

# Revisiting Rachel Davis DuBois' Childhood and Young Adulthood: Reflections on the Linked Lives of an Intercultural Education Pioneer

Kathleen Mufti  
University of Turku, Finland

## Abstract

This paper presents a biographical analysis of the early life of Rachel Davis DuBois (1892–1993), an intercultural education pioneer of early twentieth-century America. The primary data source is DuBois' autobiography *All This and Something More: pioneering in intercultural education*. In a life course perspective, and guided by In Vivo Coding, this study focusses on the social relations linked to DuBois' childhood and early adulthood in order to better understand her participation in the intercultural education movement. I argue that evidence of her moral and political development are found in her Quaker ties and participation in the Quaker community during childhood and young adulthood. On the one hand, her adult emotional reaction to racial injustices may have stemmed from her experiences with hired workers on the farm; on the other hand, DuBois' Quaker upbringing and community influences may have impacted her pioneering role in the intercultural education movement.

## Keywords

Rachel Davis DuBois, Biography, Intercultural Education Movement, Quakerism, Life Course, American History.

... she [Rachel Davis DuBois] brought passion and conviction to articulating a vision of an inclusive society that cherished cultural diversity and, simultaneously, to implementing that vision through pedagogical reforms. (Selig 2008: 10)

## Introduction

The Intercultural education movement in the United States has a complex history with many different contributors. As early as the 1920s there were concrete efforts in the development of intercultural education by social scientists, faith-based groups, intellectuals, social activists, organisations and institutions. The wider phenomenon of the intercultural education movement in US history can be characterised by the development of educative methods created to tackle the problems of racism and prejudice (Selig 2008) and the promotion of appreciation and diversity in the school system (Lal 2004). Nicholas Montalto (as quoted in Bradley 2007) considered the movement to have stemmed from connections between World War I and the problem of nationalism.

Rachel Davis DuBois (1892–1993), the individual acknowledged today as ‘the heart of the [intercultural education] movement’, was born in New Jersey in 1892, during a time when segregation was still a reality (Bradley 2007: 71). DuBois’ life calling challenged the societal norms of the time. She is described as ‘a tireless champion of pluralism’, (Selig 2008: 10) a spearhead in the intercultural education movement (Bello 2009), and an innovative character in the field (Savage 1999). DuBois has been compared to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the 32nd president of the United States, as both held a theoretical stance on the connections ‘between the intimate level of the neighborhood and the vast realm of world events’ (Looker 2010: 363). W. E. B. Du Bois (1948: 235) argued that it was Rachel Davis DuBois who ‘started a movement for interracial education which was later known as Intercultural Education’.

### DuBois’ Contributions to the Intercultural Education Movement and Beyond

In 1929 Rachel Davis DuBois gained early recognition for her development of intercultural education methods (‘Educational News and Editorial Comment’ 1929: 94). The publication mentioned that ‘The American Friends Service Committee’, a Quaker committee in Pennsylvania, published a pamphlet titled ‘Education in Worldmindedness’ that described DuBois’ ‘assembly program method’ (‘Educational News and Editorial Comment’ 1929). DuBois called her intercultural education method ‘the Woodbury Plan’ (Selig 2008: 77). The programme began in 1924 at Woodbury High, New Jersey, but spread to other schools in New Jersey and New York (Lal 2004).

The Woodbury Plan, Diana Selig (2008) elaborates, entailed efforts from both teachers and students. They would survey the school and community, meet with representatives of the various groups to be studied and engage in discussions on prejudices. When prejudices and stereotypes were identified they would discuss ways in which they could debunk them (DuBois 1939a and 1939b; DuBois 1984; Selig 2008). Each programme would have a speaker of a representative of

a particular culture, ethnic or religious group. For example, in 1925 Dr William Pickens, the field secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) of that time, participated in the programme during Black history week (DuBois 1984: 55). Not everyone welcomed DuBois' intercultural experiments, however. According to Sarah Bair (2008: 19), DuBois 'almost lost her teaching job' for inviting Pickens to participate in the programme.

According to DuBois (1984: 48), the Woodbury Plan 'contained the commitment which fitted...[her] concern': that is, to 'dedicate the rest of ... [her] life' to devoting her 'major energies to race relations' (DuBois 1984: 34). Reaching one's 'concern' is intrinsic to the Quaker faith, according to DuBois (1984). Quaker belief contends that to act under concern is essentially listening and acting upon one's 'Inward Light' that is calling one to action (Hall 2013). For DuBois, the development of the assembly programme method was only the start of her long career in intercultural education and activism for social justice. She was a member of many organisations, such as the national board of The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (Bracey Jr. and Meier 1993), the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the YWCA (DuBois 1984), and served on many different committees, such as the Quaker Pennsylvania Committee on the Abolition of Slavery (DuBois 1984).

In 1934 DuBois founded the Service Bureau for Human Relations in New York (which later changed its name to The Service Bureau for Intercultural Education) (DuBois 1984; Bradley 2007). Circa 1938–39 she had her own radio show, titled 'Americans All – Immigrants All' – ('Rachel Davis DuBois Papers, ca. 1917–1974'), and in the 1940s founded the Intercultural Education Workshop (Hochstein 1942). In 1959 she began her Quaker dialogue tour, which involved sessions that were 'an adaptation of group conversation for a group' of 20 or fewer of various ages (DuBois 1984: 194), and by 1965 had joined the interfaith movement ('Rachel Davis DuBois Papers, ca. 1917–1974'); also during the 1960s she became a staff member and conducted workshops for the 'Southern Christian Leadership Conference ... in Atlanta at Martin Luther King, Jr.'s request' ('Inventory of Rachel Davis DuBois Papers, 1920–1993'; DuBois 1984). In 1979, for her interfaith work, she was given 'The Crown of the Good Name' by the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Philadelphia (DuBois 1984: 292), while in 1983 she was granted an honorary degree in Education for her pioneering work in intercultural education, just ten years before her 101st birthday (DuBois 1984). DuBois' death in 1993 marked the beginning of a new era. Soon after her death the Internet started to become a widely used medium for a new type of intercultural communication, perhaps something that she could have only dreamed of in her lifetime. Throughout the course of her adult life, DuBois was driven by the struggle of seeking effective methods of intercultural communication (DuBois 1984).

## Background of the Study

If William James and Jane Addams were Rachel Davis DuBois's intellectual progenitors, her sibling would, of course be John Dewey, the nation's patron saint of Progressive education. (Lal 2004: 22)

Slightly less than a decade before Rachel Davis DuBois' death her autobiography was published. In her prologue she expressed that she was curious to see whether her experiences would be of value to youth and others in their own endeavours 'to live lives of emotional satisfaction and continuous growth' (DuBois 1984: x). As a researcher of DuBois' life course, I am particularly inspired by her efforts and find them of value to my own life endeavours. DuBois' work is what led me to her autobiography, as I was interested to learn more about her upbringing and the influential events in her journey in developing better global human understanding.

There have been many academic contributions on DuBois' viewpoint and practices of intercultural education (see Austin 2009; Bair 2008; Baxter 1946; Bello 2009; Bowman 2006; Bradley 2007; Cadbury 1950; Daniel 1936; Dodson 1948; Drake 1978; Du Bois 1948; Gallant 1946; Goodenow 1975; Hatfield 1940; Headings 1963; Henry 1946; Hochstein 1942; Johnson 2006; Kelber 1953; Lal 2004; Lasker 1945; Looker 2010; Macarov 1965; McGee Banks 2005; Mead 1945; Nelson 1937; Reid 1951; Selig 2008; Taba and Wilson 1946; Woodson 1945; Zimmerman 2004). Past studies on DuBois cover various periods of her career, such as her roles in activism in the cultural gifts movement (Selig 2008), in her 'Americans All' radio show (Savage 1999), in her 'neighborhood home festival' (Mead 1945: 527), in a pedagogical response to an unjust society (Bradley 2007), in the development of ethnic heritage programmes (Banks 2004), in the establishment of the Service Bureau for Intercultural Education (Lal 2004), in the development of curricula for these programmes and services (Johnson 2003), in African-American relations (Bair 2008) and in progressive education (Bowman 2006).

While earlier research on DuBois provides valuable knowledge about her contribution to the intercultural education movement, very little discussion is directed to her youth and the influences that could have impacted upon her adult agency. Thus, the leading concern in this article is the linked lives in DuBois' childhood and early adulthood. The key frame of analysis is situated within a life-course paradigm: that is, 'a theoretical orientation that guides research on human lives within context'; within this paradigm, 'linked lives' is an analytical tool whereby 'lives are lived interdependently and socio-historical influences are expressed through this network of shared relationships' (Elder Jr. et al. 2003: 13). I chose Rachel Davis DuBois' (1984) autobiography *All This and Something More: pioneering in intercultural education* as the primary source of data. Tracing her social relations in her childhood and early adulthood can provide new understanding of

her work in intercultural education while shedding light on individuals who have made an impact on social change.

I consider DuBois' childhood and young adulthood as crucial to her life story and social development. Childhood is considered a critical period for development and young adulthood is understood as a time when political perspectives take shape (Schultz 2002). Peter Uhlenberg and Margaret Mueller (2003: 130) consider 'the transition from adolescence to adulthood ... the most pivotal turning point in the life course'. It is the family that is often considered primary to one's initial stages of developing 'self-efficacy', with peers, school, race and ethnicity as other important elements following the family; self-efficacy is considered 'a key factor in life course construction' (Gecas 2003: 371, 374). Viktor Gecas (2003: 372) describes how:

Self-efficacy, which encompasses the individual's beliefs about personal agency, causality, and competence, develops primarily out of the interactions between individual and environment.

In light of this analytical frame, I present some of the key social relations of DuBois' childhood and early adulthood in this article. In the presentation of the analysis I refer to the subject by her first name, Rachel. During the analysis, I adopted Glen H. Elder Jr. and colleagues' (2003) concept of linked lives, a popular theoretical principle in life course research. Within this principle, Elder Jr. and colleagues (2003: 13) argue, 'the initiation of new relationships can shape lives ... by fostering "turning points" that lead to a change in behavior or by fostering behavioral change'. Additionally, the notions of embodied knowing and experience are important here. As Meredith McGuire (2016: 155) argues, in light of Pierre Bourdieu's viewpoint:

Our bodies have embedded in them certain learned senses (such as a sense of justice, sense of good taste, moral sense, sense of disgust, and common sense) ... . If we accept Bourdieu's thesis about embodiment and social practices, then we can understand how senses – not only moral senses, but also religious senses – can be acquired and embedded in our bodily experience.

The above concepts are particularly fruitful analytical tools in an exploration of DuBois' early life, especially when keeping in mind her pioneering work in the intercultural education movement.

I identified and extracted DuBois' social relations from her autobiography in order to consider potential key influences in her early life that may have shaped her adult agency. During the data collection process each page referring to DuBois' youth was examined. I identified individuals, social groups and communities linked to DuBois' childhood and young adulthood. I followed the basic method of *in vivo* coding. *In vivo* coding, following Johnny Saldaña's (2012) *Coding Qualitative Data: a survey of selected methods*, was considered the most appropriate coding method for this study. This basic method was followed as I

analysed DuBois' autobiography, as if it were, for example, a transcript. During the analytic reflection (Saldaña 2012), I identified themes from the codes. This helped pinpoint key moments of DuBois' identity development and aided the identification of her core beliefs. No particular qualitative data analysis software was used for this study. Saldaña's manual on coding was used to complement the analytic process as I explored the data with the perspective of life course in mind. Saldaña (2012: 2) insists that his manual 'focuses exclusively on codes and coding and how they play a role in the qualitative analytic process' and not 'any one specific research genre or methodology'. During this study, I sought to answer the following key questions: 1) What social relations are linked to DuBois' childhood and young adulthood and in what types of social context? 2) How can the linked lives in DuBois' childhood and young adulthood help us to better understand her participation in the intercultural education movement?

### Rachel Davis DuBois and Quaker History

The fundamental problem of our land and the world today is the problem of personal relationships. After twenty years of experimentation in finding ways to develop friendly attitudes among all sorts of peoples, we believe that only in face-to-face contacts, based on simple friendliness, can most individuals be helped to regard as persons people of groups other than their own, regardless of the differences of race, color, creed, or nationality. In these face-to-face contacts, attitudes do change. Then, and only then, are individuals really able to live more harmoniously together. (DuBois 1946: 561)

Born into a Quaker farm family in New Jersey, Rachel Davis DuBois believed that God was in every person (DuBois 1984; Lal 2004). Some studies have acknowledged her Quaker faith (e.g. Austin 2009; Lal 2004; Selig 2008), her intercultural experiments in Quaker schools (Drake 1978) and her pacifist identity (Bradley 2007; Zimmerman 2004). Even so, in earlier work DuBois' dedication to the Quaker faith is rarely researched as a core theme in scientific inquiry. Quakerism was, however, an important aspect of DuBois' life; for example, she participated in local Quaker gatherings and even engaged in international Quaker activities, which were elaborated on in her autobiography (DuBois 1984).

Past research has focussed on DuBois' community action related to race relations, where she communicated her concerns in Quaker meetings (Austin 2009). In 1926, at the age of 34, she voiced her concerns to Quaker groups that Friends (i.e. Quakers) should become more familiar with race problems in the United States (Austin 2009). Moreover, Henry J. Cadbury (1950: 122) referred to DuBois' work *Neighbors in Action*, in which he found the subheading titled 'Home Life of Some Quaker Americans' in the chapter titled 'Word Pictures of American Family Life' particularly noteworthy. In her book *Americans All: the cultural gifts movement*, Diana Selig (2008: 11, 68–112) provides an in-depth

presentation of DuBois' efforts in the start of antiprejudice education. Selig (2008: 11) acknowledges DuBois as being one of the 'Quaker activists who drew on a tradition of concern for racial equality'. Shafali Lal (2004: 22) considered DuBois' science to be 'tempered by her religiosity'. St Clair Drake (1978: 89) referred to DuBois as an anthropologist who experimented in 'intercultural relations', and attempted 'to modify the racial attitudes of students in Quaker schools and members of Quaker meetings through a controlled experiment'.

However, earlier research on DuBois tends to neglect the consideration of the historical backdrop of Quakerism in America and the special Quaker characteristic to engage in action for social justice. Quaker history provides an interesting frame to my analysis of DuBois' biography. A prominent attribute of Quaker history is the continuous strength of social movements for social justice. Since the seventeenth century Quaker ideology has had firm roots in the igniting of a transnational peace movement (Terp; Götz 2010). Quakers have engaged in action in other movements, such as the abolitionist movement (Blue 1989; Christian Sr. 1978; Jordan 2008; Lapsansky-Werner 2010; Rokicky 2002; Swaminathan 2009; Vlasblom 2011) and the free produce movement (Glickman 2004; White 2007). Rebecca Larson (1999) considers that much of even the earliest examples of Quaker action, starting from the birth of the movement in seventeenth-century England, was 'designed to confront corruption', which in turn threatened 'the entire system of hierarchies' (Larson 1999: 27).

Quaker action for social justice has an interesting meaning in light of the Quaker belief system. David Vlasblom (2011: 2) describes the Quaker tradition, at the start of Quakerism, as one that was 'inclusive of members of other religious traditions', as compared with other mainstream Christian practices of that time. This contention, according to Vlasblom, stems from 'the light of Christ', an 'early modern Quaker teaching' (Vlasblom 2011: 2). According to Vlasblom, 'the light of Christ' reflects the notion that all of humanity has a Light within that comprises 'truth and spiritual wisdom' (Vlasblom 2011: 2) – in theory, allowing the Quaker to be more open to interaction and dialogue with people of other faiths. He describes the Quaker faith as one to be experienced, rather than set on 'a scheme of doctrine to be believed' (Vlasblom 2011: 3). Moreover, he suggests (Vlasblom 2011) that Quakerism encourages respect and dialogue among people of difference. I find this quite fruitful in relation to DuBois' intercultural education endeavours, as she promoted the encouragement of respect and dialogue. From this perspective, I analysed DuBois' childhood and young adulthood with the aim of exploring how her beliefs and actions fit with the overarching norms of her Quaker community as well as the historical underpinnings of Quakerism.

### Childhood on the Farm and Intercultural Encounters

It seems to me that each of us to some degree establishes our own special patterns of living through the unique way we experience life. (DuBois 1984: 1)

On 25 January 1892 Rachel Davis, a white American, was born to C. Howard Davis and Bertha Haines Davis in their family farmhouse near Woodstown, New Jersey. Rachel was born on the same farm that her ancestors had tilled since the 1600s. On the day of her birth, the nurse carried Rachel up to the attic before bringing her downstairs in the hope that she would be ‘high-minded’ (DuBois 1984: 1). Being a farm girl at that time was not an uncommon thing; late nineteenth-century America was chiefly rural. According to Dorothy W. Hartman (2012), seven out of ten people in the United States lived in small towns or on farms at this time.

From Rachel’s perspective, living on the farm entailed working together and getting along with people of different backgrounds (DuBois 1984); her childhood disposition is marked by a community spirit, a loving household, Quaker faith and humour. Humour played an important role in her life and was something that she would apply to her intercultural education practices later on (DuBois 1946; DuBois 1984). Rachel spoke of the laughter she shared with her mother, and described how her mother would jokingly remind her of how different she was from the rest of her siblings, because of her ‘high-mindedness’ (DuBois 1984: 1).

When discussing her family, Rachel described the farm workers as her extended family:

The family was extended by several employed black workers with whom I came to establish significant patterns of reciprocal relationships. (DuBois 1984: 4)

She candidly reveals the love she and her siblings had for a particular African American worker, Bill, from King and Queen County, Virginia. Sharing a memory of Bill, she wrote:

He, unable to read and write, was in love with a girl back home; I was eight, with a large and legible script which I had learned at school. At the kitchen table Bill Williams dictated his love letters to me. He knew what to say. He also knew I’m sure, that when in love, words are really unimportant. (DuBois 1984: 4)

Her description here may give a glimpse of Rachel’s own perspective of love. Her claim that Bill surely knew that ‘words are really unimportant’ may provide a window into how Rachel had understood the concept of love herself; perhaps she found that actions were more important. But, more interestingly, this experience with Bill provides an example of the social situations that Rachel was exposed to during her childhood. Bill is seemingly a key individual with whom she shared experiences. This paints a different picture from that of a mere ‘farm worker’ who might be largely removed from the household boundaries and daily family life.



This memory provides a place – that is, the kitchen – which places Bill inside the home, indicating that his relationship with the family was more intimate than that of a basic employer–employee relationship with not only Rachel’s father but possibly the entire family. An image is also provided of a man who simply loved someone who was far away, adding a human element to the table.

Emotions and feelings were valuable to Rachel and she did not hide them in her writings. When discussing her face-to-face intercultural method in her article titled ‘The Face-to-Face Group as a Unit for a Program of Intercultural Education’ (1946: 557) she states, ‘The method is difficult to describe because it is mainly an emotional experience and needs to be felt in order to be understood.’ Interestingly, the opening of Rachel’s autobiography echoes the very start of the face-to-face method, comprising people with varying ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. She describes:

We introduce ourselves, telling where we were when we were ten or twelve years old and what we liked to do at whatever season of the year it happens to be. We have tried other all-embracing topics, as ‘Food,’ ‘Freedom,’ or ‘Work.’ It is amazing what happens to adults when they begin to talk about their youth. They seem to feel again that pleasant preadolescent carefreeness common to all, while the act of talking gives them a feeling of importance and acceptance. Such conversation turns the rich substratum of memory possessed by everyone into social entertainment that breeds friendliness and a feeling of oneness among participants. (1946: 55)

Indeed, Rachel embraced the importance of self and biography, for this is what laid the foundations of her intercultural practices. In essence, her autobiography reflects these intercultural practices by sharing experiences from her youth.

When describing growing up on a farm, Rachel wrote, ‘Love of the land was in my father’s blood and in the blood of my brothers, all of whom became farmers’ (DuBois 1984: 3). Rachel’s upbringing on the farm is not just a story of her life working alongside people of difference – in her case, living and working alongside African American farm workers, the help and other nationalities, such as Italians. The Davis farm was something that Rachel writes about with great emotion. Rachel and her siblings all shared responsibilities on the farm and worked side-by-side with the hired workers. This image of her activity on the farm is slightly different from Shafali Lal’s (2004: 18) perspective, which explains Rachel’s activities as merely ‘watching’ the workers. According to Rachel, she played an active role on the farm. She remembers a song sung by one of the farmers while she would drop corn down on the ‘freshly plowed earth’ (DuBois 1984: 5):

If I had a scoldin’ wife,  
I’d wup her sures I’m born;  
I’d take her down to New Orleans  
And trade her off for corn.

This was a song sung by Bill, another indication of his importance in her childhood. She vividly remembers coordinating her work by following certain words of the song, in which she would drop ‘a kernel on *born* and *corn*’.

More insight into her farm life and the people she encountered is found in her description of how she and her siblings would sell old newspapers, pieces of iron and worn-out wheels to someone she described as a Jewish man. Moreover, she reflected on her time with Joe Pignatelli, ‘an Italian immigrant worker’ on the farm; Joe introduced Rachel to Italian opera and Rachel taught him ‘bits of English’ (DuBois 1984: 5–6). She described other human encounters, such as her relationship with Eve Jackson, an African-American woman described by Rachel as their ‘help in the kitchen’ (DuBois 1984: 5); Eve taught her poetry by Paul Lawrence Dunbar. Dunbar (1872–1906) was the first African-American to gain national recognition for his poetry (‘Biography’). The representation of these different individuals in her life not only conveys the humanity of the people who played a role in her childhood but also demonstrates the various, and valuable, intercultural encounters and exchange that took place.

Although she claims that her father and brothers had a love for the land, she too shared that love, even if she was not a farmer by profession. When discussing the farm, Rachel felt it important to add what she wrote about her brother after he died. What is compelling about what she wrote is that the reader can get a glimpse into her perspective of the land she grew up on and her appreciation for the hard work of her ancestors and early Quakers. Part of the excerpt reads:

With his efficient hands he made life more comfortable for all of us ... . The individual, small-crop farmer is now being replaced by the thousand-acre superfarmer. But these superfarmers do not love their acres like my brother and my father and his, and his and on back to those early Quakers, the Davises and Horners and Edwardses who came here from Wales and England in the time of William Penn. These farms do not measure their fields by counting steps, hands clasped behind their backs. Nor do they judge the ripeness of their crops by smell and touch and sight. (DuBois 1984: 3)

DuBois addressed the socio-historical context of her childhood surroundings in this excerpt amid her discussion of the ‘superfarmers’. Her farmland and the farms around her were tilled by the early Quakers that migrated to the US in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including her own ancestors, the Davis brothers (DuBois 1984). A sense of passion for the land can be drawn from this excerpt, which indicates that Rachel’s youth on the farm was of profound importance.

### A Quaker Upbringing

Since Rachel speaks candidly of her intercultural moments on the farm, such as her experiences with Bill, it is easy to let the other linked lives slip away from

the analysis. However, religion entered her discourse on many occasions. When trying to recall religious practices in the home she explained:

I do not recall bedtime prayers until in my teens; I made them up for myself. But I must have been in a mood of prayer earlier; for often, as I went to sleep in my early childhood, I would leave my hand outside the covers so as to be able to receive what might come to me in the mystery of the night. (DuBois 1984: 8)

This gives the impression that religion was not necessarily particularly important in the Davis household; however, the results suggested quite the contrary.

Rachel lists several family members and relatives in her discussion of her childhood, remembering, for instance, her grandmother Amy Jones Davis sharing stories about her ancestors, and she made it clear that she did not remember ‘any formal introduction to family customs other than Quaker’ (DuBois 1984: 1). The four original Davis brothers who migrated from Wales and settled in Long Island in 1699 resettled in Salem County, New Jersey upon acquiring seven hundred acres from William Penn, who was the executor of the John Fenwick estate (DuBois 1984). Penn was a Quaker leader as well as a ‘businessman, politician, friend ... architect, writer, lobbyist for religious toleration and for Pennsylvania’ (DuBois 1984: 51).

The four Davis brothers, or, as Rachel calls them, ‘the original Davises’, married ‘Quaker women from England’ (DuBois 1984: 1). Rachel came from the ancestral line of John and Dorothea Davis; Dorothea was a renowned Quaker preacher. Rachel’s eighteenth-century ancestors were slave owners. She learned about this in her adulthood after her sister-in-law came across old documents. Rachel describes:

A will dated 16 September, 1760, made by Elizabeth Davis, lists her personal possessions, one being a silver-hilted cane and another being her slave girl, Sary Smith. She willed these possessions to her daughter, Rachel. To my relief, as I read further in this genealogical world of who begat whom, I found that another Rachel Davis ‘set her slaves free on March 25, 1794.’ What a relief! She must have heard John Woolman speak at Yearly Meeting in Philadelphia, or else he had traveled on horseback to the red brick Friends meeting house in Woodstown (the one in which I grew up), built in 1785 under the committee chaired by Judge David Davis, one of my ancestors. (DuBois 1984: 8)<sup>1</sup>

Rachel’s grandfather Charles Engle Davis acquired 150 acres of the original Davis land, the same acreage that Rachel grew up on. Interestingly, Rachel described her father as her ‘earthly father’, and God as her ‘Father’ (DuBois 1984: 9).

Although Rachel considered her home life to lack family worship, she wrote

1 In this excerpt, DuBois refers to the ‘Yearly Meeting in Philadelphia’, which is better known as Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. It is also important to remember that excerpts such as this are from DuBois’ autobiographical perspective and therefore individuals and dates may not correlate. Thus, the analysis is conducted with caution, as is described further in the discussion.

that she ‘developed a spontaneous and persistent religious feeling of great importance’ (DuBois 1984: 8), although she appeared uncertain as to what influenced her in her religious conviction. But even though she claims this uncertainty, multiple Quaker influences in her childhood can be identified. I argue that the influence of Quakers played a vital role in the development of Rachel’s spiritual and moral self. Quaker historical figures, individuals within and outside the family, education and community gatherings were identified in her autobiography. This indicates that there was a wider institutional influence on Rachel’s upbringing.

As a child Rachel would sit in Quaker gatherings where she ‘heard about Quakers who had concerns’ (DuBois 1984: 7); as was discussed in the introduction, reaching one’s ‘concern’ is inherent to Quakerism. When reflecting on her childhood participation in the First Day schools (comparable to Christian Sunday School) and Meetings for Worship based on silence, Rachel recalled that they did not have missionaries that returned ‘from abroad asking ... to save ... pennies for the “poor heathen”’ (DuBois 1984: 7); rather, she describes Quakers discussing concerns. It was in these two community gatherings – Meetings for Worship based on silence, and the First Day schools – that Rachel, at the age of 29, voiced her own concern when reporting her fieldwork on education and segregation in 1921 (DuBois 1984).

Although she was uncertain what influenced her religious certitude, I would argue that the family also had a hand in directing Rachel’s Quaker faith. She spoke about her grandfather Davis having strong connections to the Quaker religion, as he influenced her parents in enrolling Rachel and her siblings in the Friends school Bacon Academy, of which he was a member of the board (DuBois 1984). This was a costly private school, but her grandfather offered to help Rachel’s father pay the tuition. She graduated from high school in 1909.

### **Community Influence in Rachel’s Youth**

Rachel had many social relations and community influences in her youth. She had an imaginative spirit to say the least, as even the cows were her friends. She describes how:

In my teens I took part in Women’s Christian Temperance Union recitals, winning gold and silver prizes. I practiced in the orchard using the cows as my audience. (DuBois 1984: 7)

This excerpt provides an insight into her activities and the community gatherings that were incorporated into her everyday life. The National Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was founded in Ohio in 1874 (‘Early History’). Its first groups emerged from women’s ‘nonviolent protests against the dangers of alcohol’, but also stemmed from ‘their lack of civil rights’ (‘Early History’). Rachel participated in one of WCTU’s local chapters. Her grandfather and grandmother

both shared a ‘concern for temperance’ (DuBois 1984: 7). She remembered her grandfather giving ‘illustrated talks’ about temperance, while her grandmother ‘wore the white ribbon of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union on her black bodice’ (DuBois 1984: 7).

Rachel referred to other experiences that were strong influences, including listening to invited speakers at Woodstown Opera House (DuBois 1984: 6). She was tremendously moved by a talk given by Alice Paul (1885–1977), a girl from Moorestown, New Jersey, who discussed being imprisoned in London, England, where she had joined the women’s suffrage movement (Carol, Myers and Lindman). Paul fought for the Quaker principal of equality of sexes and dedicated her life to the suffrage movement (Carol et al.). This experience impacted upon Rachel’s perception of women’s liberation. She describes how:

One Sunday evening I sat on the front seat listening wide-eyed with astonishment while Alice Paul, a young Quaker girl from Moorestown, New Jersey, told us about going to jail in London, England. She had joined the English suffrage movement with the conviction that it was time women had the vote – a conviction she was bringing to America. I felt ready to join her at once, but I heard no more of this idea in my family or in Woodstown. It was not until I was grown and teaching that I joined Alice Paul’s Equal Rights Movement. (DuBois 1984: 6)

Paul’s dedication to the suffrage movement moved Rachel enough to take action later in her adulthood. This is one example of how the Quaker community gatherings affected Rachel’s adult choices. Rachel’s participation in the Quaker community exposed her to discourses about social problems that most certainly could have played a role in her own dedication and action in the intercultural education movement.

Rachel discussed Grange meetings, and described her parents as being ‘very active in’ them; she started attending these meetings herself at the age of 14 (DuBois 1984: 14). The National Grange was founded in 1867 following the Civil War with the aim of putting America, ‘torn apart by war between the States, back together’ (‘Learn About the New Jersey State Grange’). Interestingly, Rachel described the Grange meetings as something that made her feel grown-up for the first time. She recounted the excitement of the secrecy of the meetings (although she did not describe why these meetings were supposedly secret); if one was late one had to give a secret knock on the door and relate the secret password for the given year; that for the first year she attended was ‘integrity’ (DuBois 1984: 14). Her activities at the Grange Hall continued even after she graduated from high school. For example, during vacations in her university years she would give ‘whole evening recitals’ at Grange Meetings and earned money from them, which paid for her school clothes (DuBois 1984: 15).

### Development of Belief

In 1914 Rachel graduated from Bucknell, a Baptist college, with no clear idea of what she would do next. Some of her friends, she mentioned, had been influenced by Christian leaders to do missionary work abroad in places such as India, China and Japan. However, Rachel did not have a passion for missionary work because of her Quaker roots. Her explanation demonstrates her deep Quaker spirit and indicates the depth of the Quaker influence on her perspective on life:

the challenge of being a missionary rang no bell in me, for I had grown up in that end of the spectrum of Quakerism which does not proselytize, for there is that of God in *every* man. (DuBois 1984: 18)

Rachel's understanding of heaven and hell, as well as religious freedom, can be gleaned from the quote on her experience at a Methodist evangelistic service. She describes how:

Once in my early teens I went to a Methodist evangelistic service out of curiosity. I knew the Lord would not put his hands on me to take me forward, and he didn't. I knew it even though, when we children got into squabbles, the Methodist kids would tell us that we were lost and what we would go to hell unless we were 'saved,' and that the way to be saved was to go to their 'protracted meetings' which they had usually in the spring. (DuBois 1984: 10)

Perhaps her experience of the Methodist way of thinking, in both her childhood and her early adulthood, helped to solidify her own beliefs, values and views of mankind. She found that there was a fundamental difference in the way Methodists and Quakers view human life. Interestingly, the separation of Us and Them is more evident in Methodist practice than the practices of Quakers, at least in Rachel's perspective, which illustrates that the view of God in every man portrays an openness to difference, while the Methodist perspective encouraged segregation and feelings of superiority.

### Discussion

This study was a biographical analysis undertaken from a life-course perspective. Here, the interrelationships of her youth were explored in order to better understand why Rachel Davis DuBois may have been interested in tackling racial and ethnic problems. Although DuBois identified herself as a Quaker and engaged in Quaker action, this aspect is rarely at the forefront of scientific inquiry on the subject. Her upbringing on the farm, the intercultural encounters in her youth and Quaker identity were all found to be important themes in this study.

DuBois was a woman who wore many hats: a civil rights activist, educator, Quaker, innovator, farmer's daughter, interculturalist, granddaughter, pacifist, schoolteacher, Doctor in Educational Sociology, niece, writer, wife, folklorist,

progressive intellectual, women's rights activist, radio personality, rebel, radical teacher, world traveller, natural scientist and so on. When considering her intriguing character, it only seemed logical to explore her childhood and early adulthood.

For the purpose of this study, childhood and early adulthood was understood as a time in which political perspectives take shape (Schultz 2002: 274). Undoubtedly those people linked to the individual's life can play a major role in developmental processes. The analytical tool of linked lives was found to be particularly useful when exploring DuBois from this frame. By exploring DuBois' linked lives (see Elder Jr. et al. 2003), it was possible to identify from DuBois' (1984) autobiography some of the key socio-historical influences on her in light of her network of shared relationships. This perspective was useful for identifying the influences on DuBois' life before her involvement in the intercultural education movement, with the help of Saldaña's (2012) coding method. Moreover, the life-course perspective provided a gateway into the people and even institutions that may have had an impact on her agency.

This analysis of the linked lives of DuBois' youth was interpreted with caution, as the data collection depended on DuBois' narration of her life story. According to Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (2010: 18), 'narrators [of autobiographies] selectively engage their lived experience and situate their social identities through personal storytelling'. Writing an autobiography is essentially a self-referential process and a performance of 'rhetorical acts' (Smith and Watson 2010: 13). The complexity of the autobiography is ever apparent in the way that Smith and Watson (2010) describe its elements; intertwined in the autobiography are features of history, biography and the novel. For example, it includes not only a presentation of the self but also biographies of others. Thus, this study's total reliance on DuBois' own narrative of her life and the social relations that she selectively chose to link to her life brings about particular empirical limitations.

Nevertheless, DuBois candidly reflected on the linked lives of her youth. Her experiences with people of different cultural, racial, religious and ethnic backgrounds, such as the workers on her farm and the women who were regarded as 'the help', provide insight into her social relationships. She regarded the African-American workers as her extended family. Her father allowed the crossing of employer-employee boundaries, which fostered more intimate connections. The intercultural exchanges in a more informal social context perhaps enabled DuBois to develop a more familial connection. As activism and agency is largely connected with human emotion, DuBois may have taken attacks on African-Americans personally, as if her own family was being attacked. Additionally, her portrayal of these relationships highlighted the intercultural encounters in her childhood. The family is a key influence on self-efficacy (Gecas 2003), and from this perspective it can be argued that because DuBois' parents were open to having friendly relationships with people of different backgrounds this openness transferred to DuBois' actions later in life.

DuBois' Quaker roots were found to be quite strong; many Quakers were linked to her childhood and early adulthood. Although DuBois observed that her own spirituality was a spontaneous one, it is argued here that her upbringing was firmly rooted in Quaker values and the key people in her childhood and teens were indeed Quakers. Her Quaker ancestry dates back to seventeenth-century America. Not only was her family Quaker; evidence of Quaker influence outside the family can be found in her reaction to Alice Paul's presentation on women's suffrage at the Woodstown Opera House, among other examples. Although DuBois felt that religion was not being practised in her household, she went to many Quaker gatherings, such as the First Day school, Meeting for Worship, Religious Society of Friends meetings and Grange meetings, and attended a Quaker school.

DuBois' actions were strongly embedded in her Quaker values, even throughout her college years at Bucknell. Bucknell was a Baptist school, but, while her classmates were drawn to missionary work, she stood by the understanding that Quakers do not proselytise. Rather, DuBois argued that Quakers voice their concerns about social problems (DuBois 1984). In her description of the religious other, she negotiated her own stance on particular issues related to religion. Interestingly, DuBois' thoughts on spirituality and faith provide a basis for understanding why she may have been open to intercultural encounters. While at times religion divides people, it is fascinating to see how DuBois' Quaker ideals may have been one of the driving forces behind her participation in the intercultural education movement, along with her action in the peace movement, the suffrage movement, the civil rights movement and the interfaith movement. Her early experience in the Quaker community may have instilled the norm of sharing concerns of social justice with the community. Being involved in communities that present different perspectives from early in DuBois' childhood and youth could have planted the seed of her first intercultural education method – that is, the assembly programme method.

DuBois' efforts in the development of intercultural education methods can be examined through the notion of embodied knowing and experience. DuBois participated in collective Quaker Meetings in her youth, where she developed much of her religious and moral senses. Her involvement in the Quaker community also exposed DuBois to social problems, and it can be argued that these experiences may have implanted the importance of coming together to discuss societal issues. Moreover, DuBois' descriptions of her time with the hired workers on the farm were expressed as lived experiences; for instance, the ritual of coordinating her timing of dropping seeds into the soil with the songs sung by the workers is an example of an emotional, 'intersubjective experience', as McGuire (2016: 160) explains: 'Such experiences clearly involve the body integrally. Embodied practices, such as singing, tap emotions and memories. Collective embodied practices, such as singing or dancing together, can produce an experiential sense of community and connectedness.' Essentially,



the development of such senses through communal experiences such as the examples above may have guided DuBois in her life's journey of intercultural understanding and social justice.

### Conclusion

From the beginnings of the Quaker movement many Quakers moved from Britain to parts of Europe and the United States to escape persecution (Larson 1999). American history has salient connections to Quakerism, and many of the histories reflect social justice. Thus, over the course of Quaker history, as social problems sprouted in various sectors of society, one can find Quaker dedication to tackling them. For this reason, it was fruitful to consider the possibility that DuBois fits into the wider phenomenon of Quakerism and the special Quaker characteristic of participating in actions for social justice. While she identified herself as a Quaker (DuBois 1984), this aspect is rarely at the forefront of research on the subject. When considering such histories and Quaker ideals while exploring DuBois' biography, a broader understanding of the potential Quaker institutional influence on DuBois' agency was possible.

Her motivation, deeply rooted in her Quaker ideals and a farm girl mentality, I argue, along with others (see Lal 2004), should be considered as key factors behind her spearheading of the intercultural education movement. It can be argued that DuBois held to the principle of inclusion: that is, as David Vlasblom sees it (2011), that at least in DuBois' actions her personal practice of Quakerism can be viewed as an inclusive one, where she embraced dialogue among people of difference. In theory, Quakers are more welcoming because of the teaching of 'the light of Christ' (Vlasblom 2011: 3), and evidence of this can be found in DuBois' reaction to what she believed was the Methodist way of thinking. It can be argued that one of the factors of DuBois' adult involvement in intercultural problems may have been her early moral development during her Quaker upbringing; DuBois' actions later in her adult life portray a form of Quakerism that denotes openness and dialogue and, indeed, it was the promotion of intercultural understanding to which DuBois dedicated her life.

This article provided a point of entry into further exploration of DuBois' life course and contribution to the intercultural education movement of early twentieth-century America. This study found that the Quaker faith was firmly embedded in DuBois' upbringing and is thus inevitably a perspective that demands further attention. Further research on DuBois' Quaker identity and action is needed in order to build on knowledge related to the impact of the Quaker ideals and community on DuBois' action in the intercultural education movement. A deeper examination of DuBois' embodied knowing and experience as it relates to her intercultural education methods would also be a fruitful analytical pathway.

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### Author Details

Kathleen Mufti is a doctoral candidate in social work at the University of Turku, Finland in the Doctoral Programme of Social and Behavioural Sciences. She is also a Migrations Fellow at the Institute of Migration in Turku. Her interests include Quaker studies, intercultural education history, crime and migration. Mailing address: Assistentinkatu 7, 20500 Turku, Finland  
Email: [kathleen.mufti@utu.fi](mailto:kathleen.mufti@utu.fi)