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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Mapping early women sociologists and their contribution to sociological knowledge in a transnational space

Chiara Ferrari

Department of Sociology, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan, Italy

ABSTRACT

The sociological canon has historically marginalised women, rendering invisible the contributions of the Early Women Sociologists (EWS) born prior to 1920. This paper addresses this epistemic gap by mapping the presence and theoretical legacies of EWS within contemporary scholarly networks. Based on an international literature review and an online survey involving 76 scholars, the study identifies 45 EWS cited as core references, distinguishing between classical, emerging, and lesser-known figures. The analysis highlights how EWS developed original approaches to social theory and methodology. Their writings reveal pioneering insights into feminism, intersectionality, materialist critiques, standpoint theory, and media studies, grounded in lived experience and practical engagement with social issues. Findings also underscore tensions in the current process of recognition: while some figures are becoming consolidated through historiographical studies, handbooks and university curricula, many remain marginal or absent, reflecting selective logics of canon formation. Recovering and reintroducing these voices thus requires not only filling gaps but critically questioning the epistemic criteria of legitimacy within sociology. The study argues that engaging with EWS enriches social theory, expands disciplinary boundaries, and fosters a more inclusive and increasingly transnational sociology.

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1. Introduction

The construction of the sociological canon has been a selective and unequal process which, since the very origins of the discipline, has systematically excluded women, despite the originality and significance of their contributions. More than a century after the publication of the main works of the Early Women Sociologists (EWS) – social scientists active between 1800 and 1920, the classical period of sociology's foundation – their theoretical legacy remains weakly represented in university curricula and reference textbooks. As Lynn McDonald (2019) pointed out, sociological theory continues to be 'the last bastion of sexism': in the most authoritative textbooks, women are often

CONTACT Chiara Ferrari chiara.ferrari1@unicatt.it

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excluded altogether, or included without adequate critical discussion, relegated to marginal sections, or presented as exemplary figures while their role in social theory is underestimated.

The consequence of this process of rendering women's contributions invisible is twofold: on the one hand, it perpetuates a distorted narrative of the history of the discipline; on the other, it conveys to new generations the idea that sociology has been theorised – and can still be conceived of – solely by men. Thomas and Kukulan (2004), in their analysis of the syllabi of classical theory courses across 40 graduate schools in the United States, demonstrated that Marx, Weber and Durkheim continue to represent the most studied classics, while the works of women are rarely assigned or discussed, and are often encountered by students only through secondary exercises or limited citations.

Within this context, the present paper illustrates some empirical findings emerging from the research project GenS – *Gendering Sociology: Proposal for Research and Teaching*, which aims to enhance the recognition of the EWS within contemporary scholarly research. This constitutes an exercise of inclusive sociology, not merely a critical endeavour, as it seeks to identify the scholars who, since the 1990s, have been engaged in expanding the sociological canon by incorporating the voices and works of women at the theoretical, methodological and empirical levels. Drawing on international literature and on the empirical results of the GenS project,[1] the objectives of this paper are, first, to provide a mapping of the currently most familiar EWS to the scholars who participated in the survey, including details concerning their historical and geographical location. Secondly, it aims to outline the main themes, key works and epistemological approaches that underpin the theoretical and methodological contributions of these EWS. This process of recognising these women sociologists does not simply amount to an attempt to recover the histories of subjects marginalised by the disciplinary canon, but also broadens our perspectives on social theory and on the meanings it has acquired among those who have constructed and practised it.

2. The women's challenge to sociology: the development of a field of study in 'Latin Europe'

Sociological knowledge developed in the West during the nineteenth century, within industrial and patriarchal societies, under the impetus of intellectuals with positivist or critical orientations (Jedlowski, 2009). In this context, sociology progressively defined its disciplinary canon, privileging quantitative methods and conferring scientific legitimacy upon certain subjects – mostly men – while excluding others, in particular women (Deegan, 1991; Holzhauser, 2021). Yet the genesis of our discipline is profoundly intertwined with the emergence of women in the public sphere and in the early struggles for civil, educational and political rights; the nineteenth century, which witnessed the rise of sociological science, was also the century of women's claims for access to education and professional domains (Klein, 1946). The birth of sociology thus coincides with the development of proto-feminist thought and with the active participation of many women in debates on social, political, educational and moral issues, which became central to the constitution of sociological knowledge.

Nevertheless, women's contributions – particularly at the theoretical level (McDonald, 1998) – have not been taken into consideration. The works of numerous women scholars

were progressively devalued, poorly disseminated, rarely read and even less frequently cited. This removal resulted in their effective exclusion from the disciplinary canon, leading, in many cases, to an almost total erasure of their presence. In this process, the authority of knowledge produced by women was often delegitimised as such, according to a logic that Lengermann and Niebrugge (1998) define as a 'gender and knowledge politics'.

As Arango (2005) points out, sociology has constructed its supposed epistemological neutrality from a male perspective, neglecting the fact that gender is a foundational category, capable of critically redefining the theoretical bases of the discipline (Smith, 1974). The removal of women scholars from the official discourse is therefore not a mere side effect, but risks constituting a structural feature of the genesis and development of sociology, generating epistemic injustice. Through these dynamics, the authority of women's thought has been systematically diminished or denied, while the public visibility of intellectual women has been subordinated to that of the men with whom they were associated. As Lengermann and Niebrugge (1998) further emphasise, many women thinkers and scholars have been remembered primarily as wives, lovers, daughters, or collaborators, translators, editors, and assistants to more renowned men. Recognition of their work proved easier when it referred to socio-political and educational engagement in professional domains considered feminine, such as teaching or journalism.

Beginning with the second wave of feminism in the 1970s, within the United States, several intellectuals, recognising these processes, initiated a systematic effort to recover and valorise the so-called 'founding sisters' (Deegan, 1991, p. 3), namely those women who, since the origins of the discipline, actively contributed to the construction of sociological knowledge at the theoretical, methodological and empirical levels (McDonald, 1994; Santagati et al., 2023). As argued by Deegan (1991), many of the women considered foundational to sociology did not hold formal academic positions in sociology and often operated in hybrid intellectual and professional spaces, including social reform, empirical research, moral philosophy, anthropology, statistics, and social work. What makes it possible to recognise them as sociologists is not their formal disciplinary label, but the way in which they addressed social problems: through a non-contingent relationship between theoretical construction and empirical investigation, a methodologically informed reflection on the data collected, and a comparative orientation aimed at identifying regularities and differences in social processes. In this sense, the category of Early Women Sociologists does not refer to a formally institutionalised disciplinary belonging, but rather to a shared epistemic orientation and to the active participation in the early constitution of sociological ways of knowing society. This work of rereading the disciplinary past has made it possible to reweave the threads of an alternative sociological genealogy, one that places women's experiences, languages, lived realities and contexts at the centre of the construction of sociological knowledge.

From then until the early 2000s, numerous studies and research projects contributed to filling this sociological gap. Mary Jo Deegan (1991) was the first to compile in her volume the bio-bibliographies of 52 early women sociologists; Lengermann and Niebrugge (1998) devoted substantial chapters of their anthology to three European thinkers – Harriet Martineau, Marianne Schnitger Weber and Beatrice Potter Webb – and to twelve American authors, including Jane Addams, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Anna Julia Cooper, Ida B. Wells-Barnett and Florence Kelley. At the same time, McDonald (1994) incorporated into her studies the already mentioned Martineau and Potter

Webb, while also highlighting the theoretical and empirical-methodological contributions of Harriet Taylor Mill, Frances Wright, Flora Tristan, Florence Nightingale and Matilda Joslyn Gage. Beyond the Anglophone world, Honegger and Wobbe (1998) provided German-speaking readers with a collection of portraits of nine women active in the field of sociology, among them the French pioneer Jenny d'Héricourt. Alongside these well-established reconstructions, EWS also made foundational contributions in other European contexts that remain less visible in the international literature. In East-Central Europe, for examples, figures such as Maria Ossowska (Kwiecińska-Zdrenka & Zdrenka, 2021) and Nina Assorodobraj-Kula played a crucial role in the development of sociology, particularly in relation to the sociology of morality, culture, and everyday life.

Since the early 2000s, this work of recovery has become further intensified and internationalised beyond the Western context, opening new avenues of analysis. From the late 2000s onwards, this expansion has increasingly overlapped with the emergence of the fourth wave of feminism, which has identified digital networks as a key infrastructure for building transnational communities and for the circulation of decentring forms of knowledge (Fortunati et al., 2025; Magaraggia, 2015), including within academia. Recently easier access to digital archives and primary sources has made possible a wider circulation of the works of the EWS, stimulating renewed efforts towards their recognition and translation into languages other than the originals. There has been a growing interest and the opening of new areas of research in the Global South (e.g. Latin America), the Mediterranean space (e.g. Spain, Italy) and Latin Europe (Bertozzi et al., 2019). Examples include the Spanish translation of Lengermann and Niebrugge's volume, edited by Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley (2019), the publication in Portuguese of Harriet Martineau's writings (Martineau, 2021), as well as the initiatives of Italian publishers (such as Kurumuny with the book series *Esplorazioni* and Vita e Pensiero with *Donne in Sociologia*), which have contributed to bringing the works of the 'founding sisters' to an Italian readership. Similarly, the Brazilian volume edited by Toste Daflon and Ribeiro Campos (2022) focuses on the profiles of sixteen pioneers of sociology between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, where – alongside already familiar figures – new names from non-European and non-Western contexts begin to appear, such as Josephina Álvares de Azevedo and Maria Firmina dos Reis, both of Brazilian origin. In continuity with this endeavour, the recent international initiative *Projecto Mary Jo Deegan* (coordinated by Navarro-Fosar and launched in 2023), based on the creation of a network of scholars engaged with the EWS, has confirmed the need for broader research and analyses capable of including scholars from diverse geographical contexts, thereby embracing a wider international scenario rather than remaining confined to the Anglophone context. At the same time, this line of research has recently been further enriched also by forms of public sociology and digital scholarship that draw attention to the gendered organisation of academic labour underlying the production of classical sociological knowledge. An emblematic example is the podcast series *Thanks for Typing*,[2] curated by Ros Edwards and Val Gillies, which explores – through archival sources, correspondence, and personal diaries – the often invisible intellectual and emotional, labour performed by sociologists' wives. By foregrounding practices such as editing, typing, correspondence management, and conceptual mediation, the series makes visible forms of epistemic contribution that have historically remained unacknowledged within official narratives of

authorship. Along similar lines, the video series Além do Cânone builds on the research and editorial project initiated by Professor Celso Castro with the book Além do Cânone: para ampliar e diversificar as ciências sociais, which aimed to expand the possibilities of the sociological canon and suggest new perspectives for understanding social reality. Composed of short videos,[3] the series explores the intellectual trajectories and legacies of authors who have been historically excluded from the traditional canon of the social sciences. Each episode is devoted to a single author and combines interviews with scholars, archival materials, books, and photographs to construct a biographical narrative introducing these figures to a broader public. The project explicitly seeks to promote the diversity of authors, thereby expanding the possibilities of the canon and suggesting alternative perspectives for understanding social reality.

In the Italian context, studies specifically devoted to the contribution of women to the origins of sociology remain rare and fragmented. There are, however, some exceptions, such as the decade-long work on American authors, both male and female, of the Chicago School (Cersosimo & Rauty, 2023; Rauty, 2017), a number of specialist studies on individual figures and on historical-philosophical approaches (Santagati et al., 2023), and two recent general sociology textbooks which, alongside the classical founding fathers of sociology, include biographical accounts and contributions of early women sociologists (Bichi, 2022; Gammaitoni, 2025). The role and contribution of the EWS to the discipline in Italy is still in its infancy and, for this reason, this article seeks, albeit partially, to help fill this gap.

3. Research design

3.1. Objectives of the study

As part of the GenS project, the present contribution reports some findings from the first phase of the study, which, through an online questionnaire, sought to map the academic and research networks of scholars who, over the last three decades (1990-2024), have worked to recover and deepen the theoretical and empirical contributions of the EWS. This specific timeframe was chosen, as noted in the previous section, because it is precisely from the 1990s onwards that texts and works dedicated to rediscovering women's contributions to sociology since its origins began to circulate (Deegan, 1991; Honegger & Wobbe, 1998; Lengermann & Niebrugge, 1998; McDonald, 1994).

The research aims are therefore: (1) to identify the EWS most frequently mentioned by the scholars who responded to the survey, and to present some distinctive features of these early social scientists; (2) to outline – on the basis of respondents' accounts – the themes, key works, and methods that characterise the main contributions of the EWS under consideration.

3.2. Research phase

The study was structured in the following phases:

1. An exploratory review of the literature was carried out in four languages (English, Italian, Spanish and French) across several scientific databases (Scopus, Web of Science,

SCIELO)[4] in order to identify scholars who, from 1990 to 2024, have examined the EWS. For the purposes of this study, the term 'sociologist' is used in a historically and epistemologically grounded sense rather than as a strictly disciplinary label. In the period under consideration, disciplinary boundaries between sociology, philosophy, anthropology, political economy, and applied social research were fluid and not yet institutionally stabilised. Following the approach adopted in foundational works on EWS, we therefore include women whose work contributed substantively to the development of sociological questions, concepts, methods, and forms of empirical inquiry, regardless of their formal disciplinary affiliation. In addition, contributions on women born before 1920, whose intellectual formation and early professional trajectories unfolded during the classical period of the foundation of sociology, were included. The review included both academics and experts operating in extra-university contexts. The search string used in the databases was: '*Early AND/OR Women AND Sociolog*' *. The literature review led to the initial identification of 174 bibliographic records.

2. These records were then manually reviewed to eliminate irrelevant entries, resulting in 33 valid records corresponding to a total of 45 authors. To this list, the names of scholars who authored chapters dedicated to the EWS in edited volumes identified in the literature review were added. Identifiers from existing research or editorial projects were also included. This process resulted in a list of 133 scholars whose public e-mail addresses were collected.
3. At the same time, the survey instrument (see 2.3) was developed for distribution to all the individuals identified and included in the list.
4. Finally, the online questionnaire was administered to the 133 identified scholars, while at the same time seeking to expand the network of participants through respondents' suggestions of additional experts. In this way, the universe of potential respondents reached a total of 160.

3.3. Survey instrument

For data collection, an online questionnaire in English was administered via the Qualtrics platform. It was designed to explore different aspects of the study and research activities on the EWS undertaken by the participants. The questionnaire was organised into four sections, each aimed at investigating a specific domain: (1) the sociodemographic profile of respondents; (2) the study and research activities on the EWS conducted by the survey participants; (3) a more detailed focus on the EWS investigated by respondents; (4) professional networks and reference figures in the dissemination of the thought of the EWS.

In line with the specific objectives of this paper, the analysis focuses on the findings from the first and third sections of the questionnaire. The first section gathers information useful for outlining the participants' profiles, asking about sex, age, country of origin, level of education, profession, academic or extra-academic affiliation, as well as disciplinary field. In the third section, respondents were invited to indicate up to three EWS[5] who represented the core of their study and research activities, specifying for each the main thematic areas addressed and the research method most frequently employed. Furthermore, for each figure identified, respondents were asked to indicate the work considered most significant, thereby providing not only an overview of the

prevailing areas of interest but also the theoretical and empirical contributions regarded as fundamental to the development of their thought.

3.4. Participants

Of the 160 individuals included in the final list of mapped participants, 147 began completing the questionnaire. Several of these did not complete it, however, thereby compromising the usability of the information provided. It's clear that in this study, the respondents do not constitute a statistically representative sample of the broader field, but rather a self-selected group of scholars identified through an international literature review and related initiatives, who are actively engaged in research and teaching on EWS. At the end of the administration process, the survey counted 76 participants; among them, 82.89% reported female sex, 15.79% male sex, and 1.32% preferred not to report. The questionnaire was completed by individuals born between 1936 and 1996, thus encompassing different generations of scholars. The average age of respondents was 50.4 years (SD = 13.89).

About the country of origin of the survey participants (see Figure 1), the data show a heterogeneous international composition, with a significant prevalence of respondents from certain Latin American and European countries. Among the latter, Italy (36.84%), Spain (17.11%) and Germany (9.21%) stand out, together accounting for a considerable share of the sample (63.16%). The marked prevalence of Italian respondents should also be interpreted in relation to the author's positionality. As the author is an Italian-based scholar, access to national bibliographical resources, archival materials, and editorial initiatives devoted to the recovery of EWS was more immediate within the Italian context. Linguistic familiarity and proximity to local academic debates facilitated the identification of sources, projects – and so authors – that might be less visible or less accessible from other national or institutional locations.[6] At the same time, the

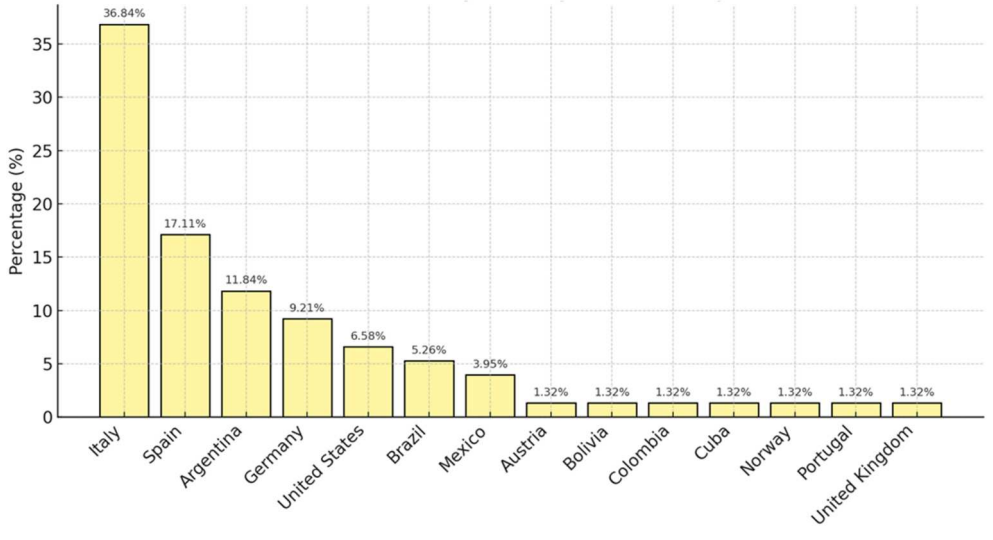

Figure 1. Survey Participants by Country of Origin. %. Source: GenS Project, 2025.

substantial presence of South America, which represents about one quarter of the sample – with Argentina (11.8%), Brazil (5.3%) and Mexico (3.9%) as the main contributors – demonstrates that interest in the EWS extends beyond Eurocentric boundaries.

As for the professional profile of participants, the data show that the sample is largely composed of academics or people with academic education: three quarters of the sample reported having obtained a doctoral degree, and 93.42% declared that they work in academia in various roles. The participants are recent graduates (1.32%) and doctoral students (6.58%), postdoctoral fellows (10.53%), researchers (10.53%), adjunct professors (9.21%) and senior adjunct professors (1.32%), associate professors (19.74%), full professors (23.68%), and retired professors (10.52%). The remaining share (6.58%) is divided among individuals working in the for-profit private sector (2.63%), the third sector (1.32%), public administration (1.32%), or as current primary or secondary school teachers (1.32%).

Focusing specifically on the academic respondents, an analysis of the generational composition highlights a marked polarisation across age groups. The data show that the majority are senior profiles (43.42%), consisting mainly of tenured faculty in higher-ranking positions (associate and full professors); this is followed by the junior component (28.96%), referring to individuals in pre-tenure or recently tenured positions, including recent graduates, postdoctoral fellows, and fixed-term researchers. A further 10.53% of participants are adjunct professors, with an average age of 43. Finally, there is a non-negligible presence of retired academics (10.52%) who, despite having formally concluded their academic careers, nevertheless maintain an active interest and engagement with the subject. The data suggest that this interest is more often cultivated after a long and consolidated professional trajectory and less frequently in the early stages of a career.

Regarding the disciplinary field,[7] most respondents belong to sociology and cultural studies (78.95%); these are followed by philosophy and ethics (10.53%) and history and archaeology (2.63%). The remaining respondents are distributed across journalism (1.32%), law (1.32%) and welfare/social work (1.32%), while 3.95% did not answer the question.

4. Results

4.1. The EWS: levels of recognition among scholars

In the questionnaires collected, completed by 76 scholars, a total of 45 EWS were listed as the object of study of the experts involved in the research. In the following table (see Table 1), a classification of the EWS is provided based on the number of citations they received from the respondents, ordered in descending order (from the most to the least cited). As noted above, each respondent could indicate up to three EWS in whose work they felt particularly specialised.

From the number of citations obtained, it is possible to distinguish three macro-groups of social scientists (clusters): (1) *the most famous/classical figures,* corresponding to the top four on the list – Jane Addams, Harriet Martineau, Marianne Schnitger Weber and Charlotte Perkins Gilman – who achieved the highest level of recognition among the experts in the field (mentioned 23, 18, 17 and 10 times, respectively); (2) *the emerging*

Table 1. EWS cited by the questionnaire respondents, with frequency of mention, country of birth and main contexts in which they operated, year of birth and death.

	List of EWS	Number of times the EWS were cited by the respondents	Country of birth of EWS (countries of professional activity indicated in brackets)	Year of birth and death of EWS
1	Jane Addams	23	USA	1860–1935
2	Harriet Martineau	18	UK	1802–1876
3	Marianne Schnitger Weber	17	Germany	1870–1954
4	Charlotte Perkins Gilman	10	USA	1860–1935
5	Beatrice Potter Webb	5	UK	1858–1943
6	Flora Tristán	5	France (Perù)	1803–1844
7	Anna Julia Cooper	4	USA	1858–1964
8	Florence Kelley	4	USA	1859–1932
9	Gina Lombroso	4	Italy	1872–1944
10	Elisa Salerno	3	Italy	1873–1957
11	Ida Bell Wells-Barnett	3	USA	1862–1931
12	Rosa Luxemburg	3	Poland – then part of the Russian Empire (Germany)	1871–1919
13	Eduarda Mansilla	2	Argentina	1834–1892
14	Herta Herzog	2	Austria (USA)	1910–2010
15	Juana Paula Manso	2	Argentina	1819–1875
16	Mathilde Vaerting	2	Germany	1884–1977
17	Pandita Ramabai Saraswati	2	India	1858–1922
18	Viola Klein	2	Austria (UK)	1908–1973
19	Alexandra Kollontai	1	Russia	1872–1952
20	Charlotte Lütkens	1	Germany	1896–1967
21	Clara Zetkin	1	Germany	1857–1933
22	Consuelo Serra Heredia	1	Cuba	1884–1945
23	Edith Abbott	1	USA	1876–1957
24	Eleanor Marx	1	UK	1855–1898
25	Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne	1	Germany	1850–1917
26	Emily Fogg Meade	1	USA	1871–1950
27	Emma Goldman	1	Lithuania (USA)	1869–1940
28	Ercilia Nogueira Cobra	1	Brazil	1862-?
29	Florence Nightingale	1	UK	1820–1910
30	Frieda Wunderlich	1	Germany (USA)	1884–1965
31	Gertrud Dyhrenfurth	1	Germany	1865–1945
32	Gisele Freund	1	Germany	1908–2000
33	Harriet Taylor Mill	1	UK	1807–1858
34	Juana Manuela Gorriti	1	Argentina	1818–1892
35	Julia Lathrop	1	USA	1858–1932
36	Margaret Fuller	1	USA	1810–1850
37	Margaret Mead	1	USA	1901–1978
38	María Carolina Grill	1	Argentina	???
39	Marion Talbot	1	USA	1858–1948
40	Mary Parker Follett	1	USA	1868–1933
41	Mary Wollstonecraft	1	UK	1759–1797
42	Nina Rubinstein	1	Germany	1908–1996
43	Rose Laub Coser	1	Germany	1916–1994

(*Continued*)

Table 1. Continued.

	List of EWS	Number of times the EWS were cited by the respondents	Country of birth of EWS (countries of professional activity indicated in brackets)	Year of birth and death of EWS
44	Simone de Beauvoir	1	France	1908–1986
45	Hilde Weiss	1	Germany	1900–1981

Source: GenS Project (2025).

figures, a substantial group of 14 sociologists whose thought was identified as an area of study between 5 and 2 times by the sample, signalling a convergence of interest around figures of diverse origins, probably reflecting the geographical affiliations of the scholars surveyed; (3) *the lesser-known figures,* which constitute the largest and most heterogeneous group both temporally (including social scientists born between 1818 and 1929), geographically and disciplinarily (encompassing authors usually associated with other disciplines, such as anthropology in the case of Margaret Mead, or nursing and statistics in the case of Florence Nightingale). This group includes 27 EWS, each mentioned only once, indicating a limited level of recognition.

As can be observed in Table A1 (see also the Appendix), the uneven distribution of citations of the EWS collected through the questionnaire tends to mirror their presence in the pioneering historiographical and theoretical works devoted to the rediscovery of women in sociology. In particular, reference may be made to the following volumes: the collection edited by Mary Jo Deegan in 1991, *Women in Sociology: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook*; the work by Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley published in 1998, *The Women Founders: Sociology and Social Theory, 1830-1930*; *Frauen in der Soziologie: Neun Porträts* by Honegger and Wobbe (1998); McDonald's, 1994 volume *The Women Founders of the Social Sciences*; and, finally, the most recent work, *Más allá del canon: Mujeres en el pensamiento social*, edited by Navarro-Fosar (2026).

When comparing the findings of the survey with the presence of the EWS in these key reference texts, Jane Addams, Harriet Martineau, Marianne Schnitger Weber and Charlotte Perkins Gilman – the four figures most frequently mentioned in the questionnaire – also emerge as those most systematically considered in the critical volumes cited above. This convergence suggests that the expert perception captured through the questionnaire is not the outcome of random or localised dynamics but rather reflects, at least in part, a process of legitimisation of the EWS already initiated by textbooks and histories of feminist sociology since the 1990s. By contrast, many of the lesser-cited figures – often mentioned only once – are either entirely absent or only rarely present in these foundational works of rediscovery.

Turning to the geographical origins of the EWS identified, a systematic examination of their countries of birth reveals a complex profile that outlines an intellectual landscape that is broad, transnational, and decentring in relation to the traditionally Eurocentric or Anglo-American narratives of the foundation of sociology (see Figure 2). Considering the overall data, there is a prevalence of figures born in the United States, followed by Germany and the United Kingdom – three countries historically central to the development of academic institutions and sociological schools between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and therefore representing the most substantial geographical core. However, when broken down according to the three clusters identified above, a more

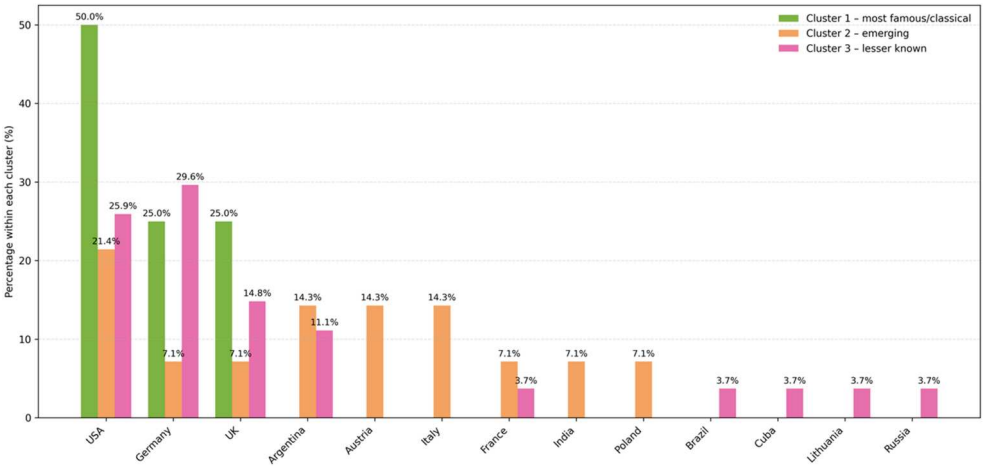

Figure 2. Cited EWS by Country of Origin and Cluster of Belonging. %. Source: GenS Project, 2025.

diversified perspective emerges. The best-known and most recognised figures (Cluster 1 – the most famous/classical) are concentrated almost exclusively in the United States and Western Europe, whereas the emerging and lesser-known scholars (Clusters 2 and 3) increasingly originate from Latin American and Latin European countries. This result points to a gradual opening and recognition within research towards contexts historically marginalised in sociological canons, but which in fact attest to the active presence of social scientists already at the dawn of the discipline.

This heterogeneity of origins should not be regarded as a mere statistical curiosity, but rather as an indicator of the widespread circulation of sociological practices and knowledge beyond the well-known metropolitan centres of the West. In many cases, moreover, the country of birth does not coincide with the country in which intellectual activity was carried out (see Table 1, column 4). Consider, for instance, Rosa Luxemburg, born in Zamość (in present-day Poland, then part of the Russian Empire) but active in Germany; Herta Herzog, born in Vienna and later emigrated to the United States, where she became a pioneering figure in the sociology of communication; or Flora Tristán, born in France but also closely linked to Peru through family origins and political references. Eduarda Mansilla and Juana Paula Manso, both born in Argentina but also living in countries such as Brazil and France, actively contributed to the spread of education and the promotion of innovative educational ideas and practices that formed part of the broader process of modernisation in nineteenth-century Latin America.

Indeed, even social scientists who appear to be rooted in a single national context – such as Jane Addams, Harriet Martineau or Gina Lombroso – operated within transnational spaces, travelling extensively across Europe and the Americas and developing their thought in dialogue with experiences, institutions and movements situated in geographical contexts other than their own place of origin. The genealogy of the discipline thus appears less as a continuous line organised around a few authoritative names and clearly recognisable geographical contexts, and more as a mobile field shaped by human mobility, as well as by linguistic and cultural entanglements. Viewed from this perspective,

social scientists are not secondary figures to be retrospectively added to the canon, but epistemic agents who contributed – even from marginal positions and/or shifting geographical boundaries – to the construction of sociological thought.

4.2. The sociological contribution of the women founders

4.2.1. The main field of study of EWS

Focusing on the main fields of study addressed by the EWS as indicated by the survey respondents (see Figure 3),[8] it is possible to reconstruct a rich and multifaceted picture that challenges many of the established narratives regarding the alleged marginality or uniformity of women's interests within the classical landscape of sociology. Alongside areas strongly represented and historically attributed to women (Marshall, 2000) – such as women's studies, gender studies and family studies – other fields also emerge significantly, including labour studies and social stratification, deviance and crime, poverty, social inequalities, and even urban sociology.

The presence of the EWS in such areas of study contests the still widespread assumption that women's contributions to sociology were confined to the private sphere or to issues related to care; instead, it demonstrates that they pursued broad sociological interests from the very beginnings of the discipline. Their attention to phenomena of marginality, poverty, social justice, and urban conflict highlights a structurally complex vision of the social, one that brings together the micro and the macro, the everyday and the institutional, the biographical and the collective.

From the survey findings (Figure 3), it is worth noting that 7.5% of respondents identified social theory as the main field of interest of the EWS – a figure that reflects the awareness, among the scholars participating in the study, of the role played by women in the development of the theoretical foundations of sociology. At the same time, 5%

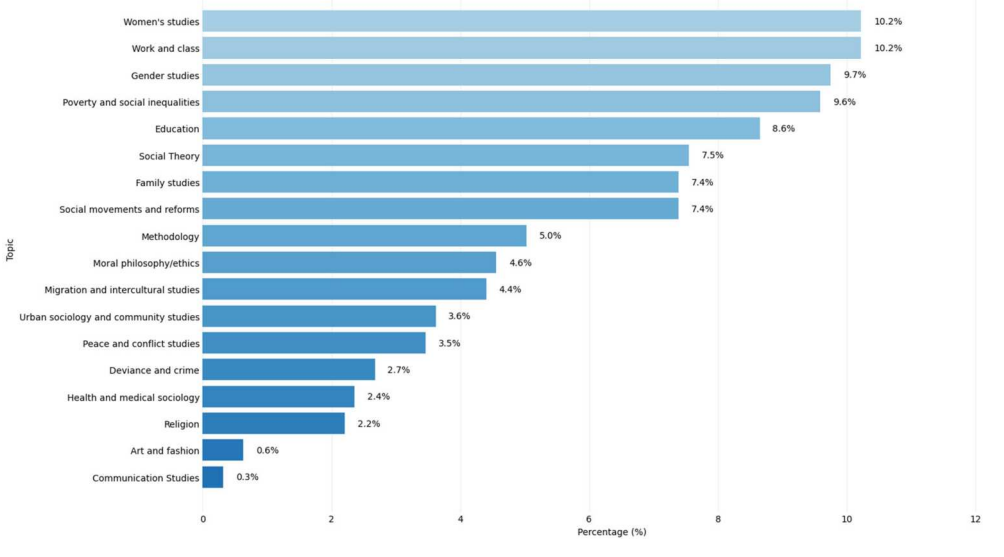

Figure 3. Fields of study explored by the EWS as indicated by survey respondents. %. Source: GenS Project, 2025.

indicated methodology as an area of study of the EWS, suggesting their active contribution to the construction of sociology as a scientific discipline.

4.2.2. The methods used by the EWS

An analysis of the methodological approaches reported by the respondents in the survey for each identified woman reveals a wide range of methodological tools and techniques adopted by the EWS (see Figure 4). This richness reflects the plurality of topics addressed by these social scientists. Beyond the frequencies, what emerges is an analytical style grounded in three complementary axes: historical depth, contextual immersion, and relational proximity to the subjects-objects of their research. First, the significant use of documentary and historical research highlights a sustained attention to the genealogical dimension of social phenomena, conceived not as a mere chronological backdrop but as an analytical space necessary for understanding the stratification of knowledge. Second, the systematic adoption of techniques such as observation and ethnography reflects a situated methodological stance, oriented towards capturing the social in its everyday phenomenology through the direct experience of contexts and practices. This close-up perspective is reinforced by the centrality attributed to qualitative and quantitative techniques such as interviews and questionnaires, which configure knowledge as the product of a reflexive interaction with social subjects – recognised not as mere objects of study to be observed with detached neutrality, but as interlocutors who carry meanings and are therefore to be encountered and listened to. Taken together, these elements – although they may now appear self-evident – reveal a methodological configuration that appears strikingly contemporary, in line with current practices of conducting social research, and indeed anticipatory. Consider, for instance, the emphasis currently placed on mixed methods (Ivankova & Creswell, 2009), which were already present in the intuitions of these social scientists, albeit without the explicit use of such terminology.

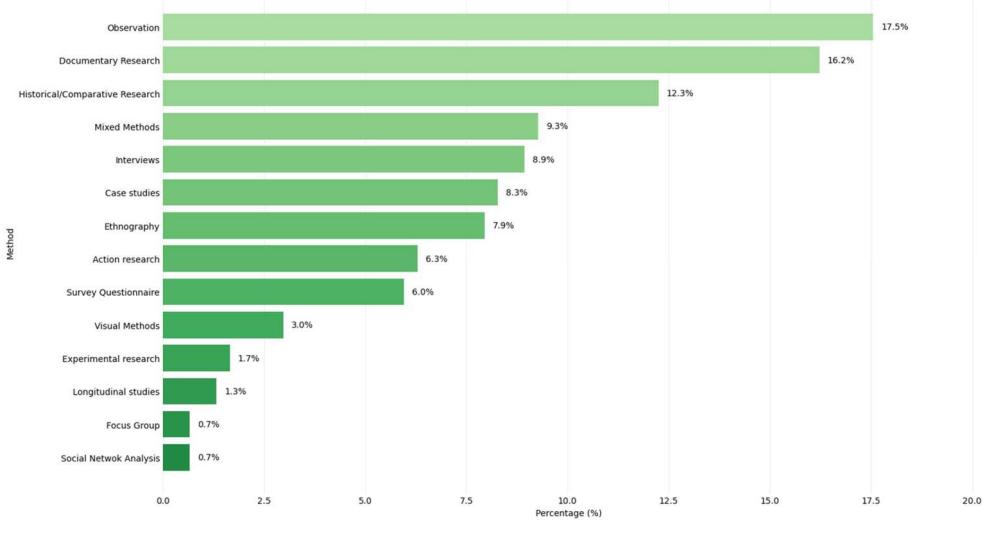

Figure 4. Methods used by the analysed EWS. %. Source: GenS Project, 2025.

4.2.3. Knowledge production through the main works of EWS

Building on the fields of study and methodological repertoires identified by survey respondents (Figures 3 and 4), it is now useful to complement these findings with a close reading of the EWS texts most frequently recognised by respondents as particularly significant (Table A12). This step enables a more fine-grained understanding of how the substantive domains privileged by the EWS (Section 4.2.1) and the methods mobilised in their inquiries (Section 4.2.2) mutually articulate and inform one another. The richness of their intellectual production cannot be fully captured in a few lines; however, a rereading of the first eighteen EWS on the list highlights not only a plurality of topics and conceptual trajectories, but also a recognisable set of ways through which sociological knowledge is produced at the origins by women in and through texts. The present synthesis reorganises their contribution around three recurring epistemic operations, cutting across authors and contexts: (a) the introduction of a gendered standpoint as a situated position through which sociological objects, evidence, and interpretations are constructed; (b) the valorisation of biographical experience – often marked by marginal locations – as a resource to describe, denounce, and imagine social change; and (c) a proximity-based analytic stance, in which living with, observing closely, and attending to particularised subjects becomes a condition for understanding social relations.

(a) The introduction of a gendered standpoint and the focus on the women's life

A first dimension recurring in EWS texts consists of the adoption of a gendered standpoint, treating it not as a merely biographical datum, but as an epistemic condition of sociological inquiry – one that orients what becomes visible as a social problem, what is recognised as evidence, and the ways in which interpretation is argued and authorised. In this sense, 'woman' is not assumed as a pre-given essence, but as a position historically, institutionally, socially and culturally produced. This move is already explicit in the first woman sociologist's works – Harriet Martineau – where gendered location functions as an entry point into the analysis of social orders. Martineau repeatedly reverses the conventional hierarchy between public and private spheres, arguing that domestic life is not a residual domain but a strategic site for understanding 'morals and manners' (Martineau, 1838; 1849); her standpoint as a woman becomes an analytic advantage insofar as it grants access to the everyday settings in which domination and inequality are reproduced and rendered ordinary. In *Society in America* (Martineau, 1837), her critique of the 'political non-existence of women' further shows how a gendered standpoint can reveal the contradictions between universalistic democratic claims and institutional realities of exclusion.

In line with this approach – and anticipating the critique of essentialism and the idea of the social construction of gender – we find, in the early twentieth century, Marianne Schnitger Weber. In *Ehefrau und Mutter in der Rechtsentwicklung* (1907), she reconstructs the historical evolution of women's legal status, deconstructing the apparent neutrality of law. Across her work, she interprets the social world from women's experience, focusing on concepts such as authority, women's non-autonomy, labour, and culture, introducing the term patriarchy. Through this lens, she critiques both the existing social order and male interpretations of reality that are frequently universalised. A comparable trajectory can be traced in Gina Lombroso, who in *La donna nella società attuale* (1927)

and *Nuove vite di donna* (1929)[9] reflects on women's identity transformations in modernity, advancing an argument that – although marked by biologising elements (a legacy of her father Cesare Lombroso's positivist influence) – nonetheless raises questions that remain salient today regarding the cultural plasticity of female subjectivity. Mathilde Vaerting, in *Soziologie und Psychologie der Macht* (1928), develops a reflection on the social construction of male authority, rejecting all forms of essentialism and anticipating a relational understanding of power. Similarly, Viola Klein, in *The Feminine Character: History of an Ideology* (1946), demonstrates how what is construed as 'female nature' is in fact the product of scientific and social constructions elaborated within different historical contexts, aimed at relegating women to clearly defined roles; her interdisciplinary interpretative approach reframes the 'woman question' beyond earlier exclusively biological readings.

Anticipating materialist feminism**,** Charlotte Perkins Gilman stands out for her analyses of labour, economy, reproduction, and care. In Women and Economics (1898), she interprets women's subordination as a consequence of their economic dependence on men, advocating the socialisation of domestic labour – i.e. the redistribution of household responsibilities through public institutions and collective services – as a condition for fostering women's autonomy. In *The Man-Made World* (1911), she extends this critique to culture, institutions, and knowledge, denouncing how androcentric logics systematically exclude women's experience and, in doing so, delimit what is recognised as 'objective' social reality. Finally, Herta Herzog, in *On Borrowed Experience: An Analysis of Listening to Daytime Sketches* (1941) – chronologically more recent than most of the works considered here – extends this operation into media studies by treating mediated experience as a space in which imagination and the self are actively shaped. By foregrounding women's emotional identification with radio narratives, Herzog anticipates audience studies and recognises spectatorship as an active and transformative dimension of subjectivity, thereby functioning as a conceptual bridge between the sociology of media and gendered cultural studies (contributing to the development of Feminist Media Studies.

These contributions exemplify an early yet robust epistemic move: the gendered standpoint is mobilised as a critical optic through which institutions, ideologies, and knowledge-producing practices become sociologically legible – revealing gender not as a private attribute, but as a social relation produced through law, power, economy, and culture.

(b) The biographical experience as a resource to describe, denounce, and imagine social change

A second recurring aspect consists in the methodological and political elevation of biographical experience – frequently articulated from marginal or liminal locations – as a privileged resource for producing sociological knowledge. Across the selected corpus, lived experience does not function as a merely illustrative or confessional element; rather, it becomes a mode of evidence, a strategy of critique, and a horizon of social imagination. In these texts, the social is rendered intelligible through the author's situated passage through structures of domination (race, gender, class, etc.) and through the transformation of personal exposure to inequality into publicly accountable claims. Biography,

in this sense, is mobilised to *name harm*, to *reconstruct its institutional and cultural mechanisms*, and to *propose emancipatory alternatives*.

This operation is particularly visible in the work of Anna Julia Cooper and Ida B. Wells-Barnett, who lay the groundwork for intersectionality not only as a concept but also as a theory, an approach, and a praxis. In *A Voice from the South* (1892), Cooper theorises the interlocking character of racial and gender oppression while speaking from the social location produced by that interlocking. Her critique of the white universalism of liberal feminism is grounded in the authority of experience – not as subjective preference, but as a standpoint that makes visible what universalist frames systematically occlude. In a complementary register, Wells-Barnett's *Southern Horrors* (1892) and *A Red Record* (1895) convert the historically situated experience of racial terror into an empirically documented public indictment: statistical evidence becomes inseparable from moral and political urgency. Here, the author's proximity to violence – and to the systematic normalisation of that violence – anchors a mode of sociological demonstration aimed at transforming an apparently 'local' experience of injustice into a collective, nationally legible problem.

A similar articulation of biography and critique, operating through the genre of travel writing, is evident in Flora Tristán's *Pérégrinations d'une paria* (1838). Anticipating standpoint theory and opening towards decolonial sensibilities, Tristán constructs a narrative in which autobiography is not ancillary to analysis but the medium through which social contradictions are diagnosed. Writing from her multiple marginality – shaped by being a woman, a foreigner, and an outsider to colonial elites – she renders visible the everyday operations of exclusion, exploitation, and violence in the worlds she traverses. Her 'I' is not an individualistic centre but an instrument: a voice that registers institutional hypocrisy and the material effects of hierarchies across gendered and colonial lines. Eduarda Mansilla's *Recuerdos de viaje* (1882) likewise uses travel as a narrative and analytical device, though from a different social location. Drawing on a privileged social, cultural, and political position, Mansilla observes the emerging American republic and reflects on women's civil and occupational freedoms, while also expressing unease towards other practices. Her sustained attention to cultural otherness and to the political sphere – particularly ethnic conflict – derives from a standpoint that is simultaneously privileged and liminal: she writes as a foreigner, a *porteña*, and a cosmopolitan. In this way, her biographical location generates a critical distance that deconstructs exoticism and complicates the rhetoric of progress, positioning her voice as neither fully external nor hegemonic.

The biographical as an instrument of denunciation and reform becomes even more explicit in Pandita Ramabai's book, *The High-Caste Hindu Woman* (1887). Here, personal experience is braided with sociological analysis and political address to expose how female subordination is codified through patriarchal interpretations of sacred texts and through entrenched cultural structures. Ramabai mobilises autobiography not for self-narration alone, but to authorise a critique of religious patriarchy from within the moral and cultural worlds it governs, while articulating secular, emancipatory education as a concrete pathway for social transformation – especially for widows and girls excluded from public life. Finally, the same approach takes an organisational and editorial form in Juana Manso's *Álbum de Señoritas*, conceived as an instrument for women's intellectual emancipation through the circulation of practical and cultural

knowledge previously reserved for men. That Manso was able to publish only eight issues – due to the reformist and provocative themes addressed – further underscores how marginality is not merely a theme but a structural condition under which these interventions operate.

(c) A proximity-based analytical stance

A third recurring characteristic of EWS's works can be described as a proximity-based analytic stance, in which sociological understanding is grounded in forms of close-range engagement with social worlds. Across these writings, knowledge is not primarily produced through distant abstraction, but through methods of proximity – living alongside, visiting, observing closely, inspecting, documenting, and attending to particularised subjects and situated interactions. Proximity here functions both materially and epistemically: it is a mode of inquiry that makes social relations legible by staying near the sites where inequality is experienced, negotiated, and reproduced, and by treating everyday contexts as analytically consequential rather than as residual 'background'.

Jane Addams exemplifies this stance most directly by developing theoretical reflection from sustained involvement in Chicago's urban community with the Hull-House social settlement. In *Democracy and Social Ethics* (1902) and *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets* (1909), democratic life and social ethics are conceptualised as emergent from interaction with marginalised communities; *Twenty Years at Hull House* (1910) turns the settlement experience into an interpretative lens on the industrial city. Addams's later works – *Women at The Hague* (1915) and *The Long Road of Woman's Memory* (1916) – extend proximity beyond the neighbourhood to collective memory and political mediation, positioning women as agents capable of translating lived suffering into projects of peace and public responsibility.

A related, though differently configured, proximity-based orientation emerges in Beatrice Potter Webb, whose work combines detailed social investigation with an explicit policy horizon. In *My Apprenticeship* (1926) and *The Co-operative Movement* in Great Britain (1891), Potter Webb treats systematic inquiry – grounded in observation, documentation, and engagement with concrete institutional arrangements – as a prerequisite for understanding the tensions between capital, cooperation, and poverty amid economic abundance. Florence Kelley similarly links empirical investigation to reform, making visible how labour conditions – especially child labour – are sustained by broader social and economic arrangements, including patterns of bourgeois consumption.

In Flora Tristán's *Promenades dans Londres* (1840), proximity takes the form of itinerant observation. By visiting poor neighbourhoods, factories, and institutions, she documents exploitation – particularly of women and children – and renders the coexistence of bourgeois wealth and working-class misery visible as an empirical contradiction of modern capitalism. Rosa Luxemburg, instead, in *Die industrielle Entwicklung Polens* (1898), operates at a more macro-structural scale; she remains continuous with this stance insofar as it is anchored in a meticulous empirical reconstruction of industrial development and its integration into wider capitalist dynamics.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The research results presented here provide an opportunity to develop several meta-analytical considerations, articulated along three main axes derived from the preceding analysis.

(1) From the overall analysis, emerges the desire of the scholars who participated in the study to introduce and deepen the voices of the pioneers of sociology, including alongside the European and American sociologists those social scientists originating from other parts of the world, particularly Latin America. The effect is to move beyond both androcentric and Western logics. This tendency appears to be consistent, albeit not always explicitly, with the claims of *Southern Theory* (Connell, 2007) in its critique of the epistemological centrality historically attributed to Europe and North America at the origins of sociology (Connell, 2019; Reuter & Villa, 2010; Rodríguez et al., 2010). The significance of this plural female presence becomes even more evident if we recall the words of Deegan who, reflecting on her own work, declared:

> I believe that there are Hispanic founding sisters; but despite an exhaustive effort to find them, I was unsuccessful. Clearly, I was hampered by my own limited North American network, my weak Spanish language skills, and the barriers against women scholars operative in these countries. At this time, however, such women are unknown to the Latin and Central American scholar I contacted (Deegan, 1991, p. 10).

Decades after Deegan's unsuccessful attempt to identify Spanish-speaking 'founding sisters', our research has detected the presence of EWS from those geographical contexts as well, distinguished by an extraordinary theoretical strength and acute critical reflection, which progressively expand this work of rediscovering the 'classics of sociology' (Aldana, 2021, 2023; Debia, 2019; Ribeiro & Toste, 2023; Sabido-Ramos, 2023). This intellectual vitality not only enriches our interpretative horizons but also invites us to recognise that it is precisely from such parts of the world that crucial stimuli emerge for a profound re-reading of the genealogy of sociology, its disciplinary boundaries, and its claims to neutrality and universalism.

(2) Secondly, the research findings offer not only the opportunity to rediscover the EWS omitted from the disciplinary canon, but also to interrogate the dynamics through which a new regime of visibility for these figures is currently being established. The empirical relevance of the present study lies precisely in making these dynamics observable. From this perspective, Holzhauser's (2021) contribution is particularly valuable in illuminating the selective and cumulative mechanisms that characterise every process of canonisation. His empirical analysis, conducted in the context of German sociology, demonstrates how disciplinary recognition operates through stratified logics of symbolic accumulation (Bourdieu, 1975, 1986; Merton, 1968): a process whereby certain individuals or works, once they have acquired visibility and recognition in the academic field, tend to attract further attention, generating a self-reinforcing spiral that consolidates their status over time. Symbolic accumulation functions as a multiplier of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1988), transforming recognition into a tool of progressive legitimation: what is cited, taught, included

in textbooks and bibliographical apparatuses continues to be reproduced and reinforced, while whatever is excluded tends to vanish from the disciplinary horizon. This phenomenon is not neutral: it rests on criteria of selection that are historically situated, culturally constructed and often opaque, which have predominantly favoured male, white, European figures endowed with social as well as cultural capital (Alatas & Sinha, 2017; Bhambra, 2014; Boyers, 2000). In this sense, Holzhauser's (2021) analysis highlights how canonisation does not necessarily reward scientific merit in the strict sense but it is instead the outcome of a combination of cultural and social capital embedded within dynamics of academic power. For recognition to endure, it cannot rely solely on the intrinsic quality of scientific production; it also requires institutional, relational and symbolic conditions that allow for its circulation and stabilisation.

Similarly, the data emerging from our study show that the contemporary process of recovering the EWS is marked by analogous tensions, which we can observe directly through both the number of citations recorded in our questionnaire and the presence of the EWS in the textbooks we examined. Certain figures – already the focus of the first historiographical works of rediscovery published in the 1990s (Deegan, 1991; Lengermann & Niebrugge, 1998) – are already consolidating as recurrent and authoritative points of reference, while many others remain underrepresented, excluded, or only fragmentarily included. What is at stake in this work of rethinking is not merely filling gaps in the canon, but the potential unreflective reproduction of familistic selective logics, whereby cultural capital is accumulated and perpetuated through editorial, textbook, institutional, and citational mechanisms. This calls for a critical interrogation of the criteria by which we define authority, centrality and legitimacy in disciplinary narratives, acknowledging that every act of re-introducing a woman author remains intrinsically situated and permeated by relations of epistemic power (Connell, 2019; Bhambra, 2014; Go, 2020).

(3) Finally, across the diverse topics and methods, the classical and emerging EWS share a common feature: a continual commitment to self-reflection in their theoretical and epistemological work. This is a theoretical practice born from the deep intertwining of the observation of the world and lived experience, in which the biographical and the analytical planes mutually nourish one another. Their theoretical contributions do not take shape as detached abstractions, but rather as situated responses to lived tensions, endured injustices and observed social contradictions. In this respect, the three epistemic axes identified in Section 4.2.3 (gendered standpoint, biographical experience from the margins, and proximity-based inquiry) can be read as specific modalities through which EWS's situated mode of knowledge production is enacted. Crucially, these three axes do more than classify recurring features of the body of work: they also help to clarify the historical significance of the EWS contribution in relation to the later institutionalisation of key sociological approaches. Gendered standpoint, biographical critique from marginal locations, and proximity-based inquiry are fundamental for the early formulations of reflexive and situated theorising that would only much later be named, consolidated, and granted full disciplinary legitimacy. In contemporary sociology, these orientations have become central to widely recognised methodological and epistemological repertoires: reflexivity and positionality are now

treated as core requirements of qualitative inquiry (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1991); ethnographic and fieldwork-based traditions explicitly value close-range engagement with everyday worlds and institutions (Geertz, 1973; Smith, 1987); and intersectional approaches have become an established framework for analysing how multiple axes of inequality co-produce social experience and structure (Crenshaw, 1989; Hill Collins, 2000). Within this perspective, the EWS texts examined here can be considered not simply as precursors in a chronological sense, but as contributions that already enact – with other words and definitions – the epistemic moves that underpin these now-legitimated perspectives named with updated terminology.

EWS's ways of studying the social offer a valuable lens to understand how theorising was interpreted by these women first and foremost as a practical activity (Misheva, 2019; Swedberg, 2016): not merely an intellectual construction, but an embodied, political and transformative act, forged in engagement with the realities of the everyday and shaped by the urgency to name what would otherwise remain unspeakable. In this sense, Miranda Fricker's (2017) notion of *hermeneutical injustice* comes to mind, namely that form of epistemic deprivation which prevents certain social subjects from fully articulating their experiences due to the absence – within the dominant culture – of conceptual categories capable of giving them form and recognition. This is not, therefore, an individual deficiency, but a structural gap in shared systems of meaning (Hamlin & Weiss, 2021). The social scientists considered here undertook a theoretical labour aimed at breaking through the barriers of hermeneutical injustice, articulating new concepts and inaugurating discursive practices capable of accommodating lived experience from their own positionality. One might think, for example, of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's (1892) incisive reflection on motherhood and postpartum depression, or of Harriet Martineau's pioneering reading (1849) of the management of disability within family dynamics (Santagati, 2025). Yet to ignore their contributions today, to marginalise them within academic discourse or reduce them to footnotes in the history of sociological thought, exposes us – social researchers ourselves – to the risk of mutilating our own cognitive apparatus. In other words, the risk is that of a restriction on the plurality and reflexivity of our interpretative frameworks, unwitting victims of new forms of hermeneutical injustice. For this very reason, beyond the analytical strategies for a critical deconstruction of the gaps within the classical corpus of sociology (Marshall & Witz, 2004), we deem it crucial to begin making use of the concepts, theoretical approaches and epistemologies of the EWS, through that intentional labour of 'archaeology of knowledge that rediscovers them by conscious choice' (Holzhauser, 2021, p. 116). This entails reconsidering the relevance of EWS thought for guiding social theorising, resignifying epistemology and rethinking method, reflecting upon our own positionality as researchers, and broadening research interests in a more inclusive direction.

Notes

1. The three-year research project (2024–2027) is fully funded by the Fondazione Cariplo and realised at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, thanks to the competitive call *Giovani Ricercatori-2024* won by Chiara Ferrari.
2. https://thesociologicalreview.org/podcasts/thanks-for-typing/.
3. https://cpdoc.fgv.br/alemdocanone/video-serie.

4. The choice to prioritise publications in English, Spanish and French reflects the Western academic context in which the author is situated and her familiarity with these languages, while the inclusion of Italian-language materials is linked to her geographical and cultural affiliation. All texts were consulted in their original language, rather than in translation. This selection may contribute to the underrepresentation of certain geographical areas, including Northern and Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, and Russian- or Asian-language contexts (e.g. Chinese or Japanese), which should therefore be understood as a limitation of this initial exploratory mapping and a possible direction for future research.
5. In the questionnaire, respondents were reminded that the term Early Women Sociologists (EWS) denotes those women social scientists who contributed to the development of sociology during the discipline's classical period, whether through theoretical work, methodological innovation, or empirical research.
6. In addition, the author's involvement in informal academic and editorial networks operating within the Italian sociological field played a role in shaping the pool of potential respondents. These networks, built over time through research collaboration, publishing activities, and scholarly exchange, provided access to projects, initiatives, and individuals actively engaged with the topic, and in some cases contributed to the circulation of further contacts. As a result, the recruitment process was partially mediated by relational dynamics that favoured contexts in which such networks were already established.
7. For the construction of the list of disciplinary fields selectable by respondents in the questionnaire, reference was made to the ISCED 2013 (International Standard Classification of Education) to ensure coherence and comparability with international standards.
8. Survey respondents were asked to indicate up to a maximum of three EWS in whose work they considered themselves knowledgeable. For each of them, they were asked the following question: 'What are the main topics this figure works on?'. The question was accompanied by a closed list of predefined topics developed by the authors, while also allowing respondents to add additional topics if they did not find the proposed categories adequate. The predefined list was constructed based on major subfields and areas of research in sociology and was used as a heuristic device to facilitate comparability across responses.
9. In English, the titles of these works could be rendered as Woman in Contemporary Society (1927) and New Lives of Women, respectively.

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Ethical statement

All participants voluntarily agreed to take part in the research and did not receive any form of compensation. They were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time during

the completion of the questionnaire if they felt uncomfortable or for any other reason. Prior to participation, all respondents provided written informed consent.

Use of IA

The graphic design of the figures included in this paper was created using ChatGPT.

Notes on contributor

Chiara Ferrari holds a PhD in Sociology, Organisations and Cultures and is a Research Fellow at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Department of Sociology. She is the Principal Investigator of the project GenS – Gendering Sociology. Proposal for Research and Teaching. She is a member of the international network of the Mary Jo Deegan Project and co-founder of the group SiD – Sociologhe in Dialogo, established within the University's doctoral school.

ORCID

Chiara Ferrari http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1433-571X

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Appendix

Table A1. Citations, bibliographical presence and main works of the EWS emerging from the questionnaire

	EWS	No. of citations	Presence of the authors in the main works on the EWS (see legend)	Main texts attributed to the EWS by the questionnaire respondents
1	Jane Addams	23	MJD; LN; HW; NF; McD	1902. *Democracy and social ethics*. New York: Macmillan. 1909. *The spirit of youth and the city streets*. New York: Macmillan. 1910. *Twenty years at Hull-House*. New York: Macmillan. 1912. *A new conscience and an ancient evil*. New York: Macmillan. 1915. *Women at The Hague*. New York: Macmillan. 1916. *The long road of woman's memory*. New York: Macmillan.
2	Harriet Martineau	18	MJD; LN; HW; NF; McD	1837. *Society in America* (Vols. 1–2). New York: Saunders and Otley. 1838. *How to observe morals and manners*. London: Charles Knight & Co. 1849. *Household education*. London: Edward Moxon. 1859. *England and her soldiers*. London: Smith, Elder & Co.
3	Marianne Schnitger Weber	17	LN; HW; NF	1907. *Ehefrau und Mutter in der Rechtsentwicklung*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr. 1919. *Frauenfragen und Frauengedanken*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr. 1926. *Max Weber: Ein Lebensbild*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr. 1935. *Frauen und Liebe*. Koonigestein in Taunus: K.B. Langewissche.
4	Charlotte Perkins Gilman	10	MJD; LN; NF	1892. *The yellow wall-paper*. New York: Feminist Press. 1898. *Women and economics*. Boston: Small and Maynard. 1911. *The man-made world; or, Our androcentric culture*. New York: Charlton Company.
5	Beatrice Potter Webb	5	MJD; LN; HW; NF; McD	1891. *The co-operative movement in Great Britain*. London: Swan, Sonnenschein & Co. 1926. *My apprenticeship*. London: Longmans, Green.
6	Flora Tristán	5	MJD; NF; McD	1838. *Pérégrinations d'une paria: 1833-1834*. Paris: Arthus Bertrand. 1840. *Promenades dans Londres*. Paris: Arthus Bertrand. 1844. *L'union ouvrière*. Paris: Chez tous les libraires.
7	Anna Julia Cooper	4	LN; NF	1892. *A voice from the South by a Black woman of the South*. Xenia, OH: Aldine Press.
8	Florence Kelley	4	MJD; LN	1899. Aims and principles of the Consumers' League. *American Journal of Sociology* 5, pp. 289-304.
9	Gina Lombroso	4	NF	1917. *Riflessioni sulla vita. L'anima della donna. Libro I: la tragica posizione della donna*. Firenze: ADDI. 1917. *Riflessioni sulla vita. L'anima della donna. Libro II: le conseguenze dell'altruismo*. Firenze: ADDI.

(*Continued*)

Table A1. Continued.

	EWS	No. of citations	Presence of the authors in the main works on the EWS (see legend)	Main texts attributed to the EWS by the questionnaire respondents
				1927. *La donna nella società attuale*. Bologna: Zanichelli. 1929. *Nuove vite di donna Autobiografie raccolte da Gina Lombroso*. Bologna: Zanichelli.
10	Elisa Salerno	3	NF	1909-1918. *La donna e il lavoro. Giornale delle classi lavoratrici femminili*. Vicenza: Società Anonima Tipografica fra Cattolici Vicentini.
11	Ida Bell Wells-Barnett	3	MJD; LN; NF	1892. *Southern horrors. Reprinted in On Lynchings*. New York: Arno. 1895. *A red record*. Chicago: Donohue & Henneberry.
12	Rosa Luxemburg	3	NF	1898. *Die industrielle Entwicklung Polens*, Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot.
13	Eduarda Mansilla	2	NF	1882. *Recuerdos de viaje*. Buenos Aires: Imprenta de Juan A. Alsina.
14	Herta Herzog	2		1941. *On borrowed experience: An analysis of listening to daytime sketches*. Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung, 9(1), 65-95.
15	Juana Paula Manso	2		1854. *Periodico Álbum de Señoritas. Periódico de Literatura, Modas, Bellas Artes y Teatros*. Buenos Aires: Imprenta Americana.
16	Mathilde Vaerting	2	HW	1928. *Soziologie und Psychologie der Macht*. Bd 1-4, Berlin-Friedenau: Pfeiffer.
17	Pandita Ramabai Saraswati	2		1887. *The high-caste Hindu woman*. Philadelphia: J. B. Rodgers Printing Co.
18	Viola Klein	2	MJD; NF	1946. *The feminine character: History of an ideology*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
19	Alexandra Kollontaj	1	MJD; NF	1971. *The autobiography of a sexually emancipated Communist woman* (S. Attanasio, Trad., Ed. G. Greer). New York: Herder and Herder.
20	Charlotte Lütkens	1		1925. *Die deutsche Jugendbewegung: Ein soziologischer Versuch*. Frankfurt am Main: Frankfurter Societäts-Druckerei.
21	Clara Zetkin	1	NF	Not specified
22	Consuelo Serra Heredia	1	NF	1928. *Para mis alumnas de la Escuela Normal de Maestros*. La Habana: El Fígaro.
23	Edith Abbott	1	MJD; LN	1908. A study of the early history of child labor in America. *American Journal of Sociology,* 14, 15-37.
24	Eleanor Marx	1	NF	Not specified
25	Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne	1		1904. *Die deutsche Frau um die Jahrhundertwende: Statistische Studie zur Frauenfrage*. Berlin: Liebmann.
26	Emily Fogg Meade	1		1972. The Italian Immigrant on the Land. *International Migration Review*, 6(1_suppl), 177-180.
27	Emma Goldman	1	NF	1931. *Living My Life*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
28	Ercilia Nogueira Cobra	1		Not specified
29	Florence Nightingale	1	McD	1859. *England and her soldiers*. London: Smith, Elder & Co. The book is attributed to Martineau, but Nightingale played a significant role in the creation of the statistical diagrams.
30	Frieda Wunderlich	1	HW	Not specified

(*Continued*)

Table A1. Continued.

	EWS	No. of citations	Presence of the authors in the main works on the EWS (see legend)	Main texts attributed to the EWS by the questionnaire respondents
31	Gertrud Dyhrenfurth	1		1898. *Die Hausindustriellen Arbeiterinnen in der Berliner Blusen-, Unterrock-, Schürzen – und Tricotkonfektion*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.
32	Gisele Freund	1		Not specified
33	Harriet Taylor Mill	1	NF	1851. Enfranchisement of women. *Westminster Review*, 59, 149-161.
34	Juana Manuela Gorriti	1	NF	Not specified
35	Julia Lathrop	1	LN	1912. The children's bureau. *American Journal of Sociology*, 18(3), 318-329.
36	Margaret Fuller	1		1845. *Woman in the nineteenth century*. New York, NY: Greeley & McElrath.
37	Margaret Mead	1		1928. *Coming of age in Samoa: A psychological study of primitive youth for Western civilisation*. New York, NY: William Morrow & Company.
38	María Carolina Grill	1		Not specified
39	Marion Talbot	1	MJD; LN	1910. *The education of women*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
40	Mary Parker Follett	1		1924. *Creative experience*. New York, NY: Longmans, Green and Co.
41	Mary Wollstonecraft	1	NF; McD	Not specified
42	Nina Rubinstein	1		Not specified
43	Rose Laub Coser	1	MJD	1991. *In defense of modernity. Role complexity and individual autonomy*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
44	Simone de Beauvoir	1	MJD	1949. *Le deuxième sexe*. Paris: Gallimard.
45	Hilde Weiss	1		1936. Die 'Enquête Ouvrière' von Karl Marx, *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, 5(1), pp. 76-98.

The acronyms used in the column refer to the main texts which, since the 1990s (cf. Sections 2 and 4.1), have recovered and highlighted the theoretical and methodological contributions of the EWS. The abbreviations are as follows: MJD = Deegan; Lengermann & Niebrugge = LN; McDonald = McD; Honegger & Wobbe = HW; Navarro-Fosar = NF