THE POWER OF PRAGMATISM: KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AND SOCIAL INQUIRY
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Introduction: The Power of Pragmatism
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In life we are accustomed to the fact that our most important decisions are often based on uncertainty. We take a punt, follow our nose or listen to our gut. We make decisions without knowing that things will work out. We accept a marriage proposal, blow the whistle on an employer or go out on strike in the hope that it will be for the best. We expect to reach our golden anniversary, receive vindication for our efforts, and win collective gains but we know it could all too easily end in divorce, persecution or unemployment. Even mundane decisions like going for a walk, buying a gift for a relative or accepting a lunch invitation make us vulnerable to unintended and unexpected consequences: one thing leads to another and unanticipated events can occur. Our greatest emotional triumphs and our most dismal failures come from putting our neck on the line. We navigate everyday life learning to expect and manage uncertainty.

When it comes to our approach to social research, however, such insights and practices tend to be lodged in the back of the mind. We deploy theoretical frameworks and abstract concepts to help us reduce the complexity of the world to manageable proportions. Even if we acknowledge that they are simplifications, we approach social inquiry with a predefined lexicon that allows us to find 'gentrification', 'neoliberalism', 'planetary urbanism', 'settler colonialism' or the 'post-political' (to highlight some of the most popular concepts in critical social inquiry today) because those are the things we expect to find. If we use large datasets and analytical models, we look for predictable patterns to find the universal causal processes behind complex activities such as voting choices, knife attacks or rates of obesity. In the search for certainty, not surprisingly, we simplify social life and find evidence that supports our established ideas. Academics pursuing the normal science of social inquiry all too often produce concepts that allow us to see certain things while ignoring others, and, in a circular and self-reinforcing process, the resulting research reproduces prevailing ideas or generates new ones that feed the cycle anew.

Relinquishing what John Dewey (1929) called 'the quest for certainty' has proved extremely difficult in both physical and social research. Predictable causal relationships might appear clear in a laboratory setting but, even there, we are likely to ignore the role of confounding factors and the likelihood of unintended consequences. The invention of DDT promised the eradication of mosquito-borne diseases but instead produced a carcinogenic legacy of global environmental contamination. The miracle invention of antibiotics that fight deadly bacteria stimulated new strains of highly resistant "superbugs" and destroyed the microbiota of the human gut that support good immunity. The laws of economic science that allow markets to flourish also produce income inequality, negative environmental externalities, and uneven development. These are just a few examples in a long list of unanticipated consequences of science that are coming home to roost in the Anthropocene (Mitchell, 2002; Polanyi, 1920 [2018]; 1944 [2001]). In both the natural and social sciences, belief in certainty has sometimes produced deadly effects.

This book aims to make the case for pragmatism as an approach to social inquiry in which the absence of certainty is an asset rather than a liability for the process of knowledge production in the social world. A practice of social inquiry informed by pragmatism, we argue, leaves open the possibility for the unexpected, the potential joy of one thing leading to an (unexpected) other. It offers an opportunity, as Richard Rorty (2009 [1979], 370) suggests, "to keep space open for the sense of wonder…that there is something new under the sun…, something which (at least for the moment) cannot be explained." Pragmatism, Rorty continues, "is not a 'method for attaining truth'" but, rather, "is *supposed* to be abnormal, to take us out of our old selves by the power of strangeness, to aid us in becoming new beings" (2009 [1979], 357, 360). In so doing, a pragmatist approach to social inquiry enlarges the possibility of creating new knowledge in the world.

While the body of thought and practice known as pragmatism has been in existence for more than a hundred years (Menand, 1997; 2011; Morris, 1970), its popularity has ebbed and flowed with changing academic fashions and was largely eclipsed by the ascendancy of analytical philosophy in the 20th century. Yet there is strong and mounting evidence that pragmatism is again becoming more widely recognised as a promising orientation for social research (Baert, 2005; Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006; Morgan, 2014; Rogers, 2009). By advocating for the wider adoption of pragmatic ideas in social and spatial research, *The Power of Pragmatism* offers a possible avenue of escape from the pitfalls and contradictions of prevailing modes of inquiry while cohering with multiple sources of emerging thought and practice.   As we discuss further below, a pragmatist approach to social inquiry offers scope to incorporate parallel and related arguments from intellectual antecedents and companions such as Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein and from subsequent social theorists such as Bourdieu, Foucault, and Latour who have been influenced by pragmatism or share its convictions (Bernstein, 1992, 2010; Harman, 2014; Purcell, 2017; Rorty, 2009 [1979], 1989).

A resurgent pragmatism also connects to nascent efforts underway to develop practice-oriented approaches to the conduct of social research, such as phronetic inquiry (Flyvbjerg, 2001), actor-network theory (Latour, 2005), and non-representational theory (Masumi, 2015; Thrift, 2008). Active experiments to adopt research approaches and methods based on collaboration beyond the academy such as participatory action research (PAR), citizen science, and the practice of co-production also present strong affinities with pragmatic social research (Fischer, 2009; Kindon et al, 2007; Jasanoff, 2012; Pestoff et al, 2012; Whyte, 1991). In their alignment with pragmatism, these approaches recognise the futility of what Dewey ([1916] 2004) called 'the spectator theory of knowledge' in which the thinker or researcher stands at an objective distance outside the culture or community of which they are part and in which knowledge constitutes a representation of that separately existing, antecedent reality. Social researchers aligned with pragmatism acknowledge the full import of the crisis of representation, the end of the 'God-trick', and the need to embrace uncertainty in the production of knowledge. While the allure of foundational certainty remains strong when rewarded by conventional practices of obtaining grant funding, publishing a journal article or presenting a conference paper, pragmatism provides a way out of the conundrum of searching for the lifeboat of apparent foundations even as we know they cannot exist.

With a commitment to problem-solving and a perspective extending beyond the academy, furthermore, pragmatism promotes the social value of social research. Its feet are firmly planted in 'the field', in tackling the problems of everyday life, and incorporating broad public scrutiny to decide what is the right thing to do. Rather than taking its cue from existing theory, academic debate

or prevailing intellectual concerns, pragmatic inquiry reorients the focus of research to working with a particular social group or community. Such research is designed to be useful: in the language of pragmatism, it is about working with publics around their problems through community-based inquiry and, in the process, further building the collective capacity to act. Akin to an anthropologist practising ethnography, a pragmatist researcher starts by listening to the beliefs or 'truths' that exist in a community and tries to understand the work those ideas are doing for variously situated community members. Comprehending such truths is further aided by a genealogical—that is, geo-historical—appreciation of the particular development of that community, its economy, institutionalized practices, and related processes of identity-formation. If community members express an appetite to move forward over a particular concern or problem, the researcher might then work with the community to facilitate inquiry into the situation and to collectively develop the ideas and associated practices needed to produce a desired change. This means shedding *a priori* expectations of what comprises a 'social problem' and instead working with people to define what, from their perspective, constitutes an issue, problem, or priority, which may look very different to the long list of public policy issues that regularly feature as recognised public concerns.

Signs of a resurgent pragmatism have been apparent since Richard Rorty, Richard Bernstein, and other 'neo-pragmatist' philosophers published their accounts of the power of pragmatism in the 1980s (Bernstein, 1989, 1992, 2010; Rorty, 2009 [1979], 1989; Unger, 2007). The neo-pragmatist perspective has selectively diffused into various areas of social research such as social psychology (Shibutani, 2017), sociology (Joas, 1993; Shalin, 1986), political science (Bohman, 1999; Festenstein, 1997), public administration (Ansell, 2011; Dieleman, 2014; Shields, 2003, 2008), medical social science (Tolletsen, 2000), human geography (Bridge, 2005; Harney et al, 2016; Wood and Smith, 2008), urban studies (Lake, 2016, 2017), planning theory (Healey, 2009; Hoch, 1984), business studies (Wicks and Freeman, 1998), and economics (Nelson, 2003). Perhaps not surprisingly, take up has been greatest in the humanities and applied arts such as law (Posner, 2003), education (Biesta, 2015), history (Kloppenberg, 1989), literature (Mitchell, 1982), theology (West, 1989), and philosophy (Misak, 2002) where the quest for certainty was already much less secure. The contributions included in *The Power of Pragmatism* attempt to build on this ongoing work to further explore its implications for the practice of social inquiry.

In suggesting that pragmatism can be applied across the social sciences to diverse fields of research, *The Power of Pragmatism* advocates the adoption of a pragmatic approach that can advance the practice of social inquiry while enhancing the public impact of the work that is done. Adopting pragmatism, however, involves major changes in the practice of social science with significant implications for the ontological status and substantive content of the knowledge produced, as well as for our academic subjectivity and public identity as "researchers". This book seeks to elucidate those changes and to address some of the challenges impeding their realization.

In the remainder of this introduction, we set out the historical development of the pragmatist tradition and its core ideas, before exploring its application to social research, past and present. We then make a strong case for pragmatic social research, outline its key components, and highlight its implications for research practice and outcomes. In the penultimate section, we address some of the long-standing concerns about pragmatism in order to provide critical context to the chapters that follow.

1.   The pragmatic tradition of thought

The pragmatic tradition of philosophy developed in the years just after the American Civil War when a group of friends living in Cambridge, Massachusetts in the 1870s met to talk about ideas. They sought an explanation for, and an alternative to, the chaotic upheaval and violence of civil war, in which, they thought, the vehement adherence to incommensurable convictions had led to incomprehensible barbarity and destruction. The key protagonists were Nicholas St John Green [1830-1876], Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr [1841-1914], William James [1842-1910], Charles Sanders Peirce [1839-1914] and Chauncey Wright [1830-1875] (Menand, 2011; Mills, 1964 [1943]). They called themselves 'the Metaphysical Club' and exchanged ideas about philosophy, science, and law, eventually advocating a new approach to understanding ideas. As Brandom (2009, 31) puts it, they came to believe that society "needed … a different attitude toward our beliefs: a less ideologically confident, more tentative and critical attitude, one that would treat them as the always-provisional results of inquiry to date, as subject to experimental test and revision in the light of new evidence and experience, and as permanently liable to obsolescence due to altered circumstances, shifting contexts, or changes of interests".

The early pragmatists were resolutely anti-foundationalist, rejecting the grounding of truth on *a priori* principles—human nature, natural law, divine will or similar premises that were themselves without foundation—and the pragmatists understood any such 'truth' to be arbitrary, socially constructed, and unverifiable. Rather than searching for metaphysical or immutable truths, pragmatists held that ideas are practical tools and can be best understood in relation to their consequences. Ideas matter not because of their correspondence to an antecedent reality but because of what they allow people to do and to get done in the world. From an ecological and historicist perspective, ideas were understood to be products of particular circumstances and were dependent upon their utility.

Fusing the consequentialist spirit of Bentham's utilitarianism with the new Darwinian science, Peirce was particularly important in arguing that the value of ideas could be understood in relation to their effects and he first published the term pragmatism in a paper in 1878 (Mills, 1964). Pragmatism, according to Peirce, sought "to lay down a method of determining the meaning of intellectual concepts, that is, of those upon which reasoning may turn." In what has become known as the 'pragmatic maxim', Peirce argued that "In order to ascertain the meaning of an intellectual conception one should consider what practical consequences might conceivably result by necessity from the truth of that conception" (quoted in Mills, 1964, 178). This was a powerful argument about a theory of meaning and the definition of truth. Ideas could be deemed to be true, the pragmatists claimed, when they had useful consequences and this practical application provided their meaning. As such, ideas are related to their social context and particular interests and it is no longer possible to support a 'spectator theory of knowledge' in which the truth lies in an antecedent reality behind or beyond the grind of everyday life. The grind is the point and ideas are related to their use in the world.

This new approach presented a startling position that challenged understanding that had ruled the history of ideas since Plato. From the start of the European Enlightenment in the seventeenth century, scientists and philosophers had embarked upon the pursuit of a particular kind of knowledge that was understood to be rational, that is, universal rather than particular, general rather than local, timeless rather than timely, and written rather than oral (Toulmin, 2001).

Enlightenment reasoning produced a shift away from "*practical* philosophy, whose issues arose out of clinical medicine, judicial procedure, moral case analysis, or the rhetorical force of oral reasoning, to a *theoretical* conception of philosophy" (Toulmin, 2001, 34). The turn from the immediate and practical to the theoretical and abstract offered an escape from a dogmatic political order in which religious intolerance and endless war were at their height. For the scholars of the Enlightenment, the certainty and predictability of universal laws seemed to provide a path to progress in the face of a chaotic and destructive social order. From Descartes and Newton to Ricardo and Marx, the Enlightenment quest for the certainty of universal laws governed the production of knowledge in the physical as in the social world. The promise of progress through knowledge continued unabated in the years leading up to and following the Second World War, when the popularity of logical positivism, abstract formalism in music, art and architecture, and the rise of spatial science all reflected a context in which universal ideas were sought and applied regardless of the contextual specificities of history and geography.

The journey towards a 'second enlightenment' (Brandom, 2009) was promoted by pragmatists as they rejected dogmatism and relinquished the quest for certainty (Menand, 2011). This new approach, however, did not reject reason in favour of art, emotion, and feeling in responding to the world, as had been advocated by the romantic poets and thinkers who sought to resist the 'enlightenment' of the seventeenth century (Toulmin, 2001). Rather, the pragmatists adopted a new version of reason that focused on practice and application, reflecting their interest in "intelligent doings rather than abstract sayings" (Brandom, 2009, 25). Such 'intelligent doings' were crystalized in pragmatists' appreciation for the new kind of science that reflected the importance of practice and application over metaphysical speculation and abstraction. "Science," as pragmatists understood it, could not depend on a stance of distanced objectivity—an unattainable position when the inquirer is inescapably situated in the world. Rather, science described a method of democratic experimentation in response to problems encountered in experience. "Science is a *pursuit*," John Dewey observed in 1920, "not a coming into possession of the immutable" (Dewey, 1920, x). It is from this understanding of science as collective experimental problem-solving that pragmatists formulated their notion of 'inquiry', understood as the way in which individuals situated in specific contexts or communities could together confront the limits of their knowledge and deliberate over possible alternative futures that could furnish ideas for action.

In its first, Peircean, manifestation, the practice of pragmatist inquiry was argued to be relatively limited, stimulated by a particular doubt (or what Dewey called a "problematic situation") that prompts the search for new ideas for action. Peirce argued that most beliefs are generally not subject to doubt. Once an idea is established and becomes habituated in systems of thought and action, it can be left to one side. Indeed, Peirce described himself as a 'conservative sentimentalist' who had no need to reflect on the instincts and core beliefs that are required to live. It is only in situations of doubt triggered by new experience that inquiry is needed to reconsider ideas. It is in those uncertain situations when the individual does not know what to think or how to act that inquiry is required to find a new way of thinking and acting. Thus Peirce understood inquiry as an intellectual process that necessarily takes place within and among a community of inquirers that, in an adaptation of laboratory science, works through experimentation to verify, or otherwise, a new set of ideas. Writing in 1896, Peirce advocated the "laboratory habit of mind" whereby "The scientific spirit requires a man to be at all times ready to dump his whole cartload of beliefs, the moment experience is against them. The desire to learn forbids him to be perfectly cocksure that he

knows already. Besides positive science can only rest on experience; and experience can never result in absolute certainty, exactitude, necessity or universality" (Peirce in Mills, 1964, 163).

In this vision, scientific practice and, by implication, philosophy too, can never be fixed as 'belief'. In the world of the laboratory, ideas can only ever be provisional and open to the winds of new experience and the inevitable reformulation of thought, and in the next phase of development, this analysis was extended beyond the laboratory to the wider society. Between 1906 and 1907, William James gave a series of lectures on pragmatism that were published as *Pragmatism: A new word for old ways of thinking* (1907). He made powerful arguments about the social character of knowledge and the practical meaning of 'truth' in the wider society, saying that "the whole function of philosophy ought to be to find out what definite difference it will make to you and me, at definite instants of our life, if this world-formula or that world-formula [were] to be the true one" (James, 2000 [1907], 27). Working in the spirit of earlier generations of empirically-oriented thinkers, he argued that the pragmatist "turns towards concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action and towards power … It means the open air and possibilities of nature, as against dogma, artificiality, and the pretence of finality in truth" (James, 2000, 27). This intervention represented a dramatic shift in philosophy in which ideas are understood as "a program for future work" (James, 2000, 28) rather than the final answer or ultimate truth. James advocated a pragmatic 'method' that involved understanding the consequences of ideas in the world. He argued that we could get to the bottom of things by understanding the work being done by an idea and its consequences for life.

However, James also highlighted the difficulty of changing our ideas even when we realize they are doing us no good and we want to find something better. Experience, the encounter with the world, might prompt doubt and indecision about what to do but our old ideas prove remarkably stubborn and difficult to relinquish. As James put it: "The most violent revolutions in an individual's beliefs have most of his old order standing. Time and space, cause and effect, nature and history, and one's own biography remain untouched. New truth is always a go-between, a smoother-over of transitions" (James, 2000, 31). For James: "our minds grow in spots; and like grease spots, the spots spread. But we let them spread as little as possible; we keep unaltered as much of our old knowledge and beliefs as we can. We patch and tinker more than we renew. The novelty soaks in; it strains the ancient mass; but it is also tinged by what absorbs it" (James, 2000, 75). The instrumental role of ideas underpins human culture in ways that will never be predictable and we can never be certain that truth will "happen to an idea" nor if it is to be "made true by events" (James, 2000, 88). Indeed, James recognised the immense challenge posed by the social validation of an idea, saying: "We must find a theory that will work; and that means something extremely difficult; for a theory must mediate between all previous truths and certain new experiences" (James, 2000, 95).

It was the philosopher John Dewey [1859-1952] who took up the challenge of further applying pragmatism to understanding the role of ideas, their place in society, and the way in which ideas can and should change for the better. Dewey had not been part of the Metaphysical Club and he came from a different time, place, and background (Westbrook, 1991; Mills, 1964). Dewey's early philosophical work was strongly influenced by established traditions of Hegelian idealism but he was gradually exposed to more practically oriented ideas both through encountering James's approach to psychology in the 1890s as well as by working with Jane Addams at Hull House in Chicago around the same time (Buxton, 1984; Deegan, 1990). As professor of philosophy and pedagogy at the University of Chicago, Dewey established the Laboratory School in 1896 and it became widely known

as 'the Dewey School'. By 1903, it had 140 students and 23 teachers and, informing and reflecting the philosophy he came to write, the school focused on teaching children to learn through doing rather than being told and then repeating what to believe. The focus was on concrete rather than abstract learning and the curriculum was designed to embed ideas in their practical application (Dewey, 2004 [1916]). Moreover, democracy was practiced in the classroom as much as in the wider world and the children were encouraged to develop their character as active participants in the school community. The goal of education, Dewey insisted, is to prepare democratically competent citizens capable of collectively addressing shared problems rather than, as was and still is widely believed, to prepare workers for an insatiable economy or to insert bodies into a prevailing class structure. As a window onto Dewey's philosophy, the school demonstrated his belief in knowledge as a practical tool for getting things done and in setting goals through collective debate and deliberation about the way ahead. Rather than absorbing abstract 'truths', the children were encouraged to learn through practical experiment and to develop their creative intelligence about the world around them. Dewey presented this model as a way to "transform American schools into instruments for the further democratization of American society … Schools should try to deepen and broaden the range of social contact and intercourse, of cooperative living, so that the members of the school would be prepared to make their future social relations worthy and fruitful" (Westbrook, 1991, 109).

Applying these ideas beyond the institution of the school, Dewey developed an argument about the importance of experience for learning and acting in the world. Whereas children within the setting of the school could be given learning opportunities against which to test their ideas and develop their intelligence, Dewey argued that experience plays a similar role in the world at large as people test their ideas through interacting with the world in which "the organism has to endure, to undergo, the consequences of its own actions" (Dewey, 1980 [1917], 8). Experience, in this approach, is understood as the active mediation between ideas and outcomes, potentially prompting people to change their ideas when, faced with the provocations of life, they have to inquire into new ways of thinking and acting. Whereas Peirce argued that doubt prompts changes in ideas in the context of a particular community of inquirers, Dewey relocated this sense of doubt into the broader concept of experience, suggesting that humans are prompted to rethink ideas when experience teaches them to do so, and particularly when (re)learning in collaboration with others. Moreover, he argued that there is a role for philosophy – via what he called social inquiry – in promoting this process of learning. In an essay titled "The need for a recovery of philosophy," written in 1917, he suggested that "philosophy recovers itself when it ceases to be a device for dealing with the problems of philosophers and becomes a method, cultivated by philosophers, for dealing with the problems of men" (Dewey, 1980 [1917], 46).

For Dewey, building on Peirce, inquiry is the practice through which people formulate new ideas and develop potential solutions to the challenges posed by experience. Reflecting the focus on practical application, he called for the development of 'warranted assertions'—ideas that can be tested and potentially validated through experiment or practice—but that always remain open to subsequent challenge and continued re-evaluation. He developed Peirce's ideas of the 'laboratory method' for application to society, recognising the importance of social complexity and diversity in the testing and validation of ideas: "What purports to be experiment in the social field is very different from experiment in natural science; it is rather a process of trial and error accompanied with some degree of hope and a great deal of talk" (Dewey, 1988, [1938], 109).

Dewey had faith in the capacity of human beings to form intelligent judgments, decisions, and action (or Darwinian 'adaptations') in response to changing circumstances, reflecting a basic democratic and relational ethos affirming the intrinsic worth of every socially embedded individual (Lake, 2017; Rogers, 2009; Westbrook, 2005). Rather than considering democracy in relation to its institutional forms, laws, and related activities, he argued that democracy reflects what it is to be human, embedded in communities that are able to learn from experience and make collective decisions about the way ahead. Far more than a system for aggregating preferences, democracy can be found in the plurality of social spaces such as family, school, church, and government (Honneth, 1998; Lake, 2017; Wills, 2016a). A flourishing democracy, moreover, requires that ordinary people have the opportunity to exercise their capacity for collective judgment, for the good of both the decisions being made and the people making them, and this is to be achieved through the combined processes of public formation and collective social inquiry.

This pragmatic practice of democratic inquiry was understood to be about developing and applying collective intelligence in particular contexts, rather than applying rules or abstractions untethered from place and time. Dewey argued that "We cannot seek or attain health, wealth, learning, justice or kindness in general. Action is always specific, concrete, individualized, [and] unique. And consequently, judgements as to acts to be performed must be similarly specific" (1957 [1920], 166/7). This approach requires energy to be invested in the particularities of situated inquiry rather than on the futile quest for generalities, abstractions, and absolute 'truth'. In a harsh criticism that rings true today, Dewey argued that "to set up a problem that does not grow out of an actual situation is to start on a course of dead work … Problems that are self-set are mere excuses for seeming to do something intellectual, something that has the semblance but not the substance of scientific activity" (1939 [1938], 108).

Dewey's commitment to democratic experimentation and collective problem-solving emerged as a direct challenge to critics who advocated the superiority of experts and expertise in democratic decision-making (Lippmann, 1922; 1993[1927]). In *The Public and its Problems*, Dewey (1954 [1927]) mounted a strong defence of the role of ordinary people, conceived as multiple publics, debating and deliberating about shared concerns. For Dewey, democracy needs the people just as much as the people need to have a voice. As he put it: "It is impossible for the high-brows to secure a monopoly of such knowledge as must be used for the regulation of common affairs. In the degree to which they become a specialized class, they are shut off from knowledge of the needs which they are supposed to serve" (Dewey, 1954, 206). While he recognized the economic, social, and political processes that undermine community, and acknowledged the role of the new social scientists who sought to provide expertise on behalf of the growing administrative bureaucracy of an expanding state, Dewey staunchly defended the capacity of ordinary people to make good decisions., If people are unprepared for this task, he held, then this requires conscious and directed effort to provide the spaces and means through which people can deliberate together and act, and to which the process of collective inquiry can make a contribution (Lake, 2017; Westbrook, 1991).

Dewey expressed concern that the 'Great Community' needed protection from being displaced by the 'Great Society'. Without the face-to-face relationships and trusted interactions associated with community, it was hard to see how people could have a role in democratic life and collective decision making. With a public that was "largely inchoate and unorganised" and "bewildered" in the face of dominant business interests, mass political parties, remote public administration, and the

demagogic manipulation of public opinion, Dewey advocated much greater attention to the protection of the public (Dewey, 1954, 109, 116). In words that ring true today, he declared that "It is not that there is no public, no large body of persons having a common interest in the consequences of social transactions. There is too much public, a public too diffused and scattered and too intricate in composition" (1954, 137). The challenge was thus to organise the public, and to find "the means by which a scattered, mobile and manifold public may so recognise itself so as to define and express its interests" (1954, 146). He highlighted the role of multiple overlapping institutions such as "the family, the school, industry, religion" (1954, 143) in underpinning public organisation. But more than this, the problem for the public was one of communication: "The essential need" he maintained, "is the improvement of the methods and conditions of debate, discussion and persuasion. That is *the* problem of the public" (1954, 208, emphasis in original; see also MacGilvray, 2010).

By the middle of the twentieth century, however, the hegemonic dominance of technical rationality, analytical philosophy, authoritarian modernism, scientific management, and quantitative social science (among many other domains) meant that Dewey's work was increasingly "widely honoured and broadly ignored" (Westbrook, 1991, 532). As Toulmin (1991) suggests, the post-war years saw a virulent return to the 'quest for certainty' and pragmatism's commitments to contextuality, provisionality, fallibilism, and inclusive democratic experimentation were largely forgotten. If considered at all, Dewey was characterised as naïve, out-of-date, and out-of-keeping with the rising currents in analytical philosophy, positivist social theory, and calculative social science. A challenge to this ascendant world view and its renewed quest for certainty did not arise until the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s broke through the barricade of prevailing ideas by demanding greater creative and political freedom for women, people of colour, and sexual minorities. These rising social movements demonstrated the diversity of truths in the world and, although they were generally associated with the radical left, triggering a renewed interest in Marxism and anarchism that later proved to be a Trojan horse for new certainties, they also opened the door to revisiting arguments that had been made by the earlier generation of pragmatists. Especially in their early days, the new social movements put great emphasis on collective learning through consciousness-raising, empowerment, deliberation, and participation (Stears, 2010).

The renewed attention to democracy had strong echoes of Dewey's earlier work and the philosopher Richard Rorty recognised the parallels between pragmatism and the new structure of feeling at large in a fast-changing world.[1] Rorty argued that the insights of pragmatism were to be realised through attention to the power of narrative and imagination to remake the world (Malachowski, 2010). He sought to foster solidarity across difference by finding ways to tell new stories through a process he called 'redescription' that could help people find common ground (Lester, 2019). Echoing themes introduced by the earlier generation of pragmatists, Rorty rejected dependence on unwavering foundations, welcomed the impossibility of certainty, and embraced the social and practical nature of truth. Without the fixed anchor of metaphysical truth, the task of philosophers and intellectuals is to develop a 'new vocabulary' that keeps society together despite its inherent multiplicity and the absence of a singular consensus.

Having nothing outside the social context and the particular community in which we find ourselves provides an imperative against "theory and towards narrative" (Rorty, 1991a, xvi). The goal of Rorty's neo-pragmatist philosophy is "to redescribe lots and lots of things in new ways, until you

have created a pattern of linguistic behaviour which will tempt the rising generation to adopt it, thereby causing them to look for appropriate new forms of non-linguistic behaviour, for example, the adoption of new scientific equipment or new social institutions" (Rorty, 1991a, 9). As demonstrated by the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, the new languages of feminism, environmentalism, and civil rights imagined and thus prompted new forms of being and acting in the world (Minnich, 2005, 2017). The task for Rorty is to find ways of intervening in public debate and culture that foster narratives that create wider, richer, and stronger forms of social solidarity. Building on Dewey's legacy, Rorty retained a faith in liberal democracy as a space of freedom in which to develop new narratives providing a vehicle for collective solidarity and social hope (Rorty, 1998a, 1999).

In a world of radical diversity in personal beliefs, Rorty argued that politics depends on the ability to develop ideas that appeal across multiplicity and difference. As he put it: "the only test of a political proposal is its ability to gain assent from people who retain radically diverse ideas about the point and meaning of human life, about the path to private perfection" (Rorty, 1999, 173). Despite the many threats posed to democratic institutions and practices, Rorty had a strong faith that democracy is the best thing we have to proceed in the world. Recognising that there is nothing outside human culture, democracy provides a way to reduce exploitation and domination and advance human flourishing. Pragmatism, for Rorty, highlighted the importance of gaining "a renewed sense of community." Recognizing "our community" as ultimately encompassing the globe (Rorty, 1997), he insisted that "our identification with our community – our society, our political tradition, our intellectual inheritance – is heightened when we see this community as *ours* rather than *nature's*, *shaped* rather than *found*, one among many which men have made. In the end, the pragmatists tell us, what matters is our loyalty to other human beings clinging together against the dark, not our hope of getting things right" (Rorty, 1980, 727, emphasis in the original).

For Rorty, then, the focus of intellectual work should be on developing useful interventions in relationship with a particular expanding community and he thought there is no particular method required to do this. While Dewey had built on Peirce's notion of the practice of inquiry, Rorty wanted to leave things open-ended. As he put it: "If one takes the core of pragmatism to be its attempt to replace the notions of true beliefs as representations of 'the nature of things' and instead to think of them as successful rules for action, then it becomes easy to recommend an experimental, fallibilist attitude, but hard to isolate a 'method' that will embody this attitude" (Rorty, 1991b, 65/6). Indeed, having abandoned representation as the purpose of inquiry, he thought that "the whole idea of … choosing between 'methods'… seems to be misguided" (Rorty, 1982, 195). Rorty (1996) instead defended Dewey's attention to the 'problematic situation' in which existing ideas are no longer adequate for a particular task and new ones are needed. Now the role for social sciences is one of supporting the search for new ideas in tandem with the community of people directly affected by the problem and its solution. As he put it: "Sociologists and psychologists might stop asking themselves whether they are following rigorous scientific procedures and start asking themselves whether they have any suggestions to make to their fellow citizens about how our lives, or our institutions, should be changed" (Rorty, 1998b, 70). "One way of thinking of wisdom as … not the same as … argument," he suggested, is "to think of it as the practical wisdom necessary to participate in a conversation (and) the attempt to prevent conversation from degenerating into inquiry, into a research program" (Rorty, 1979, 372). Relinquishing the goal of accurate

representation, pragmatism seeks engagement in a collective democratic experiment aimed to discern what Dewey called "a sense for the better kind of life to be led" (Dewey, 1919, 39).

2. Pragmatic social research: past and present

The take-up of pragmatism has had a long, uneven, and at times contentious record in the practice of social research. When Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr established the Hull House Settlement on the west side of Chicago in 1889, their "great experiment in social service" (Commager, 1961, xii) rested firmly on pragmatist principles of community engagement, collective experimentation, anti-foundationalism, and problem-orientation. Addams was familiar with William James's writing and her close and enduring friendship with John Dewey pre-dated his appointment to the Philosophy faculty at the newly established University of Chicago in 1894.[2] Reflecting Peirce's 'pragmatic maxim' that the value of ideas relies on their consequences in practice, Addams asserted that "action is the only medium man has for receiving and appropriating truth" (Addams, 1961 [1910], 81). Recollecting her experience at Hull House after two decades, Addams described the Settlement House approach in a long passage that easily stands as a manifesto for pragmatism:

> The one thing to be dreaded in the Settlement is that it lose its flexibility, its power of quick adaptation, its readiness to change its methods as its environment may demand. It must… have a deep and abiding sense of tolerance. It must be hospitable and ready for experiment. It should demand from its residents a scientific patience in the accumulation of facts… It must be grounded in a philosophy whose foundation is on the solidarity of the human race... Its residents must be emptied of all conceit of opinion and all self-assertion, and be ready to arouse and interpret the public opinion of their neighbourhood. They must be content to live quietly side by side with their neighbours, until they grow into a sense of relationship and mutual interests…. They are bound to see the needs of their neighbourhood as a whole, to furnish data for legislation, and to use their influence to secure it. (Addams, 1961 [1910], 84-85)

These principles articulated a pragmatist sensibility on multiple grounds. The Settlement House championed a method of flexibility, fallibility, and experimentation; a willingness to bracket prior expectations and foundational assumptions; an openness to and tolerance of multiple perspectives; the denial of superior expertise and "all self-assertion"; a status of radical equality between Settlement House residents and surrounding neighbours; and a driving commitment to collective and collaborative problem solving. This last point in particular—the commitment to address problems facing Chicago's most impoverished immigrant residents—constituted the central aim and purpose of the Hull House Settlement. As Addams expressly explained, "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, 1961 [1910], 83).

These principles, however, were sometimes contested in the emerging school of urban sociology that was taking form at the nearby University of Chicago during the same period.[3] Faris's celebratory history of Chicago academic sociology hailed the decade after 1920 as "the transition from a pre-scientific to a scientific stage in sociology" (Faris, 1970, xiii), during which the quest for a "science" of

sociology displaced and often denigrated the earlier commitment to problem-solving and social reform. In an otherwise highly adulatory overview of the Chicago School's formative period, Short disparaged the Hull House Settlement as "characterized by highly partisan purposes of immediate social reform…unguided by explicit theoretical premises and hence not productive of generalized, objective statements about urban structure and social life" (Short, 1971, xvi). The identification of universal, generalizable, theoretical statements about the city was elevated as the defining aim of Chicago academic sociology, expressed in the title of the foundational text, *Introduction to the Science of Sociology,* written by Robert Park and Ernest Burgess in 1921, and in distinct contrast to the earlier focus on improving the lived experience of people in cities.[4] Only five years later, Burgess was able to announce that "sociology is being transformed from a social philosophy into a science of society" (Burgess, 1926, viii; see also Burgess and Bogue, 1964) as "the study of the city became divorced from social action and practice" (Deegan, 1990, 37). As Deegan recounts, "Park and Burgess were key figures in disassociating sociology from the appearance of doing social reform" as academic sociology in Chicago "loudly and defiantly separated itself from social reform" (Deegan, 1990, 143).

Chicago was growing rapidly during this period through a combination of industrialization, mass immigration, and urbanization and the early academic sociologists viewed the city as a laboratory from which they could extract a science of urban growth and human behaviour (Park, 1916, 1929; Park and Burgess, 1921; Park et al, 1925). Park's 1929 essay, "The City as a Social Laboratory," exhorted social researchers to emulate the hard sciences by employing the city as a source of immutable truth (Abbott, 1999; Gross, 2009). The trope of the city as a social laboratory that repeatedly appeared in the writing of the Chicago sociologists of this period presupposed that the city constituted an antecedent reality amenable to discovery through the observational methods of laboratory science yielding generalizable laws and universal regularities. As a result, as Gieryn points out, "Chicago (was) naturalized to become (an) analytical object (and) the peculiarities of Chicago are elided, as the city is made into a specimen of generic and universal 'urbanism,' describable not in local details but with laws" (Gieryn, 2006, 10-12).

The ambition to observe the city as a sociological laboratory generated an extensive series of ethnographic field studies of Chicago neighbourhoods, institutions, and organizations published as volumes in the Sociological Series by the University of Chicago Press in the first decades of the twentieth century (Burgess, 1916; Harney et al, 2016; Wills, 2016b).[5] While these ethnographic studies indeed provided a window on the city as "a spatial pattern and a moral order" (Park, 1916), the detailed description of urban life was sometimes used as a means for the elucidation of generalizable principles. Writing the preface to Nels Anderson's *The Hobo: The Sociology of the Homeless Man* (1923), Park asserted "It is, in fact, the purpose of these studies to emphasize not so much the particular and local as the generic and universal aspects of the city and its life, and so make these studies not merely a contribution to our information but to our permanent scientific knowledge of the city as a communal type" (Anderson, 1923, vii-viii, quoted in Gieryn, 2006, 31). In his ethnographic account of *The Ghetto* (1928), Louis Wirth wrote that the ghetto became a "laboratory specimen" (Gieryn, 2006, 12) and Faris approvingly observed that "Wirth's interests were less in the Jewish ghetto as such than in what Park called the natural history of such settlements" (Faris, 1967, 71).

The academics' perspective on urban residents as specimens to be observed in the sociological laboratory was utterly anathema to Jane Addams and her colleagues at Hull House. The difference in perspective between university researchers and settlement house workers encompassed but also went well beyond the divergent objectives of sociological science and social change. Reflecting a basic philosophical as well as political divide was a fundamental disagreement regarding the position of Chicago's residents as research subjects in the urban social laboratory. If the residents of Chicago's slums and ghettos provided the academic sociologists with observations on which to develop theorizations about the city, those same residents provided the settlement house workers with co-equal partners in devising solutions to the problems presented by the exigencies of life in the industrial metropolis. For the academic sociologists, people were the subjects being examined; for Addams and the workers at Hull House, people were the experimenters (Gross, 2009). Describing the *Hull House Maps and Papers,* the early collection of data published in 1895 that the settlement house workers used to document neighbourhood conditions and the need for reform, Deegan explains that

> The use of these maps by female Chicago sociologists (at Hull House) was radically different from their subsequent "scholarly" use by male sociologists (at the University of Chicago). On the one hand, the maps of the "scholars" were intended to reveal to experts and decision-makers the lives of the people of the neighbourhood. On the other hand, the maps of Hull-House were intended to reveal to the people of the neighbourhood that their lifestyles had patterns and implications that they could use to make more informed decisions. These maps were part of the community and integral to the settlement's goals of democracy and education. (Deegan, 1990, 47)

The two perspectives differed not only with respect to the positionality of subjects but also in regard to the position of the researchers. While the academic sociologists aspired to immutable conclusions that would transcend the specificities of place and time (and would simultaneously assure and preserve their status in the academic canon), Addams espoused the intention to become both invisible and unnecessary. "That was exactly what we wanted," she avowed, "—to be swallowed and digested, to disappear into the bulk of the people" (Addams, 1961[1910], 203). Addams, furthermore, explicitly rejected the academics' assumption of superior expertise and status relative to the subjects of their inquiries. Her experience at Hull House, she reported, had revealed that

> the daintily clad charitable visitor who steps into the little house made untidy by the vigorous efforts of her hostess, the washerwoman, is no longer sure of her superiority to the latter…. She is chagrined to discover that in the actual task of reducing her social scruples to action, her humble beneficiaries are far in advance of her, not in charity or singleness of purpose, but in self-sacrificing action. She reaches the old-time virtue of humility…because she has stumbled and fallen in the road through her efforts to…march with her fellows. (Addams, 2005[1902], 20)

Finally, for the academic sociologists who viewed the city as a social laboratory, it was a small step to enlist the settlement house as their window on the urban neighbourhoods to which they sought entry. This move Addams also rejected, saying "I have always objected to the phrase 'sociological laboratory' applied to us, because Settlements should be something much more human and

spontaneous than such a phrase connotes" (Addams, 1961[1910], 203). As Deegan reports, "this 'colonization' of social settlements was a popular idea among male sociologists (but) was unacceptable…to the women sociologists. The latter's resistance to analysing populations as 'specimens' was a fundamental divergence between the male and female sociologists…. It was the view of settlements as 'laboratories' which (they) rejected, believing that the needs of the people took precedence over the needs of researchers…. (T)he women closed their sociological 'windows,' placing the needs of the community first. The view of people as 'objects' and not participants in social studies was rejected by them" (Deegan, 1990, 35-36).[7]

In contrast to the contentious relations between the urban sociologists and the settlement house workers, the close relationship between Addams, Dewey, and his departmental colleague, George Herbert Mead (Dewey's "closest friend" (Ryan, 1995, 79)) nourished the development of a pragmatist approach that transcended the dualisms between knowledge and action, idealism and realism, and social theory and social reform (Bernstein, 1971).[7] In the view of some of the Chicago School sociologists, discovering fundamental scientific knowledge about the urban community was tantamount to finding solutions to its problems. Dewey and Mead, in contrast, rejected the supposition, central to the spectator theory of knowledge, that the individual and society are antecedent to their co-constitution in practice. They sought a more direct route from present experience to future betterment that avoided the retrospective detour of representing a world as it already was. In Mead's view, as quoted by his student Anselm Strauss, "intelligent activity does not seek to know the world but 'undertakes to tell us what we may expect to happen when we act in such and such a fashion'" (Strauss, 1964, xx). Knowledge, for the pragmatists, does not precede action but resides within it.

Mead spent his career trying to understand the development of shared meaning in society, highlighting the importance of inter-subjective communication as the medium of social action (Mead, [1934] 1925). Reflecting pragmatism's concern to understand meaning in its social context, Mead developed new analytical tools for understanding how meaning is created within the communicative co-production of individual and society, focusing on the deployment and interpretation of what he called 'significant symbols' comprising gestures, words, intonations, and a shared understanding of intent that allow communication and foster the trust needed to underpin collective action (Faris, 1937; Misak, 2013; Strauss, 1964; Fuller, this volume). This work exemplified a pragmatic approach to understanding society from the ground up, exploring "how humans create meaning in their everyday life and … how this meaning is created and carved out through interactions with others and by use of various symbols to communicate meaning" (Brinkmann, 2017, 106). The meaning thus created in turn shapes action and the further evolution of social communities, demonstrating the pragmatic connection between ideas and their consequences in a never-ending cycle of experience, experimentation, and further interpretation (Blumer, 1969).

Transcending the dualism of *theoria* and *praxis* (Bernstein, 1971) has been a continuing theme in the pragmatic practice of social inquiry. Drawing on Aristotle's distinction between different kinds of knowledge and their associated implications for subjectivity and practice, Flyvbjerg (2001) distinguishes epistemic (*episteme*) and technical knowledge (*techne*) from practical wisdom or *phronesis.* Rather than aspiring to the creation of abstract epistemic knowledge about society, phronetic inquiry seeks to "restore social science to its classical position as a practical, intellectual activity aimed at clarifying the problems, risks and possibilities we face as humans and societies, and

… contributing to social and political praxis" (Flyvbjerg, 2001, 4). Echoing the central tenets of Deweyan pragmatism, phronetic social research is understood as a vocational craft that involves applying and testing ideas in the context of particular circumstances. In parallel with phronetic professions such as law, medicine, ministry, teaching, and community organising, practitioners apply their knowledge on a case-by-case basis, working through the problematic situation to find a way forward that is sensitive to the diversity of values, interests, and potential outcomes specific to the case. Thus, Flyvbjerg advocates case study research in which inquirers look at particular situations and work with affected publics to understand what is going on and to highlight the moral and political imperatives involved. Rather than treating the case study as a window onto general processes that are valorized as being more important, as is common in social science, he advocates attention to the case on its own terms (see also Mitchell, 2002; Savage, 2010). Only through immersion in the particular case and its practices, interests, and power relations, can the researcher gain the insight from which to illuminate the practical matters at hand. Rather than producing abstract (epistemic) knowledge, the goal of phronetic research is "not to develop theory, but to contribute to society's practical rationality in elucidating where we want to go, and what is desirable according to diverse sets of values and interests" (Flyvbjerg, 2001, 167).

Based on an intensive case study of a planning decision in Aalborg, Denmark, Flyvbjerg (1998; 2001, 60) developed a four-pronged approach to inquiry comprising the following questions: (1) Where are we going? (2) Is this desirable? (3) Who is gaining and losing from the status quo? and (4) What, if anything, should be done about it? (see Lake, 2016). While he roots this approach in Bourdieu's attention to practice via the concept of the habitus, and in Foucault's reading of Nietzsche and the development of genealogy, Flyvbjerg could also call this pragmatic research. His phronetic social science is particularly alert to the importance of working with diverse publics, prioritizing the value of public engagement in establishing the focus of research, and endorsing, or otherwise, particular arguments or justifications of fact, value, and truth. His phronetic research is "done in public for the public, sometimes to clarify, sometimes to intervene, sometimes to generate new perspectives, and always to serve as eyes and ears in our ongoing efforts at understanding the present and deliberating about the future" (Flyvbjerg, 2001, 166).

There is increasing evidence of similar pragmatic themes emerging in various areas of social inquiry such as political science, economics and public administration. James Bohman has made a particularly strong contribution in applying pragmatism to international relations and political theory, adapting Dewey's arguments about inquiry into problematic situations through which political matters arise and people seek to find their potential solution (see Bohman, 1999a, 1999b, 2002). Bohman (2002) has advocated a multi-perspectival approach that seeks to understand problematic situations from the ground up through direct engagement with the people affected. As he puts it: "In the context of inquiry, critical social science treats social actors as knowledgeable social agents to which its claims are publicly addressed … Social science research helps agents to see their circumstances differently, especially when mounting problems indicate that some change is practically necessary" (Bohman, 1999a, 475). In the field of public administration, Dieleman (2014) has applied the pragmatic principle of fallibilism to assist decision-makers to act in the absence of certainty and she advocates the practice of pragmatic engagement as a means to democratize the administrative state. Drawing directly from Dewey and Addams, Shields (2003) considers the method of collective intelligence developed via a community of inquiry as a model of participatory democracy in public administration.

A new body of research has sought to focus on the intersections between pragmatism and the insights of feminism and critical 'race' studies (Kautzer and Mendieta, 2009; Sullivan, 2009). A rising generation of scholars is reconstructing pragmatism to incorporate contemporary concerns and there has been strong interest in the scholarship of WEB Du Bois and Alain Locke (Fraser, 1998) and in creating space for women's voices in democratic debate (Collins, 2012). Several scholars have traced the close affinity between pragmatism and feminism reflected in a shared commitment to pluralism, anti-essentialism, the rejection of a universalizing perspective, and an insistent focus on the practices of the everyday (Hamington and Bardwell-Jones, 2012; Seigfried, 1996, 2002). Noting that "feminism incorporates what pragmatism initiates," Livingston (2001, 7) traces "an intellectual lineage that begins with William James and ends (for the time being) with Judith Butler." Seigfried discerns what she considers a feminist sensibility in pragmatism's commitments to metaphorical rather than deductive discourse, the experiential rather than universalizing basis of theory, a focus on problematic situations rather than abstract formulations, a method of communal problem solving rather than "rationally forced conclusions," and pragmatism's "valuing of inclusiveness and community over exaggerated claims of autonomy and detachment" (Seigfried, 1996, 32). Pragmatism and feminism both subscribe to the Deweyan idea that identity is not a given but an achievement (Dewey, 1957[1920]; Bernstein, 1998), and both direct attention to uncovering the collective processes through which that achievement is accomplished.

Also in evidence are strong parallels and overlapping concerns between pragmatism and several intersecting strands of recent post-structuralist thought. Pragmatism (both classical and "neo") articulated and anticipated several themes now at the center of post-structuralist debate, including the abandonment of foundational thinking, an embrace of contingency and indeterminacy, and attention to historicity, genealogy, process, and practice in a world seen as emerging, unfolding, and in flux rather than already available for representation by a distanced or disinterested observer (Diggins, 1994). Both pragmatism and post-structuralism aim to avoid the perils of representation and highlight the performative power of ideas in producing the world, suggesting that research is potentially a tool for intervention rather than the disclosure of truth (Jones, 2008; see also this volume). Rorty's (1979) pragmatist rejection of philosophy as the "mirror of nature" was situated equally in Dewey's repudiation of the correspondence theory of truth and in what he (Rorty) termed the "edifying philosophies" of Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Sellars, and Quine. The shift from representation to enactment and a focus on "thought-in-action" (Anderson and Harrison, 2010, 9) characteristic of non-representational theory (NRT) in human geography owe an explicit debt to pragmatism's commitment to knowledge as certified in its consequences rather than in the accurate representation of an antecedent reality. Thrift's elucidation of NRT credits Peirce and Dewey for providing "pointers to subsequent work by…Deleuze, Castoriadis, and Joas, who … emphasize creativity (and) want to privilege the power of the imagination" (2008, 118-119).

In regard to Foucault's genealogical account of the ubiquity of power, Rorty famously asserted that "we should see Dewey as having already gone the route Foucault is traveling, and as having arrived at the point Foucault is still trying to reach" (Rorty, 1982, 207). When Latour (2005, 7) sought "to define the social not as a special domain, a specific realm, or a particular sort of thing, but only as a very peculiar movement of re-association and reassembling," he explicitly referenced Dewey's assertion, in *The Public and Its Problems* (1954[1927], 8), that "most concepts which are introduced by 'The,' (are) both too rigid and too tied up with controversies to be of ready use." Pragmatism's orientation to process, contingency, and flux (see Harney *et al,* 2016; Rogers, 2009) informed

Latour's formulation of Actor-Network Theory (ANT) in which "it all depends on the sort of action that is flowing from one to the other, hence the words 'net' and 'work'…. It's the work, and the movement, and the flow, and the changes that should be stressed" (Latour, 2005, 143). The emphasis in ANT on interactions and relations (i.e., on the Actor-Network rather than on the isolated actors) reflects Dewey's claim that "A *distinctive* way of behaving in conjunction and *connection* with other distinctive ways of acting, not a self-enclosed way of acting, independent of everything else, is that toward which we are pointed" (1954[1927], 188).[9]

Finally, pragmatism has been a growing influence in social science in France over the past twenty-five years. Scholars in what has been called 'the pragmatic sociology of critique' have sought to understand the forms and tenor of communication that develops in relation to disputed public concerns. This scholarship looks at the institutional, technical, legal, and material supports deployed by people seeking justification for their particular views in relation to matters of (in)justice (Boltanski and Thevenot, 2006; Holden et al, 2013; Karsenti and Quéré, 2004). Like Dewey, this approach sees inquiry as arising in everyday life, as people contest decision-making and deploy various arguments to win others over to their point of view. Rather than using research to unmask power relations, as has been common in social science research, or intervening to set up social inquiries as some pragmatists might suggest, the French pragmatists have developed "a framework for interpreting the actions of people as they argue with each other in the power-, and value-, and meaning-laden contexts that reproduce daily domination" (Holden et al, 2013, 4; see also Holden this volume). Thus, scholars have focused on the activities of what might be referred to as Dewey's publics and Mead's social interaction in order to understand 'the grammar of public disagreement' and its role in shaping a sense of the common good. They have highlighted the ways in which different forms of argumentation that include differentiated 'orders of worth' shape the outcomes of public debate. However, there is much less commitment to intervening in the trajectory of this debate than would be found in Dewey's or Rorty's approach. While the French scholarship highlights the importance of understanding the fraught emotional tenor of communication in the public realm, there is less of a sense in which social inquiry (or philosophy) can be a tool for telling new stories or a vehicle for engaging in public inquiry to find a way forward over a public concern. This approach has a less engaged focus without any of the pragmatic expectations that science and philosophy can – and should - contribute to the wider public good.

3. The pragmatic approach to social research

The pragmatic approach to knowledge production represents a way of thinking that roots ideas in their geo-historical context, understands them in relation to their application, and pays close attention to the collective communicative practices through which they are generated (Toulmin, 2001). Here we summarise what this means for the practice of doing pragmatic social research and point to some of the barriers to its implementation. We don't suggest that there is a pragmatic 'method' (Lake, 2014) but, rather, that we can develop a pragmatic orientation to inquiry and that this orientation, if taken seriously, has significant implications for the practice of academic scholarship and the kind of knowledge produced.

Relinquishing the certainty of foundational thinking poses sharp challenges for the practice of social inquiry. It is difficult to approach the task of research without *a priori* expectations based on

experience and context and it is all-too-easy to reinforce the circularity of existing thought. As Rorty (1992 [1967], 1-2) put it in relation to philosophical research:

> To know what method to adopt, one must already have arrived at some metaphysical and some epistemological conclusions. If one attempts to defend these conclusions by the use of one's chosen method, one is open to the charge of circularity. If one does not so defend them, maintaining that given these conclusions, the need to adopt the chosen method follows, one is open to the charge that the chosen method is inadequate for it cannot be used to establish the crucial metaphysical and epistemological themes which are in dispute … every philosophical revolutionary is open to the charge of circularity or to the charge of having begged the question.

Building on Dewey's approach to inquiry as collective experimentation, Rorty resolved this dilemma through a strong commitment to community and the rootedness of ideas in context rather than in 'reality' or 'truth'. He argued that "objectivity is not a matter of corresponding to objects but of getting together with other subjects" to identify concerns and work things out (Rorty, 1998b, 72). A pragmatic approach to research-in-community necessarily proceeds through a collective and collaborative process particular to specific social formations in time and space.

Thinking about the connection between social research and community offers at least two distinct avenues for delineating the community of inquiry within which one is engaged. On the one hand, it is possible to employ a pragmatist approach to examine how ideas are generated and mobilised within the community of academic scholarship. This is to treat one's academic community as the object of study, looking at the sources and implications of the practices being deployed and the ideas being produced. It is clear that one's choices of theoretical position, epistemological framework or research methodology produce very different kinds of research "data" and situate the researcher within particular camps with varying degrees of academic fashion and acceptability. Such choices, in turn, influence the chances of getting published, earning income, and forging an academic career. Although chance events—having a good teacher, reading an exciting paper, having a prior personal interest or finding a fit between ideas and temperament—may influence one's trajectory, research practices are unavoidably constrained by the practical challenges of survival in the academic marketplace.

Under these conditions, the paradigm wars have a powerful effect in propelling inquiry towards those *a priori* foundations prevalent within a particular epistemic community at a certain place and time. A pragmatist sensibility can help to deconstruct this process by tracing the genealogy of ideas at work within a given "disciplinary matrix" (Rorty, 1999, 178) as a first step in broadening the terms of inquiry and debate. The aim of such auto-critique is not to better align one's practices with prevailing norms of 'proper' research. Rather, as pragmatism is an idea about ideas and their role in social life, it is necessary to demonstrate that the adoption of a pragmatic orientation toward social inquiry produces useful outcomes for the kind of research that is done and the quality of the knowledge produced. In the phrase expressed by William James more than a hundred years ago, it is necessary to demonstrate pragmatism's 'cash value' to the community of inquirers and the institutionalized supports (funders, administrators, gate-keepers) that govern the practice of research. This is a matter of changing ideas within our own community to attract a new generation of scholars to work outside the boundaries of conventional practice.

Secondly, and on the other hand, if pragmatism involves situated, collaborative engagement with a community of inquiry, then specifying the boundaries of the community is essential to the practice. For Jane Addams in Hull House, that community was her neighbours on Halstead Street in Chicago's West Side. For Dewey, the community of inquiry comprises the public that forms through recognition of a problematic situation. For Iris Marion Young (2000), the community encompasses all those affected by any particular problem and associated deliberation. In all cases, establishing the boundaries of collaborative engagement is likely to involve interrelated questions of problem definition, geographic scale, and the absence of certainty in a contingent and mutable world.

Dewey has at times been criticised for a romantic attachment to face-to-face deliberation in the democratic community but the challenge of geographic scale is inescapable within a relational ontology with no outside. Following the example of Addams and Hull House, pragmatists seek a lexicon of particularity by working with grounded publics in specific contexts to address local circumstances, conducting research that might speak to a wider audience but without guarantees. Experiments in university-community partnerships, for example, underway in several locations around the world seek to develop methods of collaborative problem-solving based on mutual interests in teaching, research, and civic activism within shared local spaces (Harney and Wills, 2017; this volume; Wills, 2016a, b). In these instances, a strong pragmatist inclination to replace the distanced analytical gaze with a practice of neighbourly love (Zitcer and Lake, 2012) may encounter resistance from institutional pressures for international visibility and presence. On the other hand, the practice of local specificity—of establishing boundaries around a local community of interest— instantiates the non-local as the "other", thereby raising what Rorty (2010) describes as conflicting loyalties to particular groups. Rorty's solution is to use a collaborative agreement on a course of action as "the initial stage in expanding the circles of those whom each party to the agreement had previously taken to be 'people like ourselves'" so that "the opposition between rational argument and fellow-feeling thus begins to dissolve" (Rorty, 2010, 441). In every case, the establishment of spatial boundaries around the collaborative community is highly contingent, an initial foray rather than a conclusion, and subject to continuing reassessment in light of the consequences of action under specific circumstances.

Working with (and within) a community of interest also requires deferral of the impulse to specify the scope and definition of the problematic situation in advance of the encounter. Here Nietzsche's frequently quoted aphorism is highly apropos: "Learning to see—habituating the eye to repose, to patience, to letting things come to it; learning to defer judgment, to investigate, to comprehend the individual case in all its aspects. This is the *first* preliminary schooling in spirituality" (Nietzsche, 1969[1889], 6). The ability to bracket prior expectations in such a way, however, is both counter-intuitive for academic researchers and runs counter to established structures of knowledge production. Under conditions of 'normal science,' being a social scientist assumes that there is an object of research, identified as social or intellectual 'problems' that can be formulated as research questions that sit outside, above or beyond any particular context. A would-be researcher applying for funding for a project must normally present a convincing 'problem statement', identify specific 'research questions', and detail a 'methodological approach' all in advance of initiating the inquiry. While researchers are rarely funded to forge relationships, pursue conversations, and slowly develop a feeling for the issues affecting a community of inquiry, pragmatic research requires an investment in such relationships before any 'research' can begin.

And finally, there remain the stubborn issues of contingency, fallibility, and the futility of *'the quest for certainty'* in delimiting the community of inquiry through the lens of pragmatism. The challenge of delimiting the community of inquiry is that all such delimitations are necessarily provisional and subject to change. In addition to the contingencies of problem definition and geographic scale is the provisionality of theoretical scaffolding and conceptual frameworks—the set of ideas used to frame a research project in advance of an inquiry. In an earlier period, terms such as 'class', 'capital', 'neoliberalism', 'the economy' or 'the state' have easily been imported to guide analysis; more recently, work to map actor-networks or assemblages, efforts to prioritise embodied and emotional responses to the world, or even the adoption of collaborative forms of research have all-too-easily been imposed on the world rather than responding to what a community brings to the inquiry. Despite the effort to avoid the quest for certainty and to produce knowledge that reflects local contingency, culture, and the evolution of ideas in place, concepts such as the 'actor-network', 'affect' or 'assemblage' are moved from one place to another and used to frame analysis regardless of the particularities and contingencies of time and space, with a profound effect on the work that is done and the arguments made.

In many ways, little has changed since the early pragmatists denounced the prevailing model of knowledge production and its limits for understanding social life. As Dewey put it more than a hundred years ago: "The waste of energy due to conducting discussion of social affairs in terms of conceptual generalities is astonishing" (1957 [1920], 198). A pragmatic orientation to research provides no ontological certainty and no *a priori* commitment to a particular problem or set of problems nor to work at a particular scale. It provides, instead, a justification for working within a particular community, however provisionally defined, to explore particular challenges as they are articulated by that community, and for allowing uncertainty to shape the production of thought. Such an approach, however, articulates an orientation to the project of knowledge production rather than a detailed set of research methodologies. In an essay titled "Pragmatism Without Method," Rorty explicitly states that "The advice to see if it might not pay to reweave your web of belief in the interests of a better ability to solve your problems is not the advice to formulate epistemic principles" (Rorty, 1991, 68). How, then, does pragmatist inquiry proceed?

At present, there is no clearly defined pragmatic 'method' of social inquiry and, indeed, pragmatists have explicitly rejected the notion that pragmatism invokes a particular research method (Lake, 2014). In Rorty's view, as noted above, "The whole idea of … choosing between 'methods'… seems to be misguided" (Rorty, 1982, 195) and Dewey, in *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (1957[1920], 72-73), held that "the release of philosophy from its burden of … sterile epistemology … would open a way to questions of the most perplexing and most significant sort." Nonetheless, a number of researchers have turned to Dewey's notion of 'inquiry' to develop a framework or approach for applying pragmatic ideas in the production of knowledge. In one such approach, David Morgan (2014, 1047) has proposed a five-step 'model' for conducting pragmatic social inquiry that proceeds by: (1) Recognising a situation as problematic; (2) Considering the consequences of defining the problem one way or another; (3) Developing a possible line of action as a response to the problem; (4) Evaluating the potential actions in terms of their likely consequences; and (5) Taking actions that are felt to be likely to address the problematic situation.

As suggested above, however, adopting the language of 'problems' requires caution in the practice of research. It easily links the social sciences – and the academy - to the project of technocratic

expertise and problem-solving and neglects the extent to which social life involves so much more than 'problems' as they may be framed in conventional understandings of social problems and public policy. It also limits the scope for applying pragmatism to the broader contribution that can be made by thinking about ideas and their consequences, and the importance of the diversity of cultural practices for making meaning in the world. As Wolfe (2017, 126) recently put it in relation to the task of building solidarity across racial differences, there are dangers in assuming that "'problem-solving' accounts for enough of our doings to render all public-formation as primarily problem-solving activity". As Peirce recognised, too, there is much of value in what he called 'conservative sentimentalism', by which he meant the beliefs that underpin our largely unthinking habits of love, loyalty, and care that matter most in crafting a life well lived. A pragmatist method of inquiry, therefore, seeks to identify social practices to be preserved as well as those to be altered; to identify beneficial practices that are vulnerable to eradication as well as practices that are normalized or naturalized that produce damaging effects; and, in every case, to identify social practices that advance the objectives of the community of inquiry.

Near the conclusion of *Reconstruction in Philosophy,* Dewey offers several guidelines for inquiry conducive to his pragmatist ideal. "Inquiry is exacted," he says:

> [In] observation of the detailed makeup of the situation; analysis into its diverse factors; clarification of what is obscure; discounting of the more insistent and vivid traits; tracing the consequences of the various modes of action that suggest themselves; regarding the decisions reached as hypothetical and tentative until the anticipated or supposed consequences which led to its adoption have been squared with actual consequences. This inquiry is intelligence. (Dewey, (1957[1920], 94)

On this account, a pragmatic orientation to social inquiry might involve some of the following:

1. *Working with a particular community (at an indeterminate scale) in which it is possible to understand the geo-historical context of the actors, institutions, and cultures and appreciate the public debate and conversation that is already underway.* The community is one in which the researcher is already or can become embedded so as to establish equal standing with other participants in the inquiry (Harney et al, 2016; Wills, 2016b; Harney and Wills, this volume).

2. *Listening to the diversity of truths that exist in the community in relation to the range of issues discussed.* Here Nietzsche's invocation to "habituating the eye to repose … to comprehend the individual case in all its aspects" is necessary to develop a feel for where people are coming from and the work their ideas are doing for them and their identified community. This situational awareness is what we do every day in safely navigating the world around us. Being pragmatic, however, requires a heightened sensitivity to the diversity of perspectives and the range of opinion that exists, even and perhaps especially those that are not our own and with which we might otherwise not be attuned. This is similar to what anthropologists seek to do in 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) but pragmatism explicitly focuses attention on the range of truths being articulated and their consequences for the community in question.

3. *If invited through conversations or relationships, to begin exploring the possibility of working on an issue identified as a matter of concern by the participants in the inquiry.* As distinct from conventional practices of induction or deduction, pragmatic research is associated with what has been called 'abduction', which "begins with a breakdown in our understanding of something and is oriented toward making the indeterminate more determinate in order to facilitate action" (Brinkmann, 2017, 91). For Peirce, this process started with doubt, and for Dewey, inquiry was triggered by encountering what he called 'forked-road situations' (Brinkmann, 2017, 100). In both cases, these are instances when it is not clear how to proceed and research is needed to elucidate a range of options for action. As we already expect from a public inquiry or commission into a knotty public concern, evidence can be gathered, position statements collected, and the commissioners advocate a particular course of action to address the problem at hand. Pragmatists advocate a similar role for social inquiry free of the conceptual, institutional, and political constraints of conventional practice. This approach seeks to work within the traditions, norms, perspectives, and values of the community, bracketing prior moral and political judgements aboutwhat is at stake, what is happening, and what constitutes an appropriate course of action. In Dewey's words: "The evils in current social judgements of ends and policies arise … from importations of judgements of value from outside the inquiry. The evils spring from the fact that the values employed are not determined in and by the process of inquiry; for it is assumed that certain ends have an inherent value so unquestionable that they regulate and validate the means employed, instead of ends being determined on the basis of existing conditions as obstacles-resources" (Dewey, 1939 [1938], 503). Transcending the conventional dualism of ends and means, hypotheses regarding an appropriate course of action arise within the process of inquiry, in the context of the particular community involved, rather than being imposed from outside (Lake, 2016, 2017; and Huff, this volume, provides an example from working with a community in Los Angeles).

4. *Once an issue is identified in this way, engaging in some sort of inquiry through methods appropriate to the case.* Those methods might incorporate Morgan's five steps as outlined above but this is not a formula to be imposed without reference to the specificity and contingency of the case. Firstly, the inquiry will need support in relation to its particular public(s), especially if it aims to facilitate the development of a solution through which to 'move on' over this issue. This is likely to be both more complicated but also more successful if the diversity and multiplicity of interests is included within the inquiry. Dewey recognised that administrators and managers tend to assume what the problem is and get on with trying to respond to it, often with little success. He argued that social inquiry could provide an opportunity to think more carefully about the "nature of the problem by means of methods that procure a wide range of data, that determine their pertinency as evidential, that ensure their accuracy by devices of measurement, and that arrange them in the order which past inquiry has shown most likely to indicate appropriate methods of procedure … The futility of attempting to solve a problem whose conditions have not been determined is taken for granted" (Dewey, 1939 [1938], 494). In this model, inquiry is guided by the problematic situation and the need to resolve the problem at hand. Having a goal allows the inquiry to develop hypotheses about the possible outcome of different solutions that could then be tested.

Once an inquiry developed a range of hypotheses for action, these could be tested in practice. As Dewey put it: "That which is observed, no matter how carefully and no matter how accurate the record, is capable of being *understood* only in terms of projected consequences of activities" (Dewey, 1939, 499, emphasis in original). Dewey recognised the particular challenges of deciding what kind of data would be required, and how to acquire it, in the process of social inquiry. He aspired to such methods producing hypotheses that could be tested to resolve a problematic situation and in so doing, to treat the development and application of ideas as experimental, always subject to future revision and improvement. He called this the "continuum of inquiry" that seeks "the determination of an indeterminate situation" (Dewey, 1939, iii). Given the importance of context and contingency in the generation of problematic situations and their potential solutions, there will never be an end to this process.

5. *Thus there is an imperative to continue the process in ongoing dialogue with the community and its interests.* If all universities had relationships with their local communities this process of shared learning would be ongoing everywhere in the world. Researchers would exchange ideas and find common ground across space without presuming that the insights from one place can be simply applied in another. This would involve a new geography of social research practice and new forms of locally-sensitive internationalism.

The implications of pragmatism for the conduct of social inquiry are profound. Pragmatic social research incorporates the full gamut of relationship building, embedded engagement, public work, and social organisation as integral elements of the research process. In sum, pragmatism is a siren-call to connect research to community. Its approach to understanding ideas and their consequences, in the context of a democratic ethos that seeks to foster inclusion, requires some kind of community through which to develop, test, and consider ideas. As Bernstein (1989, 18) put it, pragmatism makes "the call to nurture the type of community and solidarity where there is an engaged fallibilistic pluralism – one that is based upon mutual respect, where we are willing to risk our own prejudgements, are open to listening and learning from others, and we respond to others with responsiveness and responsibility".

In an ideal world, our universities would nurture such communities around various interested publics, through which we could then conduct social research to foster reciprocal gain. However, all-too-often, our universities are poorly grounded in community. Encounters are imbalanced and self-interested, and the priority has been on the international reputation of the institution and its scholars rather than investing in place. Academic institutions need to be encouraged to prioritise and support embedded relationship-building to underpin a pragmatic approach to social research. This would mean research funders and academic journals that support pragmatic research. It would require recognition that the 'output' of pragmatic inquiry includes a range of activities, experiences, and publications with a more limited role for conventional academic publications that might materialise only when there is something of wider significance to report such as a reflection on the ideas that circulate in the community and the work they are doing for people, or the creation of a new idea that has allowed some sort of resolution, however temporary, to a particular concern, or in relation to the impact of pragmatism on the process and outcomes of doing the work. Taking pragmatism seriously requires a commitment to particularity, to the illumination that comes from patient investment in relationships, and to the sometimes small things that often matter the most.

4.   The potential pitfalls and limits to pragmatic research

The practice of engaged, pragmatic inquiry as described above faces substantial challenges, many of which have fuelled critiques of pragmatism since its inception. Here we consider, in particular, the pitfalls of expertise, the problem of meliorism, and pragmatism's relation to progressive ideas.

The challenge of 'the epistemic division of labour' in society is a particular problem for pragmatic research and inquiry, not least because of the persistent Platonic divisions between thinking and doing that pragmatism has sought to overcome (Arendt, 1958, 1971; Bernstein, 1971). Dewey was acutely cognisant of this challenge, arguing in *The Public and Its Problems* (1954[1927] that "A class of experts is inevitably so removed from common interests as to become a class with private interests and private knowledge, which in social matters is not knowledge at all." A few years earlier, in *Reconstruction in Philosophy,* he observed that the specialization of experts "can be trusted only when such persons are in unobstructed cooperation with other social occupations, sensitive to others' problems and transmitting results to them for wider applications in action. When this social relationship of persons particularly engaged in carrying on the enterprise of knowing is forgotten and the class becomes isolated, inquiry loses stimulus and purpose" (Dewey 1957 [1920], 147). This dilemma has not only persisted but deepened with the ever-increasing technological complexity of contemporary problems. Drawing on the example of AIDS activists who organised to challenge the exclusivity of the medical establishment over information and research, Bohman (1999b) highlights the benefits of greater popular scrutiny of expertise saying that: "Challenges by the public to expert credibility or to expert definitions of the epistemic enterprise do more than make experts accountable; they make the knowledge so gained genuinely social and shared, even if differentially distributed" (Bohman, 1999b, 602). While the rise of the internet and greater opportunities for civic engagement in political decision making are providing ways to break down these divisions, universities, think tanks, and the professions continue to champion elite-led models of problem-solving that serve to exclude a wider range of voices. The pragmatic orientation to research needs to work especially hard to break down these divisions, and as outlined above, this can only be done through careful relationship-building over time.

Pragmatism has been frequently criticised for its meliorism and moderation. Because pragmatists seek to appreciate the range of ideas in circulation at any one time if there is to be some sort of inquiry over a pressing concern, pragmatic inquiry has to find some common ground, however provisionally, on which everyone in that community can stand. For some of its critics, this understates the need to take sides in the struggle for justice (Mumford, 1926; Mouffe, 1996; Mills, 1964). All-too-often the minority group are expected to sacrifice their interests for the wider public good and there is always a danger that the common good can trump alternative ideas of the just (Allen, 2006). Brandom cites the example of democracy squeezing human rights in the North's response to the South after the American Civil War whereby people of colour paid – and still pay - a great price. In Brandom's words: "We still have a lot of thinking to do about what is living and what is dead in pragmatism – both in philosophical theory and in political practice" (Brandom (2009, 44-45).

C. Wright Mills also queried the extent to which pragmatic thinking can be applied to the dominant social formations in long-established and relatively institutionalised societies. He argued that the

idea of inquiry could be most easily applied to social groups that are socially mobile and finding their way in the world. For Mills (1964), pragmatism was less relevant for action associated with organized political parties, social movements, and labour unions. He argued that pragmatism works for people "on the edge of social structures, such as frontier types of society that are edging out into places not hampered by social organization. It is predominantly outside the rationalized structures in which the actions of individuals face decisions, and almost by definition, decisions involving new factors that have come into the actor's horizon and path" (1964, 393). Writing in the middle years of the 20th-century at the historic peak of the labour movement, Mills understandably emphasised the importance of mass movements and their struggle for power. This is much less pertinent today and the break-up of strong workers organisations has exposed the contingency of class experience and the necessity to act in non-standard ways, as required in context (Wills, 2008). However, he is right to highlight the importance of scrutinising the often taken-for-granted vested interests associated with established power relations, and pragmatic research needs to be rigorous about facing dominant power.

Interestingly, pragmatism has also been criticised from the perspective of conservative thought for its apparent affinity with the idea of 'progress' (Cahoone, 2002: Cavell, 1998; Lasch, 1991, 1995). Even though pragmatism seeks to understand ideas in relation to their consequences, which can be about maintaining established ways of life as much as anything else, this conservatism has often been lost in the application of pragmatism to wider debate. As we have seen, the use of pragmatism in relation to problem solving through inquiry tends to imply activism, collective advance, and even social cohesion around the process and the emergent ideas. Given that inquiry is argued to be triggered by experience which prompts doubt, uncertainty, and inaction, the pragmatic approach tends to exclude an appreciation of established culture and practice.

Dewey, Rorty, and others deployed pragmatism to make a contribution to the liberal and progressive political traditions of their times. In his related argument for 'prophetic pragmatism', Cornel West similarly endorsed the connection between the tradition and the need to foster a sense of collective hope for the future. He writes that pragmatism "consists of a future-oriented instrumentalism that tries to deploy thought as a weapon to enable more effective action. Its basic impulse is a plebeian radicalism that fuels an anti-patrician rebelliousness for the moral aim of enriching individuals and expanding democracy" (West, 1989, 5). For some, this future-oriented approach smacks of utopian wishful thinking and is insufficiently realistic or sceptical about the notion of progress (Gray, 2007; Niebuhr, 1932, 1944). Stanley Cavell (1998) argued that we can understand Dewey pragmatically and that, like Rorty, he was making an intervention to create the world he wanted to see. Cavell argued that Dewey was making "a wager on democracy, a wager that is rational not because of the weight of evidence that his writing will prove effective, but because it is worthy of being listened to; because there is some reason to believe that it will be listened to; and because there is no other future worth wagering on and working to achieve" (Cavell, 1998, 79). As such, pragmatism comprises a political and performative argument as much as a philosophical or epistemological one, as recognised by many pragmatists who have defended Dewey's democratic position (Bernstein, 2010; Putnam, 1992; Rorty, 1989; Westbrook, 1991, 1998).

For critics like Diggins (1998) and Fish (1998), however, the goals of democracy often require forms of enforcement that are alien to the model of democracy advocated by Dewey and other pragmatists. As Fish suggests: "provisionality, openness, and toleration are not what the

mechanisms of democracy generate, but what they enforce against the inclinations of citizens who remain as dogmatic, closed minded and bigoted as they were before democracy emerged" (Fish, 1998, 426). Rather than suggesting that democracy arises from the human spirit, Fish suggests that it arises only through Hobbesian forms of enforcement that suppress the sin of the people. While he is willing to accept the broad thrust of pragmatic thinking when it comes to the role of ideas and their connection to practice, he rejects any necessary association with democracy, public-formation, and social improvement.

Thus there is nothing inherent in pragmatism to endorse a progressive approach and pragmatism can be used to challenge ideologies of both the left and the right. Indeed, in his introduction to a later edition of *Reconstruction of Philosophy*, Dewey sought to distance himself from any association with reformers and progressives arguing that his approach embraced the range of ideas generated in human society, declaring that while "[i]n a verbal sense reform and reconstruction are close together … the reconstruction or reform here presented is strictly one of theory of the type that is so comprehensive in scope as to constitute philosophy" (Dewey, 1957, xli). Rorty spent much of his time exposing the limits of thought on the left and the need for a new form of patriotism that could appeal across society rather than being a point of polarisation (1998a).

In his work a hundred years earlier, Peirce had pointed out that many beliefs and habituated practices don't need to be challenged as they work perfectly well in getting things done. He self-identified as a 'conservative sentimentalist' while also highlighting the struggle involved in rethinking established ideas when they are no longer useful in making sense of the world. For Peirce, there was a time and place for rethinking ideas, and for making some sort of 'progress' in thinking, although this was about understanding the world and reflecting the joy of human capacity to think as much as it was about material progress. As Cahoone (2002, 288) notes, "society is not a community of inquirers", and most of the time, people live together despite their differences without needing to unpack their ideas. We need to think carefully about the time and place for pragmatic inquiry and the grounds on which interventions are made and, in many cases, it may be best to listen and do nothing rather than rushing to act.

5. The power of pragmatism: An introduction to the rest of the book

We have sought in this Introduction to outline some key facets of pragmatism and to present an outline of what it means for social inquiry. At present, we see only glimmers of what pragmatic social research might look like and the chapters that follow seek to advance this agenda.

Divided into two sections, the book begins with a section entitled 'developing pragmatic ideas and practices for social research' and it includes five chapters that advance particular ideas and associated practices from the pragmatic tradition, and explore their potential application to social research. In Chapter 2, Malcolm Cutchin explores Dewey's ideas about 'habit' and the implications of habit for understanding how communities of inquiry will necessarily face challenges in developing new ideas for action through social research. In Chapter 3, Gary Bridge highlights Dewey's ideas about 'transaction', exploring the idea of the 'situation' as a way to capture the particular time-spaces of social life and emergent truth. Pragmatism exposes the geographical particularity of life, experience and ideas that is important – but often overlooked – across social science research, and Bridge's chapter seeks to do justice to this. Chapter 4, by Crispian Fuller, develops Mead's arguments

about the social self, applying ideas about identity and identification to current debate about urban politics and practice. This chapter develops important ideas from social psychology while also applying this perspective to making sense of urban politics, and as such, it overlaps with the more applied concerns developed in later parts of the book. Trevor Barnes (Chapter 5) develops Richard Rorty's ideas about the power of 're-description' to open up conversation around new narratives that can foster social transformation. Barnes draws on some of the cartographic representations developed by the Geographer Bill Bunge to illustrate the potential power of pragmatic re-description to change the way people think. In Chapter 6, Klaus Geiselhart deploys pragmatic ideas about truth in relation to the practice of academic debate, arguing that there is a powerful role for academics to mediate between divergent views of the world. He calls on pragmatists to do more than echo or reinforce wider concerns about fake news and post-truth, arguing that it is important to develop the arts of evaluation and judgement in relation to ideas and their context, a process he calls 'mediation' (see also Barnett, 2017).

The second group of seven chapters, gathered under the title of 'pragmatic research in practice' includes work that looks at the implications of pragmatic ideas and research for particular fields of research and activism such as ecological politics (Meg Holden in Chapter 7 and Owain Jones in Chapter 8), planning (Ihnji Jon in Chapter 9) and development studies (Alireza Farahani and Azadeh Esfahani in Chapter 10). These chapters each make a bold argument that pragmatic ideas can advance these fields of academic study and policy practice in powerful ways. In addition, Chapters 11 and 12 explore the deployment of pragmatism in relation to community-based research. Alice Huff (Chapter 11) describes her work with a group of parents engaged in a struggle to save a school in inner-city Los Angeles. Having immersed herself in the conversations and relationships of the group, she illustrates the ways in which ideas develop in dialogue with people in context; an experience that is transformative in unpredictable ways. Her approach to knowledge production through involvement in a 'community of inquiry' is taken up again in the following chapter (12) in which Liam Harney and Jane Wills describe their involvement in an explicitly pragmatic knowledge experiment, to build a community and consider developing research to support action over common concerns. They faced major challenges in relation to the diversity of political opinions expressed and hidden, and in regard to the barriers to action that arise from social fragmentation. Their work suggests there is nothing easy or straight-forward about developing this approach to knowledge production and its link to social action.

The final chapter in this section (13), by Susan Saegart, then provides a powerful reminder of the ways in which pragmatic ideas can and should influence the politics of knowledge exchange and learning within the university as well as beyond it. Despite being a 'community of inquirers', academic departments are not automatically open to everyone, nor do they do justice to all of their members. Saegart takes an honest look at these challenges and draws on the pragmatic tradition to find resources for promoting greater democracy in her academic community and beyond. There is a great deal at stake in taking a pragmatic approach to knowledge production, however challenging it proves to be on the ground. Finally, in a concluding chapter (14), Robert Lake considers the promise of pragmatism as an answer to the crisis of knowledge posed by the simultaneous denigration of democracy and science in the current conjuncture.

In thinking about the title of this collection, it is striking that the question of power does not feature widely in the lexicon of pragmatism. The idea of pragmatism invoked in everyday usage—vulgar

pragmatism, perhaps—evades considerations of power through an amoral surrender to sheer expediency and bare instrumentalism. The founding statements of philosophical pragmatism by Peirce, James, Dewey, and neo-pragmatists such as Rorty, Bernstein, and Hilary Putnam, rarely offer an explicit engagement with considerations of power. Indeed, an explicit evocation of 'power' as an abstraction preceding its materialization in practice would violate the pragmatists' anti-foundational rejection of causal forces thought to exist before, behind or above the social practices through which they are formed. While Dewey, for example, devoted a lifetime to excoriating the pernicious effects of economic and political institutions, he did so by revealing their practice in the world and by not only avoiding but explicitly rejecting a merely theoretical discourse on power as an abstract mystical force posited to exist prior to its instantiation through practice (Misak, 2013; Ryan, 1995; Westbrook, 1991).

And yet, power is deeply implicated in pragmatism's commitment to practice understood as the ability to have an effect on the world. An abiding orientation to action—the "power to" rather than "power over"—constitutes pragmatism as an enabling philosophy insistently concerned with "what enables us to make a difference in the world" (Allen, 2008: 1614; see also Arendt, 1958). This book considers the power of pragmatism as an orientation towards the conduct of social research and relatedly, as a way of understanding the role of ideas in making the world.

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Endnotes

1 Although Rorty took the world by surprise in 1979 when he published a glowing account of Dewey's contribution to ideas in his *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, it is perhaps not surprising that Rorty had a counter-cultural view of the power of pragmatism. His mother, Winifred, had studied sociology at the University of Chicago during the heyday of its commitment to pragmatic social research. She was taught by George Herbert Mead, worked as a researcher for Robert Park, and wrote a well-received biography of Park that was published in 1979, the same year as Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* challenged the philosophical establishment. Her father, Walter Rauschenbusch, was a central figure in the social gospel movement and he knew and was strongly influenced by William James and John Dewey. Thus Rorty grew up in a highly intellectual milieu in which pragmatism played a key role in both American political culture and his personal and family life (Voparil, 2010; Westbrook, 1991).

2. Christopher Lasch (1965) notes "It is difficult to say whether Dewey influenced Jane Addams or Jane Addams influenced Dewey. They influenced each other and generously acknowledged their mutual obligations" (quoted in Westbrook, 1991, 89). Dewey frequently lectured at Hull House both before and after arriving in Chicago, he served on its Board of Directors until Addams's death in 1935, and he named one of his daughters Jane in honor of Addams (Boronat, 2019; Deegan, 1990; Hamington, 2009; Ryan, 1995; Seigfried, 1996; Westbrook, 1991).

3. The University of Chicago was established in 1892 and John Dewey arrived two years later as chair of the philosophy department, having also secured a faculty appointment in philosophy for George Herbert Mead [1863-1931], who had previously taught with Dewey at the University of Michigan. Albion W. Small (1854-1926) was appointed Head Professor of the department of sociology in 1892 and was joined by W.I. Thomas (1863-1947) in 1895. By the 1920s, a 'second generation' of sociologists had established what became widely known as the Chicago School of Urban Sociology, primarily comprising Robert E. Park (1864-1944), Ellsworth Faris (1874-1953), Ernest W. Burgess (1886-1966), William Ogburn (1886-1959), and Louis Wirth (1897-1952) (Faris, 1970; Short, 1971).

4. Park and Burgess's *Introduction to the Science of Sociology* firmly asserted that sociology seeks "natural laws and generalizations in regard to human nature and society, irrespective of time and of place" (Park and Burgess, 1921, 11, quoted in Entrikin, 1980, 48). The 1924 second edition of the text complained that "A great deal of social information has been collected merely for the purpose of determining what to do in a given case. Facts have not been collected to check social theories…. In very few instances have investigations been made disinterestedly" (Park and Burgess, 1924, 44). Robert Park's biographer, Winifred Rauschenbusch (1979), quotes Park as proclaiming that "In developing the techniques of sociology we must escape both *history* and *practical applications….* The first thing you have to do with a student who enters sociology is to show him that he can make a contribution if he doesn't try to improve anybody" (quoted in Deegan, 1990, 152). Advocating for the importance of "a workable theory of urbanism," Louis Wirth (1938, 24) insisted that "only by means of some such theory will the sociologist escape the futile practice of voicing in the name of sociological science a variety of often unsupportable judgments concerning such problems as poverty, housing, city-planning, sanitation, municipal administration, policing, marketing,

transportation, and other technical issues…. The prospects for doing this are brightest through a general, theoretical, rather than through an *ad hoc* approach." Short's account of the Chicago School after 1920 identifies the elevation of science as the pervasive ethos in the department. Of William Ogburn, Short (1971, xix) reports that "his scientific stance was based on the conviction that systematic and objective study of social change was more efficacious than was social reform as an approach to human problems." Robert Faris, Short (1971, xx) says, "describes the 'Chicago attitude' as essentially that of pure science," quoting Faris's (1970) opinion that "it is worthwhile to pursue many intellectual questions without reference either to their immediate service or to the question of what particular applications the knowledge may have….(T)he restrictions of scholarly attention to the search for immediate alleviation of present problems…delays the development of the organized and tested knowledge which could be effective." However, there were differences within the group, and even in the ideas developed by individuals over time. Ernest Burgess, for example, played an important role with Clifford R. Shaw in the establishment of the Chicago Areas Project (CAP) in order to develop neighbourhood scale collective capacity to improve social life. The CAP appointed Saul Alinsky to work in Back of the Yards in Chicago in 1931, and this spawned the tradition of community organising that remains a beacon of pragmatic politics in the US and elsewhere today (Wills, 2016b).

5   A partial list of ethnographic field studies conducted by members of the Chicago School of urban sociology includes Thomas and Znaniecki (1918); Nels Anderson (1923); Louis Wirth (1928); Harvey Zorbaugh (1929); Clifford Shaw (1930); and Paul Cressey (1932) (for a descriptive overview, see Short, 1971). Several of these ethnographic accounts became highly popular best-sellers that were widely read as voyeuristic portraits of Chicago's forbidden urban worlds (Short, 1971).

6.   The split between the Hull House Settlement and the Chicago School of Sociology was institutional as well as philosophical and practical. Addams formally rejected the University's bid to absorb Hull House within the University administration, fearing a loss of autonomy and wishing to protect the Settlement's unique approach and mission. Writing to University president William Rainey Harper in December 1895, Addams held that such an affiliation "could not be other than an irreparable misfortune…and most unfair" (quoted in Deegan, 1990, 38).

7.   Entrikin's (1980) characterization of Dewey's pragmatism as idealist emphasizes the Hegelian influences on Dewey's early philosophical training but Dewey moved decisively away from idealism in his later work (Bernstein, 1971; on pragmatism and realism in William James, see Putnam, 1998). Ryan credits Dewey's wife, Alice (Chipman), with having done "a great favour by making him focus on the unsatisfactory, unjust, and thoroughly disorganized here and now, rather than the realm of the ideal" (Ryan, 1995, 82). Dewey's move beyond Hegelian idealism is evident in the concluding chapter of *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (1957[1920]), where he explicitly rejected the notion that philosophy involves "the purely rational application of the mind to problems and questions that have no real social genesis." Dewey instead professed a commitment to "practical idealism" in which the collective mind, as the realm of creative intelligence, offers imaginative solutions for problems encountered in experience of the world (Dewey, 1980[1917]). As Diggins explains, "the mind for Dewey was not a looking glass reflecting

the world nor a logical faculty for defining truth; instead it was a problem-solving tool for adjusting to an unstable environment" (Diggins, 1994, 229).

8. Anselm Strauss observes that "Robert Park and Ernest Burgess included none of Mead's writings in their 1921 reader-text that educated the Chicago graduate students for almost two decades" (Strauss, 1964, xi). Wirth's 70-page "Bibliography of the Urban Community," divided among 11 topical sections and 53 sub-sections ranging from "streets and sewers" to "the mentality of city life," contains no reference to Mead's work or ideas (Park, Burgess, and McKenzie, 1967[1925], pp. 161-228). As if to affirm his pragmatist commitments, Mead concluded his 1938 essay on "The Nature of Scientific Knowledge" by asserting that: "the experimental scientist, apart from some philosophical bias, is not a positivist. He has no inclination to build up a universe of such scientific data, which in their abstraction can be identified as parts of many different worlds. The reference of his data is always to the solution of problems in the world that is there about him, the world that tests the validity of his hypothetical reconstructions. Nothing would more completely squeeze the interest out of his world than the resolution of it into the data of observation." (Mead, 1964[1938], 61)

9. For a detailed discussion of Dewey's influence on Latour, see Harman (2014, 161-178) and Marres (2005, cited in Harman, 2014). In Rorty's anticipation of assemblage theory, he asserts that "We antiessentialists…suggest that you think of objects…in the following respect: there is nothing to be known about them except an initially large, and forever expanding, web of relations to other objects…. There are, so to speak, relations all the way down, all the way up, and all the way out in every direction: you never reach something which is not just one more nexus of relations…. There is nothing to be known about anything save its relations to other things" (Rorty, 1999, 53-54).