

Chapter 2

Jane Addams' Theory of Democracy and Social Ethics: Incorporating a Feminist Perspective¹

Patricia M. Shields

Key Terms

Participatory democracy
Pragmatism
Scientific attitude
Social claim
Sympathetic understanding

Introduction

This chapter uses the lenses of feminism to theorize about public administration and democracy. Just as the term “feminism” has many perspectives (Hutchinson, 2005), democracy and its meanings are complex and multifaceted. There are also, perhaps, many democracies. We are used to treating the term “democracy” from a political perspective. Representative democracy and the rule of law are common traits associated with political democracy. Aside from the political sphere, where Addams was legally barred from participation, she also articulated and helped to create social and economic democracies (Deegan, 1990, p. 276).

Robert Westbrook (1991, p. xv) describes a cynical view of liberal democracy:

[T]he provision of a minimal level of welfare to every member of a society through a corporate capitalist economy regulated by a centralized state directed by administrative experts, which even when it works betrays an identification of the good with the goods.

In this view, public administration represents the world of practice and field of study that is the training ground for the “administrative experts” that direct the capitalist corporate state. In contrast, the democracy of Addams and Dewey calls upon women and men to

“build communities in which the necessary opportunities and resources for every individual to realize fully his or her particular capacities and power through participation in political, social and cultural life” (Westbrook, 1991, p. xv).

This chapter explores the meaning of social democracy through Jane Addams' feminist-informed philosophy. The key facets of her conceptualization of an ethical social democracy (role of social claims, sympathetic understanding, experience, scientific attitude, dignity of the everyday, idealized rule of living) are examined. Implications for public administration theory are developed throughout.

In *Democracy and the Public Service*, Frederick Mosher (1968, p. 3) asked how public service may “be made to operate in a manner compatible with democracy.” His book and others, like Emmette Redford's (1969) *Democracy in the Administrative State*, are good examples of how eminent male public administration scholars examined this complex question. They focus on issues common to political democracies such as democratic control, expertise, professionalism, responsive leadership, and representation in the public service. Both Mosher and Redford discuss the possibility of participatory democracy as an interesting yet unrealistic ideal. Redford (1969) incorporates participation as a facet of democratic morality. Participatory democracy has the potential to “better decisions” and enhance “organizational effectiveness and efficiency” (Mosher, 1968, p. 17). Unfortunately, they find a logical dilemma between “*democracy within an administration*” and “*political democracy*” (Mosher, 1968, p. 18) [italics added].

The democracies of Redford and Mosher differ substantially from both the liberal democracy articulated by Westbrook and the participatory democracy conceptualized by Addams and Dewey. One of the goals of this book is to explore how the ideas, scholarship, and experiences of women in public administration can inform and create theory in public administration. Clearly, Addams' perspective on democracy offers such an opportunity. Addams' (1902) *Democracy and Social Ethics* as well as her numerous writings provide a view of democracy that contrasts and complements the more traditional (predominately masculine) views. Her rendering of democracy draws on the lived experience of the populace. In addition, the “rough and tumble social egalitarianism that, to her, was the heart and soul of the American democracy was fully compatible with beauty and a yearning for excellence in all things” (Elshtain, 2002, p. 76). Also, as will become clear later, she was a practicing public administrator.

Jane Addams' ideas grew out of her experience as a settlement founder during the progressive era. Both waves of immigration and the industrial revolution led to a shift in population from rural to urban. The sprawling cities were characterized by widespread corruption. During this time municipal reform emerged as a force that shaped public administration. The New York Bureau of Municipal Research led reforms that had widespread influence on public administration theory and practice (Stivers, 2000).

Although the bureau men of this period were tackling municipal reform, the settlement movement (mostly composed of women) also became a force for reform. Camilla Stivers (1995, 2000, 2002) pervasively argued that the settlement movement, particularly the work of leaders like Addams and Lathrop, represents a lost feminist alternative to the

dominant public administration themes of the bureau movement (e.g., efficiency, effectiveness, expertise). This chapter is a modest addition to Stivers' previous work. It brings the lenses of feminisms to Mosher's (1968, p. 3) timeless question: How can public service "be made to operate in a manner compatible with democracy?"

Jane Addams illustrates the difference in perspective as she critiques the governmental reform efforts in Chicago. According to Addams (1902, pp. 222–223), governmental reform movements are generally not an expression of a moral or social life:

As a result of this detachment [reformers] are almost wholly occupied in the correction of political machinery and with a concern for the better method of administration, rather than with the ultimate purpose of securing the welfare of the people. They fix their attention so exclusively on methods that they fail to consider the final aims of city government. . . . In trying to better matters, however, they [the reformers] have in mind only political achievements which they detach in a curious way from the rest of life, and they speak and write of the purification of politics as of a thing set apart from life.

Addams was skeptical about municipal reformers that held firm to the correctness of their solutions while at the same time were disconnected from the citizens (and their experiences). She believed that social ideals should "enter into political programmes, and . . . not as something which at best can be indirectly promoted by government, but as something which it is the chief business of government to advance directly." Reform should incorporate a "social expression to democracy" (Addams, 1902, p. 224). She cautions that the merit system has the potential "to become stranded in the shallow water of negative virtue, failing to launch it upon the deep seas of popular affection" (Addams, 1930, p. 17). Her concerns have modern counterparts. Are we ignoring larger ends-in-view (e.g., healthy, educated citizenry, safe streets, adequate food and housing) as we focus on privatization or other techniques of the new management?

Who Is Jane Addams?

The remarkable Jane Addams is perhaps most well known as the first woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize (1931). Although a frequent world traveler, she was born in Cedarville, Illinois (1860), and as an adult called Chicago her home until she died in 1935. She was the most famous public woman of her time. She gained prominence through her work as a founder (with Ellen Gates Starr) of the progressive era's most acclaimed settlement: Hull House. She was a successful reformer working to enact child labor laws, establish juvenile courts, and initiate policies that protected the public health (Knight, 2005). Social work claims her as a founder, as does the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. She was also an acknowledged feminist, assuming leadership positions in the suffrage movement (Deegan, 1990).

Within the last 20 years scholars have begun to rediscover Jane Addams' impressive intellectual legacy.² Academic fields beyond social work, such as classical pragmatism,

sociology, and public administration, claim her as among their founders.³ She authored or coauthored 13 books and over 500 speeches, essays, columns, journal articles, and editorials (Deegan, 1990; Elshtain, 2002).⁴ Her scholarly legacy (one that is infused with practice) is used to explicate her theory of democracy and draw out its characteristics and implications for public administration theory. Addams is a master at using narrative and stories to clarify and extend her theories. Her stories had both broad moral implications and emphasized lived experiences. Stories about a newsboy and a grieving mother teach us about a wider social ethic. In addition, as the founder of a nonprofit organization and as a paid city garbage inspector, Jane Addams was a *practicing* public administrator!

Feminist philosophers have reestablished the link between feminist theories and the classical pragmatism of Jane Addams and John Dewey (see Duran, 1993, 2003; Keith, 1999; Siegfried, 1992, 1996, 2001; Shields, 2005b; Whipps, 2004). For contemporary feminist philosophers like Charlene Seigfried (1996, 2001) and J. D. Whipps (2004), Addams is a critical link between feminism and pragmatism. Her philosophy was infused with both. Addams' theory of democracy is also central to her feminism. It is a small leap from Addams' conceptualization of democracy to Dewey's. Hence, the two positions are treated as almost interchangeable.⁵

Jane Addams' Feminism: A Snapshot

Although Jane Addams' major works seldom emphasize her broader feminist perspective explicitly, make no mistake: She understood Stivers' point that men had captured the theoretical lenses within which we view the world. She offered another perspective—one that incorporated feminist lenses.

She spells out these differences in a hilarious, patronizing, tongue-in-cheek essay. Here she speculates about what the world would be like if women were in power and men were seeking the vote. She demonstrates her understanding of how the male perspective influences policy and by implication the need for a feminine perspective (Addams 1913/2002, pp. 229–230):

Our most valid objection to extending the franchise to you is that you are so fond of fighting—you always have been since you were little boys. You would very likely forget that the real object of the State is to nurture and protect life. . . . We [women] have carefully built up a code of factory legislation for the protection of workers in modern industry; we know that you men have always been careless about the house, perfectly indifferent to the necessity for sweeping and cleaning; if you were made responsible for factory legislation it is quite probable that you would let the workers in the textile mills contract tuberculosis through needlessly breathing the metal filings.

When Jane Addams walked into the male-run 19th ward of Chicago she saw a “veritable riot of disorder in the name of order” (Elshtain, 2002, p. 130). She was repelled by the “foul

smells,” poisonous sewage, alarming infant mortality rates, rotting garbage, and animal waste (Addams, 1910/1930). Public health was threatened by inadequate sanitation and corrupt garbage collections systems. Children were sacrificed to penal systems designed for adults. Industrialists kept labor cheap and disorganized. Women and children were forced into oppressive labor (Elshtain, 2002, p. 130). She worked to rectify the situation and used her feminine lenses to devise a different way of viewing city problems.

Addams challenged the male vision of city authority with a coherent feminine version of civic housekeeping—a rich potential source for public administration theory. She contrasted her notion of the city as household with the male militant view of city as citadel. The citadel model, although once appropriate, helped to create the sprawling mess that was late 19th century Chicago. She argued that if the city were conceived as a household in need of continuous housekeeping, cleanliness, and caring, many of its problems would be coherently addressed and rectified. According to Jean Elshtain (2002, p. 237), her feminine model of reform brought

a healing domesticity in which the strong maternal image sustains and enables instead of smothering or constraining. . . . The maternal model thrust women into a world of care, responsibility and obligation. This fact did not represent moral superiority rather moral necessity that served as a source of female power and authority.

Elshtain believed that the imperatives of this realm must be extended more generally. “This perspective is the rock-bottom ground of her civic philosophy and her social feminism” (Elshtain, 2002, p. 157).

She noted that city departments like health and sanitation were similar to women’s traditional chores. Hence, women’s experience provided them with insights and knowledge to deal with the problems of an overcrowded immigrant population. She believed it was time that women became involved in crafting solutions (Elshtain, 2002, p. 158).

Contemporary Relevance

Jane Addams’ feminist theories emerged over a century ago. What is the point of reviving them now? It is hard not to agree with Camilla Stivers’ discouraging insights into how public administration had an opportunity to internalize them and instead turned away. Stivers’ (2000) *Bureau Men, Settlement Women* was an attempt to uncover Addams’ and other settlement workers’ ideas, activities, and historical significance. Unfortunately, from her perspective the efforts “sank like a stone, leaving few ripples” (Stivers, 2005, p. 365). Moreover, popular governmental reform movements, like reinventing government, continue to echo the themes of scientific management and fail to incorporate feminine perspectives such as Addams’.

Scholars such as Sorensen and Torfing (2005), Salamon (2005), and Merget (2003) note that public policy and public administration in the 21st century operate in a multisector

environment where public, private, and nonprofit organizations work together as networks. We have moved from a world of government to one of governance. The new world of governance does not rely on hierarchical command and control structures to get things done. Clearly, a political democracy underlies the workings of government. Jane Addams' social ethic and social democracy has much to offer our governance mechanisms. Given Addams' stress on ethical, participatory democracy and collaboration, her insights have special appeal. Indeed, a national network of nonprofit organizations (and FEMA) are investigating Addams' approach as a theoretical framework for long-term disaster recovery as they continue to struggle with the aftermath of Katrina (Gatlin, 2006).

Perhaps even more discouraging are the larger political trends in society. The past decade has seen an increasing polarization. Congressional districts have been redistricted repeatedly as a way to keep single-party control. As a result, decisions are made at the primary level where the polarized views are rewarded by the hard-line party faithful. Policy debate is often couched in a rigid moralism that Addams warned against. In addition, our contemporary focus on individualistic ethics is counter to Addams' vision of a social democracy. In spite of these trends, Addams' ideas have relevance. They offer a refreshing alternative to the rigid moralism that has dominated the public sphere.

In the 2006 Donald C. Stone lecture at the American Society for Public Administration conference, Irene Rubin (2006) made a compelling case that "democracy in the United States is now at risk." She demonstrated how requirements for democracy such as "adherence to the constitution and the rule of law, accountability, the right to protest and popular control" have all seriously eroded in recent years. She outlined ways that public administrators could respond and repair the damage. "Democratic governance comes not just from the top down, but from the bottom up." Although Rubin is clearly speaking about political democracy, her insights open the door to explore Addams' bottom up, ethical social democracy.

Addams stressed relationships and communication. As a woman denied the vote, she and the women of Hull House had little power or influence in Chicago's political democracy. They were inspired and motivated by Addams' vision of a social democracy. Using hard work and this vision, they helped propel significant social change. They acted to change the conditions in a great city. Critics of their feminist-inspired democratic vision might dismiss their contribution as a footnote in history. This is perhaps true—but it was a thriving force close to the everyday lives of the people they cherished, learned from, and served. It guided their actions and sustained their souls.

In a provocative 1999 article, Thomas and Cynthia Lynch present a "theory of soul" for the profession of public administration. Their article is about infusing public administration with "ethics and morality" (Lynch & Lynch, 1999, p. 138). They advocate an altruistic notion of oneness that is associated with public administration's role of serving the "larger public good" (Lynch & Lynch, 1999, p. 140). Lynch and Lynch have developed a rich and interesting theory, yet there is no connection to democracy. Addams' work bridges this important gap.

Democracy

And democracy did save industry; it transformed disputes about wages from social feuds into business bargains. (Residents of Hull House, 1895/1970, p. 197)

To say democracy is only a form of government is like saying home is more or less a geometric arrangement of bricks and mortar; that a church is a building with pews, pulpit and spire. It is true; they certainly are so much. But it is false; they are so much more . . . [democracy is] a form of moral and spiritual association. (Dewey, cited in Westbrook, 1991, p. 41)

Traditional and popularly accepted notions of democracy stress equality before the law and political participation through voting. Democracy is viewed as a form of government. Addams and Dewey move outside these notions. They developed a conceptualization of democracy that stresses “moral and spiritual association.” As the quote above shows, Addams applied her principles of democracy to reconceptualize labor disputes. According to Westbrook (1991), the participatory democracy envisioned by Dewey and Addams is a much wider and “more radical voice than had been generally assumed” (p. xiv).

The democracy of Addams and Dewey is one of ideal and practice. There is no claim of an eventual utopia. Nevertheless, the ideals are useful in understanding and perhaps improving the lived world. Their ideas apply to our daily conversations and associations. Clearly, social problems and their resolution preoccupied Jane Addams and John Dewey (Hildebrand, 2008). Their work, however, always incorporated the lived world and those daily conversations, experiences, and associations. Public administration is a field of study and a world of practice. It contains within its sphere the lived experiences of citizens with different roles (one role of which is public administrator). The sphere of lived experience can be both exhilarating and boring, exotic and quotidian. The world of citizen experience is a place of practice. It is where Dewey’s and Addams’ theory of democracy resonates most clearly.

The expansive vision of democracy advocated by Addams is difficult to classify or compartmentalized because the themes she emphasized are interrelated. Presented here are a few key notions that should be used as markers as one navigates the terrain of her ideas. The next sections explore these markers—the social claim, the role of the situation and experience, sympathetic understanding, scientific attitude, the dignity of the everyday, and democracy as an idealized rule for living and faith.

Social Ethics and the Social Claim

When, however, she responded to her impulse to fulfill the social or democratic claim, she violated every tradition. (Addams, 1902, pp. 74–75)

Addams was part of generation of young women that were just beginning to enjoy university-level education. Higher education awakened these women to new opportunities

and for some, like Jane Addams, a desire to serve. She sought a larger democratic connection to society. She recognized a barrier to this participation in young women's own homes. Women were caught between their desire to contribute to a wider society (social claim) and the family claim that challenged their right and questioned their ethics if they turned their attention outward. "The failure to recognize the social claim as legitimate causes the trouble; the suspicion constantly remains that woman's public efforts are merely selfish and captious, and are not directed to the general good. This suspicion will never be dissipated until parents, as well as daughters feel the democratic impulse and recognize the social claim" (Addams, 1902, p. 77).

It was this essentially feminine conflict that led Addams to her theory of social or democratic ethics. She recognized that both claims are legitimate and they often complement and reinforced one another. She asks us to use this knowledge "to make a second adjustment between the family and the social claim, in which neither shall lose and both be ennobled" (Addams, 1902, p. 75).

She used this 19th century feminine conflict to develop a theory of social ethics with wide applicability. Unfortunately, society had not yet recognized the legitimacy of social claims for women. She applied her insights into the conflicts between the narrow individual claims and social claims to a wide array of social problems. Women in Addams' era were awakening to a larger change-filled world. In 18th and 19th century rural America both male and female labor was usually tied to the household (or farm). The condition of labor was closely associated with the family. The industrial revolution severed the tie between labor and family. According to historian James Livingston (2001, p. 3), "wage labor, or rather 'abstract social labor' comes to dominate the social relations of goods production—capitalism becomes a complex market society." Yet conceptions about the meaning of "labor" were trapped in a narrow personal or family ethic of an earlier period. Likewise, the narrow, limited family and individualistic focus made it difficult to recognize and understand the growing problem of industrialized, metropolitan life, and urban poverty in particular. Thus, Addams' social ethics responded to the conflict facing young, educated women and the new problems of urban, industrialized society.

Her decision to enter the settlement movement and open Hull House was an action that demonstrated her recognition and calling toward the evolving social claim. In *Democracy and Social Ethics* Addams (1902) used her experiences at Hull House as well as her understanding and faith in democracy to develop a social ethics that is the heart and soul of her social feminism. Rather than rely on an ethics that centered on individual righteousness, integrity, or family, Addams introduced the social claim, which she also referred to as the "democratic claim."

Although she did not discard the individual or family claim, she understood that there was a need to incorporate a larger social claim and to balance the two against these claims. This was not an easy task: It meant that it was necessary to deliberately consider the situation, recognize the claims, and weigh and clarify them in relation to one another. She organized *Democracy and Social Ethics* around pairs of human relationships, such as the

parent and the adult daughter, the charity worker and the poor she served, and the corrupt politician and the voter. “She traced for each relationship the ways that the old individualistic and out-of-date morality was evolving under the pressures of democracy into a new social humanitarian or democratic one” (Knight, 2005, p. 400). She showed how the social claim could be considered and demonstrated how often neither claim is satisfied if the social claim is ignored. This was a theme found throughout her writing.

For example, in *Twenty Years at Hull House* she told the story of a widow that cared deeply for her daughters and devoted herself to her home and daughters’ care. She was, however, aloof from the neighborhood efforts to secure better sanitation. Unfortunately, the widow’s spotless home could not save her daughter from the deadly typhoid bacteria that entered her home through the plumbing. “The entire disaster affords, perhaps, a fair illustration of the futility of the individual conscience which would isolate a family from the rest of the community and its interests” (Addams, 1910/1930, p. 297). We cannot divorce ourselves from the moral experiences of the many if a code of social ethics is to be developed. Addams’ social claim is consistent with the altruism or “oneness” discussed by Lynch and Lynch (1999). It is also, however, a concept that takes into account the conflict between individual, family, and society. She encourages us to confront the conflict and work it out in practice.

Addams used municipal housekeeping as a way to connect the family and social claim. She showed the value of expanding women’s family claim to urban governance. The virtues and concerns of housekeeping could be extended to city administration. As Stivers (2000, p. 100) notes, settlement workers viewed the city as a “home for its people; therefore, city government should be thought of not as a business but as a kind of homemaking, devoted to creating the conditions under which residents could live safely and in relative comfort.”

Addams believed women should extend the reach of the household virtues to incorporate the condition of the streets, the food, the drinking water, even the schools. “Much of the activity of Hull House over the years involved pushing boundaries to include people. Optimistically, Addams believed that both the family claim and the social claim would be ennobled in this dynamic process; that neither need lose” (Elshtain, 2002, p. 168). Addams sought a new understanding of the family claim. This broader definition of the family claim freed people to serve in the wider world. Yet, “the social claim—the claim asserted by the public world of responsible human action—must respect and respond to the family claim. . . . One cannot resolve tension and conflict between the two through abstract logic. Instead, the relationship must be worked out in practice” (Elshtain, 2002, p. 104).

Addams realized that people must suspend their existing belief systems and try to understand the perspectives and experiences of others. The social ethic was not a sweeping theory that categorized and recast roles and claims. The family claim was broadened: “it was a social claim of the most basic kind. Addams’ challenge was to see the family as a part of a web of social imperatives and forces without ever losing sight of that one little hand” (Elshtain, 2002, p. 97).

Role of Experience and the Situation

Democracy is belief in the ability of human experience to generate the aims and methods by which further experience will grow in ordered richness. (Dewey, 1998, p. 343)

We distrust the human impulse as well as the teachings of our own experience, and in their stead substitute dogmatic rules for conduct. (Addams, 1902, p. 67)

Addams' emphasis on using practice to work out the relationship between claims led her to emphasize the role of human experience in ethics. She believed "we are under a moral obligation in choosing our experiences, since the results of those experiences must ultimately determine our understanding of life" (Addams, 1902, pp. 9–10).

According to Dewey scholar David Hildebrand (2005, p. 350), "For Dewey experience—or better, experiencing—is just what might be called life or living." Experience is where we begin when we confront a problematic situation. Experience is also how we "reason out possible solutions, and what we go through to test these solutions." Experience is more than a linguistic or intellectual construct, "we both *have* to undergo experience and later we may come to *know* it" (Hildebrand, 2005, p. 350).

Clearly, Addams embraced life and the living, teeming world surrounding Hull House. Her adult life was devoted to confronting problematic situations that began with her decision to move outside the narrow confines of the family claim and widened her loyalty to include her urban settlement; the health, welfare, and education of children; and eventually global concerns about war and peace. Her narrative style of writing demonstrated repeatedly how she used experiences (of herself and others) to reason out possible solutions and to test these solutions. Addams emphasized the role of human experience within a concrete situation to analyze social claims. She wanted Americans to think of one another as neighbors and fellow citizens with "vastly different experiences" (Elshtain, 2002, p. 123).

Addams (1902, pp. 169–170) illustrates how these vastly different experiences can shape our morality with a story about a boy of 8 who darts onto a moving streetcar "calling out the details of the last murder, in hope of selling an evening newspaper." Three adults seated on the streetcar use their own sense of morality to respond to the situation. A "self-made man" is pleased with the child's work ethic and buys a paper. A "philanthropic lady" is unhappy that such a "bright boy is not in school." She rededicates herself to supporting schools for newsboys. The third, a workingman, realizes that the boy will burn himself out at a young age (he had witnessed many a grown man spent by their mid-thirties) and dedicates himself to work for child labor laws. "He knows very well that he can do nothing in the way of ameliorating the lot of this particular boy; that his only possible chance is to agitate for proper child-labor laws . . . in order that the child of the poorest may have his school time secured and may have at least his short chance for growth." Addams (1902, p. 170) notes, "These three people . . . are all honest and upright, and recognize a certain duty toward the forlorn children of the community." It is, however, the workingman that has the most developed sense of social ethics.

The situation also provides the setting for action. For Addams, ethics outside of action is speculation. Addams (1902, p. 273) believed that “action is indeed the sole medium of expression for ethics. We continually forget that the sphere of morals is the sphere of action, that speculation in regard to morality is but observation and must remain in the sphere of intellectual comment, that a *situation* does not really become moral until we are confronted with the question of what shall be done in a *concrete case* and are obliged to act upon our theory” [italics added].

Addams (1902, pp. 176–177) was distrustful of “an exaggerated personal morality” and was concerned that it is “often mistaken for a social morality, and until it attempts to minister to a social situation its total inadequacy is not discovered.” Social morality in the absence of democratic experience results in “the loss of the only possible corrective and guide, and ends in an exaggerated individual morality but not a social morality at all. . . . A man who takes the betterment of humanity for his aim and end must also take the daily experiences of humanity for the constant correction of his process” (Addams, 1902, p. 177). Critics argue that giving the situation such importance opens the door to moral relativism. “The flip side of the coin of moral relativism is, however, rigid moralism of a sort that makes little or no provision for human weakness and that squeezes out space for forgiveness and passion. Faithful to her lifelong search for balance, Addams attempted to negotiate the shoals between these two perils” (Elshtain, 2002, p. 80).

Sympathetic Understanding

Social morality results perforce in the temper if not the practice of the democratic spirit, for it implies that diversified human experience and resultant sympathy which are the foundations and guarantee of Democracy. (Addams, 1902, p.7)

We are learning that a standard of social ethics is not attained by traveling a sequestered byway, but by mixing on the thronged and common road where all must turn out for one another, and at least see the size of one another's burdens. (Addams, 1902, p. 6)

Addams' faith in an idealized democracy where human beings in concrete situations could work out social claims depended on the ability of each to sympathetically understand the other or “at least see the size of one another's burdens.” The concept of sympathetic understanding is the cornerstone of her larger social ethics. An ethical social democracy works when this component is practiced and understood. Sympathetic understanding helps one make sense of others' experiences and thus facilitates meaningful communication and social change. Sympathetic understanding helped to develop a social ethic. Sympathetic understanding and the resultant fellowship was her alternative to dogmatism, rigid moralism, and self-centered righteousness. “To perform too many good deeds may be to lose the power of recognizing good in others; to be too absorbed in carrying out a personal plan of improvement may be to fail to catch the great moral lesson which our times offer” (Addams, 1902, p. 146).

Addams (1902, pp. 154–155) used a businessman/philanthropist relationship with his workers to show how rigid belief systems in the absence of understanding and fellowship can be problematic. The businessman in her story is confident he knows what is best for the worker. Unfortunately, his mindset too often cuts him off from

the social ethics developing in regard to our larger social relationships, and from the great moral life springing from our common experiences. This is sure to happen when he is good 'to' people rather than 'with' them, when he allows himself to decide what is best for them instead of consulting them. He thus misses the rectifying influence of that fellowship which is so big that it leaves no room for sensitiveness or gratitude. Without this fellowship we may never know how great the divergence between ourselves and others may become, nor how cruel the misunderstandings.

Addams would argue that Lynch and Lynch's (1999) "theory of soul" needs sympathetic understanding as connective tissue.

Addams believed in a larger human solidarity that rested on the assumption that certain experiences are shared on a deep level by all human beings. She believed that if people could open themselves, their different cultures, generations, types of childhoods, and so forth, they could find common ground. She extended this logic of solidarity to the city as a larger type of household (in need of housekeeping). "Her ideal of the modern city is one in which solidarity does not depend upon sanctions or a consciousness of homogeneity but upon a respect for variation, not upon inherited memory but upon trained imagination" (Elshtain, 2002, p. 203). The city should invite all into political fellowship. Thus, government should be part of a cooperative alliance with all levels of society.

Addams and her fellow Hull House residents helped propel most social legislation and civic initiatives dealing with children from 1890 to the New Deal. According to Jean Elshtain (2002, p. 122), this "legislation, at its best, began life as sympathetic understanding, a determination to enter into lives that were not one's own, without falling into the arrogant pretense that one understood the lives of others better than they did."

Scientific Attitude (or Openness to Intellectually Honest Inquiry)⁶

The Settlement, then, is an experimental effort to aid in the solution of the social and industrial problems which are engendered by the modern conditions of life in a great city.
(Addams, 1910/1930, p. 125)

Addams approached 19th century urban problems with a scientific attitude. In other words, she used sympathetic understanding to take into account the experiences of others as she approached problematic situations. She was keen to avoid fixated belief systems that would stifle debate and inquiry. In addition, she valued reasoning out and testing

solutions. When all three are in place (open mind, careful reasoning, and testing of solutions), a problem is approached with a scientific attitude. Thus, the settlement, as “experimental effort to aid in the solution” of social problems, exhibits this scientific approach.⁷ Addams and the residents of Hull House demonstrated a strong commitment to the scientific attitude by their emphasis on collecting data. One needs data to fully understand the situation. These data were subsequently shared with the larger community and often used to promote better living conditions. Little would be accomplished if sympathetic understanding worked in the absence of an organized effort to reason out the problem and secure and analyze data.

This belief in the necessity of depending on factual data for scientific inquiry led the residents of Hull House to develop many innovative research design and cartographic techniques. In the early 1890s, Jane Addams and her colleague Florence Kelley supervised the writing and production of *Hull House Maps and Papers*. The complete *Hull House Maps and Papers* contains two large, multicolored maps that depict the demographic characteristics within a third of a square mile near Hull House. The maps provided information on the distribution of 18 nationality groups who resided in the area as well as the residents’ wages, occupations, and housing conditions.

Hull House Maps and Papers also contained chapters that delved into some of the most important problems facing the immediate community. Florence Kelley (1970) detailed the many problems with employment in the garment industry in “The Sweating System.” She also documented how the decentralized “sweating system” increased the likelihood of labor abuses and health risks. For example, “sweaters” with typhoid often illegally worked on suits that later infected the purchaser. Florence Kelley and Alzina Stevens, both Inspectors of Workshops and Factories for the State of Illinois, reported on the enforcement of recently passed Illinois child labor laws. They documented the increased dangers of mutilation and death faced by children because they were less cautious and often unable to read directions.

Jane Addams was the overseer of the entire project. The mapping of social and demographic characteristics of a population was a methodology first adopted at Hull House. Not only was this unique methodological approach first used to create and publish *Hull House Maps and Papers*, researchers at Hull House continued using and refining this approach after the book’s publication and national dissemination. Thus, the Hull House neighborhood and surrounding areas became a place of ever-increasing study and ever-increasing cartographic analysis.⁸ In addition, the maps became part of the community, an integral component of the settlement’s goals of encouraging and promoting education and democracy among neighborhood residents.

The scientific attitude also involves a willingness to see and learn from experimental failures. “There was room for discouragement in the many unsuccessful experiments in cooperation which were carried on in Chicago during the early nineties” (Addams, 1910/1930, p. 141). And, “in spite of failures, cooperative schemes went on, some of the same men appearing in one after another with irrepressible optimism” (Addams, 1910/1930, p. 142).

The scientific attitude has special relevance for public administration empirical research. Research should have relevance to the world of practice and be connected to real-world problems. In addition, there should be a participatory component: The parameters of the problem should take into account the views and be shared with those affected by the problem. In other words, the problematic situation in public administration should be vetted through a wide audience, investigated using reasoned arguments, and be data driven.⁹

Dignity of the Everyday

Whenever I held up Lincoln for their admiration as the greatest American, I invariably pointed out his marvelous power to retain and utilize past experiences; that he never forgot how the plain people of Sangamon County thought and felt when he himself had moved to town; that this habit was the foundation for his marvelous capacity for growth. (Addams, 1910/1930, p. 37)

Addams' close-to-the-people, experiential social ethics led her to recognize and celebrate the dignity of our daily lives. Her early admiration for Lincoln and his down-to-earth, close-to-the-people style led her to incorporate the dignity of the everyday world into her theory of social democracy. Thus, democracy is a type of lived experience that takes into account the small things in order to see the whole (Elshtain, 2002, p. 172).

Addams found dignity in the everyday tasks of tending to the well-being of the old and young—sewing and sowing, planting and harvesting. She was engaged in “a struggle to convince others of the urgency, the importance of such affairs” (Elshtain, 2002, p. 29). She discovered “that you cannot be universal anywhere but in your own backyard.” Her social ethics was a principled defense of the quotidian. She avoided “extreme risk or the darkest teaching of violence and domination” and instead celebrated the everyday, with its undramatic practices and values (Elshtain, 2002, p. 64).

The everyday problem of grossly inadequate garbage collection illustrates the importance of humble activities and propelled her into the sphere of public administration. The sights, smells, health hazards, and obvious corruption led Addams and the women's clubs of Hull House to action. Using their characteristic scientific attitude,¹⁰ the women's clubs and residents of Hull House

carefully investigated the conditions of the alleys. During August and September the substantiated reports of violations of the law sent in from Hull House to the health department were 1037. . . . It required both civic enterprise and moral conviction to be willing to do this three evenings a week during the hottest and most uncomfortable months of the year (Addams, 1910/1930, pp. 284–285).

In spite of their efforts, violations persisted, the infant mortality rate remained high, and corrupt contractors continued to win bids. Eventually, Chicago City Hall recognized the community's concern and appointed Jane Addams the first woman garbage inspector. Again, she and neighborhood women found themselves following garbage wagons at

6:00 AM. She dealt with contractors, insisting they increase the number of wagons and collect the rotting animal carcasses that littered many streets.

Aside from the health and aesthetic benefits, Addams (1910/1930) enjoined many reluctant women to see the garbage inspection as an extension of their duty to keep a clean house and to nurse the sick.

Many of the foreign-born women of the ward were much shocked by this abrupt departure into the ways of men, and it took a great deal of explanation to convey the idea even remotely that if it were a womanly task to go about in tenement houses in order to nurse the sick, it might be quite as womanly to go through the same district in order to prevent the breeding of so-called ‘filth diseases.’

The slowly improving conditions led the women to see that “their housewifely duties logically extended to the adjacent alleys and streets” (Addams, 1910/1930, pp. 287–288). Once more, she applied the feminist social ethic to practice.

Addams’ emphasis on the world of the everyday feminine experience is an example of her feminism. For thousands of years women had dedicated their lives to the everyday tasks of caring for home and family. Society may have taken women’s work for granted; yet if it is left undone, society’s survival is threatened. Addams not only recognized the inherent dignity and worth of these activities, she incorporated them in her theories of civic reform and democracy. Feminist theorists, like Addams’, were the first to extend ideas about how the home is organized to the problems of municipal organization. She uses something as seemingly humble as garbage collection to demonstrate the usefulness of a broad social ethic drawn from feminine experience.

Addams celebrated the dignity of the everyday and made the connection between democracy and the humble, yet important, nature of human experience. Because public administration is a field of study and a field of practice, it incorporates the lived experiences (often boring) of practicing street-level administrators. This is the aspect of public administration with which many academics feel uncomfortable. How can a field that counts manhole covers have academic import? For example, renowned scholar Ken Meier (2005, p. 654) believes “many of the concerns of practitioners are just not very interesting.”¹¹ Whether the activities are interesting or not, Addams’ ideas infuse even the most humble task with dignity and meaning and connect them to her vision of an ethical, social democracy.

Thomas and Cynthia Lynch’s (1999) “A theory of soul” calls on humankind (and by implication public administration) “to radically enhance its souls with *heart, spirit* and *openness*. Ethics and morality are no longer important; they are essential” (p. 157). They seek a higher level of morality and ethics that can help us “conduct our lives for the growth of organization, ourselves and the betterment of all” (p. 157). Jane Addams’ feminist-informed, ethical, social democracy suggests a way to do this. Although her democracy incorporates humble activities, it also has an idealized, almost mystical component. If we let it, democracy could feed our soul.

Idealized Rule of Living

We are thus brought to a conception of Democracy not merely as a sentiment which desires the well-being of all men, nor yet as a creed which believes in the essential dignity and equality of all men, but as that which affords a rule of living as well as a test of faith.

(Addams, 1902, p. 6)

The foundation of democracy is faith in the capacities of human nature: faith in human intelligence and in the power of pooled and co-operative experience. It is not belief that these things are complete but that, if they are given a show, they will grow and be able to generate progressively the knowledge and wisdom needed to guide collective action.

(Dewey, 1946, p. 59)

Lynch and Lynch (1999) look for a higher morality and ethics that inform us on how to conduct our lives. The democracy of Addams and Dewey also provides an idealized rule of living. If one considers Addams' social ethics, sympathetic understanding, scientific attitude, and the dignity of the everyday, one finds an idealized rule of living that "informs" conduct and addresses the concerns of Lynch and Lynch.

Further, her democracy is not static. It has an organic quality and changes as our experiences change. One might view public administrators as potential guardians of a social democracy that feeds our collective soul. "Democracy like any other of the living faiths of men, is so essentially mystical that it continually demands new formulation. To fail to recognize it in a new form, to call it hard names, to refuse to receive it, may mean to reject that which our fathers cherished and handed on as an inheritance not only to be preserved but also to be developed" (Addams, 1909, p. 146).

Conclusion

If we return to Mosher's (1968) question and ask how public service may "be made to operate in a manner compatible with democracy," I argue that many of the tenets of Addams' feminist social democracy, if consciously applied, indeed complements the political democracy to which Mosher referred. In addition, it would complete our sense of who we as public administrators are, and show us that in our every interaction with our fellow public servants or citizens, we are participating in and creating our social democracy.

The goal of this book is to critically examine public administration theory and practice through the lenses of feminism. In previous work, Camilla Stivers (1995, 2000, 2002) showed the relevance of Jane Addams' work to public administration. This chapter builds on her efforts by examining Jane Addams' bottoms-up theory of social ethics and democracy.

Clearly, public administration operates within the sphere of Addams' social claim. There is also a similarity between the disenfranchised 19th century women of Hull House and contemporary public administrators. Our political leaders are voted in and, as representatives of the people, decide public policy through the vote. Like the disenfranchised

women of Hull House, public administrators influence the political sphere and public policy through their actions and interactions. Addams' theory of social democracy has relevance to the everyday lived world of public administration (inside the bureaucracy or amid the policy network). Ideally, public administration can embody a lived, experiential, ethical democracy. This ethical, social democracy provides useful guidance for how we should treat/care for each other and the citizens we serve.

Like her ideas, Jane Addams cast a wide net. Conservative, Christian political philosophers like Jean Elshtain study and promote her theories as do more radical feminists philosophers like Siegfried and Dugan. This wide appeal shows how her ideas cross ideological boundaries even today. Her vision of democracy has the potential to heal and draw us together.

Jane Addams' widening social ethics led her to leadership positions in the early 20th century pacifist movement. As the founder of Hull House she was praised and loved; in her work as pacifist she was ridiculed and shunned. Her path was never easy. In the last analysis, one can see Jane Addams standing at the always unlocked door of Hull House. "Come in she said, there is shelter from the storm" (Elshtain, 2002, p. 254).

Discussion Questions

1. Compare and contrast representative democracy and participatory democracy. Why does Shields argue that participatory democracy has much to offer public administrators as they go about their daily lives?
2. Explain how Addams developed her theory of social ethics using the tension young women felt as they tried to balance the family claim and the social claim. Give examples of policy areas today where her ideas are relevant.
3. Compare and contrast "municipal housekeeping" and "city as citadel" as metaphors for local government administration.
4. Why is Jane Addams concerned with rigid moralism? Can you give an example?
5. How did Jane Addams use stories like the "newsboy" and the "grieving widow" to link social ethics and policy? Can you suggest a contemporary example?
6. What role does action play in Addams' notion of ethics?

Notes

1. Much of this chapter was previously published as "Democracy and the Social Feminist Ethics of Jane Addams: A Vision for Public Administration" in *Administrative Theory and Praxis*, 28(3), 418–443. Published here with permission.
2. There are scores of articles on the subject. For key books see Mary Jo Deegan's (1990) *Jane Addams and the Men of the Chicago School, 1892–1918* (sociology); Charlene Haddock Seigfried's

32 ■ Chapter 2 Jane Addams' Theory of Democracy and Social Ethics

- (1996) *Pragmatism and Feminism: Reweaving the Social Fabric*; James Livingston's (2001) *Pragmatism, Feminism and Democracy: Rethinking the Politics of American History* (pragmatism); and Camilla Stivers (2000) *Bureau Men Settlement Women: Constructing Public Administration in the Progressive Era* (public administration). Louise Knight's (2005) *Citizen: Jane Addams and the Struggle for Democracy* and Jean B. Elshtain's (2002) *Jane Addams and the Dream of American Democracy* are a particularly good references explicating Addams theory of democracy.
3. See Deegan (1990) for the connection between Addams and sociology. See Shields (2003, 2005a, 2005b, 2008) and Stivers (2000) for the connection between Addams and public administration. See Seigfried (1996), Livingston (2001), and Luizzi and McKinney (2001) for the connection between the philosophy of pragmatism and Addams.
 4. Elshtain (2002) included 12 books, omitting *Hull House Maps and Papers*, a book written and organized by Addams and formally authored by "the residents of Hull House." Deegan (1990) cites nine Addams articles in sociology journals, including the *American Journal of Sociology*.
 5. Dewey and Addams are linked through a common respect and deep friendship. The friendship began during the early years of Hull House where Dewey was a frequent speaker. Their association deepened when he took a teaching position at the University of Chicago and became an active Hull House board member. His encounters with Hull House influenced his ideas about democracy, inquiry, ethics, and education (Seigfried, 1996; Westbrook, 1991). For example, Dewey assigned Addams' *Democracy and Social Ethics* to his ethics class (Seigfried, 1996) and cited it in *Ethics*, the book he coauthored with Tufts (Dewey & Tufts, 1926). Dewey's pragmatism helped Addams build a larger framework from which she refined her social ethics and feminism (Seigfried, 1996). According to Christopher Lasch (1965, p. 176), "It is difficult to say whether Dewey influenced Jane Addams or Jane Addams influenced Dewey. They influenced each other and generously acknowledged their mutual obligation."
 6. See Shields (2003, 2008) for an extended discussion of the scientific attitude.
 7. The scientific attitude articulated by Addams and Dewey is quite different from the efficiency approach that Taylor brought to scientific management or the scientific administration use by the bureau men.
 8. Deegan (1990) persuasively argues that many leading sociologists at the University of Chicago borrowed (without acknowledgment) the urban mapping techniques that made them famous from the investigator/researcher/scholars who wrote *Hull House Maps and Papers*.
 9. See Bolton and Stolcis (2003) for a discussion of the practitioner divide in public administration. See Raadschelders (2005) for a discussion of sources of knowledge in public administration and how the theory/practice guide can be conceptualized. See Shields (1998) for an extended discussion of the philosophy of science of Dewey, James, Peirce, and Addams as it applies to public administration research.
 10. The sewage system was also a problem. Again, the scientific attitude comes to play. "Typhoid fever epidemics, which arose because sewage water had entered the drinking water supply, were targeted in the best scientific fashion. A bacteriological study undertaken by Hull House resident and pioneer epidemiologist Alice Hamilton provided the necessary scientific evidence for Hull House's proposed reforms in health and sanitation by showing that flies breeding in the befouled plumbing could spread infection" (Elshtain, 2002, p. 172).
 11. It should be noted that much of the Meier (2005) article was tongue in cheek and this may not be his view.

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34 ■ Chapter 2 Jane Addams' Theory of Democracy and Social Ethics

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