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PAUL F. LAZARSFELD

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A Biographical Memoir by

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Biographical Memoir

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PAUL F. LAZARSFELD

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BY DAVID L. SILLS

PAUL FELIX LAZARSFELD was born and raised in Vienna. In 1933 he came to the United States as a Rockefeller Foundation fellow. He remained in America at the end of his fellowship, became a citizen, and for three decades was a professor of sociology at Columbia University. He died of cancer in New York City.

Although he was trained in mathematics, Lazarsfeld thought of himself as a psychologist; only in midlife did he identify himself as a sociologist. His major interests were the methodology of social research and the development of institutes for training and research in the social sciences. Because of the originality and diversity of his ideas, his energy and personal magnetism, his unique style of collaboration with colleagues and students, and the productivity of the research institutes he established, his influence upon sociology and social research—both in the United States and in Europe—has been profound.

In the years since Lazarsfeld's death, a substantial number of appraisals of his life and work have been published.¹ I shall

¹ Appraisals up to 1979 are listed in David L. Sills, "Publications About Paul F. Lazarsfeld: A Selected Bibliography," in *Qualitative and Quantitative Social Research: Papers in Honor of Paul F. Lazarsfeld*, ed. Robert K. Merton, James S. Coleman, and Peter H. Rossi (New York: Free Press, 1979), pp. 389–93. Subsequent publications

attempt to summarize his rich intellectual legacy in this article. But first, let me convey some sense of Lazarsfeld the person by quoting from the writings of his former students Allen H. Barton and David L. Sills, both sociologists, and his son-in-law, the historian Bernard Bailyn. As these witnesses attest, neither Lazarsfeld nor his associates were able to distinguish very clearly between the man and the scholar.

Allen Barton's attempt to capture the essence of Lazarsfeld's personality is to be found in his dramatic and rather subjective account of the history of one of Lazarsfeld's major inventions: the university-based social research institute. Barton notes that the concept of the university-based social research institute "was born in the mind of a social activist student in the intellectual hothouse of Vienna between the wars," who "created a penniless research center in a near-bankrupt society, and found his friends jobs studying unemployment." He calls Lazarsfeld "an intellectual Odysseus" and "an entrepreneur of intellectual conglomerates," who "brought new meaning to the words 'non-profit' as he used one deficit-ridden project to support another, and pyramided his intellectual assets from grant to grant." In the end, Barton notes, "the Bureau was demolished and hauled away

include: Allen H. Barton, "Paul Lazarsfeld and the Invention of the University Institute for Applied Social Research," in *Organizing for Social Research*, ed. Burkart Holzner and Jiri Nehnevajsa (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman, 1982); James S. Coleman, "Paul F. Lazarsfeld: The Substance and Style of His Work," in *Sociological Traditions from Generation to Generation: Glimpses of the American Experience*, ed. Robert K. Merton and Matilda White Riley (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1980); James S. Coleman, "Introduction," in Paul F. Lazarsfeld, *The Varied Sociology of Paul F. Lazarsfeld*, writings collected and edited by Patricia L. Kendall (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982); Paul Neurath, "Paul F. Lazarsfeld and the Institutionalization of Empirical Social Research," in Robert B. Smith, *An Introduction to Social Research* (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger, 1983); Paul Neurath, "In Memoriam Paul F. Lazarsfeld: Paul F. Lazarsfeld and the Institutionalization of Empirical Social Research," in *Realizing Social Science Knowledge*, ed. B. Holzner, K. D. Knorr, and H. Strasser (Vienna: Physica-Verlag, 1983); and David L. Sills, "Surrogates, Institutes, and the Search for Convergences: The Research Style of Paul F. Lazarsfeld," *Contemporary Sociology*, 10(May 1981):351-61.

to make room for a parking lot on 115th Street, while a Center for the Social Sciences rose on 118th Street, proclaiming a set of purposes almost identical to Lazarsfeld's recipe for his research institutes in Vienna, Newark, Princeton, and Columbia."²

Bernard Bailyn had the good fortune to have been both colleague and son-in-law; here is his recollection of a family visit by his father-in-law:

A visit by Paul was like some wonderfully benign hurricane. There would be premonitory squalls for days in advance. Special delivery letters would begin to arrive long before he got there; telegrams and messages would pile up, occasionally an embarrassed assistant would appear on the doorstep having got the wrong day relayed through secretaries in two universities. The day before he was due there would be a flurry of frantic, often hilarious telephone calls rescheduling the flight, but then finally he would arrive. The cab would pull up in the driveway and Paul would struggle from the door clutching a briefcase overflowing with manuscripts, books, pipes, cigars, shirts, and some miscellaneous shoes. He would half run to the house in his odd, stiff-kneed, sideways-swinging walk; call gaily to his daughter; shake hands with the male members of the family with a slight European bow, heels together; and almost invariably, as soon as he was inside the door, say "The most *amazing* thing happened!," and out would come an extraordinary episode, told with barely suppressed laughter and high suspense—some bizarre coincidence—and the visit would be properly launched.³

In a summary sketch of Lazarsfeld's personality, David Sills singled out Lazarsfeld's quite remarkable capacity to carry out his intellectual activities with, and through, other people:

Most of his major writings are coauthored, and much of his work day consisted of listening to, talking to, and instructing his students, colleagues, and co-workers: in class, in his office, in taxicabs, in his apartment, in a

² Barton, "Paul Lazarsfeld and the Invention of the University Institute," pp. 17–18.

³ Bernard Bailyn, "Recollections of PFL," in Merton, Coleman, and Rossi, *Qualitative and Quantitative Social Research*, p. 16.

succession of summer houses in New Hampshire; at breakfast, at lunch, and at dinner; at the blackboard, or pacing his office with a cigar, or seated in the faculty club with a double Manhattan cocktail in hand, Lazarsfeld seldom was or worked alone, and he was always working. What Allen H. Barton termed "the hectic Lazarsfeldian life style" went on to midnight or later; only then did he work for hours alone.⁴

THE VIENNA YEARS

Lazarsfeld came from a professional family, active in the musical, cultural, and political life of turn-of-the-century Vienna. His father, Robert, was a lawyer in private practice, rather unsuccessful financially, who often defended young political activists without fee. His mother, Sofie, had been trained in individual psychology by Alfred Adler. Lazarsfeld had three successive marriages: to Marie Jahoda, Herta Herzog, and Patricia L. Kendall—all his students, all his coworkers, and all accomplished social scientists. His daughter Lotte Bailyn is a social psychologist, his son Robert a mathematician.

Socialist Youth. Austrian socialism in the early decades of the twentieth century was not just another political movement, particularly for the Lazarsfeld family and friends. Long after the Vienna years, Lazarsfeld's boyhood friend Hans Zeisel recalled that time and place and noted that "for a brief moment in history, the humanist ideals of democratic socialism attained reality in the city of Vienna and gave new dignity and pride to the working class and the intellectuals who had won it." Socialism was integral to the familial, social, intellectual, and political environment of Lazarsfeld's early years.

He once said that he had become a socialist the way he had become a Viennese: by birth, and without much reflec-

⁴ David L. Sills, "Lazarsfeld, Paul F.," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences: Biographical Supplement*, vol. 18, ed. David L. Sills (New York: Free Press, 1979), p. 419.

tion. But he was a socialist all right. When his mother's friend, the socialist leader Friedrich Adler, was arrested for assassinating the prime minister, Count Karl Stürghk, in August 1916, Lazarsfeld attended the trial. He was arrested for taking part in a courtroom demonstration when Adler was convicted. He was active as a leader in socialist student organizations; he created a monthly newspaper for socialist students; and he helped found a political cabaret that was to play a seminal role in the development of both the political and theatrical history of Vienna. Lazarsfeld's first publication, coauthored with Ludwig Wagner and published when he was twenty-three, is a report on a children's summer camp they had established according to socialist principles.

Although Lazarsfeld often stressed the importance of his early immersion in the socialist movement, his political activism did not survive his move to the United States. In later life he used to say that he was still a socialist "in my heart," and once he remarked that his intense interest in the organization of social research is "a kind of sublimation of my frustrated political instincts—as I can't run for office, I run institutes." His American students and colleagues found him to be essentially apolitical. Particularly because he studied voting behavior, he felt strongly that politics and scholarship should be kept apart.

The Wirtschaftspsychologische Forschungsstelle. Lazarsfeld received his Ph.D. in applied mathematics from the University of Vienna in 1925; his dissertation was an application of Einstein's theory of gravitation to the movement of the planet Mercury. While a student, he assisted Charlotte Bühler in her studies of early childhood and youth development. In 1925 he established a research institute dedicated to the application of psychology to social and economic problems—the *Wirtschaftspsychologische Forschungsstelle*. Years later, he recalled that at the time he established the *Forschungsstelle*,

he also created a formula to explain his interest in applied psychology: "a fighting revolution requires economics (Marx); a victorious revolution requires engineers (Russia); a defeated revolution calls for psychology (Vienna)."

Karl Bühler became the Forschungsstelle's first president; a board, consisting largely of university professors and business leaders, was recruited; Lazarsfeld became the research director. Scores of small research projects were carried out—chiefly for business firms, but also for trade unions and city agencies. "[The Forschungsstelle] came to life in 1925," Hans Zeisel later recalled, "and sustained itself mainly on ideas, all of them more or less Paul's, on the unabated enthusiasm of its members, and on no money worth talking about." As with most of Lazarsfeld's projects, the participants never forgot the experience. Ilse Zeisel (Hans' sister, who had been an employee of the Forschungsstelle in the 1930s) remarked at the time of Lazarsfeld's death that "in the end it is to the Forschungsstelle and to Paul that we owe our existence if not more," a comment that expresses the intense, almost familial relationship that Lazarsfeld had with many of his associates.⁵

The Forschungsstelle was the first of four university-related, applied social research institutes founded by Lazarsfeld. The others were the Research Center at the University of Newark, the Office of Radio Research at Princeton University, and finally the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia University.

The Marienthal Study. The Forschungsstelle's most ambitious project was a study of Marienthal, a one-industry Austrian village twenty-four kilometers southeast of Vienna where the labor force was nearly all unemployed as a result of the severe economic depression in the years after World War I. The study was directed by Marie Jahoda, Lazarsfeld, and Hans Zeisel. The methods used were both imaginative

⁵ Useful accounts of Lazarsfeld's Vienna years are contained in the two Neurath articles cited in footnote 1.

and eclectic: interviewing, participant observation, life history analysis, and a variety of unobtrusive measures, such as charting the circulation of the socialist party newspaper, which declined more during the years of widespread unemployment than did the circulation of a sports and entertainment newspaper. This lack of interest was interpreted as a measure of withdrawal from participation in political affairs. The circulation of books from the workers' library was also examined: although the borrowing fee was abolished during the years 1929–31, the circulation declined by almost half—a decline that was interpreted as an indication of apathy.

The Forschungsstelle carried out a great deal of innovative consumer research, and it contributed importantly to the development of this field by making the study of consumer decisions and radio audiences academically respectable. Nevertheless, it is *Marienthal*, a slim, clearly written volume, that remains the Forschungsstelle's most memorable product (Jahoda, Lazarsfeld, and Zeisel 1933). The study has impressed generations of social scientists by its integrated use of quantitative and qualitative observations. Robert and Helen Lynd, for example, in their *Middletown in Transition* (1937), repeatedly refer to the methods and findings of *Marienthal*. It contributed substantially to the methodology of community studies, and its major finding, that the prolonged unemployment of workers leads to apathy rather than to revolution, foreshadowed the widespread lack of resistance to Hitler. *Marienthal* was banned by the Nazis soon after it was published, and most of the copies were burned, but by 1978 it had become part of the sociology curriculum in German and Austrian universities. In 1979, a group of young Europeans undertook a restudy of the village.⁶

⁶ See Birgit Flos, Michael Freund, and János Marton, "Marienthal 1930–1980," *Journal für Sozialforschung*, 23(1):136–49; and Michael Freund, Birgit Flos, and János Marton, "The Scars of Unemployment from the 1930s Are Still Visible," *Austria Today*, 4(1982):49–53.

CAREER IN THE UNITED STATES

Lazarsfeld first came to the United States in September 1933 as a Rockefeller fellow; he spent the academic year 1933–34 visiting universities, New Deal agencies, and market research firms. In most places he tried to learn by attaching himself to one or more research projects. With the enthusiasm, energy, hard work, and imagination that characterized his entire career, he sent a questionnaire to the eight other European fellows in his group to learn how they had adjusted to life in the United States.

At the end of the second year of his fellowship, Lazarsfeld decided to remain in the United States. The deteriorating political situation in Austria following the defeat of the Social Democrats in the civil war of February 1934 had made his return to the University of Vienna impossible; the Forschungsstelle was in the same deficit state he had left it in two years earlier; and his marriage to Marie Jahoda—who had remained in Vienna with their daughter—had ended. So he accepted the job of analyzing some 10,000 questionnaires from young people that had been collected by the New Jersey Relief Administration. Lazarsfeld soon transformed the project into the University of Newark Research Center, and became the director.

The Center survived its first year by carrying out studies for the public school system, the Works Progress Administration, and the Frankfort Institute for Social Research—then in exile. Located on the fringes of a small university, with only a handful of staff, its abiding meaning is that it was for Lazarsfeld the American rebirth of his Vienna Forschungsstelle.

The Princeton Radio Project. In 1937 the Rockefeller Foundation granted funds to Hadley Cantril, a Princeton psychologist, for a large-scale study of the social effects of radio. On the recommendation of Robert Lynd, Lazarsfeld was cho-

sen to be director. Cantril and Frank Stanton, then research director, and later president of the Columbia Broadcasting System, were appointed associate directors, and a broad study of radio programming, radio audiences, and the preferences of radio listeners was begun. The emphasis was on the secondary analysis of existing survey data; the content analysis of programs; and the use of the Lazarsfeld-Stanton Program Analyzer, a jointly developed device for recording the instantaneous likes and dislikes of experimental audiences, following the prototype developed at the Forschungsstelle in Vienna.

The Lazarsfeld radio research project virtually created the field of mass communications research. It asked why messages are introduced into the media and why people attend to them; that is, what gratifications or rewards people get from the media and what functions the media serve in their lives. Herta Herzog's studies of the audiences of daytime radio soap operas and (with Hadley Cantril) of the radio listeners who believed the famous 1938 Orson Welles broadcast of an invasion from Mars are examples, as are the studies of T. W. Adorno on the social roles of popular and serious music. Other communications research projects carried out by Lazarsfeld's associates are Bernard Berelson's study of "What 'Missing the Newspaper' Means," which used the occasion of a 1945 newspaper strike in New York City to ascertain the functions that newspapers serve in the lives of their readers, and Leo Lowenthal's 1944 analysis of the biographies of culture heroes published in popular magazines. Lazarsfeld's own research (1940) on the comparative effects of radio listening and reading was the first serious examination of this important question. His influence on the field outlived him: In 1983 the directors of social research of the nation's three largest networks—CBS, ABC, and NBC—were all former students of Lazarsfeld.

The Bureau of Applied Social Research. In 1939 the Rockefeller Foundation radio research grant was renewed but transferred from Princeton to Columbia University, where Lazarsfeld was first appointed a lecturer and in 1940 an associate professor of sociology. In 1944 the Office of Radio Research was renamed the Bureau of Applied Social Research. During the 1950s and 1960s, the Bureau expanded its program and grew steadily in terms of both revenue and staff. By the mid-1970s, its annual budget was more than a million dollars, and it employed at any one time more than 100 people, half of them full time. In 1977, however, a year after Lazarsfeld's death, the university withdrew its support, the Bureau closed its doors, and its legacy and library were transferred to a new Center for the Social Sciences, located on the Columbia campus.

The Bureau's offices were temporary and makeshift throughout its life span; it never quite became the established, university-based social research institute that Lazarsfeld had first dreamed of in Vienna. But it survived for forty years, generally amidst administrative chaos, and with conspicuously little financial support from the university. The research ideas it fostered, the leading social scientists who were trained there, the innovative research it sheltered, and its distinctive organizational structure have greatly influenced the institutionalization of the social sciences throughout the world.⁷

Lazarsfeld remained at Columbia from 1940 until his retirement in 1969; in 1962, he was appointed Quetelet Professor of Social Sciences, a chair that had been created for

⁷ For historical accounts of the Bureau's activities, see Barton, "Paul Lazarsfeld and the Invention of the University Institute," and Phyllis Sheridan, "The Research Bureau in a University Context: Case Study of a Marginal Institution" (doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1979). See also: Paul F. Lazarsfeld, "An Episode in the History of Social Research: A Memoir," *Perspectives in American History*, 2(1968):270-337.

him. Unwilling to give up teaching altogether after his retirement, he traveled almost weekly to the University of Pittsburgh, where he served as Distinguished Professor of Social Sciences from 1969 until his death.

THE INTERACTION OF THEORY AND METHOD

During his fifty-two years of active professional life, Lazarsfeld made important contributions to four substantive areas in the social sciences: the social effects of unemployment, mass communications, voting behavior, and higher education. These contributions did not spring from a grand design, but were largely the results of historical accidents and opportunities seized. By his own accounts, Lazarsfeld studied the effects of unemployment in an Austrian village in the early 1930s because the Social Democratic leader Otto Bauer had ridiculed his plan to study leisure during a severe economic depression. He studied the impact of radio in the late 1930s because he was a poor immigrant in need of a job—and Robert Lynd found this one for him. His study of the 1940 U.S. presidential election grew out of a planned evaluation of U.S. Department of Agriculture radio programs directed at farmers: Lazarsfeld simply wanted to do a panel study. All his life he was interested in university organization, but his major study of higher education came about because in the early 1950s Robert M. Hutchins, the president of the Fund for the Republic, asked him to do a study of how college and university teachers reacted to McCarthyism. Throughout his life, he insisted that serendipity was at the core of the process of scientific discovery.

Methods of Analyzing Survey Research. When Lazarsfeld studied the effects of radio in 1937, he realized that because radio listening created no public records, such as circulation data, it needed new methods of accounting and study. He took the opinion poll—at that time used mainly for descrip-

tive purposes, to measure such features as the popularity or audience size of radio programs—and by the multivariate analysis of responses developed ways to measure the impact of radio on attitudes. This transformation of the opinion poll into multifaceted survey research constitutes one of Lazarsfeld's major accomplishments.

Several important procedures to follow in the analysis of survey data are described in "Problems of Survey Analysis" (Kendall and Lazarsfeld 1950), a pioneering codification of techniques for avoiding spurious causal relationships in the analysis of survey data and establishing the time sequence of variables.

The Panel Method for the Study of Change. A major finding of Lazarsfeld's research on radio listening is the tendency of audiences to be self-selected; that is, to tune in to programs that are compatible with their own tastes and attitudes. Accordingly, in order to sort out the causal sequences of such problems as the effect of listening upon attitudes versus the effect of attitudes upon patterns of listening, a method of determining the time order of variables was required. Drawing on his research in Vienna with the Bùhlers, in which repeated observations were made of the same children over time, as well as on the earlier research of Stuart A. Rice among Dartmouth College students and Theodore M. Newcomb among Bennington College students, Lazarsfeld developed what he called the panel method, in which a sample of respondents is reinterviewed at periodic intervals.

The panel method is a form of longitudinal research; it is essentially a field experiment in which a "natural" rather than an experimental population is studied. Although Lazarsfeld cannot be said to have invented the panel method, it was his imaginative use of it, and particularly his innovative ways of introducing control groups into the analysis of panel data, that made him its earliest and most effective exponent.

The Study of Interpersonal Influence. Lazarsfeld used the op-

portunity provided by his pioneering study of the 1940 U.S. presidential election to test and extend the panel method as a field technique. The study was published as *The People's Choice* (1944), a spare and elegant book that has become a true classic. The substantive findings of the study are as important as the methodology. First, a great deal was learned about the psychological and social processes that delay, inhibit, reinforce, activate, and change voting decisions. People subject to cross pressures, for example, delay making a decision longer than do others. Second, the study uncovered an influence process that Lazarsfeld called "opinion leadership." It was found that there is a flow of information from the mass media, initially to persons who serve as opinion leaders, and then to the public. This process was termed the "two-step flow of communication" (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955).

Techniques developed by Lazarsfeld for measuring interpersonal influence, opinion leadership, and networks of influence stimulated a wide variety of studies. His students and, in turn, their students, developed variants of the method and new fields of substantive application.⁸

The Analysis of Action. Throughout his long professional life, Lazarsfeld was intrigued by the problem of how to study "action" from the point of view of the actor. Much of his research, as well as the work of his students, concerned the codification of motives and conditions underlying people's behavior—a research procedure that came to be known as "reason analysis." At the heart of the procedure is the development of what is called an "accounting scheme"—a model of the action being studied that incorporates the dimensions of the act that guide the collection of empirical data. Many of the data in an accounting scheme are obtained by personal interviews, and in a crucial part of the interview the interviewer asks the questions necessary for the analyst to do what

⁸ Examples of the application of these techniques by Lazarsfeld's students and their students are given in Sills, "Lazarsfeld, Paul F."

Lazarsfeld called "discerning": that is, determining not only that a person was *exposed* to a given influence, but that he or she acted in a certain way *because* of that exposure.

Lazarsfeld's initial article on reason analysis, "The Art of Asking Why" (1935), was published shortly after he arrived in the United States, and is based largely on consumer studies that he had carried out at the Forschungsstelle in Vienna. The article identifies three types of data that need to be obtained by asking "why" questions in studying consumer purchases: (1) influences that lead toward action, (2) relevant attributes of the product, and (3) motives of the purchaser. This formulation has a generality that goes far beyond consumer research, and has been widely used—with adaptations and extensions—by Lazarsfeld, his students, and others.⁹

The intensity of Lazarsfeld's interest in the study of action is indicated by an important 1958 historical essay and by the attention given to it in his two methods readers (1955, 1972), in his autobiographical memoir (1968), and in his essay "Working With Merton" (1975). He viewed the analysis of action as a way of merging the study of individuals with the study of the aggregate effects of individual actions, and thus as a way of merging psychology and sociology.

The Relationship between Individual and Collective Properties. Techniques for relating the characteristics of individuals to those of collectivities were termed by Lazarsfeld "contextual analysis." They involve characterizing individuals by some characteristic of the group to which they belong (the context).

⁹The best explication of reason analysis is in Hans Zeisel, *Say It With Figures*, 6th ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), pp. 186–215, first published in 1947. Examples of the application of reason analysis to such topics as consumer choice, changes in voting intentions, choosing or not choosing trial by jury, choosing an occupation, getting married or divorced, going to a psychiatrist, joining a voluntary association, moving from one house to another, and not practicing contraception are given in Charles Kadushin, "Reason Analysis," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 13, ed. David L. Sills (New York: Macmillan and Free Press, 1968), pp. 338–43.

It is then noted how individuals who are similar in other ways differ in their opinions or behavior in accordance with their group. The characteristic of the group may be an aggregate of individual characteristics (as in "climate of opinion" studies) or it may be a so-called "global" characteristic that describes the collectivity as a whole. Lazarsfeld first made systematic use of the procedure in a 1955 study of social science faculty members in American colleges and universities (Lazarsfeld and Thielens 1958).

Mathematics in the Social Sciences. Lazarsfeld never abandoned his early interest and training in mathematics. He sought for many years to introduce improved mathematical methods into the social sciences with efforts such as his work in latent structure analysis and in dichotomous algebra. His own work was primarily in mathematical psychology, because he sought to model processes within the individual. His impact on mathematical sociology was of a different kind: he posed problems, he raised questions, and he organized the efforts of others. James S. Coleman dedicated his *Introduction to Mathematical Sociology* to him, and eight colleagues and former students contributed mathematically based articles to the 1979 *Festschrift*.¹⁰

OTHER INTERESTS

The History of Empirical Social Research. As early as the Marienthal study, Lazarsfeld was fascinated by the historical development of research methods. At his request, Hans Zeisel wrote an appendix for the book that traces the history of what is called "sociography"—primarily community studies. But he did little systematic work on the topic until a 1959 interdisciplinary conference led him to prepare a paper

¹⁰ See the articles by T. W. Anderson, Raymond Boudon, James S. Coleman, Leo A. Goodman, R. Duncan Luce, Anthony Oberschall, Peter H. Rossi, and Herbert A. Simon in Merton, Coleman, and Rossi, *Qualitative and Quantitative Social Research*.

(1961) tracing the history of quantification in sociology. In 1962–63 he gave courses and led seminars at the Sorbonne and at Columbia University on the history of quantification, which became one of his major interests during the remainder of his life.¹¹ His interest in the topic made him into something of a reverse missionary during the last fifteen years of his life: he attempted to convince Europeans that American-style empirical social research had been strongly influenced by an earlier European empirical tradition. He was primarily responsible for—or exerted a strong influence on—the establishment of research institutes in Oslo and Vienna, and his visits to Paris and Warsaw greatly altered the nature of social research in these cities. He visited Paris frequently, where Columbia University's Reid Hall became almost his second home. He invited a number of Europeans to spend a year at Columbia, and in this way he enriched sociology on both sides of the Atlantic. When he died, Raymond Boudon and Jean Stoetzel, who had worked closely with him during his stays in Paris, wrote memorial articles for the Paris press, and practically every sociological journal in Western Europe published an obituary.

The Utilization of Social Research. Lazarsfeld's career began with his founding of an institute for applied social research in 1925, and he never lost his interest in the practical applications of research. When his presidency of the American Sociological Association (1962) offered him the opportunity to set the theme for the annual meeting, he chose "the uses of sociology" (Lazarsfeld, Sewell, and Wilensky 1967).

LAZARSFELD'S CIRCLE

Throughout his life, Lazarsfeld worked intensively with students and colleagues, and a full-scale intellectual biography would of necessity trace the intertwining of his career

¹¹ Examples of publications on the history of empirical social research that were stimulated by Lazarsfeld are given in Sills, "Lazarsfeld, Paul F."

with those of his associates, his "circle." Furthermore, his early years as an organizer of socialist youth activities established a pattern of leadership that he never fully abandoned: he was skilled at telling others what they should do, and then helping them do it. As his associate Morris Rosenberg once noted, "his most obvious impact is upon his students and, of course, on his students' students. When you read Pete Rossi, you read Paul; when you read Jim Coleman, you read Paul; when you read Charlie Glock, you read Paul; and so on and on."¹²

Major Associates. Hans Zeisel, who became a professor of law and sociology at the University of Chicago, worked with Lazarsfeld in Vienna at the Forschungsstelle, with Jahoda and Lazarsfeld on the study of Marienthal, and later with Lazarsfeld at the Bureau of Applied Social Research. His *Say It With Figures* (1947), a textbook that is more than a textbook, a manual that is more than a manual, now translated into six languages, is a product of their long collaboration. Zeisel's essay in the 1979 Lazarsfeld *Festschrift* is both a record of and a sentimental tribute to their lifelong association.

Robert S. Lynd, then professor of sociology at Columbia, befriended Lazarsfeld at the time of his first visit in 1933; for many years, the Lazarsfelds went to the Lynds' apartment on Thanksgiving Day or on Christmas Eve. Bernard Berelson, Frank Stanton, and Edward A. Suchman were early collaborators in his work on mass communications. Allen H. Barton, professor of sociology at Columbia, first studied with Lazarsfeld in 1947 and accompanied him to Norway in 1948 to help establish a research institute at the University of Oslo. They coauthored an important article on qualitative measurement (1951) and Barton was director of the Columbia Bureau from 1962 to 1977.

In Paris (and for one year in New York), Lazarsfeld had

¹² Personal communication: 1981.

a profound influence on Raymond Boudon; in Warsaw, where he was fascinated by the social research that was being done in the late 1950s to test the efficacy of various socialist programs, he was assisted primarily by Stefan Nowak. His collaborative relationships with his three wives were noted earlier. For years, he and the Columbia philosopher Ernest Nagel taught a successful graduate seminar on the logic of social inquiry. He had intense and complex relationships with two sociologists whose approaches to scholarly work were sharply at variance with his own: T. W. Adorno and C. Wright Mills. Both were critical of him; while critical of much of their work, he nevertheless went to great lengths to try to find common ground. More important than any of those named above in their effect on Lazarsfeld, and in his influence on their thinking, are two of the most eminent American sociologists of the twentieth century—Samuel A. Stouffer and Robert K. Merton.

Collaboration with Samuel A. Stouffer. Lazarsfeld and Stouffer first met in 1936. At that meeting, they agreed to collaborate on a monograph concerning the American family in the depression that was a part of a Social Science Research Council inquiry into the era directed by Stouffer (Stouffer and Lazarsfeld 1937). Thus was established what Lazarsfeld called “an alliance” that lasted until Stouffer’s death in 1960. Their most notable collaboration was on the wartime research concerning the U.S. Army that led to a four-volume series, including the two volumes entitled *The American Soldier*, published in 1949 and 1950. Lazarsfeld also edited and wrote the introduction to a posthumously published selection of Stouffer’s papers—although Stouffer had himself selected the papers.

It was Stouffer who first introduced Lazarsfeld to the fourfold contingency table—a concise way of demonstrating the relationship between two dichotomous variables—by

drawing one on a luncheon tablecloth one day in Newark in 1937. During the war years, when Lazarsfeld was a consultant to the War Department, his ideas on latent structure analysis and on the causal analysis of survey data were worked out in discussions with Stouffer. Their personal and research styles were totally different: Lazarsfeld was the somewhat flamboyant, cultured European, raised as a socialist; Stouffer was the homespun, modest Midwesterner, raised as (and remaining) a Republican. Lazarsfeld surrounded himself with research assistants; Stouffer was famous for running his own statistical tables on the IBM counter-sorter outside his office door in Washington, and later at Harvard. Both knew how to organize research workers, and both were totally absorbed in obtaining ideas and findings—not from speculation, but the hard way, from data. Perhaps because he saw in Stouffer a more disciplined and self-effacing reflection of himself, Lazarsfeld considered Stouffer “the most important man of all of us . . . an outstanding mind in our generation”; Stouffer’s effect upon his thinking, although subtle, was enormous.

Collaboration with Robert K. Merton. Lazarsfeld and Merton joined the Columbia faculty at the same time; in fact, their appointments were designed to resolve an internal dispute over whether the next major appointment to the Columbia sociology faculty was to be theorist or a methodologist. With Merton and Lazarsfeld, Columbia hoped to get both. It did, and for decades Merton was known as the major “theory” person in the department, Lazarsfeld as the chief “methods” person. To a certain extent this is true; most graduate students studied under both but aligned themselves primarily with one or the other. Hanan Selvin, like Patricia Kendall, one of the relatively few graduates of the department who worked closely with both Lazarsfeld and Merton, spoke for generations of students when he said in a 1975 *Festschrift* for Merton that “we were satellites, not of one sun, but of two,

for Robert K. Merton and Paul F. Lazarsfeld so dominated Columbia during these three decades that no lesser figure of speech will do."

Lazarsfeld and Merton were close friends and colleagues for thirty-five years. There are few examples in the history of science of two such brilliant and accomplished colleagues developing and maintaining such a strong personal and scientific relationship for such an extended period. An attempt to explicate the relationship in brief compass is not a digression; rather, it is central to an understanding of Lazarsfeld's accomplishments.

It was primarily a professional rather than a social relationship; Lazarsfeld entitled his account of their collaboration "Working with Merton" (1975). As noted below, they were coauthors and coeditors of a small number of important publications. Moreover, Merton was the anonymous collaborator on almost everything Lazarsfeld published. On the title page of the copy he gave Merton of a long chapter on latent structure analysis, Lazarsfeld wrote: "Bob, this is the first item in 20 years you did not have to work on. P."

Each of their six published collaborative efforts reveals something important about their relationship. They coedited *Continuities in Social Research: Studies in the Scope and Method of "The American Soldier"* (1950), a brilliant attempt to enrich social theory by reappraising the wider effects of the series of attitude surveys that Stouffer had conducted among soldiers during the war. Their three coauthored articles on mass communications deal with the social and cultural meanings of the radio research they had both carried out. In their "Friendship as Social Process" (1954), Lazarsfeld recast a number of Merton's sociological propositions about friendship into formal, deductive mathematical terms and indicated their research relevance. And in "A Professional School

for Training in Social Research" (1950), they reviewed plans for a new educational institution they had talked about for many years, but which never reached fruition.

In their life at Columbia together, it was Merton whose diplomatic skills were called upon to extricate Lazarsfeld from numerous troubles with the university, his colleagues, his students, or his sponsors. It was Merton who toiled over Lazarsfeld's drafts, applying to them the brilliant editing skills that have benefited so many of his students and colleagues. And it was Merton who established and maintained the close support with the Columbia University community that Lazarsfeld—more the outsider and much more the world traveler—only achieved toward the end of his tenure.

The substance of their professional friendship is more difficult to specify; elaborating it would be a worthy research project in itself. Certainly Merton's interest in the sociology and history of science influenced Lazarsfeld's work on the history of the empirical study of action, and on the history of methodology more generally. Lazarsfeld's concept of "global characteristics"—the characterization of groups based on characteristics that are not derived from the properties of individual members (population density is an obvious example)—influenced Merton's subsequent work in the sociology of science. Lazarsfeld had no opportunity to create a personal library during his first decade in the United States; when he first saw Merton's eclectic library, he resolved to develop his own, and did.

In his article in the Merton *Festschrift*, "Working with Merton," Lazarsfeld provided a detailed recollection of their relationship; in the Lazarsfeld *Festschrift*, Merton refers to Lazarsfeld as a "brother." Their students and colleagues know that these words only hint at the depth and complexity of their intellectual and personal companionship.

RECOGNITION

Lazarsfeld received many acknowledgments of his accomplishments during his lifetime. He was president of both the American Association for Public Opinion Research (1949–50) and the American Sociological Association (1961–62), and he was an elected member of the National Academy of Education as well as the National Academy of Sciences. He received honorary degrees from Chicago and Yeshiva universities in 1966, from Columbia in 1970, from Vienna in 1971, and from the Sorbonne in 1972, the first American sociologist ever so honored. In 1955 he was the first recipient of the Julian L. Woodward Memorial Award of the American Association for Public Opinion Research, and in 1969 the Austrian Republic awarded him its Great Golden Cross, largely for his help in establishing the Institute for Advanced Studies in Vienna in 1963. He was a much sought-after consultant, speaker, and teacher. Shortly after his death, a Paul F. Lazarsfeld Memorial Fund was established in order to sponsor a series of lectures in his honor. In 1983 a large collection of his books and papers was dedicated as the Lazarsfeld Archives at the University of Vienna.

LEGACY

Lazarsfeld's innovations in consumer research and his effect on the business and advertising communities were substantial. He was a major trainer and model for the generation of advertising and market researchers that matured in New York City in the decades following World War II. His work in communications research helped create it as a field of scholarship, and through his analyses of propaganda during World War II and his influence upon the research activities of the Voice of America, he helped create the field of inter-

national communications research. His model for the institutionalization of training and research in the social sciences is embodied in dozens of thriving research organizations around the world. He was one of the founders of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences in Stanford, California. His use of the sample survey as a tool for causal analysis helped transform opinion polling into a scientific method, and his development and use of the panel method has enormously influenced a wide range of evaluations of the effect of educational or social reform programs.

Marginality. In spite of these achievements, Lazarsfeld felt that he was somehow an outsider in America, a marginal person, never at the center of things. Why did he feel this way? He thought that it was the result of his Jewishness, his foreignness, his heavy accent, and his interest in such a low-status activity as market research—but these reasons are not fully convincing. He lived his life, as he once put it, like a bicycle rider, always compensating so as not to fall off. He left his marginal position at the University of Vienna for equally marginal positions at Newark, Princeton, and (at least initially) Columbia. He left mathematics because he knew that he would never be in the first rank, but he never quite believed that events had transformed him into a sociologist. He approached every new research topic from a startlingly new direction, and he took pride in the originality of studies carried out at the Columbia Bureau, in contrast to the more traditional research carried out at other university centers such as those at Chicago and Michigan. Like an expert skier, who knows that the best snow is generally at the edge of the trail, his genius kept him carefully away from the accepted center of most problem areas. "But look," he would say with his hand raised, and then proceed to outline a highly original plan of action.

Lazarsfeld's self-perception of marginality was allied to his conception of his role in the social sciences: to be on the margin is also to be on the frontier. It can also be argued that his marginality contributed to the intellectual traffic between ideas and methods that made him a singularly influential figure in the history of social research. In a memorial article published in *Le Monde* shortly after Lazarsfeld's death, Raymond Boudon noted that "his work has attained the most noble form of marginality: many of the ideas which he introduced have become so familiar that hardly anyone bothers to attribute their paternity to him."

The Search for Convergences. One consequence of Lazarsfeld's sense of marginality for his intellectual activity was his never-ending search for convergences between different intellectual traditions—convergences that could serve to enrich both traditions. His search for convergences undoubtedly was a result of being Viennese: bold syntheses are characteristic intellectual products of Vienna. His collaboration with the theorist Merton is the most obvious of these convergences. Other convergences that he encouraged were between disciplines: psychology and sociology; mathematics and sociology; anthropology and media research; and sociometry and survey research. He sought both a convergence and a mutual understanding between the critical sociology of the Frankfurt school (see especially the writings of T. W. Adorno) and the dominant positivistic trend in American sociology, as well as between Marxist sociology and mainline European-American sociology.

Other convergences he sought were between the social sciences and the humanities. He used his early studies of radio to build bridges between the social sciences and such fields as literary analysis and music. He sought to relate the philosophy of science and empirical social research, historical analysis and opinion research, and logic and concept for-

mation. While some of his critics were accusing him of mindless quantification, he was spending time reading and talking with some of the nation's leading humanists, historians, and philosophers.

Finally, he sought convergences between different research traditions and methods. He made connections between small-group research and the use of sample surveys to study interpersonal influence (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955) and between the use of fixed-choice questions in surveys and so-called open-ended interviewing. His work on concept formation (1966) and index construction (see Lazarsfeld, Pasanella, and Rosenberg 1972) is a monument to interdisciplinary borrowing and to making connections. With Allen Barton, he took a polemic of C. Wright Mills against the decline of "craftsmanship" and developed it into a scheme for studying the man-job relationship (Barton and Lazarsfeld 1955). And he encouraged the foremost qualitative researcher of the 1950s—David Riesman—to reinterview a sample of the respondents during his study of American social scientists (Lazarsfeld and Thielens 1958). A volume of interdisciplinary essays edited by Mirra Komarovsky, *Common Frontiers of the Social Sciences* (1957), was inspired by him and prepared under his general direction. A modern-day Leonardo da Vinci, he largely ignored the traditional specialization of knowledge and sought to find new truths by bringing people and ideas together.

The convergence in the social sciences that Lazarsfeld tried hardest to effect is that between quantitative and qualitative research. In almost every field in which he worked, he tried to fuse these two productive modes of inquiry: it was the theme with which he ended his presidential address to the American Sociological Association; the journal *Quality and Quantity* was founded in 1967 under his direct influence; and for all these reasons the *Festschrift* in his memory is en-

titled *Qualitative and Quantitative Social Research*.¹³ In the words of James S. Coleman, he was "one of those rare sociologists who shaped the direction of the discipline for the succeeding generation."¹⁴

THE AUTHOR IS PARTICULARLY GRATEFUL for the assistance and suggestions of the following friends and associates of Paul F. Lazarsfeld: Albert E. Gollin, Patricia L. Kendall, Robert K. Merton, Paul M. Neurath, and Hans Zeisel.

¹³ See Merton, Coleman, and Rossi, *Qualitative and Quantitative Social Research*.

¹⁴ Coleman, "Paul S. Lazarsfeld," p. 1.

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