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## Credit For Contribution In Early Sociology

Being an author infers that one should expect credit after publishing or presenting work. As a result, credit for contribution or authorship may include not only those who did the actual writing but also those who provided any kind of intellectual contribution. Similarly, if a person did a certain contribution during the early stages of a field of study through their work, it is fair if they get their due credit. However, there are various variables involved in the identification of a contributor in a field. Nonetheless, once they have been rediscovered, credit has to be assigned to their contributions. Beatrice Potter Webb, Anna Julia Cooper, and Florence Kelley are three women who made significant early contributions to the field of sociology and did not receive credit until recently. Exploring who they were and what they did to the said field would be useful given that they are gradually recapturing a place in the history of sociology.

### Beatrice Potter Webb

Beatrice Potter Webb was an English sociologist who lived between 1858 and 1943. In addition to being a sociologist, Webb was also an economist, social reformer, labor historian, and socialist. She was born in the village of Standish, Gloucestershire to a businessman named Richard Potter and a Laurencina, who was a daughter of a Liverpool merchant (Harrison, 2016). Webb's grandfather (on the side of her father) was a member of parliament affiliated to the liberty party and cofounded a non-conformist liberal group called little circle, which made considerable contribution to the Reform Act Of 1832. She was married to Sidney Webb who was also a socialist, economist, and social reformer. Their marriage in 1892 founded an enduring partnership of shared interests.

One of the most popular things associated with her is the term collective bargaining, which she coined in 1891 (Harrison, 2016). Collective bargaining refers to a process in which a negotiation happens between employers and a group of workers regarding agreements that aim at regulating salaries, benefits, and working conditions among other aspects related to workers' rights and payment for work done. These types of negotiations and agreements have been in existence since the emergence of trade unions during the 1900s. Nonetheless, the introduction of the term to the field can be considered a useful contribution.

Additionally, one of her books titled *The Cooperative Movement in Great Britain* was published in 1891. In it, she differentiated the terms "co-operative individualism" and "co-operative federalism" after which she identified as a co-operate federalist, which is a school of thought that fights for the existence of consumer corporate societies (Harrison, 2016). On the other hand, corporate individualism is defined as the one that supports the control and ownership of workplaces by the employees. Her key ideological position in this subject was that workers should form cooperatives whereby members are cooperatives after the federal cooperatives buy and operate factories and other means of production.

### Anna Julia Cooper

Anna Julia Cooper was an American educator, sociologist, black liberation activist, and one of the most prominent black scholars in America. She was born into slavery in 1858 but fought

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through all the odds to earn a work-class education and gain power and respect in academic circles (Grant, 2015). Her mother was a slave woman and her father a white slave owner. At the age of ten, she joined the newly established Saint Augustine's Normal School and Collegiate Institute, which was a school meant for freed slaves. Shortly afterward, she proved to be an excellent student and soon began teaching mathematics part-time at her young age. Her feminist awakening happened when she learned that there was a disparity in how male and female classmates were encouraged to pursue different curriculum (with males being urged to study a more rigorous curriculum than females).

In 1879, she joined Oberlin College, which she graduated in 1884 with a bachelor's in science degree in mathematics. Cooper received a master's degree in mathematics in 1888. Around the same time, she had become a faculty member at the M Street High School where she taught science, mathematics, and Latin (Grant, 2015). Soon thereafter, she started being involved in the black women's club movement. This club was made of highly educated middle-class women who took it as their responsibility to help poor African Americans in improving their welfare in general. It was during this club membership that she gained popularity as a public speaker.

Cooper contributed to social theory by providing a fresh perspective on such issues as conflict, dominance, race, gender, and power among other issues. Her social theory hovered around the idea of domination as a system of oppression and privilege where she considered "othering" as the main 'perpetrator' in the emergence of ideologies that 'feed' from difference between people, for example gender, material resources, and race (Grant, 2015). Accordingly, identifying blacks as the "other" results in the domination and subservience of the same. It was through her intersection of how differences like race, gender or class are used to create 'otherness' that makes her social theory revolutionary. There might have been discussions about the three issues before her theorizing but she was charting new territory in rethinking the intersection of the three issues. An example of this consideration is her push for black women to build coalitions with other subordinates (women and people of color) to achieve social change.

## **Florence Kelley**

Florence Kelley was a social and political reformer who lived between 1859 and 1932. She was born in Philadelphia to a William Kelley and Caroline Bartram Bonsall. Her father was a member of the United States House of Representatives, an abolitionist, and founder of the Republican Party. After graduating from Cornell University in 1882, she went on to study law and government in German (Brandeis, 2017). While in college, she joined the Intercollegiate Socialist Society, joined the German Social Democratic Party, was an activist for women's right to vote, and fought civil rights for African Americans.

After moving to New York City in 1899 where she lived until 1926, she started the National Consumers League for which she served as its general secretary (Brandeis, 2017). She used the authority availed by this organization to raise public awareness and to protect workers, particularly women and children by passing state legislation. Besides, the National Consumers League was itself anti-sweatshop.

One of her most notable legal contributions was her contribution to lobbying for the passing of Keating-Owen Child Labor Act of 1916 by congress (Brandeis, 2017). This law prohibited the

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sale of products that were made in factories that hired children below the age of 13. In addition to this legislation, she also participated in the lobbying of Sheppard-Towner Act, which facilitated the first social welfare program in the country to fund health care clinics to lower maternal and infant mortality.

## References

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