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1991

## Lucile Eaves (1869-1953)


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Deegan, Mary Jo and Hill, Michael R., "Lucile Eaves (1869-1953)" (1991). *Sociology Department, Faculty Publications*. 391.  
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Deegan, Mary Jo and Michael R. Hill. 1991. "Lucile Eaves (1869-1953)." Pp. 140-147 in *Women in Sociology: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook*, edited by Mary Jo Deegan. New York: Greenwood Press.

# LUCILE EAVES (1869–1953)

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Lucile Eaves was a research and applied sociologist, a professor, and an activist. She was fired by a desire to change women's status and that of laborers, anticipating the contemporary concern with the structural ties between class and sex. She worked in the South Park Social Settlement of San Francisco, and as a faculty member at Stanford University, the University of Nebraska, and Simmons College. Her work for the Women's Educational and Industrial Union generated numerous quantitative studies of women's lives in a variety of contexts. She is one of the first sociologists to study medical sociology, especially women with physical disabilities.

## BIOGRAPHY

Eaves was born in the Midwest, in Leavenworth, Kansas, on January 9, 1869. She was the daughter of David William and Anna Cowman Weir Eaves. Like many other female sociologists of her day (e. g., Edith Abbott\* and Sophonisba Breckinridge\*), her father was a lawyer. She had at least one sister, Ruth, who lived with Lucile most of her life. She graduated from the Peoria (Illinois) High School, and then taught elementary school in that city for one year. She followed this work with three years of teaching in an industrial school for the Nez Percé Indians at Lapwai, Idaho. Next she taught in the public schools of Portland, Oregon, for a year. In 1892, when Leland Stanford, Jr., University opened its doors to women, she rushed to obtain more advanced education.

As an early feminist, Eaves entered the first class of Leland Stanford, Jr., University and graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1894. For the next four years Eaves headed the history department at San Diego (California) High School. She studied at the University of Chicago during 1898–1899, where she was a

lecturer in university extension. (Sophonisba Breckinridge, Katharine Bement Davis,\* Frances Kellor,\* and Marion Talbot\* also were there during this year.) In 1899 she returned to Stanford, where she was hired as a history instructor. During the summers of 1899 and 1900 she continued her studies in sociology, economics, and philosophy at the University of Chicago. As a student and later a faculty member at Stanford, she worked closely with sociologists E. A. Ross and George E. Howard (both men later became presidents of the American Sociological Society) and Mary Elizabeth Burroughs Roberts Smith Coolidge.\* Eaves held this position until 1901 when she lost her position due to her public support of her mentor, E. A. Ross who was fired. After her resignation from Stanford, Eaves was offered a summer position at the South Park Social Settlement in San Francisco. She was partially forced to accept the position out of financial need, but she soon developed a strong commitment to this work.

Eaves first achieved public attention through her role as head resident at the South Park Settlement in San Francisco, but these were lonely times for her. She wanted to continue in academic life, but believed that it was impossible to do so at this time. Ross (and later Howard, who resigned in protest over his colleague's dismissal) was hired by the University of Nebraska, whereas Eaves had to start her professional life anew. The settlement kept her busy, however, serving 700 to 800 persons each week. Although she preferred academic work, she wryly noted that "the problem of popular education is after all a most important one" (Eaves to Ross, November 25, 1901, p. 4, Ross Papers). Following Jane Addams's\* model of the ideal women sociologist and her agenda for social change, Eaves was closely integrated into "women's work in sociology." In her work at the social settlement, Eaves actively investigated child labor and campaigned for a better state law, which was passed in 1905. As a result of this work, Eaves became a special agent of the State Labor Bureau and appeared at hearings in Sacramento in behalf of the bill.

Despite her active life, Eaves believed that she was getting "provincial," and wanted a doctorate in applied sociology. She intended, however, to return to the settlement and provide greater leadership to it as a result. She turned to Ross for recommendations to enter Columbia University and study with Franklin Giddings (mentor of Elsie Clews Parsons\* and Anna Garlin Spencer\*). She also was offered a scholarship at the University of Chicago at this time but she preferred studying in New York. She turned her position at South Park over to Mary Elizabeth Burroughs Roberts Smith Coolidge, who had fallen into financial difficulties as a newly divorced woman.

After the devastating San Francisco fire in 1906, Eaves returned to California to assist in the relief work (Eaves 1906). A year later she had completed the text for her book on California labor legislation after obtaining a fellowship from the University of California and working for the Carnegie Institution.

In 1909 she received good news from her mentor Howard, who had not forgotten her. He hired her at the University of Nebraska as an associate professor of practical sociology. The next year she completed her Ph.D. degree in applied

sociology at Columbia University. Eaves worked successfully at Nebraska for several years. During the ensuing years she wanted, but did not get, more money and a promotion from the University of Nebraska (Deegan 1981). This discrimination structurally limited her professional opportunities. In 1913 she took a sabbatical from Nebraska and assumed a lectureship in economics at the University of California. She returned to Nebraska despite her dissatisfaction with her position there. For example, Eaves ruefully declined an offer from Ross to participate in a scholarly conference at Princeton University. "You know this university pays me a very modest stipend and I have a sister and a farm to support" (November 12, 1914, 1). In 1915 she regretfully resigned from the University of Nebraska because of financial pressures.

Eaves immediately found employment as a lecturer and as the director of research at Simmons College in Boston. In 1921 she was promoted to associate professor, and in 1925 promoted to full professor. The graduate program at Simmons was operated through the Women's Educational and Industrial Union (WEIU), in which she trained more than sixty students and continued the traditions established by Annie Marion MacLean,\* Amy Hewes,\* and Susan Kingsbury.\* (See Eaves' brief description of the WEIU, 1924b.) Eaves' students became affiliated with social work rather than sociology, however. Eaves continued her Nebraska connections throughout her career at the WEIU, jointly addressing meetings of the American Sociological Society with her former colleagues (e.g. 1917) or having her work critiqued by them (see section on critiques).

Eaves was an active member of the American Sociological Society and an elected member of its executive committee from 1924 to 1926. From 1917 to 1924 she worked on the Committee to Standardize Research in an effort to make annual, national, cooperative studies part of the sociological enterprise. She also held memberships in the American Economics Association, the Royal Economic Society, the American Association for University Women, the American Association for Social Workers, the American Association of University Professors, and Phi Beta Kappa. She served as an associate editor of *The Journal of Applied Sociology* from 1923 to 1929.

After her retirement from Simmons and the WEIU, Eaves became the director of the North End Union, a philanthropic organization operated by the Unitarians. She died in Brookline, Massachusetts, on January 20, 1953, after an extremely active life.

## MAJOR THEMES

Cooperative research was a major goal for early women sociologists. They believed that the self was personally and professionally embedded in larger social entities, and sociologists were a particular group dedicated to improving the lot of people in everyday life. Eaves articulated these general ideas in specific research, organized under the auspices of the American Sociological Society.

Eaves worked on a committee to conduct such work in 1917, and in 1919 she investigated women's old-age support. This plan was published in the *American Journal of Sociology* in 1920, and the study was completed in 1922. She continued this style of research over a series of studies (e.g., 1923, 1927, and 1929), but not under the sponsorship of the American Sociological Society, which became increasingly conservative in the 1920s, especially in their collegial relations with women scholars.

A good example of Eaves' early role in the women's network of the American Sociological Society is her participation at the 1918 meetings, where she and Marion Talbot critiqued the work of Anna Garlin Spencer. Here they supported the "Ideals and Methods in the Social Education of Women" articulated by Spencer. In 1917 Eaves participated in the meetings of the same group as a discussant of the work of Kelsey on social control and war. She argued for cooperative research and reviewed her research studies and their alliance with that of Sophonisba Breckinridge and British sociologists.

This role as a person who conceptualized female sociologists' practices is seen in several articles. Thus in 1923 she wrote on the relation between applied sociology and social work, and in that same year she reported on "Women in Conference on Industrial Problems," where Mary van Kleeck,\* Florence Kelley,\* and Sophonisba Breckinridge were major speakers. This conference was plagued by anti-Communists, who saw these women as threats to capitalism.

The statistical studies conducted by Eaves complement the work of her female cohort (e.g., Edith Abbott, Amy Hewes, and Mary van Kleeck). Eaves examines the limited income, housing, family obligations (e.g., 1921, 1921c; 1925), and even the budgetary constraints on nutritious food for working women (1917).

The life cycle was a major theme in Eaves' writings, echoed in many contemporary writings (e.g., Alice S. Rossi\* and Matilda White Riley\*). Her cooperative, statistical studies of *Aged Clients of Boston Social Agencies* (1925), *Children in Need of Special Care; Studies Based on Two Thousand Case Records of Social Agencies* (1923c), and *Old Age Support of Women Teachers* (1921c) reveal a complex pattern of disadvantage related to both youth and old age. This pattern is exacerbated for women with physical disabilities, who are limited in employment opportunities, pay, and physical endurance. Eaves' *Gainful Employment for Handicapped Women* (1921b) documents the meager lives of this still underresearched population. Her pathbreaking work on women with physical disabilities is the earliest sociological analysis on this population.

This massive survey research work is a marked contrast to her early studies on labor history and legislation. Her major writing is *A History of California Labor Legislation* (this book is dedicated to Howard "by his pupil and co-worker," 1910). The first chapter, on the "San Francisco Labor Movement," was her doctoral dissertation, written under Giddings's guidance at Columbia University. It examines the geographical location of the city, its concentrated population, racial composition, and historical development of trade unions. Eaves presents a sympathetic interpretation of workers' rights to organize, and docu-

ments in particular the racism of anti-Chinese organizations. Eaves herself supported the exclusion of Chinese labor, a racist stance, arguing from the populist, white working-class perspective. This was a "radical" perspective, a major cause of Ross being fired at Stanford, since it supported unionizing the poor and laborers. It also was a "conservative" perspective in its protectionist and racist application. (Eaves used the same argument in her 1918 discussion of Kelsey's work.) In this way she followed the more racially bigoted writings of E. A. Ross and Franklin Giddings than the more egalitarian work of Mary Elizabeth Burroughs Roberts Smith Coolidge. Despite this *major* flaw in Eaves' thought, she wrote a complex study of the interaction of class, race, and history in a "democratic," populist context. Her scholarship here remains a classic statement on this often forgotten struggle for workers' rights in a pioneer era marked by tumultuous racial conflict within and across all classes.

Eaves used her expertise on the sociological and historical development of California to critique the work of Katherine Coman (1913a) in *The American Journal of Sociology*. The former's review of the latter's two volumes on *Economic Beginnings of the Far West* lauded their painstaking research, comprehensiveness, and interdisciplinary strengths. She used her knowledge of women's work in the marketplace to critique and support Mary van Kleeck's work in *Women in the Bookbinding Trade* (Eaves 1913b).

The problems of health for the poor (1929a, 1929b, and 1929c), people with cancer (1927b), and children victimized by industrial accidents (1921a) are examined in a series of informative articles. The Flynn physical exercise system (1911), the study of women with disabilities (1921b), and the analysis of food (1917) point to Eaves' focus on the relation of the body to social functioning. This work comprises some of the earliest studies in medical sociology.

## CRITIQUES OF LUCILE EAVES

Lucile Eaves was connected to several networks in sociology, through Stanford University, the University of Nebraska, the Women's Educational and Industrial Union, and social settlements. Her books were widely reviewed and well received within this complex professional network.

George E. Howard and E. A. Ross reflected both her Stanford and Nebraska ties. Howard (1922) actively supported Eaves' intellectual project in his positive critique of her cooperative research. He cited her years of preparing and organizing such innovative work, her skill in producing it, and her leading role in sociology. E. A. Ross also wrote a glowing review of *Old Age Support of Women Teachers* for the *American Journal of Sociology* in 1922. He wrote, "If this is not material for sociology, nothing is" (p. 241), making a significant attempt to keep her work defined as sociology instead of as social work.

Chase G. Woodhouse, active in the women's network in sociology, reviewed *A Legacy to Wage-Earning Women* (1926). Woodhouse found the work "prepared with the same care as have earlier ones in the series" (p. 651), referring

to work by Amy Hewes, Susan Kingsbury, and Annie Marion MacLean at the Women's Educational and Industrial Union. Lillian Brandt, active in social work circles, positively reviewed *A History of California Legislation*, but also, unfortunately, supported the exclusion of Chinese and convict laborers that Eaves advocated. Unionization is defined, according to Brandt, as a democratic rather than revolutionary process. This book was one of Eaves' most important writings, but it received only a paragraph note in *The American Journal of Sociology* (review of *A History of California Legislation* [1910]).

A brief description of South Park Settlement was written by Katherine Coman in 1903. Another brief entry on its work is found in Robert A. Woods and Albert J. Kennedy (1922, 20–22). Mary Elizabeth Burroughs Roberts Smith Coolidge also provides information about the settlement and the Stanford network in which Eaves worked.

Unfortunately few contemporary scholars use the writings of Lucile Eaves. Leslie Woodcock Tentler, however, has used Eaves' studies on working women's budgets and food to document the frugality and loneliness of their lives (1979, 124–128). Eaves' relation to the American Sociological Society is briefly considered in an article on the early sexual division of labor in that organization (Deegan 1981). In general, Eaves' work, writings, and biography have been overlooked in scholarly annals.

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