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The Clinical Sociology of Jessie Taft

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ABSTRACT

Jessie Taft is an erudite and insightful clinical sociologist who decades ago explored the linkages between the work of G. H. Mead and Otto Rank. Her innovative practice as a Rankian therapist and her founding role in Functional Social Work has been recognized for years. Her sophisticated application of symbolic interaction, however, has been entirely neglected. This paper traces her theoretical roots and their linkage to a sexual division of labor in sociology.

Jessie Taft was an early female sociologist whose contributions to clinical sociology have long been overlooked.¹ She generated an innovative theory and practice that combined the works of two major theorists: the symbolic interactionist, George Herbert Mead (1934, 1936, 1964), and the psychoanalyst, Otto Rank (1936a, 1936b; Taft, 1958). Her original and insightful integration of Mead and Rank provides a sound theoretical basis for applying sociology in a clinical practice. This paper locates Jessie Taft within her historical milieu and explores her intellectual stature as a theoretician and clinical sociologist.

Before turning to an outline of Taft's personal history and the subsequent task of theoretical explication, however, the long neglect of Taft's work within the discipline of sociology needs at least an introductory comment. Part of her disciplinary obscurity is explained by the general pattern of discrimination against women professionals (Rossiter, 1982) and another part is due to the particular

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neglect by disciplinary historians of clinical sociologists of both sexes (Fritz, 1985a, 1985b).

In fact, many early leaders in clinical sociology were women who were trained in sociology but unable to find work in academia as sociologists (Deegan, 1978, 1981, forthcoming; Rossiter, 1982; Talbot, 1936; Talbot and Rosenberry, 1931). These women were encouraged to use their specifically sociological skills in areas deemed at the time more "appropriate" to their sex, i.e., "helping others." Frequently designated (and dismissed) by male revisionists simply as "social workers," these women sociologists merged sociological and psychological theory with clinical practices. Taft is an outstanding example of such a phenomenon.

This paper unequivocally explicates and underscores Taft's major contributions as a sociologist. That Taft found recognition and paid employment in social work rather than sociology during the period when many of these contributions were made to sociology is problematic only if one assumes that specific job titles necessitate harnessing one's intelligence in disciplinary straitjackets. This account of Taft's sociological work is not intended to discount her significant and lasting contributions to social work. Rather, it straightforwardly analyzes the specifically *sociological* work of Jessie Taft.

Taft's significant contributions to sociology lie primarily in her work as a sociological theorist. She articulated a brilliant political theory of feminism, socialization and social action (1915), powerfully combining the sociological concepts of G. H. Mead and Jane Addams (Deegan, forthcoming). She translated and introduced Otto Rank to American social workers (Rank, 1936a, 1936b; Robinson, 1962; Taft, 1958) and integrated his work with her own, which was built on Chicago sociology (Taft, 1915, 1926a). Finally, she established a firm theoretical basis for clinical sociology. This latter accomplishment, following a brief outline of Taft's life, is the principal focus of the present paper. Taft's work as a sociological theorist establishes her credentials and requires the recognition of her as a major figure in sociology. One of her major specialities was clinical sociology. Before analyzing her clinical work, however, her biographical background and historical setting are briefly presented.

TAFT'S HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY

Taft was born in 1882, in an era when women were agitating for the right to higher education (Talbot and Rosenberry, 1931). At this time, sociology was one of the most promising fields for studying "the woman question"—eventually one of Taft's interests (Deegan, 1978; Dike, 1892)—and the most daring school in sociology was located in the Midwest, at the University of Chicago (Diner, 1975). Many early leaders in sociology were not only born and raised in the Midwest (Deegan, 1982; Hinkle and Hinkle, 1954), but were also trained at the

University of Chicago (Faris, 1970). Taft was no exception to this pattern.

Her parents moved from Vermont to rural Iowa, where she was born and raised. This "old" established American family was comfortable, but not affluent. Jessie was the eldest of three daughters in a traditional family. Nonetheless, she never learned traditional sex roles because "her mother was too competent a cook herself to want the children bothering her in the kitchen" (Robinson, 1962:25). Jessie's scholarly interests were fostered by a female physician who influenced her undergraduate training at Drake University in Des Moines. Interestingly, Jessie's father experienced the mixed feelings toward "educated women" characteristic of his era, but he nonetheless actively supported her choices:

Her father's brief letters, which she saved over the years, show his unflinching affection and willingness to have her find her own way and to support her choice. His own preference was to have his girls stay at home where he would willingly have supported them. He never sought to understand the strange determination in this oldest daughter that took her away from home but followed her movements with pride in her accomplishments. (Robinson, 1962:26-27)

With this mixed background of traditional Midwestern roots and emancipatory supports, Taft pursued additional academic training and a professional career.

By 1905, Taft had moved to Chicago where she earned a Ph.B. from the University of Chicago. She then returned to Des Moines and taught high school for four years. In the summer of 1908, Taft went back to the University of Chicago where she met Virginia Robinson who later became her lifelong companion and colleague.²

As Robinson and Taft sat in their classes, walked the Midway, rowed on the lagoon in Jackson Park, and explored the big city, they reveled in their newfound personal and intellectual freedom. Here was a setting in which they could escape the frustration of indifferent students, the loneliness of their lives as strong-minded, single women in small communities, and the oppressiveness of conventional thinking. (Rosenberg, 1982:116)

Both women returned to their respective teaching positions at the end of the summer, but longed to do more invigorating and substantial work. When the University of Chicago offered Taft a fellowship in 1909 (exhibiting the institution's early openness to women students), she eagerly accepted it.

The years from 1909 to 1913 are crucial for understanding Taft's long-term career in and relationship to sociology. During this time, she selected G. H.

Mead, a sociologically significant philosopher, as her doctoral chair. Her graduate training included advanced training in the Chicago School of Pragmatism and the Chicago School of Sociology (Deegan, forthcoming). It was during this period also that she found her first professional employment, established her deep professional and personal identification with never-married female sociologists, and entered the women's network in sociology that was located largely outside the academy.

These major transitions in Taft's life were all interrelated. Mead and other Chicago sociologists, notably W. I. Thomas, were particularly interested in the changing role of women and the work that women sociologists did in applied sociology (Burger and Deegan, 1981; Deegan, 1978). These women sociologists fused (rather than dichotomized) the personal and professional, the public and the private, and the theoretical and the applied. The major institution tying this network of women sociologists together was the Chicago social settlement, Hull-House, led by Jane Addams.

A closely related—but more academic—female network was centered at the University of Chicago. Taft entered the world of professional female social scientists through this University of Chicago connection. Taft's linkage to this network was found through Marion Talbot, a sociologist at the University of Chicago (Fish, 1985). Talbot initially helped place Katherine Bement Davis, a doctoral graduate in economics from the University of Chicago, in a position at the Bedford Hills Reformatory for Women in New York. Davis, in turn, hired Taft and Robinson to conduct interviews in her research on the relationship between crime and "feble-mindedness." Thus, as part of this project, Taft and Robinson soon found themselves:

in a cell converted into an office, [where] we interviewed the drunks and prostitutes committed from Night Court. Evenings were spent observing the prostitutes soliciting on 14th Street or being brought into Night Court, and week ends in Bedford getting acquainted with that institution and talking with Miss Davis about our experiences. (Robinson, 1962:33)

Although they criticized the statistical process they employed and the categorizing of people that ensued, both women knew they had found an exciting and promising career. Taft returned to Chicago and—in 1913—completed her doctorate on "The Woman Movement from the Standpoint of Social Consciousness." Her training behind her, she planned to combine intellectual rigor with pragmatic issues of social amelioration.

She wanted to integrate this applied work in the classroom, but the academic barriers to women were nearly insurmountable. In addition, she was partially supported by an applied sociology network with goals and training similar to

hers, located primarily in the Midwest. Her first jobs, however, were located in an Eastern network of female social workers with different training, ideals, goals, and practice (Robinson, 1962). These different networks were not clearly defined.

Thus, her early professional years were marked by discouragement and interruption. Her first position, after her *magna cum laude* graduation from the University of Chicago (Robinson, 1962:37), was as Assistant Superintendent of the New York State Reformatory for Women. "Nothing in her education or experience had given her any preparation for institutional work nor for understanding the court-committed inmates of a reformatory, and no process of instruction to the requirements of the job could be provided" (Robinson, 1962:41). When Davis left her position as Superintendent in 1915, Taft lost her tie to the women's applied sociology network. Taft's view of the work and that of the new superintendent conflicted. Taft soon left Bedford Hills without a recommendation, despite an outstanding work record under Davis' administration. When Taft sought help from Mary Richmond, an eminent Eastern social worker, Taft's "qualifications apparently did not impress Miss Richmond, who told her she would need training in a good casework agency under a competent supervisor" (Robinson, 1962:44). Unable to find work, this talented philosopher considered returning to her home or "living off her father" (Robinson, 1962:44). Fortunately, the Director of the Mental Hygiene Committee of the State Charities Aid Association of New York resigned, and Taft filled the position. She resigned two years later when another change in leadership occurred. Discouraged she wrote her close friend, Virginia Robinson, "I feel so cowardly and good for nothing. But I brace up soon. It isn't like this all the time." (Robinson, 1962:51-52) This insightful feminist and later noted social worker internalized her failure to find successful employment instead of directing her anger toward a system that failed to use her training and skills. She was caught in a situation in which women sociologists suffered from declining power in the discipline while social workers were gaining legitimacy as a profession (Deegan, forthcoming; Lubove, 1965).

In retrospect, Taft characterized her work at this time as "mental hygiene." This field is comparable to contemporary work in the sociology and epidemiology of mental illness; social work, and policy planning (Taft, 1926b). Although the emphasis on applied sociology was strong, the field ultimately became associated with social work instead of sociology.

Taft fought for access to the academy for decades. Her marginal faculty appointments began in 1919 when she was hired as a part-time psychology instructor in extension courses at the University of Pennsylvania. She continued in this peripheral position for ten years. Removed from the main campus and its intellectual life, the courses did not challenge her. Taft explained the problems in Meadian terms:

They did not satisfy because in an extension course the teacher does the work and perhaps gets the response. At any rate, there is not much opportunity to see students progress, or to be responsible for the effect of one's methods, when the members of the class are not working for credit and can be held to no standard of accomplishment. (Robinson, 1962, citing Taft, 1934:193)

Taft literally had to "beg" for a class of regular students, and in 1929 she was finally allowed to teach advanced personality courses to vocational students (Robinson, 1962:194).

Despite her erratic employment record in a field for which she was not trained, Taft soon emerged as a social work leader, first in Philadelphia and then nationally. Her articles appeared in professional journals such as *The Publications of the American Sociological Society*, *Mental Hygiene*, *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, and *School and Society*, as well as in popular magazines (Robinson, 1962:371–384). She translated two of Otto Rank's books (1936a and 1936b), wrote his biography (1958), and formulated her own ideas in *The Dynamics of Therapy in a Controlled Relationship* (1933). She edited a number of texts (1939, 1944, 1946a, 1946b, 1948), some of which were originally published as issues of *The Journal of Social Work Process*, which she cofounded. Taft also spoke at the American Sociological Society meetings in 1921 and 1925. These sessions were organized by Ethel Sturgess Dummer, a Chicago philanthropist who created a few structural opportunities for women in this group (Deegan, 1978/1979, 1981). By and large, however, Taft's professional life was in social work.

Taft's academic career finally stabilized when she was hired by the School of Social Work at the University of Pennsylvania in 1934 (21 years after she had completed her doctorate). The School first offered the master's degree in 1936 and Taft guided the program's direction. Welcoming administrators and supervisors in both academia and social agencies to take her courses, she also helped other faculty members to adopt her approach (Robinson, 1962:197). She brought in distinguished speakers from professional and scientific fields, among them Otto Rank. Her work with and sponsorship of Rank was, in fact, a major influence on the development of American psychology and social work, as well as clinical sociology. She was the Director of the School until her retirement in 1950. She died 11 years later, after a very full and largely happy retirement (Robinson, 1962:345–368).

TAFT'S WRITINGS

Combining Mead's Genesis of the Self with Rank's Will to Be Free

Taft combined the concepts of G. H. Mead and Otto Rank into a powerful theoretical framework for interpreting problems in daily living. Her humanistic

and compassionate understanding allowed her to transcend the differences between the men's theories of social life. Their divergent assumptions are briefly introduced before a more focused analysis of their fusion by Taft.

G. H. Mead, on the one hand, assumed that people create human behavior through language, gestures, and shared symbols. This human community is based on learned patterns of behavior which are taught to each member. Each infant enters an ongoing world of meaning, and through successive stages of increasing ability to respond to others, finally sees the self as a social object. The process of learning to interact with others and become an object to oneself is referred to as "the genesis of the self." Mead studied the normal process of basically rational and social beings (e.g., Mead, 1934, 1964).

Otto Rank, on the other hand, assumed that people begin life with a trauma: the stressful entry into a harsh world where one must be independent instead of passively nourished in the womb. Despite this everpresent, problematic world, each person has a great capacity to overcome this normally difficult life. The will to be free, to be creative, and to transcend the limits encountered in life are drives found in every person. A therapist helps the individual with living problems to tap this creative energy and possibility through their intense, personal relationship (e.g., Rank, 1932, 1936a, 1936b). Originally a Freudian, Rank suffered a painful break with Freud and his followers. He was disowned and shunned by psychoanalytic colleagues, and Taft's sponsorship of Rank in America is a vivid story that unfortunately cannot be pursued here.³ With this skeletal background, I will now explicate Taft's theory in relationship to key concepts of these two men.

Taft's view of human nature was a direct extension of Mead's. For example, 37 years after the completion of her doctorate, she wrote: "Man develops whatever of selfhood he receives through his social relationships. The self, insofar as it is a self, is social in character, and reflects its use of other selves in its development" (1950:297). Although firmly committed to Rank, she still shared Mead's basic assumptions about the nature of human potential; that the self actively sought contact with others. In fact, her belief in the helping process, arose from the fundamental assumption that:

one must believe in the existence of a natural impulse toward better organization of self, which, however, blocked or confused, provides the basis for a new orientation to living, once a situation is encountered which can disrupt the habitual pattern and release, for the formation of a new integration, the underlying growth tendencies. (1950:296-297)

Thus Taft's process of rationally encountering and resolving problems as a mechanism for growth and creativity echoes Mead's.

Her interpretation of the child and parent relationship also emerged from Mead. Contrary to the Freudian assumptions that parents shape the child and enact the oedipal drama, Taft notes that even a baby is both an actor and an object acted upon. In this way, parents are affected by their children for "it is well to remember that the child creates the parent in his own image as truly as the parent creates the child" (Taft, 1950:298).

This Meadian view on childhood, however, is blended with Rank's concerns with the trauma of birth. Thus Taft believed that such factors influencing the self as the "inherited constitution, the intra-uterine experiences, the particular kind of birth and its relation to the particular makeup of the infant" (Taft, 1950:298) establish a characteristic pattern of response to crises. Taft interpreted these challenges as beginnings and endings, unions and separations, involving the primacy of the self or the other.

Taft extends Mead's concept of the organization of the self further back in the individual's life cycle. Rather than assuming that this structuring occurs as a function of "mind" or the ability to solve problems rationally (Mead, 1934), Taft asserts that even an infant has rudimentary organization in order to meet the struggle to fulfill its needs (1950:298-299). Although clearly committed to the concept of the self, Taft's use of Rank's concept of the "will" enabled her to tap creative and controlling forces that make the process of helping both exciting and frustrating. This resistance to others is more evident in a child than adult because the child's will is often exercised in a negative capacity: to resist and refuse rather than create.

Although optimistic about the possibility of growth, Taft tempered this view with an awareness of destructive and negative forces. This negativity resists the impulse for greatest "social consciousness" (Mead, 1910a, 1910b) or "international-mindedness" (Burger and Deegan, 1981; Mead, 1929) when confronting a crisis. In this way, Taft supplies the mechanism to extend Mead's uncomplicated explanation of the genesis of the self to those common situations where the process occurs in a situation of resistance. Taft also differed from Mead when she drew upon the work of Rank in her view of self development through conflict, i.e., through "resistance" and "counterwill."

Rank's concept of "will" is easily incorporated with Mead's ideas by defining "will" as a complementary process to other Meadian ones such as "thought" and "mind." A crucial difference between these processes, however, is that Mead's definitions of thought and mind are rational processes whereas Rank's definition of "will" gains its strength from both rational and emotional forces. Taft's fusion of these men's ideas provided for a more balanced definition of the origin of problems, their maintenance, and amelioration.

Mead's concept of taking the role of the other and his belief in the parental impulse are clearly reflected by Taft in her view on the changing definition of the home and family. Disregarding the myths surrounding these institutions, Taft

argued that foster parents or even institutions may provide better care for children than blood relatives. Stressing the need to look objectively at families and to study facts associated with neglected children, Taft wrote that a child needs "a fundamental security, and freedom to grow up, which are provided in the last analysis only by the love and understanding of a mature adult who assumes the parental attitude to him" (1927:287).

Taft's understanding of the self was exceedingly close to Mead's prior to her work with Rank, although she always doubted that "scientific control" could be perfected as Mead suggested. Thus, she noted that

the conscious self arises as a result of its own social responses and that it continues to exist as a social process [is] an index of its changing social relationships . . . So elusive is the material, so varied, so rich, so individual that one can but wonder whether it will ever be possible to know enough of the detail of the process we call personality to bring it under anything approaching scientific control. (1926a:10)

Mead's concept, "impulse," is very similar to Taft's use of the same word, but again we see her correcting Mead's blindness to the feelings of the individual:

Needs and impulses are part, then, of the positive, creative forces found in the universe of our experience, and are the energies through which we are enabled to work, to think, to fight, to control, but they themselves are not subject to complete human determination in the self or in the other, any more than are the basic physical forces of the universe. (Taft, 1942:105-106)

Taft again extends Mead's thought when she wrote on education. Where he emphasized the rational use of schools for the development of thought (which he defined as the ability to solve problems), Taft stressed the school's disregard of the instinctive and emotional life of students. For her, the educational system induces neurotic behavior and the inability to solve problems, whether they be rational or emotional in origin (Taft, 1919, 1926a).

Taft had a more pessimistic view of human nature than Mead. This emerged from her own experience and work with problems, and her philosophical underpinnings in Rankian thought. Taft assumed that there was an "inevitable negative at the basis of all man-made progress" (1942:108).

Despite this caution in approaching the change process, Taft assumed that the clinician creates a growth-relating situation in order to precipitate internal growth. This positive perception of the active role of the therapist is derived directly from Taft's extension of Mead's concept of "taking the role of the other."

Taft's Concept of the "Professional Self"

Taft defines receiving and giving help as similar phenomenon; both involve growth and reciprocity (1950). Taft thereby incorporates the ability to take the role of the other into the training of caseworkers. This procedure, moreover, emerges from the group comprised of the teacher and those being trained. This social environment creates the professional role.

Again showing the similarity between therapist and clients, Taft stressed growth throughout the life cycle for both groups. For therapists, however, their growth process is systematically structured into their work. She explained: "Only a training process that is geared to the expectation of psychological growth, or if you like, to the development of a professional self in the student, can be counted on to provide the basis for such conviction [of possible growth in the client]" (Taft, 1950:295-296).

The training process is formulated so that a professional self emerges from the interaction of three actors: the adviser, who also teaches the student a practice class; the supervisor of practical work at an agency or job; and the teacher of the personality class who actively trains the student's will and feelings associated with it. This training process is distinct from casework, supervision, or therapy. It usually involves trainees who are already professional social workers who feel a need to expand their skills and self-development.

The organization of a professional self is located in the beginnings and endings of the school year. This schedule creates the structure for a crisis and the active intervention of the professional trainers. At the end of the year, the program reaches a specific, pragmatic goal: "the achievement of a reliable professional self for every student" (Taft, 1950:306). Needless to say, such an intense program of study is accompanied by strong emotions: anger, resistance, hostility, and fear. This experience enables the student to redefine the self.

Taft's training process is in stark contrast to Meadian pedagogy which is based on abstract, rational thought. The exigencies of clients' needs and concrete problems were absent from the Meadian classroom, and the theory and practice emanating from each approach reflects this fundamental difference.

Taft's Specific Divergence From Freudian Practice

One of Taft's contributions to clinical sociology is her explicit difference from Freudian therapy.⁴ For example, Taft's unique contribution to clinical work can be seen in her innovative interpretation of the motivating force for action. Instead of depicting the individual as a person with an insatiable id, as Freud did, Taft described the need for "life," "associates," "experience," "creativity," and "growth" as the springs for action. She also rejected Freud's pleasure principle as a major explanation for action. According to Taft, "Pleasure, or better said, satisfaction, attends the active, successful expression of the organized will: it

is a by-product, not a motive or an end in itself" (1950:302). Pleasure, to Taft, was only of moderate interest and involved only a part of the self. In this regard she reflects Mead's pragmatism with its emphasis on getting things done and the resolution of problems as major goals.

Taft, like Mead and unlike Freud, assumed that individuals with problems were normal, and that problems in society or the self could be resolved through the use of language. This view of the distressed person differs radically from Freud's theory of pathology and malfunction within the individual. Taft's more positive view of the troubled person and the helping process is summarized in this passage:

The client, in my belief, is not a sick person whose illness must first be classified, but a human being, like a worker, asking for a specific service. Diagnosis, then, is not a categorizing of a client's makeup, with a resultant prescription for his needs, but an attempt on the part of worker and client to discover what client need and agency service can be brought into a working connection that is mutually acceptable. (1948:9-10).

Taft also differed from Rank and Freud on the significance of the past for explaining the present. Like Mead, she emphasized action in the present. Although the present is always based on the past, the present is the primary concern. The future, moreover, is based on the present and can become a variety of possible futures, dependent upon "the other," "the generalized other," and process of "reflection" (Mead, 1932, 1934). This orientation to time permeated Taft's approach to diagnosis (Taft, 1949). Her goal was treatment with service, not diagnosis without action, again reflecting the pragmatic emphasis on action and behavioral change. For Taft and Mead it was not facts but the interpretation of facts that was significant. Reality is socially created and not determined by biological drives.

Her fusion of Mead and Rank ultimately led to her unique clinical theory, an approach that was strongly at odds with Freud. Her final position is beautifully illustrated in the following passage:

It [therapy] has developed from the notion of a reform of the "other" through superior knowledge of life and psychology, a concept closely allied to that of scientific control in the field of emotions and behavior, to my present acceptance of therapy as presented in this volume; a therapy which is purely individual, nonmoral, nonscientific, nonintellectual, which can take place only when divorced from all hint of control, unless it be of the therapist's control of himself in the therapeutic situation. (1933:xiii)

Thus, Taft drew on Mead and Rank to develop a helping role characterized by a profound equality between the therapist and client, in contrast to a Freudian authority figure. She also recognized, however, the Freudian contribution of being nondirective and nonjudgmental.

Her rejection of structured forces shaping interactions and her emphasis on emotions were, in many ways, the opposite extreme of Mead's overemphases on rationality and social control. Taft's understanding of the self and the other brought needed balance to Mead's concepts by drawing on Rank's and Freud's interpretations of the irrational. But she carried the latter men's ideas on emotions to such an extreme that she generated her own weaknesses—an overly emotional understanding of the world. Her concern with the “other,” “social control” and “anti-rationality,” however, are responses to the world depicted by Mead and, thus, a significant blend of Mead, Rank, and Freud.

Taft separated her work from psychoanalysis, as did Rank, especially in her understanding of “functional therapy” (Taft, 1937). Here, Taft's ideas were uniquely her own. In the following passage, she defined this approach as particularly distinct from Freudian, Meadian, and Rankian thought:

The term “relationship therapy” is used to differentiate from psychoanalysis or any process in which either the analytic or the intelligent aspect is stressed or the immediacy of the experience denied or confused with history. It was only gradually that I became sufficiently confident of my own difference to want to give it a label, but it now seems necessary to use some name to designate a philosophy and technique which have little in common with psychoanalysis as generally understood, but are, on the contrary, antipathetic to the Freudian psychology and practice. (1933:xvi)

Her selection of children as primary clients and foci of study is also a reaction to both Mead and Rank, who were chiefly concerned with adults. The study of children, moreover, was a topic in which women sociologists specialized (e.g., Addams, 1909, 1910; Deegan, forthcoming).

Taft attacked psychiatrists for being too individualistic in their approach. They could only “see individual rather than social units, and . . . deal with disease entities rather than with the concrete problems of social maladjustment” (1918:660). Taft's therapeutic approach offered a viable alternative to Freudian practice, and it carved a specific niche different from the work of Mead and Rank, as well.

Taft assumed that her work, casework, existed in the interstices between the personal and the social (1920b). She saw it as the “practical application of mental hygiene to individuals who need it” (1920b:1). Her clinical sociology allows sociologists to temper the powerful but overly optimistic insights of

symbolic interactionists with the insights gained from confrontations with the problems of thwarted dreams and lives. Her vibrant application of the genesis of the self to the training process for clinicians turns the traditional expert versus client relation into a "we relation," a journey into a shared and meaningful future.

CONCLUSION

Jessie Taft was a brilliant social theorist who established a theory of clinical sociology based on the work of G. H. Mead and Otto Rank. Her biographical situation as a woman philosopher trained over 60 years ago embedded her in a situation that was both liberating and restricting. Inspired by the work of men, she was not allowed to be their professional equal in the male academy. Finally finding an occupational home as a social worker, her myriad contributions to sociology have been neglected for years.

The clinical sociology of Jessie Taft provides contemporary scholars with an innovative way of defining problems in daily living and the positive strengths of people in trouble. Practitioners and clients are empowered by her articulation of the creative possibilities of helping relationships. Taft's emphases on the genesis of the self, the dynamic rather than the static, the role of problems in instituting change and growth, and the professional self emerged from Mead's influence. She envisioned clinical work as embedded in social situations where both the abnormal and the normal have a common origin and similar processes of development.

Because she rarely claims to follow Mead in her writings, however, the intrinsic union of symbolic interaction and functional social work has not been integrated into the sociological tradition. Her failure to be employed or recognized as a sociologist during her lifetime provides another reason for her distance from sociological networks. Her status as a woman professional and her ties to her female colleagues also distanced her from many of her male colleagues. Finally, the unwritten history of clinical sociology deepened the gulf between her work and contemporary professionals in this field.

This paper has introduced Taft's sociological legacy, but a full exposition of her work is still needed. Her work on the female self, the feminist movement, functional therapy, and the use of time in a client relationship are particularly promising areas to study. In addition, her biographical situation and professional career need more investigation to reveal both her individual development and that of her female colleagues and network. Further analyses of Taft's life and ideas will unearth a rich heritage worthy of extensive excavation in the archaeology of knowledge.

NOTES

1. Fritz proves a notable exception to the general neglect of the history of clinical sociology (1985a) and the particular neglect of Taft (1985b).

2. My biographical information on Taft relies to a considerable extent on Robinson (1962). This is the major publication on Taft's life, and it contains few intimate or specific details.

Robinson and Taft lived together for over 40 years and such a lifelong female friendship was characteristic of early women professionals, especially sociologists. Many contemporary scholars speculate on whether such women were lovers (e.g., Cook, 1977), but I do not have any evidence that could settle this issue. Rosenberg (1982) discusses Taft, relying heavily on the Robinson account, but assumes inaccurately that Taft was primarily influenced by men in her work and social thought. Taft was clearly committed, generally, to women and feminism, and, specifically, to Robinson. In addition, the close friendship between Taft and Ethel Sturgess Dummer, a Chicago philanthropist who supported sociological writings and research, is documented in Deegan (1978/1979). These women were significant influences on Taft as a person, professional, and theorist.

Such women-identified lives were increasingly suspect after the rise of Freudian thought (see Cook, 1977, Sahli, 1979), and this social disapproval may have led to the rather flat account provided by Robinson. This book, nonetheless, is a notable introduction to Taft and contains a collection of her writings.

3. Taft drops tantalizing hints concerning her complex role in Rank's tumultuous career in her biography of him (1958).

4. I assume the reader has a greater familiarity with Freud's epistemology than with Mead's or Rank's. For the novice, an outstanding overview of Freudian assumptions and problems is found in Yankelovich and Barrett (1971).

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