

Jessica Blanche Peixotto and the Founding of Berkeley Social Welfare

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Abstract

Jessica Blanche Peixotto was the first woman to become a full professor at the University of California in 1918 and yet her role in establishing social welfare studies at Berkeley is mostly untold. A social economist and foremost a scientist, she led efforts to infuse evidence-informed practice in professional social work education in the early 1900s, laying a foundation at Berkeley that is still felt today. Of her many efforts, she established a certificate in social welfare at Berkeley in 1917, the first such training on the West Coast. This article describes her personal and professional life and seeks to establish the importance of her role in establishing social work education at Berkeley and in furthering an evidence-informed approach to our professional work.

Social work education began at the University of California in 1904 when President Benjamin Ide Wheeler appointed Dr. Jessica Blanche Peixotto as a lecturer in sociology. Despite being an alumnus of the School of Social Welfare at Berkeley and spending my entire career in social work higher education, I was not aware of the historic importance of Jessica Blanche Peixotto to our profession until 2012 when I was appointed dean of Berkeley Social Welfare. I was trained at Berkeley to develop evidence to inform practice and so my interest was piqued about this predecessor of mine and how she shaped our field. Peixotto was an early pioneer in arguing that social work practice and policy must be shaped by the best available evidence and laid the groundwork for scholars like Joel Fischer, a Berkeley doctoral graduate, to ask six decades later if casework was

effective (Fischer, 1973). It has been the academic home for Eileen Gambrill (2019, see Burnette, 2016), a member of the Berkeley faculty for over four decades and a leader in bringing evidence-informed practices to our field.

This article draws on a wide variety of sources published by and about Peixotto and her family. It seeks to establish the previously untold importance of her role in leading the formation of social work education at Berkeley and in furthering an evidence-informed approach to our professional work.

Family history of migration

This story starts long before Peixotto was born on October 9, 1864, in New York City. The Peixotto family migrations can be traced back to the late 1400s when Christopher Columbus was setting off for



Jessica Blanche Peixotto in 1918. University Archives, University of California, Berkeley.

the New World and the Spanish Inquisition against non-Christians was in full swing on the Iberian Peninsula. Peixotto's Jewish ancestors fled Portugal for Amsterdam where they resided until the early 1800s (Dzuback, 1995; Peixotto, 2010, Voorsanger, 1905). Her ancestors' decision to flee in the late 1400s set in motion cascading migrations to The Netherlands, the Caribbean island of Curaçao, and then to New York. These migrations continued almost four hundred years later when, in 1870, a six-year-old American-born descendent, Jessica Blanche Peixotto, travelled with her mother, Myrtilla, and two younger brothers, Sidney and Edgar, by boat from New York to Panama, by train over the Isthmus of Panama, and then by steamer up the West Coast to San Francisco. The family was reunited with her father, Raphael Levy Maduro Peixotto, who had

travelled earlier to the San Francisco Bay Area where Peixotto would spend most of the rest of her life. Two younger brothers, Ernest and Eustace, were born in San Francisco (Peixotto, 2010). Her large Portuguese Jewish family was related to many well-known figures. Cousins included: Annie Nathan Meyer, founder of Barnard College; Emma Lazarus whose poem appears at the base of the Statue of Liberty; and Associate Supreme Court Justice Benjamin Nathan Cardozo.

Her father, Raphael, was an early employee of Levi Strauss and eventually became an executive in his in-laws' successful retail business, *The Emporium* department store, that is today Macy's. He also served in the late 1890s as the President of Temple Emanu-El, the oldest synagogue west of the Mississippi that still thrives today in San Francisco. The eulogy for Raphael, who died in 1905, was delivered by Emanu-El's Rabbi Jacob Voorsanger. The rabbi attested to Raphael's business and civic standing in the community and his efforts to self-educate himself over his lifetime despite having achieved only an elementary school education (Voorsanger, 1905). Raphael's self-education efforts brought college professors and other intellectuals into their home and likely influenced his only daughter's own yearning for education (Voorsanger, 1905).

Hard-fought Berkeley education

Upon graduation from San Francisco's Girls' High School in 1880, Jessica Peixotto sought to extend her education by enrolling at Berkeley. Unfortunately, her father didn't think it was appropriate for women to attend college but did encourage his daughter's continued studying with private tutors (Dzuback, 1995; Hatfield, 1935). Finally, in 1891,

her father was convinced to allow Peixotto to enroll in classes but not pursue a degree at Berkeley. Perhaps her father's mind was changed by the fact that women's enrollment at Berkeley was expanding rapidly. In 1890 there were only 105 female students enrolled but by 1900 there were 10 times that number, representing almost half of the student body and giving Berkeley the highest female enrollment in the country (Nerad, 1999).ⁱⁱ

Despite being in her late twenties when she started as a freshman, Peixotto was mistaken for being younger than 18, the age required for admission (Hatfield, 1935). Peixotto was admitted after proving her age and excelled at Berkeley. In a seminar taught by the renowned historian and political scientist, Bernard Moses, she was one of only two students, the other being David P. Barrows who later became a president of the university. She also befriended her brother's close friend, Frank Norris, who became a well-known California writer. Norris thought Peixotto was wasting her time by not working toward a degree and helped convince her father to allow her to formally enroll in a degree program. She was able to complete all the requirements in only three years and awarded a Bachelor's degree in 1894 at the age of 30. This was just a start, however, for Peixotto then enrolled in graduate studies in 1895 under the mentorship of her teacher, Professor Moses, who encouraged her to study social political economies (Dzuback, 1995; Hatfield, 1935). Her dissertation focused on French socialism and she was further encouraged to collect information in France where her brother Ernest was already studying art.

Peixotto headed to Paris in the Spring of 1896 to spend a year at the Sorbonne

researching her dissertation topic. A single woman in her 30s, Peixotto traveled and roomed with another American student in France. Her companion was a 24-year-old childhood friend and architecture student named Julia Morgan who traveled with her by train to New York, across the Atlantic to France, and then shared lodging with her in Paris. Julia Morgan was a pioneering woman in her own right. Morgan was encouraged by the well-known architect, Bernard Maybeck, to enroll in the l'Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris where she became the first woman admitted to the school's architecture program. When Morgan returned to California from France she became the first woman to be a licensed architect in the state and designed over 700 buildings, including the famed Hearst Castle in San Simeon, California (Kastner, 2009).

Peixotto's dissertation, titled *The French Revolution and Modern French Socialism: A comparative study of the principles of the French Revolution and the doctrines of modern French socialism*, was completed in 1900 and published as a book in 1901 (Peixotto, 1900, 1901). At the age of 36, she became only the second woman, after the psychologist Milicent Shinn, to receive a doctorate at the University of California.

Hired at Berkeley

Peixotto never intended to become an academic. After graduation, she worked in a settlement house in San Francisco (Peixotto, 1919). But the university was under growing pressure to give attention to women students and faculty. Phoebe Apperson Hearst, the widow of a mining magnate, suffragist, and mother of William Randolph Hearst, was appointed in 1897 as the first woman regent of the

University of California and served on the Board of Regents until her death in 1919. She was a strong advocate for women students and faculty at Berkeley and funded the campus master plan as well as many early scholarships for women, campus buildings, and new academic programs. Nerad (1999) points out that in 1891 when Peixotto became an undergraduate, “women had no social or extracurricular life, no athletic programs, no facilities for social and cultural events, and no rooms for club meetings” (p. 19) in comparison to a full array of opportunities for male students. Hearst championed the cause of women on campus, and would likely have seen hiring of women faculty as important to the institution and part of an “entering wedge” strategy “to make university women visible and bring them gradually into the mainstream of campus and American life” (Nickliss, 2018).

Peixotto’s opportunity for a teaching position at Berkeley came when she was approached by the University’s president, Benjamin Ide Wheeler. Wheeler, who became president in 1899, was evidently alarmed at the growing number of women on campus and feared they would displace men in the sciences. He is quoted as having said that women’s education “should tend to make you more serviceable as wives and mothers” (Nerad, 1999, pp. 28-29).

Despite his views on women in academia, Wheeler is said to have approached Peixotto in 1903 to ask her what she intended to do with her recently earned doctorate. Her response is reported to have been one of surprise as “she had no intention of doing anything” with it (Hatfield, 1935). Nonetheless, Wheeler hired her in January 1904 as a lecturer in sociology to teach a course in Contemporary Socialism, the topic of her

dissertation. Dzuback (2006) argues that Regent Hearst played a key role in Peixotto’s hiring. She writes, “Hearst knew Peixotto from their civic work in San Francisco, and that she had a close friendship and advising relationship with Wheeler, likely contributed to his willingness to consider Peixotto” (p. 157) for a position.

Peixotto, along with Lucy Sprague who was appointed the first dean of women and promoted to the faculty in 1906, were the first two women hired as full-time faculty members. The first part-time female faculty member was Dr. Mary B. Ritter, hired in August 1899 to serve as the university’s medical examiner for women and a part-time lecturer in hygiene, a position fully paid for by Hearst (Nickliss, 2018).

Peixotto was subsequently appointed as an assistant professor of sociology in 1907 but didn’t like being labeled a sociologist. In her oral history, Helen Valeska Bary, one of the first employees of the Social Security Administration, stated that “Dr. Peixotto was very much opposed to the current thinking in sociology, which was much more sentimental and religious” (1974, p. 172). In their history of sociology at Berkeley, Burawoy and VanAntwerpen (2001) confirm Peixotto’s antipathy towards sociology, writing she was “an uncompromising foe of sociology, regarding it, in the words of Robert Nisbet, as a ‘mixture of social uplift and metaphysical nonsense’” (pp. 6-7). Perhaps this reflected the fact that at the turn of the century, “many of the major figures in sociology, especially at Chicago had been theologians” (M. Burawoy, personal communication, May 28, 2020). It also reflected wider opposition to sociology at Berkeley in the

first half of the last century (see VanAntwerpen, 2005).

At Peixotto's urging, her appointment was changed by 1909 to assistant professor of social economics. She was subsequently promoted to associate professor of social economy in 1912 and finally to professor of social economy in 1918 (Dzuback, 1995, Hatfield, 1935). With this final promotion, Peixotto became the first woman at the University of California to achieve full professor status.

Struggle for acceptance at Berkeley

When Peixotto arrived back on campus in 1904 there was clearly a continuing bias against women as students, and even more so as faculty members. She and Sprague were the only two women faculty members on campus in those early years. Sprague later became the university's first Dean of Women. Their appointments were not without resistance and as Sprague (1953) wrote in her autobiography, "The older men were solidly opposed to having any women on the faculty" (p. 193). The chair of the Economics Department in 1904, Adolph Miller, was clearly one of these men. Sprague (1953) quoted Miller as saying "the finest flower of any culture was a 'lady' – and a lady never worked except in her own household" (p. 143). But Peixotto, as Dzuback (2006) suggests, had demonstrated her intellectual abilities as a doctoral student, came from a prominent family and, perhaps most importantly, at age 40 was unmarried. Sprague (1953), writing about her own poor treatment by male faculty, stated, "Jessica Peixotto was their equal in training and in intelligence, and they acted the same way toward her

appointment because she was a woman" (p.193).

President Wheeler may only have hired Peixotto to expand opportunities for educating women to satisfy domestic roles, but Peixotto and her female colleagues had other ideas and sought to train women for careers in the sciences (Dzuback, 2006). Peixotto continued to argue for women's right to a college education throughout her career, clearly arguing so in *The Case for Coeducation* (1923).

In the early years there is evidence that Peixotto and Sprague avoided attending faculty meetings in the economics department. As Dzuback (1999) writes, "they did not attend faculty meetings, not because they were barred from them, but because they feared they would alienate their male colleagues with their 'conspicuous' presence" (p.4). Sprague commented "Certainly we could have come, but I know that it would have prejudiced the men against us, and we already had enough prejudices to live down" (Nerad, 1999, p. 40).

Women's exclusion from Berkeley's Faculty Club was another continuing marker of their second-class treatment. In the early 1900s women were only allowed into certain areas of Faculty Club, often only at the invitation of male faculty. In the Fall of 1919 an invitation was issued to all women faculty to meet to discuss establishing a separate space for themselves on campus. Given that there were so few women faculty even by 1919, that first meeting was held in Peixotto's small apartment in Cloyne Court. This meeting set in motion larger meetings of women faculty and staff, culminating in the funding and building of the Women's Faculty Club in 1923 (Women's Faculty Club, n.d.). The Club

subsequently became the center of women faculty's social lives (Dzuback, 1999). A century later, the Berkeley Women's Faculty Club "is the only faculty club in the nation, founded originally for women, that still has its own building" (Women's Faculty Club, n.d.).

Throughout her career Peixotto not only supported women students and faculty hiring but was unafraid to voice her displeasure with her own treatment as a faculty member. For example, there is reference in a biography of Frank Norris to an episode when Peixotto "led a movement to shorten skirts to shoe tops to scandal of faculty" (Crisler & McElrath Jr., 2013, p. 80). More importantly, several authors have also pointed to her ongoing correspondence with President Wheeler. In one exchange in 1914 she stated "I hope I may be of such service to (the university), that someday it will be ready to confer upon me a less elementary title than that of 'Assistant Professor,' a title I have held for six years" (Dzuback, 1995, p. 5). She was promoted to Associate Professor the next year. Several years later she wrote again to Wheeler after several male colleagues hired after her had passed her in rank. She wrote that it had been "mortifying enough these past weeks to feel that when it is a question of promotions in our department, I am invariably the latest to get any evidence of merit. Late comers get first place" (Dzuback, 1995, p. 5). She was promoted to full professor the next year.

Beloved teacher

Over the years Peixotto added courses to her teaching portfolio - including many relevant to future social workers - such as the Control of Poverty, the Child and the

State, the History of Social Reform Movements, the Household as an Economic Agent, Contemporary Theories of Social Reform, Crime as a Social Problem, and, at the end of her career, the History of Economic Thought (Berkeley Baptist Divinity School, 1915, 1919; Hatfield, 1935).

Peixotto's course syllabi often included both a course outline and an annotated outline of each of her lectures. For example, her syllabus for Econ 180: The Control of Poverty course syllabus was published by the University of California Press in 1923 and is over 100 pages in length (Peixotto, 1923). The syllabus shows that in this course, she went into great detail defining poverty, its prevalence, its socioeconomic sources, a variety of theoretical conceptualizations of poverty, and actions to end it. She also discussed how social services could intervene to reduce poverty's effects. This course reflects her career-long interests in poverty, its structural sources, and the sources and expenditure of family incomes. Her focus on structural sources of poverty appears throughout her courses, as it does, for example, in her syllabus for Econ 42: Contemporary Theories of Social Reform (Peixotto, 1906). Her former student and colleague, Emily Huntington, remarked "Although Jessica Peixotto had been brought up in a family where I understand there were no economic strains, she had real concern for the problems of the lower income groups. For some reason which I could never fathom, her interest seemed to be in the history of the treatment of the poor and the reasons for the existence of poverty in the early decades of the twentieth century" (Huntington, 1971, p. 8).

Peixotto's home department was always economics and she clearly aligned with the view that rigorous data on the

economics of home life could inform improved social policy and charitable practices. As stated earlier, she objected to the label of sociologist and instead developed, along with other women colleagues, an area of study she termed “social economics” but which others derogatorily labeled the “feminine branch” of economics (Dzuback, 2006, p. 157). Social economics – the study of poverty and labor and social reform programs - grew into one of four areas of study within the economics department and was led by Peixotto. To this day, Peixotto’s early leadership role in the study of economics at Berkeley is still widely recognized and the department’s student lounge is the Peixotto Room.

Peixotto was highly respected as a teacher and colleague. When asked if she was charismatic, Ella Barrows Hagar, the daughter of a university president and wife of a regent, answered “very, very...She was slight and small, beautifully garbed, very precise and brilliant, and very human. Yet, it was never a chummy relationship at all. It was one of great respect and affection” (Hagar, 1974, p. 67). When asked if she was a role model like Jane Addams, Hagar responded “Well, no and yes. Certainly not like Jane Addams who must have been a very earthy person, dealing directly with the slums and areas of poverty and administering actually to people. Dr. Peixotto, always elegant and crisp and theoretical and academic, was another kind of model.” Hagar continued, “We all respected Dr. Peixotto and had great affection for her” (p. 67). Emily Huntington, a former student who would later be hired by Peixotto as a colleague in social economics, recalled in a 1971 oral history that “Jessica Peixotto brought to her teaching an enthusiasm for her subject, a very wide knowledge of the

literature in her fields. (We sometimes smiled a little when she would name three or four books she had read very recently. We were suspicious that she couldn’t have read each book through but her comments usually stopped our smiles.)” (p. 8). Walter A. Haas, Sr., a student who would later become president and chairman of his family’s Levi Strauss & Co. also recalled that Peixotto “was a wonderful woman and she had influence, I guess, on my career and my interest in public affairs and social organizations, which has been very much a tradition in our family” (Haas Sr., 1975, p.15).

Huntington (1971) also spoke extensively about Peixotto’s ability to inspire students. She stated that “Professor Peixotto had a real interest in her students. If a student at an informal conference expressed an interest in some special aspect of the course, she frequently gave us assistance in developing a small project. I was one of those students, and in working closely with her I came to know her well” (p.8). For Huntington, it was a very important relationship: “My longest and closest association was with Jessica Peixotto. She was the person most responsible for stimulating my interest in economics during my undergraduate years. She encouraged me and gave me confidence not only in finding interesting jobs after graduation but later in returning to college, Radcliffe, to complete the work for a Ph.D. degree.” (p. 7).

Berkeley, as a campus with global reach, also often offered fertile ground for intellectual exchange across national boundaries. For example, the journalist Gobind Behari Lal wrote in a *San Francisco Examiner* column of an upcoming visit of the Indian Prime Minister Morarji Desai to Berkeley in June of 1978. He mentions Peixotto,

among other faculty, who had a lasting influence on early Indian independence leaders who studied at Berkeley and returned to India to help free it from British colonial rule (Lal, 1978). Among the personal items Peixotto left to the University on her death was a 1917 work by Rabindranath Tagore on Indian nationalism.

A focus on science

Both students and colleagues commented on Peixotto's scholarly approach to her work. Her publications were significant and influenced public policies and programs of her era. Her dissertation was published as a book in 1901 (Peixotto, 1901). She next participated in a major study of the impact on families of the 1906 earthquake (O'Connor et al., 1913). She later surveyed almost 100 faculty to establish family incomes and a living wage, publishing the results in *Getting and Spending at the Professional Standard of Living: A study of the costs of living on academic life* (1927) and *Family Budgets of University Faculty Members* (1928). She continued this line of research with a community survey of 82 typographers and their families resulting in the *Cost of Living Studies, II: How workers spend a living wage* (1929). The foci of Peixotto's scholarship still resonate in our society today as scholars estimate a living wage and laborers and professionals fight for it.

Peixotto also worked to support her own research and that of her female colleagues by securing funding to establish the Heller Committee on Social Economic Research in 1923, an important source of research funding for the University of California. She secured financial support for the Heller Committee from her close friend, Clara

Hellman Heller. Heller was a member of a banking family that owned Wells Fargo Bank among other financial institutions. Peixotto served as founding chair of the Committee and held that post until her retirement. She used the Committee's funds to support research into social economic issues mostly conducted by herself and her fellow female colleagues, and to support women student assistants who were not being hired by male faculty at the time. The Committee added greatly to the standing of Peixotto and her colleagues within the University and created an intellectual center for social economic scholarship (Dzuback, 2006; Hatfield, 1935).

A leader for change at the university

Peixotto also provided extensive service on campus. For example, Wheeler appointed Peixotto in 1909 to head the Domestic Science Committee studying the establishment of a home economics department at Berkeley. While Wheeler may have seen this as another opportunity to divert women from the sciences into a "women's department," Peixotto and her female colleagues saw it as a path to establishing more opportunities for women to engage in rigorous social science training that would have direct impacts in communities (Nerad, 1999). Her work as a social economist was widely respected beyond the university, resulting in her appointment as Vice President of the American Economic Association in 1928 (May & Dimand, 2016). She spoke widely on social economics, and despite her aversion to the term sociology, she presented at the American Sociological Society meeting in 1926. Peixotto's extensive activities in service to furthering charitable work and

social welfare policies are highlighted in a later section.ⁱⁱⁱ

Emergence and growth of social welfare studies

Some historians have written about Jessica Blanche Peixotto, the social economist, but there is scant mention of her leading role in social welfare education and scholarship. Peixotto was a contemporary of Jane Addams, who was four years her senior. As indicated in oral histories, Peixotto's approach to social welfare was quite different than that of Jane Addams and other settlement house leaders (e.g. Hagar, 1974). She was perhaps more similar to Alice Salomon, eight years her junior, who at the same time founded social work education in Germany. Both Salomon and Peixotto came from assimilated Jewish families, were strong advocates for women, and spent most of their careers in academic settings but neither were activists who spent their lives on the street or in neighborhoods (see Salomon, 2004).^{iv} Peixotto was a scholar who used the methods of social science to bring about social reform and was described as one who used "science in the service of humanity" (Dzuback, 2006, p.158).

It is clear from people who knew Peixotto that she was somewhat reserved and so the life of an academic may have been more fitting for her. But her reserved nature did not stop her from leading major changes at Berkeley. As mentioned earlier, she almost singlehandedly developed an array of courses relevant to future social workers. She also used her formal and informal power to push the university to hire more women with interests in social economics, reform, and intervention.

Economics during Berkeley's early history was mostly the domain of a single faculty member, Bernard Moses, who was Peixotto's mentor. The content was taught as "political economy" until a separate Department of Economics was formed in 1903. So when President Wheeler hired Peixotto in January of 1904 she entered a brand-new academic unit. As her role at the University became more permanent she and the first Dean of Women, Lucy Sprague, worked hard to bring more women faculty onboard to expand relevant teaching and research. In social economics, Peixotto was able to hire Lucy Ward Stebbins in 1911, Barbara Armstrong in 1919, and later Emily Noble, Martha Chickering, and Emily Huntington. These women faculty made economics at Berkeley unique for having so many women faculty members and influenced the department to focus on more progressive social reform efforts in teaching and scholarship (Dzuback, 2006).

Historical documents indicate the economics faculty concluded in the early 1910s that "widespread interest in the control of poverty has given rise, in recent years, to a demand for the services of the trained social worker." The demand was seen as the result of four trends: (1) growth in the number of charities; (2) growing agitation for social reform; (3) the development of social science methods and (4) the establishment of similar training programs at other universities, such as Columbia and the University of Chicago (University of California, n.d.).

There is some discrepancy in historical records about the next evolution of social work training at Berkeley. Berkeley's official history of social welfare education points to 1912 as the establishment of the first formal

Curriculum in Social Economics that included both a year of study in social economics and field work with the Associated Charities of San Francisco (University of California, n.d.). Peixotto and Stebbins would have taught most of the required courses at that time and Peixotto's connections to charitable organizations likely paved the way for these first field placements.

Hatfield wrote that the first formal training for social workers occurred during World War I in the summer of 1917 when Peixotto and her colleagues established a program for Red Cross and home service workers. He indicates that this led to the establishment of a formal graduate Certificate of Social Service in the following 1917-18 academic year (Hatfield, 1935) just before the so-called "Spanish Flu" pandemic arrived in the San Francisco Bay Area. Correspondence from Peixotto to President Wheeler indicates that by this time there were 230 students enrolled in the social economics curriculum (Nerad, 1999).

The university's own website indicates a slightly different chronology with the Certificate being established ten years later, in 1927 (University of California, n.d.). This may indicate that first there was a curriculum in social economics followed by a more specific one in social services. Regardless, this social service curriculum was then accredited in 1928 by the American Association of Schools of Social Work. One of the first graduates of the accredited program was Martha Chickering who became program director of the certificate program in 1932, an Assistant Professor in 1936, and went on in 1939 to become Director of the California State Department of Social Welfare for the next six years (Martha Chickering Fellowship, n.d.).

It would be 10 years after accreditation and a few years after Peixotto's retirement that a Department of Social Welfare was established under the leadership of Harry Cassidy in 1939. The department emerged as an independent School of Social Welfare, under the leadership of Dean Milton Chernin, in 1944 during World War II. Sadly, Peixotto did not live to see this last achievement.

The influence of economics on social work training today is not as robust as it was in Peixotto's era. Page (1977) wrote of this history and pointed out that in the 1920s and 1930s a majority (15 of 28) social work programs required economics courses. By the 1970s, however, very few programs required economics courses or even mentioned economists in the profession's textbooks. At Berkeley, the last economist to hold a position in social welfare was Leonard Miller who retired in 2005 after 34 years on the faculty. There are a few economists who are still prominent in social welfare, for example, Sheldon Danziger who now leads the Russell Sage Foundation and previously taught in social work programs at the Universities of Michigan and Wisconsin.

An engaged scholar

Peixotto's research and teaching at the University coincided with her extensive engagement in public affairs. The evolution of the social service curriculum coincided with Peixotto's appointment in 1910 as a founding member of the Berkeley Commission on Public Charities. Hatfield (1935), who served on the Commission with Peixotto, wrote that Peixotto was the only member of the Commission with knowledge of charities and other members relied on her

expertise to develop policies and programs. She would serve on this Commission until 1913 and later served as chair of the San Francisco Federation of Women's Clubs' Child Welfare Department. In this later role she arranged a speaker series on contemporary child welfare issues. She was also one of the founders of Oakland's Baby Hospital in 1912, the first Western hospital to admit infants and children regardless of their family's economic status, now called the UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland (Oakland Wiki, n.d.).

Peixotto's local work was also recognized at the state level. California Governor Hiram Johnson's appointment of Peixotto to the State Board of Charities and Corrections coincided with the election of 1911 that swept a progressive government into power in California and establishment the following year of the federal Children's Bureau under the leadership of Julia Lathrop. The State Board soon had the power to investigate and license all private charities and publicly supported institutions (Gutman, 2014) and by 1922 had oversight for 2,200 California institutions and homes caring for over 12,000 children (Hatfield, 1935). Peixotto served as both a member and chair of the State Board's Committee on Children and also as chair of the Board's Committee on Research (Hatfield, 1935).

During this same decade, as World War I broke out, President Woodrow Wilson created a Council of National Defense to coordinate national resources in support of the country's war effort. Peixotto was appointed to U.S. Council of National Defense in 1917 and eventually moved to Washington D.C. for a short period to serve in multiple leadership roles. She served on the

Women in Industry and Child Welfare Committees. Her work on the Council included a much larger survey of child well-being than her later family income studies. This survey included distribution of six million questionnaires nationally (Hatfield, 1935, Peixotto, 1920). Peixotto was promoted to chair of the Committee on Child Welfare in December 1917 and worked closely with Lathrop and the Children's Bureau staff to advocate for and win approval from President Wilson for a national "Children's Year." She was quickly promoted to Chief of the Child Conservation Section of the Council. Peixotto's group acted as the liaison with state- and territory-level committees to implement the policies and programs of the Children's Bureau.

She returned to California soon after the war ended and resumed her work on living wages. A 1921 San Francisco Chronicle story details her talk to the meeting of the California Conference of Social Work that generated so much interest that the venue had to be moved to a larger space. As reported, her talk focused on the need for social workers to advocate for a living wage for all workers (San Francisco Chronicle, 1921).

Peixotto made many state and national appearances over her career, at sociology, economics, and social welfare conferences. As Chief of the Child Conservation Section of the National Defense Council, she delivered an extensive report on the Children's Year accomplishments at the 1918 New York State Conference on Charities (Peixotto, 1918) and published a similar report in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* that same year (Peixotto, 1918). The Chicago Daily Tribune described a speech by her encouraging women to become "home health volunteers" as part of the

Children's Year effort to reduce infant and child mortality by 100,000 (1918, March 14, p. 11). The National Conference on Social Work, held in Milwaukee in 1921, lists Peixotto participating on the Committee on Time and Place led by Harry Hopkins, on the Committee on Expression Concerning Standards alongside Mary Richmond, and the Children's Division alongside Grace Abbott among others, all early leaders of the social work profession. Clearly, she was very connected to social reform efforts at a national level and among the leaders of an emerging social work profession.

Peixotto retires

Peixotto started her academic career at age 40 and then spent three decades as a faculty member at Berkeley. At retirement in 1935 she was only one of six women professors at Berkeley (Rosenbaum, 2011). The sociologist Robert Nisbet recalled that "undoubtedly the most brilliant of the six was Jessica Peixotto" (Nisbet, 1992, p. 69).

A special volume – a *festschrift* - was published in honor of her retirement (Grether et al., 1935). Many authors, obituary writers, and myself have relied heavily on a biographical chapter in that volume by her friend and colleague, Henry Hatfield. The volume was much more than a biographical sketch. It included a wide variety of chapters by her colleagues and former students. Interestingly, one chapter was authored by then economics doctoral student, Clark Kerr, who later became the first Chancellor of the Berkeley campus and then President of the entire University of California system.

Peixotto never married and perhaps choose a professional career over family.

She responded "opportunities missed" on a form asking for her marital status and number of children (Nerad, 1999). She lived for many years in what is today a student housing cooperative, Cloyne Court, but in her time was the first housing devoted solely to faculty. She had contemporary roommates at times, from Julia Morgan in Paris to Lucy Sprague for a year early in her time at Berkeley.

Peixotto's mother, Mrytilla, lived with her in Berkeley after Jessica's father died in 1905. There is no mention of Peixotto having an intimate partner, male or female, in the record. She was the older sister to four brothers, three of whom died before her. Her nephew, Ernest D. Peixotto, recalled in a telephone interview and subsequent letter her being seen as a mother-figure to his own father, Eustace, who was 23 years younger than her. She was called "Doc" by her family (E.D. Peixotto, personal communication, July 5, 2016).

Her death came on October 19, 1941, at age 77 after a long illness. Obituaries appeared in many regional papers as well as *The Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Herald*, and *The New York Times*. The census of 1940 and obituaries indicate that she was living with her brother Sidney's widow, Jean, and her teenage nephew, also named Sidney, in the Elmwood neighborhood of Berkeley at the time of her death. Shortly after her death and the end of World War II, the University constructed the first student housing complex on campus, including one building for 77 male students named Peixotto Hall (University of California, n.d.).

Peixotto's legacy to social welfare and Berkeley

Like so many women in our society, Jessica Blanche Peixotto's leading role at Berkeley is mostly untold. While she would likely have identified as an economist and not a social worker, her important role in the early development of social welfare education and scholarship is even less well known.

Peixotto was a strong advocate for herself and other women students and faculty at Berkeley. She founded social welfare scholarship using rigorous social science methods of her day to establish evidence that would inform policies to support living wages. She was the key faculty member who led a systematic effort to give birth to and expand social economics and social service training programs at Berkeley. Last but not least, she was an engaged scholar who held many influential positions in key local, state, and national organizations aimed at promoting child and family wellbeing.

In a review of the *festschrift* published at her retirement, Carr-Saunders (1936) of the University of Liverpool wrote, "Miss Peixotto has not only made valuable contributions to knowledge; she has also exerted widespread influence upon students, and more than that upon the trend of social research and upon the course of social legislation...her work has been in the important, and until lately neglected, field of scientific social investigation, followed by the formulation of practical policies; and she has won her place among that group of remarkable women who have done so much for their country." (p. 328).

Peixotto's legacy can still be felt today at Berkeley Social Welfare. The faculty are leading scholars who focus on

developing evidence to inform both social policy and social work practice. Current faculty and graduates include leaders in comparative family policy, evidence-informed practice, and in services to support children and families. Peixotto's early work to bring scientific knowledge to inform policy and practice is present every day in the life of Berkeley Social Welfare and the social work profession.

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Endnotes

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ⁱⁱ Nerad (1999) documents that Stanford capped female enrollment in 1899 at a maximum of 500 students whereas Berkeley at that time had over 1,000 women enrolled.

ⁱⁱⁱ Peixotto spoke on restricting immigration in 1902 as reported in the San Francisco Chronicle

(April 18, 1902) but there is no record of this speech and there is no evidence that she commented or wrote on immigration again. In fact, much of her subsequent work was aimed at improving the lot of poor families who, in her time, included many immigrants.

^{iv} Salomon wrote her unpublished autobiography in exile in New York in the 1940s after being stripped of her university positions and expelled from Germany by the Nazis. Like Peixotto, she had no children of her own and the manuscript was inherited by her grand-niece, Ilse Eden, who received her M.S.W. from Berkeley. Eden worked with Andrew Lees, the editor, to have it published by the University of Michigan Press in 2004, a half-century after Salomon's death.