43.
in a way which they saw as, “enabling children to live through different historical periods, working in the manual training shops as primitive people worked.”\textsuperscript{139} The \textit{Craftsman} writer who described the school asserted on this point that,

Every child who has gained a respect for manual labor by working hard with his own hands in competition with other children and by studying at the same time the history of industrial art has learned the significance of hand work in the advancement of history, and is prepared to respect labor and laborers for the rest of his life. Not only is manual training essential to a proper understanding of the progress of civilization, but in Prof. Adler’s mind it is the foundation of all permanent ethical culture.\textsuperscript{140}

Out of all of this instruction in the respect for laborers and their work, manual training advocates hoped to achieve the same social results they would receive from the development of well-rounded and intelligent laborers, namely an end to class divisions and labor strife. Woodward wrote, “If the manual training school should do nothing else, it would still justify all the efforts in its behalf if it helps in the solution of the difficulties between labor and capital.”\textsuperscript{141} The manual training movement envisioned the reparation of the socially aggregate problem of economic inequality and class division in the malleability of young boys. They sought, by shaping the hands, hearts and minds of individual men, to solve the large scale problems of a nation in flux.

\textsuperscript{139} For instance, “American history is specialized for all the children in the lower grades, and in every branch of work prepared for them Indian life figures prominently. In the manual training shops they make tents and canoes; in the domestic science classes they have absorbing times building camp fires as Indians built them by striking fire from a flint; in due time they cook the corn and eat it, and then their attention will be called to the way in which Indian bread differs from modern bread, and also to the many changes in comfort of living that have been brought about by improvements in industrial arts.” “Learning to Be Citizens: A School Where Boys and Girls of All Creeds, Races and Classes of Society Work Together.” \textit{Craftsman} 9, no. 6 (March 1906): 781.; Dewey, John. \textit{The School and Society}. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1900), 155-164.

\textsuperscript{140} “Learning to Be Citizens: A School Where Boys and Girls of All Creeds, Races and Classes of Society Work Together.” \textit{Craftsman} 9, no. 6 (March 1906): 780.

A well rounded balance between physical and mental development, a connection to production and an independent, democratic ethos formed the component parts of the vision of manhood which the manual training movement attempted to craft in response to the changes in American social and economic life in the late nineteenth century. This vision of manhood was shared, in varying degrees, by most people involved in the expansion of manual training across school curricula. However, it was not the end of the visions of manliness set forward by manual training advocates. Several other visions of manhood emerged in reaction to changing conditions under industrial capitalism and ran alongside and built off of this vision in different directions as the movement progressed. These included a vision of manhood as rooted in the image of the Heroic Artisan of the past, a vision of manhood associated with primitive vitality and a vision of manhood profoundly linked to society and associated with a progressive future. Each of these visions had its champions within the manual training movement and their values and priorities pushed the movement forward in different directions and shaped the way the drive to incorporate manual training in school curricula played out in the early twentieth century.

**Crafting Artistic Manhood in the Arts and Crafts Movement**

The desire to embody a whole and productive manhood drove some fin-de-siècle Americans to look to a preindustrial past for inspiration. The men and women of the American arts and crafts movement found their inspiration in an idealization of the image of the medieval artisan, a man who possessed both intellectual and physical power over the product of his labor while also creating objects of beauty and art. The arts and crafts movement envisioned a form of manhood which Michael Kimmel has referred to as,
“The Heroic Artisan.” While Kimmel traces the origins of The Heroic Artisan in American culture back to the colonial period, the arts and crafts movement looked rather distinctly to the middle ages to find its image of manhood. The American arts and crafts movement was an offshoot of its namesake movement in Britain which was led by social philosophers John Ruskin and later William Morris, both of whom shared, and played some role in generating manual trainers’ aversion to the specialization of labor which accompanied industrial capitalism. Passionately defending the spiritual side of labor and looking to the, “fierce conviction, physical and emotional vitality, playfulness and spontaneity, an ability to cultivate fantastic dreamlike stances or awareness, an intense otherworldly asceticism,” seen found in the people of the middle ages, the American arts and crafts movement cultivated a nostalgic vision of artistic and domestic manhood.

The most widely read publication of the American arts and crafts movement, the *Craftsman*, demonstrated its nostalgia for an older form of manhood, which, like that envisioned by most manual training advocates, was complete, independent, democratic and rooted in individual production. A 1901 article titled, “The Rise and Decadence of the Craftsman: An Historical Note,” stated that under modern, industrial capitalism,

The workman becomes a specialist. Through disuse of his art or trade as a whole, he loses his skill. His judgment and reason, no longer called upon to meet constantly varying demands, fail him. The co-operation of his brain and hand ceases. His muscular power weakens. The intelligent, alert and vigorous workman declines, until he seems to form a part of the machine which he operates; his human intellect obeying a mechanical power, his individuality forfeited, and his personal liberty confined within narrow limits.

142 Kimmel, 75.
143 Kimmel, 13-14.; Lears, 76.
144 Lears, No Place of Grace, 142.
The men and women of the arts and crafts movement sought to rectify these wrongs by cultivating a greater connection to a better kind of labor among the American people. These shared values behooved many craftsmen and women to take up common cause with the manual training movement and advocate for, in the spirit of William Morris, “a primary education which shall be worthy of the name,” which placed heavy emphasis on the, “manual arts.” 146 Morris was quoted in the first issue of the Craftsman as writing in a letter that, “Education is the prime necessity, and it is hopeless to attempt to reconstruct society without existing materials.” 147 John Ruskin was also an early advocate for the incorporation of craft skills into general education, and a writer for the Craftsman wrote, “He stood for a radical reform: holding that technical and industrial training should, to a great degree, supersede literary studies.” 148 The enthusiasm of the arts and crafts movement’s British grandfathers for manual training only heightened in America, to such a point that Jackson Lears declared, “for nearly all craft reformers, manual training became the solution for industrial problems.” 149 Carol Coleman illustrated the faith the arts and crafts movement put in education when she wrote of manual training and drawing teachers saying,

You are the ones to distribute the leaven, to plant the seed of beauty among the masses, to revive that which is dead […] It is noble word to restore handicraft to its rightful position, but coupled with it, there is a nobler work, viz: the saving of man from the heartless factory system, with its strain and over-pressure, which makes the operative an old man at forty. 150

146 “Foreward.” Craftsman 1, no. 1 (October 1901): ii.
149 Gilbert, 84.; Lears, No Place of Grace, 81.
The alliance between the arts and crafts and manual training movements affected both movements. Lears argues that the arts and crafts movement, by focusing its attention of education reform, began to do more to accommodate craft production to industrial capitalism than to offer an alternative mode of production or even resistance to it, as its early British leaders had. Meanwhile aspects of the manual training movement associated with the arts and crafts movement began to cultivate an image of manhood which included an artistic and domestic focus and combined art and manual training in school curricula.

Walter S. Perry, another writer for the *Craftsman*, wrote favorably of manual training in 1902 but nonetheless thought that something was missing. While the Russian and Sloyd systems of manual training had done well to introduce children, young and old, to the methods of tool use and basic craft, he nonetheless believed the manual training curriculum to be incomplete. “There must be something else engrafted on it,” he wrote, “and that something is art.” He believed that, “a student should learn early on that he can originate, and he will create.” He saw, in the arts and crafts movement, the missing piece of the manual training project, writing, “with the advent of the Arts and Crafts movement, has come the demand for work in manual training that shall be directly related to, and based upon, arts instruction.”

Many manual training advocates agreed with Perry that art education had something important to offer manual training. A few months after Perry’s article in the

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151 Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 82-83.
Craftsman was released, the Manual Training Magazine dedicated its October 1902 edition to the integration of artistic study and manual training. In addition to incorporating art study in their curricula, manual training schools largely adhered to standards of beauty set by the arts and crafts movement, which stressed simplicity and utility as the chief hallmarks of beauty. One Emmerich student described a display of student works at a convention saying, “the work of the forging classes was extremely interesting. The display of lamps resembled a corner of an Arts and Crafts room.”\textsuperscript{153} A writer for the Indianapolis Morning Star even believed that one of the main purposes of manual training education was to teach children to value the simple, useful and beautiful and another writer for the Manual Training Magazine also illustrated this when he wrote,

Manual training used to mean very literally hand-training, to impart to the student notions of method and accuracy. I think now we are coming around to the view that, while these qualities are desirable and necessary, the aim of manual training is rather to cultivate an appreciation of the proper use of material in adaptation to ends. […] We are going to design a thing that can be used instead of merely learning to use a tool.\textsuperscript{154}

Manual training in the United States had come a long way from the simple importation of Della Voss’s Russian system of tool instruction used at the Imperial Moscow Technical Institute. Artistic production of beautiful and useful products became an important part of the vision of manhood offered by those manual training advocates who allied themselves with the arts and crafts movement. Student participation in and

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\item \textsuperscript{153} “Shops” The Mirror 15, no. 9 (May 1908): 18.
\item \textsuperscript{154} The writer for the Indianapolis Morning Star had this to say about what a child would learn about art at a manual training school, “His first impulse will be to fill all these spaces with copies of pictures--perhaps prints of masterpieces in art. He will soon learn, however--usually through the instructor--that even a masterpiece looks ridiculous except in a place for which it was designed; that the eternal fitness of things forbids him to paint a brilliant posey—however well done—on a block of wood designed to support books.” “In the Manual Training School.” Indianapolis Morning Star, January 8, 1905.; Peyser, Harold. “Practical Co-Operation Between Art and Manual Training.” Manual Training Magazine 4, no. 1 (October 1902): 10.
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enthusiasm for art instruction and exhibitions put on by schools also reflected the impact art instruction had on manual training schools. Mahlon Sharp, a student at Emmerich Manual High School in Indianapolis acknowledged the growing connection between manual training and the Arts and Crafts when she began wrote in *The Mirror*, “Art in its true sense is man’s expression of high ideas in the work of his hands, or as William Morris has said, ‘Art is the expression by man of his pleasure in labor.’”\(^{155}\) Like the aspects of the vision of manhood offered by the manual training movement in general, the arts and crafts vision of an artistic manhood was also a reaction to the changing conditions of industrial capitalism. While new modes of production prevented individual workers from expressing artistic creation or even ownership of their work, the spiritual connection between the medieval craftsman and his product was looked to as a way for head workers and hand workers to get in touch with a true and beautiful connection to production. This vision of manhood and the coursework it inspired carved out a place for art instruction within the American curriculum with lasting effect.

The Heroic Artisan vision of manhood offered by this alliance of some manual training advocates and the arts and crafts movement had a domestic as well as a productive and artistic focus. American craftsmen, including Gustav Stickley, president of United Crafts and editor of the *Craftsman* intended their craftsman-style furniture to make the home a place better adapted to the needs and tastes of men. Michael Kimmel argues that, “turn-of-the-century designers carved out a distinctly male space in the home as an antidote to feminized Victorian parlors—the den.”\(^{156}\) A den, filled with Craftsman-style furniture and its “disciplined geometry, generous proportions, and sturdiness,”


\(^{156}\) *Kimmel*, 76
offered a manly counterpart to the emotional, extravagant and ‘feminized’ Victorian parlor.\textsuperscript{157} The domestic focus of arts and crafts manhood did not stop at the creation of a room better adapted to male tastes, and even if it had a strong argument could be made that it was the workroom, rather than the den which had the greatest impact.\textsuperscript{158} The arts and crafts and manual training movements gave men a new way to interact with and identify with their own domesticity through the popularization of workbenches and do-it-yourself projects. Steven Gelber argues that the arts and crafts and manual training movements together allowed men a gendered place in domestic labor and recreation that might, “provide […] a sense of satisfaction that may have disappeared from their jobs.”\textsuperscript{159}

The rise of a do-it-yourself mentality among fathers, enabled by the manual training and arts and crafts movements, also allowed fathers to interact with their sons in the field of manly domestic activity. Gelber writes, “shop courses introduced boys to the use of tools at a time when simpler house and furnishing styles made it easier for them, and their fathers, to make fashionable household items.”\textsuperscript{160} Woodward’s suggestion that, “It will be found an excellent plan to give all the boys permission occasionally to make what they like, and to carry away the products,” illustrates that manual training pedagogues did not envision the school to be the end of a boy’s craft work.\textsuperscript{161} In 1916, an author for the \textit{Craftsman} encouraged parents to promote creative work in a home

\textsuperscript{157} Kimmel, 75.
\textsuperscript{158} In 1909 the \textit{Craftsman} even ran an article about the prevalence and importance of workrooms in modern homes titled, “The Wookroom That Is Taking the Place of the Library, Study or Den” \textit{Manual Training Magazine} 9, no. 5 (1906): 378.
\textsuperscript{160} Gelber, 74.
\textsuperscript{161} Woodward, \textit{The Manual Training School}, 49.
environment in which one might, “picture the fathers absorbed with their boys in the intricacies of derrick, dumps and railroad construction, flying machines, windmills and motorcar mechanics.” Meanwhile, the wealth of literature about craft projects for boys, both around the turn-of-the-century and in ensuing decades, denotes a similar spirit. Among these, the works of A. Neely Hall were lauded by another writer for the *Craftsman* as, “a source of pleasure and profitable enjoyment for many a day,” for boys and their fathers. Gelber advances this idea further into the twentieth century than this paper will, but the connection between manual training, craftsman styles and the father-son bonding associated with ‘do-it-yourself’ projects illustrates the way in which the arts and crafts wing of the manual training movement fashioned a vision of manhood with a domestic focus. In the cooperation and overlap between parts of the manual training and arts and crafts movements, another vision of manhood appeared in reaction to the changing realities of manhood under industrial capitalism emerged. This vision, rooted in the image of the Heroic Artisan, shared the whole, independent, productive and democratic aspects of the general manual training vision of manhood but added a focus on art and domesticity which impacted the directions taken by both movements in the early twentieth century as well as the way men related to domesticity.

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Crafting Vital Manhood: Recapitulation and Primitivism

Other manual training advocates looked even further back to find parts of a vision of manhood which would be best adapted for life under industrial capitalism. However, rather than looking back in history, they looked deep into the perceived nature of men and boys and sought to connect them to a vital and primitive force. Gail Bederman has described the reinvention of masculinity, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century United States and has located the cultivation of an ideal of manhood based upon primitive vitality. Men, who had been judged on their ability to conceal and control their passions in centuries prior, began to value their connection to a primitive and vital part of themselves. Part of this transition accompanied a reconciliation between the ideals of boyhood and manhood. E. Anthony Rotundo describes how men in early America defined their manhood in opposition to boyhood. The exuberance, enthusiasm and passion which boys possessed that placed them opposite men had to do with, “frivolous behavior, the lack of worldly aims, and the want of self-control.” The ability to manage and surpass these passions had been a hallmark of American manhood throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. American boys had long been associated with primitivism—they were often compared to American Indians—but, Rotundo argues that as part of a larger shift in understandings of masculinity, late nineteenth century men began to embrace attributes of primitive vitality and exuberance typically associated with boys. He writes,

Boyhood was glorified, boys’ vices suddenly became men’s virtues, and the two phases of life developed a more natural connection to one another. Men embraced

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165 Bederman, 18-19.
166 Rotundo, 20.
167 Rotundo, 31.
boyhood at the same time that they were learning to value savagery, passion, and the embodied manhood of the athlete and the soldier.\textsuperscript{168}

Rotundo thus places the late nineteenth century’s manly embrace of boyhood in the context of a redefinition of masculinity which Gail Bederman describes in her book \textit{Manliness and Civilization}. In the decades around the turn of the twentieth century, men embraced a more rough-and-tumble version of what it meant to be a man based on the presumed primitive vitality of men.\textsuperscript{169} In men’s adoption of the perceived primitive nature of boys, the two categories were drawn together and some manual training advocates were able to endow both with a connection to primitive vitality.

The reinvention of masculinity Bederman describes was a response to changing social and economic conditions of the late nineteenth century, many of them related to industrial capitalism. Bederman argues that, “by 1880 an increasingly corporate economy, as well as recurring rounds of bankruptcy-spawning depressions, meant fewer middle-class men could achieve manly power as successful, independent entrepreneurs.”\textsuperscript{170} Instead, many looked to the vital nature of men engaged in battles of various sorts as a new hallmark of manhood. Frank Norris’s novel \textit{The Pit} provides us with an example of such vital and striving manhood in the character Curtis Jadwin. Jadwin is a Chicago man, “a warrior” engaged in, “the Battle of the Street,” who faces the, “vast, cruel machinery of the city’s life,” and conquers it.\textsuperscript{171} A man who, in courting his future wife, was described as, “aggressive, assertive, and his addresses had all the persistence and vehemence of a veritable attack,” is also prone to, “a boyish pleasure in

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{Rotundo} Rotundo, 256.
\bibitem{Bederman} Bederman, 17-20.
\bibitem{Bederman} Bederman, 30.
\end{thebibliography}
certain unessential though cherished objects and occupations.” Jadwin is portrayed as thoroughly masculine and is placed within the competitive and combative business world of the Chicago wheat pit, and although his passionate and vital competitiveness ultimately leads to his undoing, it nevertheless places him in a new category of masculinity determined by vitality and force.

Some advocates of manual training sought to reinvigorate men and boys with a connection to their primitive vitality. These educators, including one of the most famous child psychologists of the time, G. Stanley Hall, saw boys as possessing an inherent connection to savagery. Many of the problems of modern men, they believed, were the result of ‘overcivilization,’ a term coined in the late nineteenth century to describe the general softening of men which had come along with the specialization of urban, industrial civilization. Gail Bederman and Warwick Anderson have both demonstrated how concerns about overcivilization were not only applied to individual men but to the men of the white or Anglo-Saxon or ‘American’ race as a whole and were deeply rooted in discourses of racial difference and development. Hall, for instance, was heavily influenced by the social evolutionist ideas of anthropologists Lewis Henry Morgan and Edward Burnett Tylor, who saw the history of society as a progression through stages of life leading from savagery to civilization. Hall believed that children experienced and progressed through these stages as they grew up, just as their race had done throughout its long history. This concept was referred to as ‘recapitulation theory,’ and enjoyed a

172 Norris, 113, 207.
174 Bederman, 205-206.; Anderson, 133-142.
substantial following among child-psychologists and pedagogues around the turn of the twentieth-century. Hall wrote in a 1904 essay that, “to understand either the child or the race we must constantly refer to the other.”

Unlike the reformers of the arts and crafts movement, his anxieties were more often concerned with boys’ bodies than their connection to the product of their labor. Hall worried that teachers were neglecting boys’ bodies and allowing them, “to atrophy, and chest, back, shoulders hips never to attain their fullest possible development.” Additionally, he agreed with Elbert Hubbard in seeing neurasthenia as a result of an imbalance between head work and hand work. If men were not allowed to live out the primitive stages of their racial memories in childhood, Hall worried that they would become weak and that racial progress could reverse or halt. He saw the marriage of the education of the hand and head as one way to foster the development of well-rounded men, but manual training was for Hall only a single part of a recipe for physical revitalization which also included sports, reading bloody adventure books and occasionally engaging in physical confrontations.

G. Stanley Hall found admirers among Theodore Roosevelt and the men who imagined themselves to be living the ‘strenuous life’ he popularized. Like most manual

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176 While Hall argued that both boys and girls experienced recapitulation, his emphasis was on the primitive vitality of boys who he considered, “nearer to primitive man.” Recapitulation theory was also sometimes referred to as ‘culture-epoch theory.’ Bederman, 88-94.; Armitage, Kevin C. “The Child Is a Born Naturalist: Nature Study, Woodcraft Indians, and the Theory of Recapitulation.” Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era 6, no. 1 (January 2007): 44.
178 Gilbert, 98.; Hall, G. Stanley, “Phi Beta Kappa Address,” quoted in Bederman, 90.
179 Bederman, 88-89.
180 Bederman, 98.
training advocates, they sought to elevate the place of manual professions in American life and society. Teddy was quoted speaking before the NEA saying,

I want to see our education directed more and more toward training boys and girls back to the farm and the shop, so that they will be first rate mechanics, fit to work with the head and to work with the hands, realizing that work with the hands is just as honorable as work with the head.\footnote{181}

However, Roosevelt sought more than just the elevation of the trades and the development of well-rounded men. He also sought the development of tough, hard-striving and strenuous-living men who would be able to make their livings in the trades and carry on the American race through its progeny. Roosevelt wrote a letter to G. Stanley Hall in 1899 enthusiastically declaring his shared conviction of the need to educate American boys in, “the barbarian virtues,” to prevent them from becoming, “effeminate milksops.”\footnote{182} Roosevelt wanted schools to develop men who could be charged with the duties of succeeding in the rough-and-tumble world of business, administering the country’s quickly growing empire and fighting its battles. If Anglo-Saxon American men lost their manhood to overcivilization, the racial progress envisioned by Roosevelt, Hall and many others would give way to degeneracy.\footnote{183} Manual training became an aspect of education Roosevelt could easily work in to his vision of manhood as connected to primitive vitality and racial progress.

Elbert Hubbard, an advocate of manual training, provided another example of the hard-striving man, fittingly engaged in the promotion of white American civilization in one of its first colonial projects, when he wrote, “A Message to Garcia” in 1899. The

\footnote{182}{Theodore Roosevelt to G. Stanley Hall, November 29 1899. Cited in Bederman, 100-101.}
\footnote{183}{Bederman, 184-185.}
hero of the piece, Andrew Rowan, a young man in the U.S. military, was given orders to relay a message to Calixto Garcia, one of the leaders of the Cuban resistance to Spanish rule preceding the Spanish-American war. Hubbard later printed “A Message to Garcia,” as a pamphlet which achieved wide popularity in the United States and abroad shortly afterwards, largely due to the patronage of employers and other ‘leaders of men’ who sought to share Hubbard’s gospel of hard-striving with their subordinates.184

Hubbard praises Rowan for his strength of will, determination and dedication to the task he is assigned by his commanding officer. He was charged with delivering a message to Garcia, and he did so without pause. This appears as an anomaly to Hubbard. He charged that the young men of the generation which followed his own were characterized by, “the inability or unwillingness to concentrate on a thing and to do it [...] slip-shod assistance, foolish inattention, dowdy indifference, and half-hearted work.”185 This malady was supposedly caused by their having grown up separated from the harsh realities of life and without connection to their own primitive vitality. He proposed, “it is not book-learning our young men need, nor instruction about this or that, but a stiffening of the vertebrae which will cause them to be loyal to a trust, to act promptly, concentrate their energies: do the thing—‘carry a message to Garcia.’”186

Hubbard’s association of manhood with unwavering action was at the core of the reinvention of masculinity Bederman describes as well as Teddy Roosevelt’s ideas about the ‘strenuous life.’187 Some manual training advocates adopted this vision of get-it-done

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185 Hubbard, Elbert. “A Message to Garcia.” Philistine. V. 8, no. 4. (March, 1899), 110-111.
186 Ibid, 110.
187 Bederman, 184-185.
manhood to an extent. Charles Penney Coates wrote of C.M. Woodward’s school in St.
Louis, “the course at manual was a long, hard grind and was so regarded by the school
boys of the city.”\textsuperscript{188} He further described Woodward’s attitude towards labor saying, “the
method more than the end is the object of interest. Obviously Woodward believed that
there was something worthwhile in the performance of a task simply because it was
hard.”\textsuperscript{189} Some manual training students shared an emphasis on struggle towards an end
as an important part of manhood. Emmerich Manual High School student, Harry Hunt
wrote a poem for the \textit{Mirror} titled, “The Race of Life,” about the need for resolute action
in a man’s life. The poem concludes with the verse, “Now Friend, when in this race of
life / The moment comes for sudden strife / To reach the goal / with firm / determination
true, / Your courage and your strength renew, / Your chosen path to hold.”\textsuperscript{190} Hard work
and determination were important parts of the manual training spirit fostered by
reformers who wanted to present a vision of manhood tied to primitive vitality.

Manual training advocates who fostered a vision of manhood tied to primitive
vitality and racial progress influenced the early formation of the Boy Scouts of
America.\textsuperscript{191} Ernest Thompson Seton, author of the Boy Scouts of America’s first
handbook and their first Chief Scout upon incorporation in 1910, also sought to endow
boys with a connection to some of their primitive vitality. Seton often expressed the
belief that civilization feminized and weakened young men and that a return to nature and
the passion of worthwhile labor could reinvigorate them.\textsuperscript{192} Like manual training

\textsuperscript{188} Coates, 42.
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid, 66.
\textsuperscript{191} For more on the early formation of the Boy Scouts of America see, Macleod, David. \textit{Building Character
in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, YMCA and Their Forerunners, 1870-1920}. (Madison, WI:
University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 130-146.
\textsuperscript{192} Armitage, 61.
advocates, Seton wanted each boy to develop into a man of, “all-around development.”\textsuperscript{193} Along with G. Stanley Hall and Teddy Roosevelt, Seton saw a connection to primitive vitality as being an integral part of boys’ development into well-rounded and robust men fit for twentieth-century American life. By establishing a place for theories based on primitive vitality and racial progress in child-centered institutions, the aspects of the manual training movement which embraced a vision of manhood defined by primitive vitality opened the door for primitivism in childhood organization like the Boy Scouts. Manual training advocates who presented a vision of manhood rooted in theories of racial hierarchy also increased the impact those theories had upon American culture.

By rooting the process of education of boys in the supposed evolution of racially-defined civilization, some manual training advocates cultivated a vision of manhood which was primitive at the same time that it was civilized. In doing so, they presented an ideal of masculinity which was part of a reinvention of manhood in response to the changing conditions of economic and social life under industrial capitalism in the fin-de-siècle United States.

**Crafting Civic Manhood in Progressive Education**

Still other manual training educators took another route, distinct from that associated with the arts and crafts or the strenuous life. This is the route which focused most on the child and on the development of pedagogical theory and is associated with the rise of progressive education in the early twentieth century. Progressive educators, led by leaders like John Dewey and Jane Addams, cultivated an image of manhood, and often

of womanhood as well, that was likewise whole, democratic and tied to production but also had an extra civic emphasis on teaching individuals about and acculturating them to their important roles in society. The manual training advocates who presented a civic vision of manhood would advance the agenda of progressive education and participate in the spread of child-centered pedagogy.

John Dewey, perhaps the most influential educator of the progressive era, was very interested in the manual training movement. He was also, like Hall, heavily influenced by recapitulation or ‘culture-epoch’ theory, writing in an article for the *Manual Training Magazine*, “the culture-epoch theory in education, and the recapitulation theory in biology, have made us familiar with the notion that the development of life in the individual corresponds to the development of life in the race.”

In fact, one historian has gone so far as to argue that, “Dewey’s history curriculum was based entirely upon his own refashioning of the anthropological-sociological-psychological theory of recapitulation,” and it certainly seems that the guided development of children from savagery to civilization was an important part of Dewey’s pedagogy. Nevertheless, Dewey developed a very different philosophy of pedagogy based upon recapitulation theory than Hall did, whom he likely was referring to when he mentioned, “the absurd pedagogical conclusions that have been drawn from this doctrine (through over-looking the fact that education is mean to accelerate and enrich this recapitulation instead of retarding and prolonging it).”

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boys with a primitive vitality, Dewey sought to assist what he viewed as the natural tendency of human social evolution towards more complex and more efficient structures. Just as civilization had evolved through progressively more complex and efficient stages over the course of history, Dewey believed that children naturally progressed into a capacity to operate in such complex and efficient systems like those corporate and bureaucratic systems emerging along with industrial capitalism.\footnote{Fallace, 388.} In this Dewey applied recapitulation theory, along with the ideas of European pedagogues like Johann Pestalozzi who believed that a teacher’s place was to guide a child through their nature-ordained development, to the task of developing men suited to a more rational and bureaucratically efficient, progressive future.\footnote{Barlow, Pestalozzi and American Education, 15.}

Dewey also looked to manual training to replace the handwork which the children of a bygone era had been raised and developed in. He saw in the development of industrial capitalism in the United States, “a revolution […] not more than a century old,” and said, “one can hardly believe there has been a revolution in all history so rapid, so extensive, so complete.” He continued, asserting that education must adapt to new conditions, saying, “That this revolution should not affect education in some other than a formal and superficial fashion is inconceivable.”\footnote{Dewey, The School and Society, 6.} It was in the manual training movement that Dewey saw the educational establishment adjusting to the rapid change of the late nineteenth century. Where children in the first half of the nineteenth century could assume some connection to productive labor at home, the emergence of industrial
capitalism, urbanty and new middle-class conceptions of childhood made a connection to hand work in childhood less likely. He wrote of his vision of pre-industrial childhood,

Practically every member of the household had his own share in the work. The children, as they gained in strength and capacity, were gradually initiated into the mysteries of several processes. We cannot overlook the factors of discipline and character-building involved in this kind of life: training in habits of order and of industry, and in the idea of responsibility, of obligation to do something, to produce something in the world. […] we cannot overlook the importance for educational purposes of the close and intimate acquaintance got with nature at first hand, with real things and materials, with the actual process of their manipulation, and the knowledge of their social necessities and uses. 200

Manual training, Dewey thought, had arisen to pedagogical acclaim precisely because of its ability to at least in part replace the social and manual training which children had previously received at home. While the manual training movement’s cultivation of a vision of a whole and democratic manhood based a connection to labor was a good start, Dewey nonetheless believed that manual training had to be pushed in a different direction. The direction Dewey wished to take manual training and the vision of manhood he presented therein was social and communitarian, rather than independent and individualistic like other manual training reformers. He believed manual training studies had to be viewed and presented, “in their social significance, as types of processes by which society keeps itself going, as agencies for bringing home to the child some of the primal necessities of community life,” and he believed that, “the radical reason that the present school cannot organize itself as a natural social unit is because just this element of common productive activity is absent.” 201 It is from this conception of manual training as a means to cultivate community life and social manhood that Dewey developed his idea of providing children with ‘occupations’ at his school. By teaching

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children about the social significance of different types of work, while also providing them a tangible connection to the materials and processes of those occupations, Dewey sought to rectify the situation by which many workers were, “mere appendages to the machines they operate,” and allow each worker to, “develop his imagination and his sympathetic insight as to the social and scientific values found in his work.”

Neither the nostalgia for a lost household economy nor the man/machine allegory is unique to educators like Dewey, who presented a social and civic vision of manhood, but the emphasis on teaching them about the social significance of work in a progressive society was.

Another famous progressive educator who advanced a social and civic vision of manhood through manual training is found in Chicago settlement house reformer, Jane Addams. Jane Addams, along with Ellen Gates Starr, ran Hull House, which helped acclimate recent immigrants to the country and improve the quality of life in working-class neighborhoods. Hull House offered manual training classes which regularly filled their shops with, “boys who are eager for that which seems to give them a clew to the industrial life around them.” Like Dewey, she sought to teach workers about the social value of the industrial labor they performed. This was carried out both in the manual training workshops and in the Hull House Labor Museum, which Addams believed were providing, “a beginning toward that education which Dr. Dewey defines as ‘a continuing reconstruction of experience.’” She believed that working men could possess a

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205 Addams, 172.
satisfying connection to even their alienated factory-labor if they were thoroughly educated on the social significance of it.\textsuperscript{206} In doing so, Addams, along with Dewey and other progressive educators, cultivated an image of manhood which was rooted in their relationship with their labor and society.\textsuperscript{207} Michael McGerr has argued that the progressive movement in American politics, education and other realms of society was influenced by a shift from an individualist worldview to a more collectivist one. Perhaps in keeping with the general spirit of the progressive movement, progressive educators sought to teach with a social focus and foster a more social vision of manhood.\textsuperscript{208} In doing so, they presented a communitarian ideal of a progressive society in which men were efficiently and socially connected to society through their labor.

The fact that the manual training movement was a starting point for many progressive educators constituted one of its most important and longest lasting impacts on pedagogical theory and school curricula in the United States. Many educators, in the later years of the manual training movement in the early twentieth century, joined Dewey on what some historians have called, “a crusade to radically transform, modernize, and democratize the American schooling curriculum.”\textsuperscript{209} The success of this crusade is evident in the esteem in which Dewey often continues to be held in the field of education today but it is important to remember the time and place which Dewey was coming from when he pioneered the progressive education movement. Influenced by the education of

\textsuperscript{206} Lears, \textit{No Place of Grace}, 80.
\textsuperscript{207} The relationship between labor, society and citizenship was explored by other facets of the progressive movement as well, including in the idea of political representation based upon occupation by Portland progressives which would have included a quota of housewives serving in the Oregon state legislature. Johnston, Robert D. \textit{The Radical Middle Class: Populist Democracy and the Question of Capitalism in Progressive Era Portland, Oregon}. (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 2003), 154.
\textsuperscript{208} McGerr, 42-45.
\textsuperscript{209} Benson, Harkavy and Puckett, 24.; Gilbert, 107.
whole, productive and democratic men set forth by the manual training movement, he established a vision of manhood and citizenship with a more collective and civic focus which drew many advocates of manual training towards further projects of progressive education and revolutionized American schools.

**Conclusion: The Decline of the Manual Training Movement**

In 1904, the managing board of the Manual Training School of Washington University in St. Louis held a special meeting to determine if they would support a merger with the Smith Academy, another Washington University preparatory school. The motion was resolutely put down on the grounds that they did not believe the Manual Training School, a “pioneer” in manual training education, should have to surrender some of its autonomy to a, “less distinctive school.”210 In 1915, just a year after the name was changed to Woodward Manual Training School in honor of its founder upon his death, the school did exactly what they had refused to do in 1904 and effectively ceased to function as an independent institution.211 An inability to compete with the St. Louis public schools, which had been making manual training a more important part of their own curricula and opened new public manual training schools in the first decades of the twentieth century, was often cited as part of the reason for the schools’ decline in prominence.212 Other schools, including Emmerich Manual High School in Indianapolis and DuPont Manual High School in Louisville, exist to this day as typical secondary

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212 Coates, 35-39.
schools in which the manual training element has been diminished to the level of most other schools in the country. By the second half of the 1920s, the manual training movement was effectively over, but it had left its mark. Manual training had a significant impact on the history of American education in its paving the way for all kinds of child-centered education which sought to educate the whole child.

Perhaps the biggest development in the history of the manual training movement and its biggest impact upon American education in general came did not come from a vision of manhood as well-rounded, democratic, independent or rooted in labor; nor did it come particularly from the visions of manhood presented by the arts and crafts movement, progressive educators or those who saw manhood as primitive and vital. Instead the expansion of vocational education was based upon the simplest vision of manhood presented by the manual training movement which I had discussed only briefly—that of man as a breadwinner. Several historians have noted the role the manual training movement played as a precursor to the vocational education movement of the early twentieth century.²¹³ By 1918, the Manual Training Magazine introduced itself as, “dedicated to the Manual Arts in Vocational and General Education,” and began to run more articles on vocational education, including an account of president Woodrow Wilson stating, “that if a plan can be formulated which will make it possible to introduce vocational and industrial education on a large scale in this country it would unquestionably be worth doing.”²¹⁴ The passage of the Smith-Hughes Act on July 1st of

1917 signaled the decline of the manual training era and the beginning of the vocational era in industrial education.  

Contemporary observer of the movement and graduate of the St. Louis school, Charles Penny Coates, went so far as to maintain that, “to manual training, the secondary school owes the very existence of vocational education in the curriculum, for hand work could at that time have been introduced into the schools only under the cloak of formal discipline.”  

While the transition of general interest from manual training to vocational education was brought about by a number of factors—including advocacy from manufacturers and other groups, and the need for trained mechanics in the first World War—the principle vision of manhood it may have been most driven by the idea that a man must be able to provide for himself and his family through his labor. Yet there was more to the visions of industrial manhood presented by the manual training movement than breadwinning. In adapting to life under late nineteenth century industrial capitalism, which was seen as corrupting men’s minds and bodies and undermining the social cohesion between men of different classes, manual training advocates envisioned an ideal of manhood which was well-rounded, independent, democratic and closely tied to productive labor. Through their instruction in work with wood, metal and machines, manual training educators sought to develop men who would embody this vision of manhood. Eventually different aspects of the manual training movement built upon this vision of manhood in different directions in attempts to cope with other the other perceived effects industrial life had on manhood. Some, looking nostalgically to

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215 The Smith-Hughes Act was a plan for cooperation between the federal and state governments to provide funding for vocational education programs. Barlow, The Vocational Age Emerges, 58.

216 Coates, 7.
preindustrial production, sought to reintroduce men to the artistic side of labor while others sought to reintroduce men to the primitive vitality of their innate being. Still others sought to better integrate all men, through their labor, into the community at large. However they envisioned perfect manhood, the reformers and educators of the manual training movement sought to craft better men in an era when social and economic change was both fundamentally threatening and fundamentally reinventing what it meant to be a man in America.
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