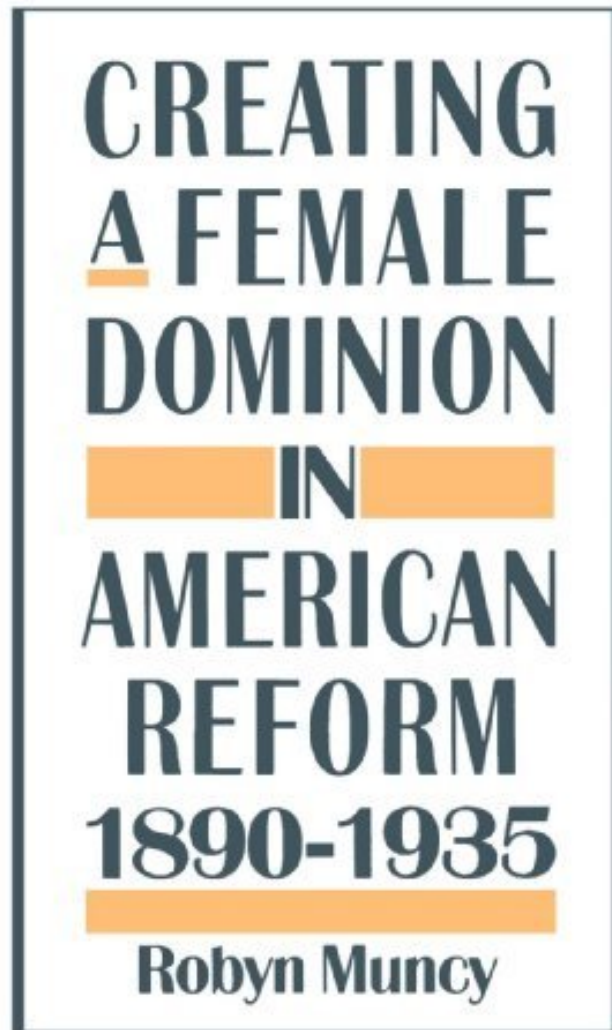


(Mobile ebook) Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935

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*Von Robyn Muncy*

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**Von Robyn Muncy : Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935:

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Robyn Muncy 1991, New Oxford Press. Progressive Party was temporarily united in 1912, but mostly the Progressive

era was a "hodgepodge of coalitions working for changes that often contradicted each other" (p.27) The women of the "Hull House" and "Chicago School" were among the most active and effective forces of the Progressive era -- that is, until they lost power in the late 1920's and early 30's."The Progressive era might be seen as a beach on which the wave of Gilded Age democratic ideals had broken, surged and just begun to recede when the wave of efficiency had broken and only begun to surge. . . . one hallmark of the Progressive era was the growth of the federal policy beyond tariffs and treaties. During these years, the federal government reached into communities to form more intimate relationships with individual citizens and corporate enterprises." (pg.29)Creation of the Hull House - chapter 1 After the Civil War many women used the concept of "the cult of true womanhood" to justify their aspirations toward higher education - in order to be good mates, good Victorian ladies they needed to be intelligent. Basically, the Hull house was founded by upper middle class and upper class women who had attended college. They had been active in school and sororities, but found no professional outlet for their intellect after graduation. Frustrated and often saddened by their detachment from other women after graduation they began to form post-college organizations. Two women: Jane Addams and Ellen Starr (daughters of two of the most wealthy Illinois families) were intrigued by the "Settlement" idea that was emerging in London. The Settlement idea intrigued many other women in different areas of the country also. The settlement idea had women relocating and living in working-class neighborhoods and aiding the community in various ways. "On the conventional side, settlements appeared simply to extend female philanthropic activities. After all, the cult of true womanhood had slated women for leadership in charitable service, and because settlements required women to surrender themselves to the needs of others, they seemed to fulfill the imperative to female self-sacrifice." (pg.9) Hull House was created by Addams and Starr in Chicago and Addams was the dominant figure for the duration. In some ways, the closeness of these women mimicked romantic relationships and some women went to live together after meeting in the Hull house. Women in the Hull House never expected to get funding from the poor community that they serviced. Instead, they sought to have rich women sponsor the monthly monetary support of the workers/members of the Hull house. In the early years they offered many varied types of programs and community support: soup kitchens, free clinics, day nurseries for working moms, free labor bureaus for men and women, etc. (pg. 13) Later, the members of the Hull House began to seek other forms of monetary backing and hoped to get the support of the government. Both local and federal government policy was based, in large part, upon the (sometimes corrupt) political party machines of the time. They reasoned that in order to change government policy women had to change the patronage system (from which they were excluded since they did not vote.) (pg.31) The Hull House settlement's leadership began to attend the National Conference of Charities during the late 1890's. They began to take over the NCC's agenda. Also, they began to infiltrate the National Consumer's League (which sought to influence industrial working conditions) and the National Women's Trade Union League. The women began to wrestle power away from the patronage system by claiming special knowledge and affinity for the nurturing of dependant people and children. "They made public issues of private matters that had always fallen under female authority and thus convinced men that they had a right to positions of power." (pg.37)Chapter 2 A Dominion Materialized: The Children's Bureau, 1903 - 1917. "On issues regarding children, powerful men listened to women and were willing to act on female advice." (pg. 41) Lillian Wald and Florence Kelley were members of the Hull House Henry Street Settlement. They decided that they needed to have a department to gather information about death rates among children. On April 19, 1912 the Children's Bureau was signed into law - Taft was pres., but soon Wilson came into office and he represented much of the Progressive agenda (pg. 46) Jane Addams wired Lillian Wald and President Taft to support Julia Lathrop's appointment to the new office (pg. 47) Lathrop became the first woman to head a federal bureau. Once in power, Lathrop hired women, in part, in acceptance of the Victorian notion that only women could speak frankly with other women about such issues as breast feeding kids. (pg. 50)Chapter 3 Staffing the Dominion: The School of Social Service Administration, 1903 - 1930 Addams hired women who were professionally trained (college) and supported by female voluntary organizations such as the Hull house. Many women who were unable to get jobs despite excellent credentials (such as women doctors who were part of the AMA, but who could not build practices because of sexism) did get excellent positions in the Children's Bureau - and they were able to professionally advance. Also, many professional schools arose during this time. Why? "Despite the relative freedoms that they [women] had in the process of creating their own niche in the professional world, they were nonetheless limited by a culture that was increasingly granting esteem, financial security, and public authority to those who could convince their public that they possessed esoteric knowledge. The proof of such possession was an advanced degree unavailable to the many." (pg. 80) The School of Social Service Admin was created by 2 women Sophonisba Breckenridge and Edith Abbott (both had ties to Hull House and Julia Lathrop. The school offered some night classes at a slightly lower cost. When the school merged with the Univ. of Chicago many of the women who had not completed their degrees were disenfranchised by the unification. The school of social service graduates were almost guaranteed a job in the Children's Bureau. But there were more jobs than the school could fill. However, "in order to progress through the ranks in the child welfare network, a woman needed to win the sponsorship of someone already established within the hierarchy. To win that sponsorship, she had to show commitment to the reform program blocked out by an earlier generation." (pg 92)Chapter 4 Consolidation and Expansion of the Dominion: The Sheppard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Act, 1918 - 1924 WWI

showed the ill health of young men and boys, many who couldn't pass the physical exam because of childhood disease. 1919-20 legislators feared women's vote (women were just enfranchized) they saw the infancy act as a pet project of women. Lathrop arranged for women's volunteer groups and analogous state agencies to press the issue in Congress and Senate. "In this drive, middle class white women self-consciously wove together the causes of child welfare reform and professional opportunity for women." (pg. 105) The bill passes by a landslide on Nov. 23, 1921 and Harding signed the bill into law. "The Maternity and Infancy act thus legalized the previously unofficial relationship between the Children's Bureau and analogous agencies in the states." (pg. 107) Professionals employed by the new public agencies were almost all female. The agencies reached hundreds of thousands of women giving advice on child health, birthing and prenatal health. In 1923 -24 they held 15,547 health conferences, ... 6,088 separate prenatal conferences" (pg. 110.) Their goal was to standardize baby care. Women were encouraged to use doctors instead of midwives, breastfeed for 8 or 9 months, feed babies only on a schedule, not rock the babies, not play with children, not sleep with babies, stay at home while the children are young., etc. (pg. 111 - 112) Cultural chauvinism and the entrenchment of middle class values played a part in some of these theories of standardization. The white women thought that most immigrants, native americans and afro american mothers were superstitious and the fact that they did things like feed the babies when they were hungry meant that they were raising unhealthy children. These ideas about motherhood did more to keep women down than to empower them. *Contraction and Dissolution of the Female Dominion: Federal Child Welfare Policy 1924 - 1935*. The Children's Bureau and Maternity Act bills were up for renewal. The federal government was moving in the New Deal direction and these social programs were tagged as those that could be brought under the umbrella of other organizations such as the Public Health Service (which was run by men more interested in professional

**Kurzbeschreibung** In this book, Muncy explains the continuity of white, middle-class, American female reform activity between the Progressive era and the New Deal. She argues that during the Progressive era, female reformers built an interlocking set of organizations that attempted to control child welfare policy. Within this policymaking body, female progressives professionalized their values, bureaucratized their methods, and institutionalized their reforming networks. To refer to the organizational structure embodying these processes, the book develops the original concept of a female dominion in the otherwise male empire of policymaking. At the head of this dominion stood the Children's Bureau in the federal Department of Labor. Muncy investigates the development of the dominion and its particular characteristics, such as its monopoly over child welfare and its commitment to public welfare, and shows how it was dependent on a peculiarly female professionalism. By exploring that process, this book illuminates the relationship between professionalization and reform, the origins and meaning of Progressive reform, and the role of gender in creating the American welfare state.

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