

The Human Drama Behind the Study of People as Potato Bugs

The Curious Marriage of Robert E. Park and Clara Cahill Park

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ABSTRACT Robert E. Park played a central part in defining sociology as a natural science. He imagined sociologists as unbiased and unaffected by the human behavior they studied. He particularly criticized the work of female sociologists who applied their sociological knowledge with the help of hundreds of thousands of clubwomen. He mocked these clubwomen and their ‘do-goodism’. Clara Cahill Park, his wife, was one of these clubwomen who engaged in all the work he mocked and she was allied with female sociologists. This resulted in a curious situation where Park supported his wife and engaged in social reform while simultaneously he criticized clubwomen and the work of applied sociologists.

KEYWORDS applied sociology, Chicago school of race relations, Chicago school of sociology, Clara Cahill Park, marriage, Robert E. Park

Robert E. Park played a central part in defining sociology as a natural science. He imagined sociologists as unbiased and unaffected by the human behavior they studied: ‘their role was to be “the calm, detached scientist who investigates race relations with the same objectivity and detachment with which the zoologist dissects the potato bug”¹ (Ernest W. Burgess, cited by Matthews, 1977: 116). This metaphor attacked the earlier intention of many founders of sociology who envisioned sociology as a moral science. These founders studied society to learn how to alleviate poverty, create social justice and enhance human freedom (Becker, 1971; Deegan, 1988; Feagin and Vera, 2001).

Park’s assault on sociology as a moral science included his aversion to what he called ‘do-goodism’. He particularly criticized the work of female sociologists who applied their sociological knowledge with the help of hundreds of thousands of clubwomen. These women changed American society and instituted a plethora

of laws and government programs concerning the rights of workers, immigrants, the disabled, children and mothers. These sociologists were fundamental to the creation of the welfare state in the United States (Deegan, 1987, 1991, 1995, 1997; Goodwin, 1997; Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley, 1998; Skocpol, 1992). An example of Park's view of the relation between women, politics and sociology is found in an account recorded by a former student, Theodore K. Noss. Here Noss notes a particularly extreme exchange between Park and a female student who engaged in social reform and was apparently a Quaker – as were many female sociologists: for example, Edith Abbott, Jane Addams, Emily Greene Balch and Florence Kelley (Deegan, 1987, 1991). After castigating Quakers' 'self-righteous meddling in the abolition movement', Park allegedly claimed 'that the greatest damage done to the city of Chicago was not the product of corrupt politicians or criminals but of women reformers' (Noss, cited by Rauschenbush, 1979: 97).

I always found this statement by Park to be absurd, a serious misperception of reality and the accomplishments of sociology as an applied science (e.g. Deegan, 1985). This view is particularly ridiculous for the city of Chicago, where he was employed – a city world-famous for its venal politicians; the rapacious gangster Al Capone; and the applied sociologist and Nobel Laureate Jane Addams. Imagine my recent astonishment when I discovered that his wife, Clara Cahill Park, was a social reformer. She was not only what Park referred to as a meddling woman, she was also a national leader in 'social reconstruction' (Campbell, 1992; Mead, 1999), a noted author on social problems and a significant figure in the creation of federal programs to financially support widows and their children. In this paper I analyze this human drama: a husband who disapproves of his wife's lifework and publicly mocks the intent to help people have better lives, and a wife who eloquently and successfully argues for such compassion, human skills and social knowledge. This is the 'human interest story' (Hughes, 1940) behind the public presentation (Goffman, 1959) of sociology as a natural science based on the study of human behavior as exemplified in the analysis of the lowly and mindless potato bug.

In order to keep the performers' names clear, I refer hereafter to Clara Cahill Park as 'C.C. Park' and to Robert E. Park as 'R.E. Park'. I begin by introducing the biography and work of C.C. Park. I then connect her work to the wider context of women's work in sociology. Next I present R.E. Park's thundering voice raised against sociology as a moral science and the work of social reformers. R.E. Park's patriarchal paradox is that he claimed to be less biased than reformers, while he loved a woman dedicated to social reform and he, too, engaged in it. Like the actors in most human dramas, R.E. Park and C.C. Park lived in a world filled with contradictions and ambivalence. I demonstrate here that, unlike the potato bug, humans behave in ways that call for tools to explain intellectual and emotional complexity, moral choices and self-reflection (Addams, 1910, 1912; Mead, 1934).

C.C. Park

C.C. Park was a remarkable, highly educated, public figure as well as a wife and the mother of four children. This background is typical for a number of outstanding women married to male faculty at the University of Chicago. These women and their husbands created a vibrant 'world' filled with civic responsibilities, the creation of knowledge and intimate relationships between families and friends (Deegan, 1999). R.E. Park was generally outside this world while his wife was within it (for an exception, see Ames, 1944). Chicago women also established a 'female world of love and ritual' supporting women's involvement in strong interpersonal relations between women and the enactment of female values to change the patriarchal state (Deegan, 1996). C.C. Park was part of this world as well (e.g. C.C. Park, 1912a, 1912b, 1913a, 1913b).

C.C. Park was also part of a national social movement of middle-class women who joined together to change the nation state. Their work, called 'maternalism' by Theda Skocpol (1992), drew on women's traditional interests in marriage, the home and children to demand social changes to support female-headed households and protect children from the abuses of capitalist society. Joanne Goodwin differentiates this work from that of 'social justice maternalists', who were national figures, intellectuals and activists who successfully argued and planned for a new welfare state, including innovative legislation and agencies to support disenfranchised Americans. 'Social justice maternalists' were often based in Chicago and part of the female world of love and ritual. C.C. Park shared their intellectually powerful arguments.

The Early Biography of C.C. Park

Clara Cahill (referred to hereafter as 'C.C.')

was born around 1869, the daughter of Edward Cahill, an eminent attorney and a member of Michigan's Supreme Court, and Lucy Crawford Cahill. Her father had established and led a troop of African American soldiers, the First Michigan Colored Infantry, during the Civil War, and his commitment to ending slavery provided an active political background for his daughter ('Cahill, Edward', 1943; Nichols, 1923). C.C. studied in the United States at the Cincinnati Art Academy and the Chicago Art Institute, and in Europe in Berlin and Strasburg. C.C. became a noted suffrage supporter, published short stories and articles in the popular press and had a syndicated newspaper column. She was a Unitarian and supported the Progressive Party ('Park, Clara Cahill', 1914).

The Courtship and Marriage of R.E. Park and C.C. Park

R.E. Park and C.C. met in 1892 while he was a reporter in Detroit, Michigan, and she was a young artist in Lansing, Michigan. Even at this time, R.E. Park was deriding women in social reform through his newspaper writing. In a letter to

C.C. he wrote, 'I did not dare to tell all that I mean about them', so both of them knew he had little respect for women doing this work. The ever-hopeful and oblivious young girlfriend lent him a book on nihilism, and the couple fell more in love with each other.

In June 1894 they married. For the first four years R.E. Park was a reporter first in Detroit and then in Chicago, followed by New York from 1894 until 1898 (Rauschenbush, 1979: 26–7). While he wrote articles, C.C. often illustrated them with pen and ink sketches (see C.C. Park, 1894a, 1894b; see also C.C. Park, 1979). In the fall of 1898 R.E. Park went to Harvard University and began a seven-year odyssey in his higher education. By the fall of 1899 he moved to Berlin with his wife and their three small children. When C.C. was pregnant again, her parents traveled to Europe and took the two oldest children with them back to the United States. In all these accounts there is no information on how the family obtained their funds, but Rauschenbush (1979: 28) suggests that R.E. Park's father helped them.

In 1903 R.E. Park worked as an assistant in philosophy at Harvard University, a low-paying job for the 39-year-old father of four, and in 1904 he started to work for the Congo Reform Association, where he wrote impassioned dispatches about the corruption of King Leopold II of Belgium (see his reprinted articles in Lyman, 1992). Although the peripatetic Park soon quit this job, he followed it with more reform work. Between 1905 and 1913 he was the secretary of Booker T. Washington of the Tuskegee Institute. Here Park aided Washington's effort to provide economic independence and vocational education for African Americans in the South. During these years he lived for significant periods of time in Alabama while his cash-strapped wife and children lived in Massachusetts.

Winifred Rauschenbush, R.E. Park's longtime, faithful, female assistant (and ghostwriter of at least one of his books) is the only scholar of his who seriously considers his relationship to C.C. Park. Rauschenbush (1979: 22–28, *in passim*) perceptively notes that the young couple's courtship seemed ill-fated from the very start because of their divergent interests. Rauschenbush also quotes from one of their daughters, Margaret Park Redfield, who mildly noted that even by 1910 – after Park had spent six winters working in Alabama at the Tuskegee Institute while his family lived in a Boston suburb in Massachusetts –

Clara Park was never wholly reconciled to having her husband away from home so much. Nevertheless, she managed. The children were getting older and more helpful. She developed her own interests and as she had an elderly Irishwoman . . . to help in the kitchen, she was not entirely housebound.

(Margaret Park Redfield, cited by Rauschenbush, 1979: 58)

R.E. Park explained to his father-in-law in 1910 how the family's parsimonious budget was salutary for his wife:

If we had had five hundred dollars more a year Clara would never have written the articles she did. She would never have become one of the distinguished women of America, she would have been less in touch than she is now with the great mass of mankind who have less than we do, she would have been less in touch with real life, more disposed to be peevish, discontented, [and] dissatisfied.

(R.E. Park, cited by Rauschenbush, 1979: 60)

Unsurprisingly, C.C. Park did not view this financial strain as an opportunity for personal growth, but as an onerous burden for the mother of four who labored alone to raise her family without enough funds, emotional support or shared parenting. Her parents and her daughter Margaret Park Redfield attested to the terrible nervous strain that C.C. experienced as a result of continuously running out of money to pay the household bills. R.E. Park, according to his daughter Margaret Park Redfield, ‘admired and encouraged his wife’ (cited by Rauschenbush, 1979: 61), but the evidence against his support – whether it is emotional, financial or intellectual – is strong. Thus C.C. wrote to her husband that ‘I have been imposed on, not intentionally, but carelessly and veritably’ (C.C. Park, cited by Rauschenbush, 1979: 62). R.E. Park was stingy toward his family and cavalier, to say the least, toward his responsibilities as a husband and father.

Extensive research on C.C.’s correspondence, newspaper articles and female network is an important task that is beyond the scope of this paper. I will note, however, a small correspondence between her and Mary Heaton Vorse, a popular writer on social problems and women’s issues (see Vorse, 1969 [c.1914], 1942, 1985). It indicates they had a professional and personal relationship. For example, on 15 October 1907, Vorse thanks C.C. for her support of a story that Vorse had written. Vorse also mentions that both C.C. and R.E. had suggested another possible topic, indicating that R.E. was consulted occasionally by the women.² Analysis of her other letters and writings would reveal more about C.C., her friends, her ideas and her marriage.

In March 1911 R.E. Park inherited money from his father’s estate, which then allowed the family to live more comfortably (Rauschenbush, 1979: 62). R.E., nonetheless, kept a tight control over the money. Thus in August 1911 C.C. was still limited in her budget and wrote him: ‘I do not like to go on living in debt, in parsimony, and in unceasing care’ (C.C. Park correspondence to R.E. Park, cited by Rauschenbush, 1979: 62).

In the summer quarter of 1913 R.E. Park moved to Chicago, where he taught summer school as a lecturer and earned \$500.00 a year. He lived alone in the city until his family slowly joined him and finally was united in 1916. He lived on the margins of the university until W.I. Thomas, his mentor, was fired abruptly in the spring of 1918 as a result of an alleged sexual misconduct (Deegan, 1988: 178–86). R.E. Park assumed the coursework of Thomas in 1918 and his career in sociology dramatically improved from this point onward. During the 1920s and

until his retirement in 1934, as noted earlier, R.E. Park denigrated the life interests of his wife in the classroom, where he lectured about the scientific detachment of sociologists and erased the legacy and views of early applied sociologists who shared his wife's perspective. He continued to travel extensively during his tenure at Chicago and to systematically absent himself from his home and family (see R.E. Park, 1923, 1944).

C.C. Park and Widows' Pensions

C.C. Park's most important community work supported the state establishment of 'widows' pensions'. This interest emerged from her own economic struggles with her wandering husband (R.E. Park, 1923, 1944) and her sympathy for mothers whose husbands' deaths leave their families with insurmountable financial problems. Although C.C. became the subject of a nationally prominent story written by Ray Stannard Baker (1913), then a famous journalist, the absence or status of her husband was never mentioned in that or in any other article on her (e.g. Hard, 1913). Baker's praiseworthy biography on her lifework was published in the popular *American Magazine* in their section on 'Interesting People', a column that resembles today's *People* magazine. Baker recounts an article C.C. wrote to help raise funds for a new home for a recently bereaved family who faced separation because of their lack of money. Her article, called 'Wanted – Rooseveltian Landlords!', called on the readers' loyalty to President Theodore Roosevelt and his support for public housing. After Roosevelt read this article he was moved to write to her:

I am so much interested in your article about the widow that I send you fifty dollars toward the cottage to be built for her. With all good wishes,
Faithfully Yours,
THEODORE ROOSEVELT

(cited in Baker, 1913: 35)

C.C. Park's national influence was evident by April 1911, when she presented a paper on 'The State and the Fatherless Child' (Baker, 1913: 35). Here she argued that the state should help widows keep their families together and out of state care. In 1911–12 she introduced a bill to establish a commission to study the needs of widowed mothers with dependent children. She later became a member and secretary of such a commission that recommended a bill to subsidize the children of 'good' or morally responsible widows until those children reached legal working age.

C.C. Park began a campaign for this work, including speeches, letters to editors of newspapers and magazines, and testimony at hearings. She even personally brought widows to public events to tell their own stories. The law enacted in Massachusetts set national precedents that were adopted throughout

most states (Skocpol, 1992). The state of Massachusetts also hired an investigator in 1912 and 1913 who helped the commission develop new legislation.

In these same years, C.C. Park became involved in a public debate over widows' need for state funds that was published in the *Survey*, the major publication for applied sociology.

In her first criticism of the conservative, anti-state positions of the social worker Mary Richmond (e.g. Richmond, 1913), C.C. Park (1912b) called for 'a war on poverty'. She ringingly states that '[t]his social revolution may be like the French revolution', and argues for a public recognition 'that the fact of bearing and rearing a child in itself creates a certain, if variable, state of dependence for a woman' (1912b: 365), an implicit description of her own reliance on a frequently absent husband.

In July 1913, Edward T. Devine (1913a, 1913b), an applied sociologist, strongly attacked widows' pensions as a form of relief or public charity. He proposed instead a national system of social insurance to help any American in financial distress. He specifically rejected a gendered or family-based argument. C.C. Park responded to his article with a powerful statement based on her expertise as a mother and as a protector of children. She directed her argument explicitly against male sociologists like Devine and R.E. Park:

Mothers, in spite of the sociologists, feel themselves, for once, on their own ground in this matter; and in possession of all their faculties, and will continue to think that as far as children are concerned, not they, but the learned doctors, are in the amateur class.

(C.C. Park, 1913c: 669)

She continued in this vein, citing Addams's book *A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil* (1912) as her authority. Moreover, she linked these arguments to children's rights for a free, public education. Again, she took on Devine (1913b) in 1914, and this reply was included in a national reader used by high school debating teams who argued the two sides of the issue (Bullock, 1915: 137–9). As Skocpol (1992) persuasively documents, C.C. Park's maternalist reasoning to have the state fund widows' pensions was accepted by the American people while Devine's approach to fund any American in financial need was defined as relief when it was applied to able-bodied men. In 1916 C.C. Park became the first vice-president of the Massachusetts branch of the Congress of Mothers and addressed their national convention on 'The Relation of the States to the Fatherless Child'.

Although R.E. Park never studied the mothers' pension movement, the female sociologist Ada J. Davis (1930) did. She noted that such intervention created social ideas and legislation,³ and this active human role in social change contradicted the theories of many male sociologists. Thus Herbert Spencer thought society follows its own evolutionary, natural process, Charles H. Cooley

argued that social change occurs only in a slow and tentative manner, and the Chicago sociologist William F. Ogburn stated that changes in technology precede alterations in 'adaptive' or social culture. Of course C.C. Park, Ada Davis and the women who initiated structural changes are not remembered in sociological annals today, while Spencer, Cooley and Ogburn are.

C.C. Park, Africans and the 'Harlem Renaissance'

Despite the wide differences between them, both Parks shared a politicized and professional interest in the lives of Africans and their descendants in the United States. As R.E. Park's only African American masters' student (Green, 1919), the late Loraine Richardson Green, told me in three telephone interviews (Deegan interviews of Green, 8 August 1991; 10 August 1992; 10 October 1992), R.E. was dedicated to social reform, as was her friend Jane Addams. When I told her that many of his former students asserted that R.E. Park opposed applied sociology, she replied that her view was based on experiences with him that spanned over two decades. To her, he was a committed social reformer on the topic of African Americans.

C.C. Park shared this devotion and thus she wrote an important letter to the editor of the *Boston Transcript* (1904). Here she poignantly appeals to other American women, especially clubwomen, to reach out to women in Africa who suffer from desperate poverty and the multitude of abuses created by male soldiers during war. 'Men, who are doubtless wiser than we in political matters', would know logically that the situation is hopeless. But women continue to hope for better conditions and help each other despite the odds against them. C.C. Park read the work of Mary H. Kingsley, an anthropologist/sociologist whose work was reviewed in Émile Durkheim's journal *L'Année Sociologique* (Anon., 1898-9; Kingsley, 1897; Mauss, 1897), and notes that African women have enormous influence in many societies, particularly as mothers. Women who are prisoners of war, however, are physically and sexually abused. C.C. Park calls for American women to build bridges to African women and to fight for African nationalism. These positions are completely compatible with those of many early female sociologists, but they are not ideas that R.E. Park developed or defended.

The Parks also shared an interest in the National Urban League and its house organ, *Opportunity*. Charles S. Johnson, who was mentored by R.E. Park at the University of Chicago (see Johnson, 1944), established editorial policies at *Opportunity* that influenced one of the most important literary movements in African American history, the 'Harlem renaissance'. This cultural movement emerged from the artwork, fiction, non-fiction and music surrounding a group of artists associated with New York's Harlem district during the mid-1920s to the mid-1930s (Bontemps, 1972). It is likely that the friendship between R.E. Park and Johnson led to the publication of two *Opportunity* covers in January and March 1929 that reproduced C.C. Park's paintings of women of color (see also

C.C. Park, 1928). This is one of the few examples of a shared interest between the couple; another example is found in C.C. Park's writing for the *American Journal of Sociology*.

C.C. Park, Feminism and the *American Journal of Sociology*

Although C.C. Park was not an acknowledged sociologist in the world in which her husband moved, she published a book review in the *American Journal of Sociology*, the preeminent journal sponsored by the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago. She reviewed the posthumous autobiography, *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman* (1935), by the feminist sociologist (C.C. Park, 1936; see also Deegan, 1997). C.C. Park found this an excellent memorial to Gilman, the first sociologist to extensively study the connection between women's oppression and their limited access to the marketplace (see Gilman, 1966 [c.1898]). This problem of economic dependence was one that C.C. Park intimately understood. Like Gilman, she thought this battle was won by 1935, although both women have been shown to be too optimistic about the changed economic status of women.

Both C.C. Park and Gilman were part of a wide network of women dedicated to the study and improvement of society between 1890 and 1920. This is the network that R.E. Park criticized.

Men's and Women's Work in Sociology, 1892–1920

Two central sociological institutions flourished in Chicago between 1892 and 1920: Hull-House, the famous social settlement founded and led by Jane Addams and the center of applied sociology; and the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago, the world-wide academic leader of the discipline and men's work in it. These two institutions were gendered, with women gravitating to the social settlement and men gravitating to the academy. This division corresponded to the popular Doctrine of the Separate Spheres (Deegan, 1988: 198–9). In sociology, this meant that white men's work was more abstract, rational, formal and academic (Deegan, 1978, 1981, 1988) while women's work was more applied, more passionate, more centered on values of the home and the roles of women, children and the family. Because women were assumed to have more emotional and cultural sensitivity than men, the women were deemed ideal professionals to improve society and make it more humane.

The Doctrine of the Separate Spheres also affected women in the community who wanted to have greater public participation, often using the knowledge gained by applied sociologists (e.g. Rynbrandt, 1999). Middle-class, married women, in particular, were expected to labor outside the home in unpaid,

volunteer work. This structure for women's work corresponded to 'clubwomen's work' or 'civic housekeeping', as Addams (1907) called it. This public work became the foundation for the maternal welfare state in the United States (Goodwin, 1997; Skocpol, 1992; Siegfried, 1998).

Because of the discipline's initial openness to women and the belief in a special 'sphere' for women's work in sociology, women flocked to the academy for training between 1892 and 1920. During this 'golden era of women in sociology' (Deegan, 1991, 1996, 1997), a fruitful, applied sociology emerged with a sophisticated theory of society: feminist pragmatism. This American theory unites liberal values and belief in a rational public with a cooperative, nurturing and liberating model of the self, the other and the community. Feminist pragmatism emphasizes education and democracy as significant mechanisms to organize and improve society (see Campbell, 1992; Deegan, 1988, 1991, 1995, 1996, 2002; Siegfried, 1998). It emerged in Chicago, where sociologists observed rapid urbanization, immigration, industrialization, migration and social change that took place before their eyes. The Great Migration of African Americans from the South to the North after World War I was part of this massive movement of people in search of more freedom and prosperity.⁴

The University of Chicago towered over the intellectual and professional landscape of sociology from 1892, when the department was founded, until 1934, when R.E. Park retired (Faris, 1967; Fine, 1995). It reputedly trained over half of all sociologists in the world by 1930. This large group of scholars fundamentally shaped the discipline through its faculty and their doctorally trained students who produced thousands of books and articles (Kurtz, 1984).

The names of R.E. Park and his colleague Ernest W. Burgess became synonymous with Chicago sociology after 1920. They are the perceived leaders of a powerful school that signaled the beginning of 'modern' sociology.⁵ This 'new' approach was notable in one respect: it loudly and defiantly separated itself from social reform and women's work in the profession. Identifying themselves as 'urban ecologists', R.E. Park and Burgess (1921) saw society as socially created and maintained through conflict similar to that found in the natural world of plants and animals. They viewed the city as both a human product and a territorial settlement. They studied populations such as immigrants, minorities and juveniles which their earlier colleagues had studied, too, but R.E. Park and Burgess's efforts to link sociological knowledge with application were truncated, at least in theory.

Because R.E. Park and Burgess were intrinsically social reformers, they wanted to engage in social reform while asserting that their work was 'unbiased'. As a result, they derogated their predecessors' work while initiating a new form of 'social policy' studies that were more politically conservative and acceptable to businessmen and administrators in the academy. This approach was much less powerful and effective in improving the everyday life of all citizens. The men gained more academic respectability but lost vitality and political effectiveness. In

many ways, C.C. Park and her female allies in sociology fundamentally changed the American state and politics while R.E. Park and his male colleagues did not.

For R.E. Park, Addams was a public person who was personally admirable but not a professional colleague and equal (Deegan, 1988: 158–9). The role of social amelioration in sociology, then, became a pivotal concept in understanding the work of Addams and other female sociologists in relation to the Chicago School of the 1920s and 1930s. In contrast to R.E. Park, C.C. Park viewed Addams and other women who applied sociology as mentors and role models. Thus C.C. Park wrote:

If we could have always with us the great people of the earth, like Miss Addams, Miss [Julia] Lathrop, [Juvenile Court] Judge [Julian] Mack, and others, there would be no such proverbs [accepting poverty as normal] as those the poor now murmur among themselves.

(1913c: 669)

R.E. Park and his colleagues ushered in the age that I call elsewhere the ‘dark era of patriarchal ascendancy’ (Deegan, 1991), in which the study of women was eclipsed. The critique of sexist ideas and practices in this school (summarized in Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley, 1998) has resulted in little internal analysis or reflexive critique. Some scholars curiously vehemently deny that this pattern ever existed. They stress that Park was a natural, unbiased scientist (e.g. Bulmer, 1984; Lindner, 1996; Lyman, 1992). The complex story of R.E. Park and his marriage to a significant female social reformer is a private drama behind the public presentation of sociology as apolitical, objective, rational and as unaffected by human behavior as a potato bug is.

R.E. Park and His Public Antipathy to ‘Do-Goodism’

As noted earlier, R.E. Park mocked clubwomen as early as the 1890s, two decades before he became a sociologist (Matthews, 1977; Rauschenbush, 1979). During this period he was not defending the discipline’s scientific integrity but merely expressing his patriarchal opinion as a journalist. He carried this bias into the profession of sociology, where he had the institutional power to claim that his position was objective and unbiased.

R.E. Park assiduously labored to appear to be an opponent of applied sociology, and a few more quotations illustrate this stance. For example, a frequently repeated anecdote of his effort to separate sociology from ameliorating social problems is the following exchange: ‘His answer to a student’s question, [“]What did he do for people:[”] was a gruff “Not a damn thing!”’ (Everett C. Hughes, cited by Matthews, 1977: 116). Similarly, Martin Bulmer also perpetuates R.E. Park’s self-portrait of being distinct from earlier, applied Chicago

sociologists when he claims that '[w]hereas [Charles R.] Henderson and [Charles] Zueblin were reform-oriented, Robert Park was not' (Bulmer, 1984: 39). This uncritical acceptance of an image without substance is echoed in the writings of Rolf Lindner (1996), Edward Shils (1991), Everett C. Hughes (1964) and Lee Harvey (1987).

R.E. Park repeated these views in his writings, too. Thus in 1924 he scathingly dismissed all social investigations done by applied sociologists – whom he subsumed under the category of 'social workers' – when he wrote: 'Generally speaking, we have had nothing that could be called social research, bearing on the tasks of social workers. The most important contributions of [the] sciences to social research and social work have come from medicine and particularly from psychiatry' (1924c: 263). With these and similar statements on the work of his early sociological colleagues – whether they were white male academicians, political activists, white women and/or people of color – he swept away the decades of work done by applied sociologists and their allies in the community (Deegan, 1988, 1996; Rynbrandt, 1999; Skocpol, 1992).

All this established evidence of his extreme opposition to 'women's work' in sociology is analyzed rarely. In fact, several scholars even object to criticism of his patriarchal impact on the development of the discipline (see Lindner, 1996: 53, fn. 224; Lyman, 1992: 143, fn. 73; Ross, 1991: 227, fn. 19). Given his intense public opposition to these women, this is an important omission. But this failure to analyze the gendered basis of sociological history and practices becomes more serious when it is coupled with the fact that when Park opposed the application of sociological knowledge and singled out clubwomen who engaged in it, he was expressing a complex, personal problem. He was attacking the life work, commitments and contributions of his talented and remarkable wife.

R.E. Park was a generally obscure figure until after 1920, when he was 56 years old. His wife, however, received great public acclaim as a clubwoman, a syndicated columnist and a leader in mother's pensions. She achieved this eminence, moreover, without his personal presence or adequate finances. R.E. Park's private trouble as a problematic husband and father married to a successful wife and mother became a public issue in sociology (Mills, 1959). He institutionalized his patriarchal conflicts exhibited in his marriage into a definition of sociology as a discipline. As Anthony Blasi noted: 'Robert Park was the most influential American sociologist from the 1920s into the 1940s' (2002: 1), and this authority included the power to publicly legitimate his patriarchal behavior and values.

The failure of scholars to seriously examine R.E. Park's relationship to the community-based and powerful work of his wife is so buried in the annals of the discipline that when the sociologist Theda Skocpol (1992) focused on C.C. Park's eminent role in creating the maternal welfare state, she did not recognize her as the wife of R.E. Park. Skocpol notes C.C. Park's significance by citing one of her speeches (1992: 313) and two more writings (see 1992: 427, 454). She even

reproduces a picture of C.C. Park (Skocpol, 1992: 440) that accompanied an article written by the popular journalist William Hard⁶ (1913a, 1913b), who praised C.C. Park as a national leader who protected motherless children.

R.E. Park frequently expressed his opposition to social reform in sociology as a disinterested scientist who has no more investment in the issue than the zoologist has in the potato bug. This statement has been accepted as a true, basically uncomplicated, disinterested position by many of his students and scholars who document his life's work (e.g. Bulmer, 1984; Lindner, 1996; Lyman, 1992; Rauschenbush, 1979). His opposite, equivocal attitudes toward sociological practice are not as well recorded, particularly by sociologists who never met him (see Deegan, 1988, for an exception to this statement).

R.E. Park's Dedication to Social Reform: Or How Human Actions Differ from Potato Bugs

R.E. Park was deeply attracted to applied sociology if he engaged it, but not when it was conducted by women. His stance can be characterized as one where he publicly wrote and taught a position amounting to 'do as I say but not as I do'. This vacillation had a profound and deleterious public effect on the discipline of sociology. In particular, R.E. Park did not adopt collegial roles toward great female sociologists associated with Hull-House, notably Edith Abbott, Jane Addams, Sophonisba Breckinridge, Julia Lathrop and Florence Kelley (Deegan, 1988, 1994, 2002).

Everett C. Hughes correctly interpreted R.E. Park's commitment to social reform as integral to Park's entire system of thought and action. At Park's funeral, Hughes opened his eulogy with these words: 'Robert Park was a reformer. All his life he was deeply moved to improve this world' (1944: 7). Again, years later, Hughes noted the key role of social reform in Park's life:

It is in a sense, the dialectic of his own life; reform and action as against detached observation; writing the news of the unique event as against the discovery of the eternal theme and process of history; sympathy for the individual man as against concern for the human race.

(1950: xiii)

Carrying out this theme of reform's significance to him, R.E. Park reflected in an autobiographical note 'that with more accurate and adequate reporting of currents the historical process would be appreciably stepped up, and progress would go forward steadily, without the interruption and disorder of depression or violence, and at a rapid pace' (1944: 11). Such views strongly contradict many of those cited earlier.

Park felt that his sociological work began when he was a reporter. Such an interpretation reveals the kind of complexity of his relationship to 'reform' and 'science'. When he worked as a journalist, both as an undergraduate and for 10 years after that, from 1887 to 1897, he sought to reform the newspaper into something 'more accurate' and 'in the precise and universal language of science' (R.E. Park, 1944: 11). He became dissatisfied with newspaper work, however, and returned to the scholarly life. Shortly after returning to college, he again tired of that routine and longed for more 'action'. When he was subsequently invited to become the secretary of the Congo *Reform* Association (italics added), he accepted. Later, he wrote:

There were at the time reports of great scandals in the Congo, and the secretary of the Baptist Foreign Missions, Dr. Barbour, wanted someone to help advertise the atrocities in order to prepare for some sort of political action which would insure reform. I was not, at that time, strong for missions, but I undertook the job. Eventually, however, I became interested.

(R.E. Park, 1944: 12)

R.E. Park continued this reform work through numerous publications in applied sociology after he joined the sociology faculty at the University of Chicago.⁷ Some of these writings include addresses to the conference of social workers (R.E. Park, 1918a, 1918b, 1920, 1921), an article for the socialist journal *The World Tomorrow* (R.E. Park, 1923), a presentation to the political activists who promoted the establishment of parks and public recreation (R.E. Park, 1924a), and five articles for the *Journal of Applied Sociology* (R.E. Park, 1924b, 1924c, 1924d, 1924e, 1926b). In 1926 (1926a, 1926c) he even edited a special issue of the *Survey*. He not only wrote professionally on applied sociology, it was a major focus within his corpus.⁸

R.E. Park was also President of the National Community Center Association from 1922 to 1924, a group dedicated to increasing democratic involvement in urban life (Rauschenbush, 1979: 46). In addition he cofounded Park House in 1924, a type of intellectual center for working-class people that was clearly built on the social settlement model that was the center for early female applied sociologists. Rauschenbush noted: 'His interest in the youth center mystified some of his friends. Had he, who detested do-goodism, himself become a do-gooder? They were also baffled by his attitude toward the religious tone of the enterprise' (1979: 47). As a board member, 'Park spent a good deal of time there; it had for him the attraction that "doing good" was combined with, or possibly masked by, an intellectual rationale and the opportunity to meet interesting people of a mildly bohemian character' (Rauschenbush 1979, 48). Park House, however, never assumed an important role in the city, and it was ignored by the University of Chicago community.

The main attraction of the center seems to have been the opportunity to make friendships; the most successful activity was folk dancing, which seems to have served the same function as a T[herapy] group in lowering the inhibitions and defenses of middle-class males.

(Rauschenbush, 1979: 47)

Finally, after Park retired from the University of Chicago, he joined the faculty of the predominately African American institution Fisk University on an intermittent basis, from 1936 to 1944. Still committed to studying and improving the lives of African Americans, he did not identify his interests as 'applied sociology.'

R.E. Park's life and sociology were shaped by his concerns with social amelioration, while he claimed to despise such work. Contradicting himself at each step, he wanted people to be more fair and democratic, while he wanted to disassociate himself from activities demanding such changes. Egocentric, brusque, cantankerous and charismatic, R.E. Park profoundly embodied the conflicts of the new sociology. He legitimized a conservative political role for sociologists and left a legacy legitimating the maintenance of the status quo while mildly condemning it. C.C. Park, in contrast, was a major and successful figure in a powerful movement to bring the state into the process of protecting women and children. Instead of bemoaning her husband's parsimony and long absences, she turned her experiential knowledge into help for other women who experienced even greater deprivations than her own.

Conclusion

R.E. Park legitimated men's abstract and depoliticized academic work in sociology by promoting the natural sciences as an ideal model for the discipline. Simultaneously, he openly displayed his hostility toward 'women's work' in the profession and/or in women's clubwork. He profoundly embodied the public changes in sociology in his private marriage to the erudite and feisty C.C. Park. She, in stark contrast, defended 'women's work' in the profession and in the community and helped create the American maternal welfare state.

In this essay, I have analyzed R.E. Park's effect on women's work in sociology, emphasizing his patriarchal, formal opposition to the impressive life's work of his spouse. As a wife whose husband left her for many months at a time between 1905 and 1913 while he worked at a low salary for Booker T. Washington in Alabama, C.C. Park turned to writing to earn sufficient money to maintain her home and children in Massachusetts. Through this work she articulated her sympathy with widowed mothers who could not receive financial help from their deceased spouses. She understood this poverty since her husband chose to provide his family with an inadequate income for their social status. She also understood the loneliness of the widow since her husband was frequently

physically absent – albeit voluntarily – from his wife, children and home. C.C. Park supported the feminist pragmatism of Charlotte Perkins Gilman and the female sociologists at Hull-House, especially that of Jane Addams. Her husband, in contrast, did not praise feminists, clubwomen or female sociologists. His opinions were central in redefining the profession and its position on applied work.

C.C. Park and R.E. Park remained married during an era when divorce was condemned. Perhaps they would have stayed together even if divorce were more acceptable in that era: love, marriage, parenthood and shared experiences generate complicated emotions and bonds. At times, their lives and interests overlapped, particularly in their support of social justice for African Americans. By and large, however, R.E. Park's public, frontstage animosity towards the work of clubwomen was an insulting response to the powerful political work in which his wife was a leader.

We need more research to explore the intersection of the Parks' private drama and the discipline's public presentation of the natural sciences as an ideal model to study human behavior. Only then can we begin to understand why applied sociology, early women's work in the profession and a powerful public presence in American public policy began to weaken after 1920. Only then can we interpret and evaluate the cost to the profession and to society of training and rewarding sociologists who look at human beings in the same way that zoologists look at potato bugs.

Notes

My thanks to Michael R. Hill and Anthony J. Blasi who critiqued earlier drafts of this paper.

1. Park did not use the formal, scientific name for the potato bug. The nickname refers to two types of beetle, either *Doryphora decemlineata* or *Lema trilineata* (*Oxford Universal Dictionary*, 1933: 1555). Park knew his audience was unfamiliar with the natural sciences, and he would get a better response with a popular, and not a scientific, term.
2. Four letters sent by Vorse to C.C. Park are found in the Robert E. Park papers, addendum, box 1, file 2, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago, Regenstein Library.
3. Such a planned program of action based on sociological knowledge is called 'participatory action research' by Feagin and Vera (2001).
4. Elsewhere (Deegan, 2002) I document how R.E. Park's familiarity with the black experience was supportive, as well as problematic, for applied sociologists in this setting.
5. I do not share this interpretation and see great continuity between R.E. Park's colleagues prior to 1920 and post-1920, with the exception that the first cohort of sociologists were less paradoxical and ambivalent in their sociological practices (see Deegan, 1988, 2001).
6. Hard resided at the University of Chicago Social Settlement for a period and helped popularize the work of female sociologists from Chicago. For a discussion of the importance of this settlement in the work of G.H. Mead, see Deegan (1999).
7. R.E. Park wrote dozens of book reviews of book in applied sociology over the course of his career. I include only one sample here.

8. R.E. Park even claimed to be first author of an applied sociology book, *Old Worlds Transplanted*, when W.I. Thomas was the primary author. This book was funded by a commission promoting applied sociology through the Americanization of immigrants. R.E. Park opportunistically appropriated the first authorship of the book after Thomas was fired from the University of Chicago. See [Thomas, W.I.], Robert E. Park (listed erroneously as first author) and Herbert A. Miller (1921) and my discussion in Deegan (1988, p. 184; 1994, 2002).

Archive

Robert E. Park papers, the Special Collections Research Center, Regenstein Library, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois

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