



The forgotten example of 'settlement sociology': Gender, research, communities, universities and policymaking in Britain and the USA, 1880–1920

Ann Oakley* – *UCL Institute of Education, University College London*

Abstract

Many of the social investigations carried out in social settlements established in Britain and the USA in the period from the 1880s to the 1920s are early examples of participatory research based on a theory of knowledge with 'citizen experience' at its centre. This research, much of it done by women, was often methodologically innovative and enormously influential in shaping public policy. Its history is bound up with that of disciplinary specialization, in which women's research and reform work have been classified, and thus hidden, as 'social work'.

Keywords: gender; settlements; methodology; public policy; universities

Key messages

- The work of women social scientists and reformers in and around the settlement movement is an early example of participatory research based on 'citizen experience'.
- Much of this has been omitted from standard histories of social science and research methods.
- The women's accounts of their research and activism to promote its findings helped to shape the modern welfare state.

Introduction

The period from the early 1880s until about 1920 saw the worldwide growth of a movement designed to combine community solidarity, social investigation and public policy reform. Residential centres – 'settlements' – were established, mainly in congested and disadvantaged urban locations, to provide neighbourhood services based on the expressed needs of citizens, to collect data about those needs and to guide public policy. The settlement movement was part of a broader social science movement, 'a great historic movement, almost heroic in its aspirations', aimed at deploying the scientific method in the interests of social betterment (Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley, 2007: 3–4; see Bernard and Bernard, 1943).

The methods and achievements of settlement sociology are mainly forgotten today, or at least viewed as of historical interest only, despite their obvious relevance to modern attempts at developing participatory research and policy. The main reason why settlement sociology has been forgotten is its gendering: most of its principal

actors were women. The 'humanistic', 'pragmatic' or 'public' sociology practised in the settlements has been seen as belonging to the domain of social work, a traditionally female specialty, and this sobriquet of women's research and reform activities as 'social work' has acted to hide much of its history (Deegan, 1997; Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley, 2007; Shaw, 2009). While scholarship since the 1980s has returned some of settlement sociology's history to the light, particularly with respect to the American story (see, for example, Costin, 1983; Deegan, 1991a; Lengermann and Niebrugge, 1998; Sklar, 1985), much work still remains to be done excavating the achievements of women 'settlers' and researchers in Britain and elsewhere in Europe. A central challenge is to document the web of connections that existed between the practitioners of settlement sociology in different countries; another is to assess the extent of its impact on policy, and the conditions that favoured or inhibited this impact.

This paper forms part of a larger project, 'From Warfare to Welfare: Women thinkers and reformers, 1880–1920', funded by the Titmuss Meinhardt Fund at the London School of Economics (LSE). It looks at the background to, and nature of, settlement work, focusing on the ways in which it differed from other forms of social knowledge-production at the time. It argues that the investigative practices of settlement sociologists were patterned by organic relationships between the researchers and researched, which in turn grew out of their shared material location, and that these practices both fed into, and reflected, a distinctively different epistemology of knowledge. The institutional autonomy of many settlements – separate from, although sometimes working closely with, universities – may well have been a significant factor in their success.

Social investigation and settling among the poor

From around the mid-nineteenth century, the social consciences of the educated middle class on both sides of the Atlantic were increasingly sensitized to the appalling social and economic consequences of unregulated capitalist industrialization and urbanization. In the USA, a vast tide of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century immigration added great cultural diversity to the problem of poverty. Dramatic statements about the degradation of the urban poor, such as Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851–62) and Andrew Mearns's *Bitter Cry of Outcast London* (1883), were important prods for the settlement movement in Europe and the USA. It was widely recognized that facts about the extent and nature of poverty were needed to inform the debate: in the USA, waves of immigration, from Eastern Europe particularly, raised questions about race and racism in the living conditions of the urban poor. Charles Booth's long and careful investigation of urban poverty, the 17-volume *Life and Labour of the People of London* (1902), began in Tower Hamlets in 1887. This was the area, the East End of London, which saw the establishment of the first two social settlements, the Anglican Oxford House in Bethnal Green in September 1884, followed by the much better known non-denominational Toynbee Hall in December 1884. The idea of the settlement was that it would provide cooperative living for a core group of residents, who would donate their free time to settlement activities in order to engage in a process of mutual learning about, and with, the poor.

Toynbee Hall acted as a centre for Booth's 20-strong team of investigators, and became a focus for the settlement movement worldwide. Henrietta and Samuel Barnett, who founded Toynbee Hall, described its rationale thus: 'We advocate, therefore, as steps towards social reform that people of knowledge, instead of sending missions to the ignorant, should themselves settle among them, and by

serving them fan into brightness the dormant public spirit ... There is more and more truth manifesting itself in the saying that we only give in what we share' (Barnett and Barnett, 1909: 11). The motif of the movement could be called 'creative altruism' (Harkavy and Puckett, 1994: 316). At its most radical, settlement philosophy was about dissolving class inequality; at its most conservative, it could be seen as an aspect of a middle-class 'mania for slumming' (Koven, 2004: 11), that occupied late Victorian and Edwardian reformers. But by the 1880s living in/visiting poor districts and collecting information about their inhabitants had become an established strategy for generating facts about poverty, with the general aim of amelioration and the reduction of class inequality.

In the three decades from the 1880s, the idea of the settlement was imported eagerly from Britain to North America and elsewhere in Europe. Two of the first three American settlements were founded within weeks of each other in 1889 by women, directly influenced by the British model. Vida Scudder, a professor of English literature and religious radical, opened, together with colleagues, a College Settlement in New York, and Jane Addams and her friend Ellen Starr took over an old mansion, Hull-House in Chicago, which soon surpassed Toynbee Hall in international influence and fame. Under Addams's leadership, many distinguished women contributed to Hull-House's research programme, becoming influential shapers of Progressive Era legislation and policy. Prime among these were the socialist lawyer, theorist, researcher and reformer (and translator of Engels) Florence Kelley, whose work on child labour and women's working conditions effected major legislative changes; Dr Alice Hamilton, pioneer of occupational health and industrial safety; Marion Talbot, an authority on higher education and the sociology of the home; Sophonisba Breckinridge, a lawyer and author of many studies of social conditions and of women in the home and public life; Julia Lathrop, who worked in health and social welfare; and Edith Abbott, a social economist, statistician and immigration expert. Breckinridge and Abbott produced a remarkable series of books and articles describing methodologically innovative studies of community issues (see Deegan, 1991a).

A *Handbook of Settlements* published in 1911 listed a total of 479 in existence, including 413 in the USA and 46 in England (Woods and Kennedy, 1911). By 1900, the settlement movement had spread throughout the British Empire, to Western Europe, Japan, China, India and Canada (James, 2001; Johnson, 1995; Imai, 2012). The first Nordic settlements (known as 'hemgårdar') started in Stockholm and Copenhagen in 1912, with a strong emphasis on practical research (Soydan, 1993). Women made up more than three-quarters of the settlement workforce (Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley, 2007: 97; Woods and Kennedy, 1911). Some migrated into it from philanthropic work of various kinds, which had always been a female-dominated occupation. A survey by Louise Hubbard in 1893 found some 500,000 British women working 'continuously or semi-professionally' in philanthropy, which was the single most important occupation nationally for women; this figure did not include perhaps another 500,000 whose involvement was voluntary and/or part-time (Hubbard, 1894; Prochaska, 1980: 224). Until well into the twentieth century, philanthropy offered a socially acceptable way for women both to labour outside the home and to domesticate the public sphere. Settlements provided safe places for women to live and work with one another, doing 'social work', broadly conceived to include social investigation. The 'transatlantic network of reform movements', of which settlements were a part, was accentuated, in the case of women, by their shared commitment to enlarging the accepted sphere of their public work (Koengeter and Schroeer, 2013).

The theory and ethics of settlement sociology

At the core of the settlement project was the concept of 'neighbourly relations' (Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley, 2002; Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley, 2007). The shared assumption guiding both settlement theory and practice was the reconstruction of social contact between the residents of a neighbourhood, a contact that had typically been disrupted by structural inequalities of class and the conditions in which the urban working classes had no choice but to live. The central problematic was the need to reconstitute connection. Most settlement workers were anxious to separate themselves from traditional charity work, with its language of 'us' and 'them' and its project of imposing middle-class norms and lifestyles (Treviño, 2012). The process of social investigation led many reformers to see that poverty and its associated difficulties were socially caused rather than, as was commonly believed at the time, produced by individual moral failure (Ross, 2007). In the USA, close contact with the diverse cultures of immigrant communities produced a radical reworking of ideas about nationalism and ethnicity, particularly in the work of the American economist Emily Balch (see Plastas, 2008).

Mary McDowell, the head of a Chicago settlement, and a tireless researcher and activist in the fields of childcare, sanitation, trade unionism and ethnic relations, talked eagerly about not working *for* the subjects of social enquiry as a missionary 'but *with* them as a neighbor and seeker after truth' (cited in Wade, 1967: 415; emphasis in original). For Mary Kingsbury Simkhovitch, who founded the Greenwich House settlement in New York, settlement workers differed from reformers in that their primary object was 'to understand the situations that arise', with the opportunity 'day by day to see facts in their relation one to another. If social improvements are to be undertaken by one class on behalf of another,' she observed, 'no permanent changes are likely to be effected. The participation by all concerned is necessary' (cited in Goldmark, 1953: v).

The same emphasis on working with the community was spelt out in the reports of the British settlements. The Victoria Women's Settlement in Liverpool, founded in 1898 by Dr Lillias Hamilton and Edith Sing, for example, adopted as its guiding principle 'cross-class friendship', with the accompanying duty to 'share as good citizens and neighbours' in the normal life of the area (Pedersen, 2004: 88, 90). Under the leadership of Elizabeth Macadam, and with the social investigation department directed by the politician and campaigner for women's rights Eleanor Rathbone, the settlement practised 'a distinctly female mode of cross-class activism' (Pedersen, 2004: 90). In London, the Women's University Settlement, founded in 1887 by Henrietta Barnett and the housing reformer Octavia Hill, had as its stated aim, 'the promotion of welfare among the poor of London, especially the welfare of women and children, by devising and providing practical, educational and recreational schemes': social investigation was not explicitly mentioned as a goal. Other settlements, for instance, the Birmingham Women's Settlement, early identified systematic study of, and research into, social problems as an important part of their work.

The clearest articulation of settlement theory and ethics is provided by the American Jane Addams in over five hundred publications written in the course of a lifetime's work that earned her an international reputation (and, not coincidentally, the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931 for her active dedication to pacifism). Addams's reputation as 'the lady abbess of Chicago', or even a 'saint', concealed an 'expert executive' with formidable talents in initiating and organizing activities and people, someone whose ability to finance settlement sociology was a question both of shrewd business

acumen and knowing the right people (Davis, 1973; Deegan, 1990). She combined this with an elegant philosophy and sociology relating to settlement work. Addams saw the rationale of settlements as the 'effort to add the social function to democracy', 'to extend democracy beyond its political expression' (Addams, 1892a: 1). Democracy is not simply about the election of governments, but about the production and ownership of the knowledge that feeds into their policies, activities and ideals. Addams quoted the philosopher and educationalist John Dewey, a close friend and frequent Hull-House visitor:

When a theory of knowledge forgets that its value rests in solving the problem out of which it has arisen, that of securing a method of action, knowledge begins to cumber the ground. It is a luxury, and becomes a social nuisance and disturber.

(Addams, 1899: 34)

A settlement therefore:

... must be open to conviction and must have a deep and abiding sense of tolerance. It must be hospitable and ready for experiment. It should demand from its residents a scientific patience in the accumulation of facts ... It must be grounded in a philosophy whose foundation is on the solidarity of the human race ... Its residents must be emptied of all conceit of opinion and all self-assertion, and ready to arouse and interpret the public opinion of their neighborhood. They must be content to live quietly side by side with their neighbors until they grow into a sense of relationship and mutual interests.

(Addams, 1892a: 23)

As Addams phrased it in her accounts of Hull-House, the systematic collection of data had to be rigorous and based on information derived from direct engagement with the subject. An important condition for developing social knowledge was openness to learning about the needs and circumstances of actual people. Such a theory of democracy prioritizes lived experience: 'The world of citizen experience is a place of practice' (Shields, 2011: 21).

The Hull-House resident Florence Kelley, a woman said to have had the largest single share in shaping the social history of the United States during the early decades of the twentieth century (Sklar, 1986: 5), provided an important theoretical statement for settlement sociology in an essay written in 1887. There are two kinds of philanthropy, contended Kelley, 'bourgeois' and 'working class'. Bourgeois philanthropy is one of palliatives and restitution, whereas working-class philanthropy is reciprocal and mutual. It involves working with the disadvantaged to understand, collectively, the reasons for their oppression (Kelley, 1887). This argument for social work and social research differed from the university model in understanding social science knowledge as deriving from civic participation across class, race and ethnic divisions.

Immersion in citizen experience led to the provision of many social necessities by many settlements: public baths; playgrounds and urban gardens; day nursery and after-school and vacation childcare; organized refuse collection and street-cleaning; recreational and educational clubs for young people and adults; cheap wholesome meals; employment agencies; midwifery; health clinics for babies, children and adults; and many other activities besides, most of which were eventually taken on as state or federal responsibilities. What is most striking about this record is that the seamless enterprise of need–research–policy, repeated countless times by women in settlements around the world, effectively created our modern welfare state, as well

as simultaneously generating a new and radical view of knowledge as a cooperative product. Yet neither of these accomplishments are recognized in the standard histories of the welfare state and social science methodology.

Settlement research: Some examples

The settlement movement was geographically, ideologically and methodologically diverse; some settlements were much more involved in research than others. The vast network of mainly female sociological researchers with Hull-House as its hub does not appear to have been replicated in other countries. In Britain, some settlement workers did take up the brief of systematic social investigation, but the focus of many settlements was on the provision of neighbourhood services, and later on the development of university-based social work training. But where research was carried out, the 'point of origin' for the substantive topics chosen was 'the neighborhood contact', a research agenda set through community participation (Wade, 1967: 422). This accounts for the enormous number of local investigations into the conditions of working-class labour, especially those involving the 'sweated' labour of women and children. In the USA, the specializations of the 'Hull-House School of Sociology' (Deegan, 2013) that grew out of this specific local concern included the study of the city; crime; industry, occupations and labour relations; education; art and aesthetics; ethics; immigration and racial discrimination; law; gender; pacifism; and the environment. For example, Edith Abbott's prolific publications and policy inputs included work on immigrants, women in industry, the penal system, and a direct role in the 1935 Social Security Act (Costin, 1983). Dr Alice Hamilton's study of toxicology and occupational health originated in her work as a Hull-House physician, learning of the terrible accidents and illnesses suffered by workers in unregulated industries in the district served by Hull-House: her research led directly to a law providing compensation for industrial diseases (Hamilton, 1943). Julia Lathrop worked on the problem of child poverty, and went on to direct the first United States Children's Bureau between 1912 and 1921. In her early years at Hull-House, Lathrop undertook research on infant mortality, using the results to argue successfully for federal aid to protect mothers and children (Addams, 1935). Mary McDowell, Edith Abbott and Sophonisba Breckinridge put together a proposal for the federal government to investigate the condition of women wage earners. Addams presented the proposal to President Theodore Roosevelt, who endorsed it, and by 1907 funds had been set aside for a federal survey, resulting in a 19-volume report published between 1910 and 1913. This provided ammunition for the passage of federal child labour laws (Deegan, 1991b).

There could often be a close tie between meeting a need and establishing the facts of a situation. A case in point was addressing the problem of child labour. Many children, at work from as young as 4, in the 19th ward around Hull-House, for example, were not in school, but what kind of provision did schools in fact make? In 1891, a Hull-House resident researched school provision, discovering that the public school census recorded 6,976 children living in the 19th ward, whereas only 2,957 public school 'sittings' were available. School attendance was not enforced because of the lack of school places and also because of corruption among city officials, which gave them an interest in maintaining a large population of child labourers. The result of the Hull-House research was publicized just before the financial appropriations voted for school buildings and sites, and the local Board of Education was thereby induced to engage in some new capital investment (Addams, 1892b: 50).

Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley (2002: 11) identify 17 major research projects carried out by American settlements between 1895 and 1917, as well as thousands of smaller studies described in settlement reports, journal publications and so forth. The most famous was the Hull-House product *Hull-House Maps & Papers*, published in 1895, which provided detailed empirical and analytic accounts of topics such as the sweating-system of wage labour, the lives of wage-earning children, the culture of the Bohemian people (a major group of immigrants) in Chicago and the relationship between settlements and the trade union movement (Residents of Hull-House, 1895). Colour-coded maps, a central feature of the book, were produced by Hull-House residents sitting in Jane Addams's office, on the basis of data produced by exhaustive house-to-house inquiries and interviews with residents around the settlement. The maps showed the distribution and incomes of different ethnic communities, providing a startling visual display of cultural diversity and economic inequality.

The social reformer and politician Eleanor Rathbone began working at the Victoria Women's Settlement in Liverpool in 1903, where she became de facto head of the social investigation department, carrying out careful and in-depth research into social and economic life. Her 1909 report *How the Casual Labourer Lives*, 'an early analysis of the credit arrangements of the poor' (Pedersen, 2004: 106), was one of the first systematic studies of family budgets. This, and other early research conducted by Rathbone, sensitized her to the personal and social disadvantages of the family wage system, with its built-in disregard for the household and childcare work of women. The facts, carefully investigated, produced a theory of the family that contested dominant economic and political ideas by locating poverty and inequality in the relations of marriage and parenthood, as well as in those of production (Rathbone, 1924). As her biographer Susan Pedersen has pointed out, Rathbone's research-based theory not only represented the experiences of working-class women but, more importantly, reinterpreted 'the economy as a whole *from the standpoint of that insight*' (Pedersen, 2004: 109; emphasis in original). What followed on the policy level was her long campaign for family allowances, which were finally introduced in Britain in 1942, as a direct result of William Beveridge's earlier conversion to the idea by Rathbone (Land, 1980).

Settlement sociology: Methods

As Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley (2002: 10) have observed, settlement sociology's most striking feature is 'the wealth of empirical research it produced and the ingenuity it showed in inventing methods of social research'. Settlement sociologists were very inventive in their data-gathering strategies, pioneering many that today we take for granted, including house-to-house surveys, in-depth interviews, questionnaires, personal budget-keeping, participant observation and the use of key informants; their approaches to secondary data analysis covered using censuses, legislation, memoirs and diaries, wage and cost-of-living records, court and industrial accident reports, tax rolls and nursery rhymes. These early researchers were also inventive with respect to methods of presenting data, from the coloured maps of Hull-House to bar charts, tables, graphs, statistical analyses, photographs, narrative accounts and extended quotation from research participants. The aim and effect of many of these methodological strategies was to 'give voice' to the researched, to follow the advice of Addams and others that the most truthful research requires the

opinions and standpoint of researchers to be set aside in the interests of allowing the experiences of the researched to occupy centre stage.

A mix of qualitative and quantitative methods was common. Mary Higgs, for example, a British vicar's wife from Oldham, who had started a small settlement in her own home, learnt about vagrancy both through the study of statistics and first-hand by dressing as a tramp and spending days and nights in the appalling conditions of the casual wards for homeless women attached to workhouses. She called such exploration, 'the patient investigation of local need' and 'the very method of science' (Higgs and Hayward, 1910: 186; Higgs, 1906: vii). William Beveridge admired Higgs's *Glimpses into the Abyss*, which was published in 1906, anticipating by 27 years George Orwell's much more famous *Down and Out in Paris and London*. Beveridge observed that Mary Higgs's revelations could 'hardly fail to hasten the reform of the present treatment of vagrancy' (Beveridge, 1906: 581). She continued her investigations for years, becoming an acknowledged authority on the problem, giving evidence at government inquiries, producing practical manuals and founding the National Association for Women's Lodging-Homes in 1909.

Many settlement sociologists included detailed accounts and thoughtful reflections on their methods. Eleanor Rathbone's research on the living conditions of casual labourers in the dock area of Liverpool, for example, involved 41 households, which completed 429 weeks of detailed budget and menu diaries, all of which added up to 629 visits from the investigative team. Rathbone's instructions to her researchers included the following:

Try to make the budget-keeper feel that the enquiry is being undertaken in the interests of the whole body of dock-labourers, and that she is doing a service to the community by taking part in it; do and say everything you can to prevent her from thinking that the enquiry is an impertinent violation of family privacy; abstain from any criticism or censure on the facts revealed to you by the book [the budget and diet record], and consider yourself bound in honour not to make any use of the facts which would injure the family.

(Rathbone, 1909: viii)

Considering the 93 homes that refused to contribute data, Rathbone wondered 'rather at the compliance of the few than at the refusal of the many', especially bearing in mind the circumstances – widespread illiteracy, no evening lighting, crowded homes, overburdened women. 'It would be interesting,' she commented acerbically, 'if an investigator could be found brave enough, to attempt to carry out the same inquiry in a middle-class suburb of Liverpool' (Rathbone, 1909: viii-ix).

Rathbone was a member of the Women's Industrial Council, a body set up in 1894 to improve the conditions of working women through research and policy initiatives. The Women's Industrial Council and the women's settlements had overlapping membership circles, which sponsored many social investigations. A leading researcher was the Council's founder Clementina Black, who combined fastidious analysis of statistics with observation and interviews in investigating the conditions of women's labour. Her research into 'match-box making at home', for example, deployed observations of her encounters with working women and rigorous analysis of statistical information to give a detailed picture of each stage of the labour process (Black, 1892). The economist Clara Collet, who helped to run the Women's University Settlement in London, was another author of significant social research. Collet was the first researcher

in the field of women's employment to base her arguments on both statistical evidence and systematic interviewing (McDonald, 2004).

Women settlement sociologists were generally wary of terms such as 'social experiment' and 'laboratory', as used by male settlement sociologists and academics, suspecting their ideological taint (Owens, 2014). They conceived their project as neither charity nor experimental science, but as the collective production of social knowledge. Yet there was also, within settlement sociology, a strong argument for 'experimental sociology', the title of a book by Frances Kellor, a lawyer who lived in Hull-House, and who specialized in researching immigrants' living conditions and promoting their assimilation into American culture (Kellor, 1901). In a key paper published in 1914, she took a cynical view of party politics as being more interested in itself than in the making of an economically efficient, fair and rational public policy. Observing that politicians were mostly in office for 'too short a time to become experts in any of the fields requiring their attention', she argued that they should have their own 'laboratories for ascertaining facts'. A party laboratory manned by experts would act as a clearing-house for information, be free from political bias, and would form a base for 'intelligent and courageous government action'. An example would be mothers' pensions: if the laboratory showed, on the basis of looking at all the research available, that these would be unworkable, they would not be recommended (Kellor, 1914: 880–5).

Kellor's approach, which modelled the social on the natural sciences, was echoed by the political economist and criminologist Katharine Bement Davis, who headed the College Settlement in Philadelphia. Davis's main reputation followed from her appointment as the head of a reformatory for women in New York State, Bedford Hills, between 1901 and 1914. Her observations and research in the field of female criminality introduced new ideas about social reintegration instead of punishment, proposing a systematic and scientific approach to sentencing based on the best evidence available (Davis, 1913). A sign of her unusual initiative and participatory approach to the women in her care was that, when her ideas about the physical layout and buildings of Bedford Hills were frustrated by lack of funding, she learnt how to mix concrete and worked with the prisoners on making paths, streets and gardens (Deegan, 2003: 22–3). Kellor raised Rockefeller funds to set up a Laboratory for Social Hygiene adjacent to the prison where she and other women investigators carried out research with female prisoners that challenged the prevailing highly sexist physiological theories about female crime.

Settlements and universities

Connections and disconnections between academic institutions, gender and the work of settlements varied between countries. Settlement research took place at a time before the hardening of our current distinctions between social work, policy research and sociology. The first academic sociology department in the USA was formed in 1892 at the University of Chicago, and the first in Britain was formed in 1904 at the LSE. 'A nineteenth century contemporary looking at "sociology" would have as easily turned to the settlement as to the university' (Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley, 2002: 6).

In Britain, a number of the main women's settlements had a major role in the professionalization of social work. Their early leaders had the ambition of turning philanthropy into a paid profession; this goal dominated settlement activities (see Beauman, 1996), just as reform-oriented social investigation dominated those of many American women's settlements. The Women's University Settlement in London had its origins in a university-based Ladies Discussion Society, whose aim was to spread interest in the development of social work. The Executive Council of the Settlement was made

up of representatives from the elite Oxbridge women's colleges; its co-founder (with Henrietta Barnett) was the housing reformer Octavia Hill, whose method of collecting rents through 'friendly visiting' helped to shape modern social work (Forsythe and Jordan, 2002). Within a short time of opening, both the Women's University Settlement and the Lady Margaret Hall Settlement had set up one-year professional training courses jointly with the Charity Organization Society's School of Sociology, which in 1912 was absorbed into the LSE.

The combination of a focus on social work and a close university connection did not, apparently, favour the development of research. A similar mechanism was at work in some of the American settlements. Denison House in Boston, founded in 1892, was one of the women's settlements established by the College Settlement Association, which maintained tight control over the activities (and funding) of its settlements. The records of Denison House show that, although social reform and research were high on the agenda at the start, residents learnt to conceal and finally to curb these activities, afraid that they would lose university support. This particularly applied to their work in labour reform and with local women trade union organizers, about which they were less than honest in settlement reports (Capitanio, 2010).

Hull-House itself never had any formal links to universities, although some of its residents did hold university posts. Florence Kelley's analysis of class relations led her to challenge quite unequivocally the class-based position of universities, which she saw as dedicated to the training of the ruling class, with the result that their sociological research and teaching were always likely to be biased by 'class interest'. In her view, university professors tended to act 'as mere apologists for the social system, the law of whose development few of them attempt to investigate'; thus what should have been 'unprejudiced investigation' was often only 'dogmatic apology' for the status quo (Kelley, 1887: 99, 101). Jane Addams was similarly disparaging about the function of universities, which she described as devoted to making 'a little inner circle of illuminated space beyond which there stretched a region of darkness' (Addams, 1930: 404–5). Her impassioned statement of the function of a social settlement in 1899 included the following:

[L]et the settlement people recognize the value of their own calling, and see to it that the university does not swallow the settlement, and turn it in to one more laboratory: another place in which to analyze and depict, to observe and record. A settlement which performs but this function is merely an imitative and unendowed university.

(Addams, 1899: 47)

True to these sentiments, Addams herself turned down the offer of a university position (Wilkinson, 2014: 93), and laboured consistently to retain the institutional independence of Hull-House. Settlement sociologists were, however, not afraid of private funding, and there are many moments in this history where important initiatives were taken up by wealthy charities and independent research-funding individuals and organizations. With funds provided by the Russell Sage Foundation, Jane Addams and other settlement leaders in Chicago set up an independent organization called the Chicago Institute of Social Science in 1906. The Foundation gave four substantial grants in that year to different organizations to resource departments of social investigation. Renamed the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy in 1908, the Chicago Institute provided a public sociology base, 'largely unfettered by university politics and agendas' for the research activities of Hull-House women sociologists (Maclean and Williams, 2012: 237). Its social investigation programme was run by Julia Lathrop and then by

Edith Abbott, who, after a year spent living in a London settlement and studying with Beatrice and Sidney Webb at the LSE, taught a Methods of Social Investigation course closely modelled on theirs.

As the American university moved, in the early decades of the twentieth century, from its status as 'an outwardly directed, service-centered' institution to 'an inwardly directed, discipline-centered' one, so its association with settlement sociology was severed (Harkavy and Puckett, 1994: 303). This distancing was furthered by the repudiation of the social reform function of knowledge. The story of how the women settlement sociologists in Chicago, particularly, were sidelined by the university, whose male sociologists prioritized theory over empirical research, and who preferred to see women sociologists corralled in a Department of Household Administration, is a particularly gruelling lesson in the politics of academic and institutional sexism (see Deegan, 1990; Maclean and Williams, 2012).

Conclusion: Research for all and public sociology

This paper has provided some pointers to a neglected area of activity that is historically significant in the effort to create a participatory model of research. It is important to note that there are almost no direct records from the communities within which, and with which, settlement sociologists worked, as to the nature of their involvement. Such accounts as do exist focus more on social experiences and services than on the process of research participation (see, for example, Polacheck, 1991). It is undoubtedly the case that settlement sociologists sometimes worked for, rather than with, their neighbours, but the primary drive was, nonetheless, that of empowering community residents to address the social problems that were of concern to them.

Catherine Marsh (1985) has argued that ideas about the relationship between researchers and the researched have historically evolved in three stages: the first view, dominant in the nineteenth century, was that researchers should only interview as proxy informants other professionals; the second, which prevailed until the 1940s, saw the researched as 'respondents', or 'subjects'; third, we have the modern idea of the researched as citizens. This historicization of social research ideology is contradicted by the evidence described above, which shows a strong and creative tradition of social science research mixing research, welfare and policy reform that was clearly centred on the experiences of the researched as citizens. What is today called 'community-based participatory research' was developed originally in many social settlements, and it represents not just a different *method* but a different *epistemological orientation* to research (Jacobson and Rugeley, 2007).

Recent calls for a public sociology capable of engaging 'multiple publics in multiple ways' return us to the fundamental orientation of much settlement sociology (Burawoy, 2005a: 4). Its outputs demonstrate just how embeddedness in actual communities allows for multifaceted and complex understandings of social issues and problems (Hale, 2008). At the same time, the praxis of settlement sociology alerts us to queries around the definition of 'public' in the concept of 'public sociology'. Defined as 'taking sociology to publics beyond the university' (Burawoy, 2005b: 71), public sociology, seen as the transmission of university-generated knowledge, ignores that very different account of knowledge-production that sites it as a cooperative activity. 'Publics' are not simply drawn in to learn and discuss what academics know; they are partners in producing that knowledge. With respect to its relevance today, all cooperative activities involving sociologists and their publics are likely to be interrupted by what has been called, 'the tyranny of market privatization and governmental

despotism' that governs many academic settings (Treviño 2012: 9). Furthermore, the culture of academia tends to militate against an orientation to public sociology, with its focus on publication in high-ranked academic journals; the prioritization of conceptual and theoretical over data-based perspectives; the importance of intra-professional communication; and the career enhancement of academics (Sprague and Laube, 2009).

In their paper 'Lessons from Hull House for the contemporary urban university', Harkavy and Puckett outline a case for rediscovering the location of academic research and teaching in neighbourhood communities. This would involve the rehabilitation of applied social science as a proper academic endeavour, and the remaking of the link between scholarly research and the promotion of public welfare. Neither of these are likely to be easy. As Harkavy and Puckett observe:

Historically, universities have missed an extraordinary opportunity to work with their communities and to engage in better research, teaching, and service. The separation of universities from society, their aloofness from real-world problems, has deprived universities of contact with a necessary source of genuine creativity and academic vitality.

(Harkavy and Puckett, 1994: 300)

The lessons of gender in all this are both obvious and subtle. Most patently, the evidence relating to the intellectual and practical work of women in the settlement movement, and its value to public policy, has been readily available for a long time, but for many years was not 'seen' by historians of the social sciences. As Anne Furor Scott has written with respect to the history of voluntary associations (of which settlements are an example), 'Historians ... did not expect to find women doing the things they had defined as significant'; thus, evidence to the contrary passed unnoticed (Scott, 1984: 19). It begins to be noticed only when academics with an interest in gender dig into the past and find its buried treasures (see, for example, Deegan 1990; Deegan, 1991a; Dimand *et al.*, 2000; Lengermann and Niebrugge, 1998).

This is not, however, simply a case of 'add women and stir' (Westhoff, 2009: 24). The practices of women settlement sociologists were designed not only to draw to everyone's attention the lived experiences of the researched, but to challenge the very conceptualization of knowledge and its relationship to structures such as the university, democracy, culture and the nation state. The radicalism of this vision perhaps helps to account for its erasure from historical and disciplinary memory.

Notes on the contributor

Ann Oakley is Professor of Sociology and Social Policy at UCL Institute of Education, University College London. She is founding director of both the Social Science Research Unit and the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI-Centre) there, and has worked in academic research for more than 50 years. Her publications span the fields of gender studies, health, methodology, public policy, biography/autobiography and fiction. In 2011 the British Sociological Association gave her one of its first Lifetime Achievement Awards for her contribution to sociology.

References

- Addams, J. (1892a) 'The subjective necessity for social settlements'. In Addams, J., Woods, R.A., Giddings, F.H., Bosanquet, B. and Huntington, J.O.S. (eds) *Philanthropy and Social Progress: Seven essays*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Company, 1–26.

- Addams, J. (1892b) 'The objective value of a social settlement'. In Addams, J., Woods, R.A., Giddings, F.H., Bosanquet, B. and Huntington, J.O.S. (eds) *Philanthropy and Social Progress: Seven essays*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Company, 27–56.
- Addams, J. (1899) 'A function of the social settlement'. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 13 (3), 33–55.
- Addams, J. (1930) *Second Twenty Years at Hull-House, September 1909 to September 1929, with a Record of a Growing World Consciousness*. New York: Macmillan.
- Addams, J. (1935) *My Friend, Julia Lathrop*. New York: Macmillan.
- Barnett, H. and Barnett, S.A. (1909) *Towards Social Reform*. London: T. Fisher Unwin.
- Beauman, K.B. (1996) *Women and the Settlement Movement*. London: Radcliffe Press.
- Bernard, L.L. and Bernard, J.S. (1943) *Origins of American Sociology: The social science movement in the United States*. New York: T.Y. Crowell Co.
- Beveridge, W.H. (1906) 'Review of Mary Higgs, *Glimpses into the Abyss*'. *The Economic Journal*, 16, 581–3.
- Black, C. (1892) 'Match-box making at home'. *English Illustrated Magazine*, May, 625–9.
- Booth, C. (1902) *Life and Labour of the People of London*. London: Macmillan & Co.
- Burawoy, M. (2005a) '2004 Presidential Address: For public sociology'. [*American Sociological Review*, 70 \(1\), 4–28](#).
- Burawoy, M. (2005b) 'The return of the repressed: Recovering the public face of U.S. sociology, one hundred years on'. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 600, 68–85.
- Capitanio, H.M. (2010) 'Denison House: Women's use of space in the Boston settlement'. Unpublished MA thesis, University of Massachusetts, Boston.
- Costin, L.B. (1983) *Two Sisters for Social Justice: A biography of Grace and Edith Abbott*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Davis, A.F. (1973) *American Heroine: The life and legend of Jane Addams*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Davis, K.B. (1913) 'A plan of rational treatment for women offenders'. *Journal of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 4 (3), 402–8.
- Deegan, M.J. (1990) *Jane Addams and the Men of the Chicago School, 1892–1918*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.
- Deegan, M.J. (ed.) (1991a) *Women in Sociology: A bio-bibliographical sourcebook*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Deegan, M.J. (1991b) 'Sophonisba Breckinridge'. In Deegan, M.J. (ed.) *Women in Sociology: A bio-bibliographical sourcebook*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 80–9.
- Deegan, M.J. (1997) 'Hull-House maps and papers: The birth of Chicago sociology'. In Plummer, K. (ed.) *The Chicago School: Critical assessments, vol. II: Theory, history and foundations*. London: Routledge, 5–19.
- Deegan, M.J. (2003) 'Katharine Bement Davis (1860–1935): Her theory and praxis of feminist pragmatism in criminology'. *Women & Criminal Justice*, 14 (2/3), 15–40.
- Deegan, M.J. (2013) 'Jane Addams, the Hull-House School of Sociology, and Social Justice, 1892 to 1935'. *Humanity & Society*, 37 (3), 248–58.
- Dimand, R., Dimand, M. and Forget, E. (eds) (2000) *A Biographical Dictionary of Women Economists*. Northampton, MS: Edward Elgar.
- Forsythe, B. and Jordan, B. (2002) 'The Victorian ethical foundations of social work in England – Continuity and contradiction'. *British Journal of Social Work*, 32 (7), 847–62.
- Goldmark, J. (1953) *Impatient Crusader: Florence Kelley's life story*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Hale, C.R. (ed.) (2008) *Engaging Contradictions: Theory, politics and methods of activist scholarship*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hamilton, A. (1943) *Exploring the Dangerous Trades: The autobiography of Alice Hamilton, M.D.* Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company.
- Harkavy, I. and Puckett, J.L. (1994) 'Lessons from Hull House for the contemporary urban university'. *Social Service Review*, 68 (3), 299–321.
- Higgs, M. (1906) *Glimpses into the Abyss*. London: King.
- Higgs, M. and Hayward, E.E. (1910) *Where Shall She Live? The homelessness of the woman worker*. London: P.S. King & Son.
- Hubbard, L. (1894) 'Statistics of women's work'. In Burdett-Coutts, A.G. (ed.) *Woman's Mission: A series of Congress papers on the philanthropic work of women*. London: Sampson Low, 361–6.

- Imai, K. (2012) 'The women's movement and the settlement movement in early twentieth-century Japan: The impact of Hull House and Jane Addams on Hiratsuka Raichō'. *Kwansei Gakuin University Humanities Review*, 17, 85–109.
- Jacobson, M. and Rugeley, C. (2007) 'Community-based participatory research: Group work for social justice and community change'. *Social Work with Groups*, 30 (4), 21–39.
- James, C. (2001) 'Reforming reform: Toronto's settlement house movement, 1900–20'. *The Canadian Historical Review*, 82 (1), 55–90.
- Johnson, C. (1995) *Strength in Community (1970–1995): An introduction to the history and impact of the international settlement movement*. New York: International Federation of Settlements & Neighbourhood Centres.
- Kelley, F. (1887) 'The need of theoretical preparation for philanthropic work'. Reprinted in Sklar, K.K. (ed.) (1986) *The Autobiography of Florence Kelley: Notes of sixty years*. Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 91–104.
- Kellor, F. (1901) *Experimental Sociology, Descriptive and Analytical: Delinquents*. New York: Macmillan.
- Kellor, F. (1914) 'A new spirit in party organization'. *The North American Review*, 199 (703), 879–92.
- Koenigter, S. and Schroeder, W. (2013) 'Variations of social pedagogy – Explorations of the transnational settlement movement'. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 21 (42). Online. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1015369> (accessed 21 November 2015).
- Koven, S. (2004) *Slumming: Sexual and social politics in Victorian London*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Land, H. (1980) 'The family wage'. *Feminist Review*, 6 (1), 55–77.
- Lengermann, P.M. and Niebrugge, G. (1998) *The Women Founders: Sociology and social theory 1830–1930*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.
- Lengermann, P.M. and Niebrugge-Brantley, G. (2002) 'Back to the future: Settlement sociology, 1885–1930'. *The American Sociologist*, 33 (3), 5–20.
- Lengermann, P.M. and Niebrugge-Brantley, G. (2007) 'Thrice told: Narratives of sociology's relation to social work'. In Calhoun, C. (ed.) *Sociology in America*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 63–114.
- McDonald, D. (2004) *Clara Collet, 1860–1948: An educated working woman*. London: Routledge.
- McDowell, M.E. (1907) 'The need for a national investigation into women's work'. *Charities and the Commons*, 17, 634–6.
- MacLean, V.M. and Williams, J.E. (2012) "'Ghosts of sociologies past": Settlement sociology in the progressive era at the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy'. *The American Sociologist*, 43 (3), 235–63.
- Marsh, C. (1985) 'Informants, respondents and citizens'. In Bulmer, M. (ed.) *Essays on the History of British Sociological Research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 206–27.
- Mayhew, H. (1851–62) *London Labour and the London Poor*. 4 vols, vol. 1 published 1851, London: George Woodall and Son, vols 2–4 published 1861–2, London: Griffin, Bohn and Company.
- Mearns, A. (1883) *Bitter Cry of Outcast London*. London: James Clarke & Co.
- Owens, B.R. (2014) "'Laboratory talk" in US Sociology, 1890–1930: The performance of scientific legitimacy'. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 50 (3), 302–20.
- Pedersen, S. (2004) *Eleanor Rathbone and the Politics of Conscience*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Plastas, M. (2008) 'A different burden: Race and the social thought of Emily Greene Balch'. *Peace & Change*, 33 (4), 469–506.
- Polacheck, H.S. (1991) *I Came a Stranger: The story of a Hull-House girl*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Prochaska, F.K. (1980) *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Rathbone, E. (1909) *How the Casual Labourer Lives. Report of the Liverpool Joint Research Committee on the Domestic Condition and Expenditure of the Families of Certain Liverpool Labourers*. Liverpool: The Northern Publishing Co.
- Rathbone, E. (1924) *The Disinherited Family: A plea for the endowment of the family*. London: E. Arnold & Co.
- Residents of Hull-House (1895) *Hull-House Maps & Papers: A presentation of nationalities and wages in a congested district of Chicago, together with comments and essays on problems growing out of the social conditions*. Reprinted with Introduction by Schultz, R.L. (2007) Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

- Ross, E. (ed.) (2007) *Slum Travelers: Ladies and London poverty, 1860–1920*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Scott, A.F. (1984) 'On seeing and not seeing: A case of historical invisibility'. *The Journal of American History*, 71 (1), 7–21.
- Shaw, I. (2009) 'Rereading *The Jack-Roller*: Hidden histories in sociology and social work'. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 15 (7), 1,241–64.
- Shields, P.M. (2011) 'Jane Addams' theory of democracy and social ethics: Incorporating a feminist perspective'. In D'Agostiono, M. and Levine, H. (eds) *Women in Public Administration: Theory and practice*. Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlet, 15–34.
- Sklar, K.K. (1985) 'Hull House in the 1890s: A community of women reformers'. *Signs*, 10 (4), 658–77.
- Sklar, K.K. (1986) 'Introduction'. In Sklar, K.K. (ed.) *The Autobiography of Florence Kelley: Notes of sixty years*. Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 5–19.
- Soydan, H. (1993) *Det Sociala Arbetets Idéhistoria*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Sprague, J. and Laube, H. (2009) 'Institutional barriers to doing public sociology: Experiences of feminists in the academy'. *The American Sociologist*, 40 (4), 249–71.
- Treviño, A.J. (2012) 'Presidential address: The challenge of service sociology'. *Social Problems*, 59 (1), 2–20.
- Wade, L.C. (1967) 'The heritage from Chicago's early settlement houses'. *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 60 (4), 411–41.
- Westhoff, L.M. (2009) 'Gender and the exclusionary politics of social knowledge: Men and women in the Civic Federation of Chicago'. *Women's History Review*, 18 (1), 23–44.
- Wilkinson, I. (2014) 'On the task of making social inquiry aligned to caregiving: An invitation to debate'. *Anthropology & Medicine*, 21 (1), 87–99.
- Woods, R.A. and Kennedy, A.J. (1911) *Handbook of Settlements*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.