

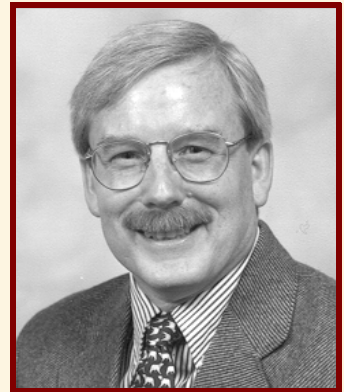
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Thematic Session — Progressive Tradition in American Sociology: Once Hidden then Lost and Now Recuperated. Organized by Sanford F. Schram, with additional papers by Cheryl Townsend Gilkes ("Sociology as an American Social Science: W.E.B. DuBois as Pioneer in a Racialized Society") and Stanley B. Aronowitz ("C. Wright Mills") and with discussion by Sanford F. Schram.

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Jane Addams, the Spirit of Youth, and the Sociological Imagination Today ¹

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JANE ADDAMS (1860-1935) was an extraordinarily accomplished, widely-acknowledged, and justly celebrated American sociologist who published in the *American Journal of Sociology* and participated — as a full-fledged member — in the programs and activities of the American Sociological Society (*now* the American Sociological Association). As an American feminist pragmatist and a Nobel laureate, Addams pioneered a profound sociological and intellectual lifecourse. Addams' decidedly sociological work — empirical, theoretical, and public — is a complex and challenging professional exemplar for young sociologists today who want sociology to engage our world with impact and consequence.

Our focus on Jane Addams is, in fact, a surrogate for a wider network of scholars. Addams worked in concert with a large number of sociologists associated with Hull-House, and their corporate effort may be properly called the Hull-House school of sociology. In focusing on Addams, we also embrace her equally impressive colleagues, not the least of which include: Edith Abbott, Emily Greene Balch, Sophonisba Breckinridge Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Alice Hamilton, Florence Kelley, Annie Marion MacLean, Mary McDowell, and Ellen Gates Starr, among others. The sophisticated, intricately interconnected theoretical and methodological frameworks produced by the Hull-House school are massive, complex, and rife with insight and innovation. Any all-inclusive bibliography of this work will be truly formidable. In short, it is a major mistake to view Addams in isolation. Her sociological *modus operandi* was distinguished and enabled by collaboration, cooperation, and community. As a coordinated body of thought, the ideas and practices of the Hull-House school are well described as “feminist pragmatism.”

Addams, Du Bois, and Mills

The inclusion of Jane Addams in this ASA panel is integral to our more comprehensive understanding of the scope and nature of progressive sociology. The sociological model presented by Addams and her several colleagues at Hull-House offers direct challenges to mainstream sociology today. Moreover, it behooves us to consider the relationship of Addams to the other major American sociologists represented on today's panel: W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963) and C. Wright Mills (1916-1962).

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The collegial friendship of Addams and Du Bois was *the* most important and consequential relationship of the twentieth century between a white woman and a Black man. Addams' crucial role in founding the NAACP (1909) is a crucial point of intersection, as was the earlier, direct intellectual debt owed by Du Bois to Addams' *Hull-House Maps and Papers* (1895) — and to Isabel Eaton,² a Hull-House resident — in the research and mapping strategies employed in Du Bois' magnificent study of *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899). Further, significant emphasis must be placed on the fact that Addams befriended not only Du Bois but also Booker T. Washington (1856-1915). The dissension and divide between Du Bois and Washington is legendary. Du Bois routinely dropped anyone who aligned with Washington, with the notable, major exception of Jane Addams. Addams embraced cooperation and rejected dichotomies — her friendship for Du Bois could not be made contingent on her rejecting Washington, or *vice versa*. It is no small matter that Du Bois so admired and valued his friendship with Addams that he overlooked her views on Washington.

The phenomenal work of C. Wright Mills appeared well after Addams' death in 1935. Any links between Addams and Mills must necessarily transcend disparate eras. In fact, Mills (1964) was highly critical of Addams and her cooperative, cross-class position, and thus we see a clash of paradigms. Mills, as a conflict theorist, did not fully grasp the radical core of Addams' non-violent, cooperative model of social action. Nonetheless, Addams would have undoubtedly welcomed Mills to Hull-House, and would have commended his critiques of class oppression, white collar complicity, and the machinations of the power elite. Addams exhibited all of the characteristics that Mills (1959) considered essential to a genuine “sociological imagination.” She was sensitive to *history*, as dramatically evidenced in her study of *The Long Road of Woman's Memory* (1916). Addams' (1902) *cross-cultural sensibilities* materialized in the Hull-House Labor Museum, the Hull-House Little Theater, and the Chicago Arts and Crafts Society. And finally, Addams' *critiques of the status quo* are vividly recorded in such books as *Democracy and Social Ethics* (1902), *Newer Ideals of Peace* (1907), *The Spirit of Youth and City Streets* (1909), and *Peace and Bread in Time of War* (1922) and in myriad articles including: “Problems of Municipal Administration” and “Recreation as a Public Function in Urban Communities” (published in *AJS* in 1905 and 1912, respectively), and such classic essays as “A Modern Lear” (1912) and “If Men Were Seeking the Franchise” (1913).³ In her writings and public speeches, Addams masterfully used stories of personal troubles to illustrate the structural dimensions of public issues. In sum, as public sociologists in the best sense, suffice it say that Addams, Du Bois, and Mills have much to contribute to progressive sociology as an ongoing disciplinary project and as an important, ever-evolving, “working hypothesis” (Mead 1899).

² Eaton's birth and death dates are not currently known.

³ For a nearly complete bibliography of Addams' writings, see Farrell (1967).

Taking Addams Seriously

The evidence that Addams and her colleagues were heavy-weight contributors to the sociological enterprise is now well documented.⁴ Unless one is totally hamstrung by misogynist chauvinism or scientific myopia, it is clearly time to take Jane Addams seriously. We can do this most effectively, as academics, by inviting Addams into our classrooms and reading lists. The opportunity to practice “public sociology” falls into our laps every semester: fully one quarter of the American population attains a bachelor’s degree, and their curriculum typically includes at least one sociology course. This presents astonishing opportunities to engage our students in truly progressive visions of sociology and society. Consider further that an even larger percentage of the U.S. population complete at least “some” college, thus expanding our horizon of opportunity. And if critics complain that attending to undergraduate college students is somehow elitist, be reminded that fully fifty percent of all hours of college-level sociological instruction in this country are taught neither in elite private schools, nor in public four-year schools and universities, but in primarily public, two-year community colleges.⁵ Sadly, this division of pedagogical labor is not equitably reflected in the membership and leadership of the American Sociological Association. In this regard, as organized, professional sociologists, we have much work to do, and much to answer for.

Jane Addams (1909: 3) opened *The Spirit of Youth and City Streets* with these words:

Nothing is more certain than that each generation longs for a reassurance as to the value and charm of life, and is secretly afraid lest it lose its sense of the youth of the earth. This is doubtless one reason why it so passionately cherishes its poets and artists who have been able to explore for themselves and to reveal to others the perpetual springs of life’s self-renewal.

This is a major collective challenge, to bring to our immediate public — our students — a comprehensive understanding of “the perpetual springs of life’s self-renewal” in ways that reassure and capture the imagination, passion and spirit of youth. One approach to this challenge is to integrate Addams’ core writings into our lectures and assigned readings. Several of Addams’ books, articles and excerpts are fully appropriate for undergraduate and graduate courses, including, first and foremost: Introduction to Sociology and Social Problems courses, but also:

- Criminology
- Education
- Environmental Sociology
- Family
- Health

⁴ Much of this documentation is found in references noted in the appended list of references. Parenthetically, it should be noted that it is also high time to take seriously the work of Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Harriet Martineau, among others.

⁵ The community college statistic was provided by Carla Howry during her recent comments on the dedication and lifework of Beth B. Hess.

- History of Sociology
- Immigration
- Industrial Sociology and Labor Relations
- Political Sociology
- Professional Ethics
- Race Relations
- Senior Seminar
- Sociological Research Methods (Qualitative and Quantitative)
- Sociological Theory
- Sociology of Art
- Sociology of Sport and Recreation
- Sociology of the Lifecourse
- Urban Sociology, *and*
- Women and Contemporary Society, among others.

Each specialty area can draw not only on Addams, but also upon the related and complementary works of her colleagues and allies. The opportunities are limited in large part only by the initiative and the sociological imagination of the course instructor.

Major Characteristics of Feminist Pragmatism

In asking you to take Jane Addams seriously, rest assured that we are not making a simple call for political correctness. It is not enough to include Addams and her Hull-House associates because they are women and have been long ignored by patriarchal and scientific sociologists. Addams and the Hull-House school of sociology must be taken seriously because it offers a vital and coherent theoretical approach to sociological practice. In short, we must give weight to Addams because we owe it to ourselves to take feminist pragmatism seriously.

Feminist pragmatism involves a lengthy list of themes and traits, all of which must be understood comprehensively as integrated and interrelated to each other. These principles and characteristics include at least the following:

- Adopts the standpoint and perspective of a Neighbor —
- Values and applies democratic principles —
- Encourages education —
- Promotes citizenship —
- Cultivates congeniality —
- Endeavors to be constructive —
- Is progressive and forward looking —
- Eschews dichotomies —
- Is always Inclusive —
- Builds cooperative relationships —
- Is both scientific *and* humanistic —
- Employs “Working Hypotheses” —

- Maintains conceptual openness —
- Endorses non-violence —
- Encourages the highest and best in all people —
- Forges strong reciprocal links between theory and practice —
- Holds people accountable for their actions and cultivates responsible behavior —
- Fosters organic intellectual leaders, students and colleagues develop the ability to speak to the public, and the public responds —
- Transcends micro/meso/macro categories; for example, as appropriate, it concentrates research, offers critiques, and organizes progressive social action on local, state, national, and/or international levels —
- Establishes vigorous organized groups, uses organization skills to initiate, launch, and advise effective groups at appropriate levels (local, state, national, international) dedicated to achieving specific, well-defined social goals —
- Values the search for social justice —
- Transcends the restrictive boundaries of narrowly-defined academic disciplines and scholarly specialities —
- Avoids “the snare of preparation” —
- Conceives of Art, Work, and Play as interrelated and inseparable aspects social theory —
- Pursues socially engaged rather than shallow careerist goals —
- Encourages empathy and sympathy, readily “takes the role of the other” in research, criticism, and action —
- Promotes holistic conceptions of society and the environment —

Taken together, Jane Addams, the Hull-House school of sociology, and feminist pragmatism, offer profound implications for all who would today devise and implement programs of progressive sociology.

A Word of Caution

Addams and her allies left us a massive and vibrant legacy of models and exemplars for progressive sociology. The extraordinary intellectual scope of this corpus merits a strong caution, however, especially as an enormous amount of commentary on Addams and Hull-House emanates from scholars and critics lodged in the disciplines of education, history, literature, museum studies, philosophy, political science, religion, rhetoric, urban planning, social work, women’s studies, and the like. Some of this extra sociological work is insightful, but the worst of it is misguided, slipshod, profoundly tendentious or simply bizarre.⁶ Likewise, some sociologists, apparently hampered by

⁶ For example, some “authorities” slip the bounds of empirical reality and intellectual integrity, variously asserting that Addams was interpersonally manipulative, an outrageous liar, a smug elitist, a pernicious racist, an enemy of the poor and working classes, an unreconstructed sentimentalist, etc. Other writers simply do not understand *sociology*, and thus inadvertently — but with heavy consequence — grossly misinterpret the methods, concepts, and intentions of the Hull-House school of sociology. Such literature, often published by presumably reputable presses, is an intellectual minefield for students and well-meaning professors alike. The advent of unvetted internet websites only serves to exacerbate the problem. Suffice it to say, when delving into the complex history and heritage of women’s

patriarchal biases, paradigmatic myopia and/or severely deficient bibliographical and archival research skills, have radically distorted the empirical record of Addams' life and sociological accomplishments. It behooves us, as sociologists, to take Addams far more seriously *as sociologists* — in the same way that we have taken seriously the likes of Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Karl Marx — to document, read, explicate, analyze, compare, contrast, critique, and extend the dozens upon dozens of lively theoretical and conceptual gifts bestowed on us by Jane Addams and her Hull-House colleagues. To fully appreciate Addams' sociological genius, we must claim the Hull-House school of sociology for ourselves in specifically sociological terms, unmediated by other disciplines and tangential agendas, and we must do so responsibly, with ethical care, empirical rigor, and intellectual integrity. This difficult but exciting work is only recently begun, the opportunities for exploration are vast — enormous potential to tap (and to rekindle) the spirit of youth in American sociology lies before us.

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contributions to sociology, it is all too easy to be misled, misinformed, and finally beguiled by extraneous stuff, diversionary red-herrings, and pretentious nonsense. As one of the most influential and innovative women in American history, let alone sociology, Addams is, unfortunately, prey to popularizers, scandal mongers, unscrupulous sensationalists, over-simplifiers, and their ilk. It's not easy, but every assertion attributed to the members of the Hull-House school must be carefully weighed and exhaustively tested against the extant empirical record. Primary data rather than secondary sources must be sought and utilized whenever possible.

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