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Paul F. Lazarsfeld: His Scholarly Journey[1]

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More than a century has now passed since the birth in Vienna of Paul Lazarsfeld, who became one of the giants of American social science during his lifetime. Born in 1901, Paul died in 1976. This was long before anyone expected his life to end, as Paul came from a family where longevity was not uncommon, and where his own expectation was for a long life. A day before he died he was able to review a set of essays by his former students that were part of a *Festschrift* in celebration of his 75th birthday. That work was published, of course, and almost 30 years later Paul Lazarsfeld's intellectual influence in the social sciences continues to be formidable. Today we come together from different nations to honor Lazarsfeld's work and to examine how some of his seminal ideas have been extended since his death.

In fact, over the past two decades there have been many tributes to Lazarsfeld and discussions of his most important scholarly contributions. Columbia University held a one-day symposium in September 2001, only three weeks after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, to celebrate the centenary of his birth. In true Lazarsfeld fashion we were able to announce that within a week of the tragic 9/11 events, Columbia sociologists had launched a large-scale empirical study that would examine the responses over time to the attacks; a study that would be built on a set of in-depth interviews with survivors and with family members of those who died in the attack. On that day, we had a feeling that Paul was smiling down on us, thinking that all of his training had made an impact on future social scientists – at least in his belief in capturing the moment and studying unfolding events with the collection of systematic data.[3] Other

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[1] Keynote address delivered at "An International Symposium in Honor of Paul Lazarsfeld," Brussels, Belgium, June 4-5, 2004.

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[3] Among the speakers and their paper topics at the 2001 Columbia University Symposium (September 29, 2001), which was titled, "Paul F. Lazarsfeld: Centennial Celebration and Conference: Theory as Measurement; Measurement as Theory" were: Peter Bearman, Andrew Abbott, Robert Sampson Harrrison White, Terry Clark, Stephen Cole, John Shelton Reed, Craig Calhoun Anthony Oberschall, Charles Tilly, William J. Goode, and Jonathan R. Cole.

tributes to Lazarsfeld have been cast as personal essays, like the brilliant piece "Working with Lazarsfeld," by his closest intellectual colleague Robert K. Merton; others, have been essays by former students and associates about specific concepts and methods that Paul developed – both alone and in collaboration. So, Paul F. Lazarsfeld has not been forgotten and his work continues to be read and, as we shall see, cited today.

I am delighted to have the opportunity today to make a few observations about Lazarsfeld's scholarly journey on the occasion of this fitting further tribute to him. He was my teacher and colleague at Columbia in the middle 1960s. Our collective presence at this conference is testimony that the fundamental problems that Lazarsfeld raised decades ago remain of critical importance today and are, in fact, of enduring interest. The papers and talks today and tomorrow speak as well to the considerable advances that have been made in dealing with some of the problems that gave him pause and that he and his students grappled with a half century ago. They also suggest that there is much work that remains to be done to solve some of the more vexing of the problems addressed by Lazarsfeld and those who stand on his shoulders.

While I too will refer briefly to some of Paul Lazarsfeld's major contributions to the social sciences, I will leave much of the substantive discussion of these topics and of the advances made since Lazarsfeld to my colleagues here who will be speaking to you over the course of the next two days. I will spend some time on the larger social context that brought Lazarsfeld and other notable intellectuals to the United States and I will suggest how they influenced the transformation of the American higher education and how they participated in the scientific and scholarly revolutions that catapulted American research universities to positions of preeminence.

Paul Lazarsfeld: The Early Years in Vienna

Paul Lazarsfeld was, of course, born well before the First World War, but his salad days were influenced by that war and its aftermath. Raised in a middle-class, highly educated, but hardly affluent Viennese family, Lazarsfeld, following his parent's lead, was an active participant in the young Socialist Movement that was concerned with, among other things, problems of massive unemployment and the need for social

reform. Hans Zeisel, Lazarsfeld's life-long friend and "colleague," reflected nostalgically on those days: "[F]or 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."[4] Lazarsfeld tells us in his own wonderfully informative autobiographical memoir that he tried to combine "the ideas of the German youth movement with socialist propaganda among my colleagues."[5] By age 18, when he entered university, he had become "too old" to be a *revolté,* so he became an amateur "educator," who worked at socialist youth camps and as a tutor in high schools to children of working class parents."[6]

Lazarsfeld was trained as an applied mathematician and said that the main influence on him was the work by Ernst Mach, Henri Poincaré, and Albert Einstein – work by those interested in science and the philosophy of science. He also had a growing interest in social psychology while still at the University of Vienna. He worked as an assistant and also taught courses in social and applied psychology, while continuing to work in the *Gymnasium.* As Lazarsfeld put it: "All the ideas which later became known as "explications" held a great fascination for me, and this interest often merged into the conviction that 'knowing how things are done' was an educational goal of high priority."[7] Many years later, Paul would regularly teach a course at Columbia on the logic of scientific inquiry with the renowned philosopher Ernest Nagel, in which they explored many of the themes in his work, including problems of causation and the uses of various types of evidence, both qualitative and quantitative, in social research.

Foreshadowing his long interest in creating new social research institutions, Lazarsfeld's early on created an empirical social research center in 1925 connected to Karl Bühler's Research Center in Vienna. While directing this center, Lazarsfeld continued to teach at the University and to interest students in doing their dissertations using data collected at this new center. In 1930, at the tender age of 29, Paul was working with Hans Zeisel and Marie Jahoda on the now famous study of the working

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[4] Quoted in David Sills, F. Lazarsfeld 1901-1976. *Biographical Memoirs,* VOLUME 56, National Academy of Sciences. The National Academy Press: Washington, D.C. 1987, p. 254.
[5] Paul F. Lazarsfeld, "An Episode in the History of Social Research: A Memoir, in Donald Fleming and Bernard Bailyn (eds.) *Intellectual Migration: Europe and American 1930-1960,* Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969: 270-337.
[6] ibid. pp. 272-73.
[7] Ibid. p. 273.

poor in a village south of Vienna, Marienthal, whose population was almost entirely unemployed. The Marienthal study, which continues to merit rereading some 71 years after its initial publication, brought Lazarsfeld to the attention of the Rockefeller Foundation, whose Paris representative offered him a traveling fellowship to the United States for the academic year beginning in September 1933, and fortuitously to Columbia sociologist Robert Lynd, who connected the Marienthal project to his and Helen Lynd's famous Middletown study. Lynd would prove to be instrumental in bringing Lazarsfeld to Columbia.

I dwell on these biographical facts because the various elements can be seen as part of the larger story of the most important intellectual migration in the 20th century, and quite certainly the most significant migration of rare intellectual talent working in or aspiring to positions at universities. The story of this migratory pattern – its scope and size as well as its impact on both the American and German, as well as other European, university systems - is perhaps less widely known to many younger scholars and scientists than it ought to be, and is, I believe, particularly relevant to the events unfolding in the United States today. I shall have more to say about the contemporary relevance in a moment.

Lazarsfeld: Part of the Larger Intellectual Migration

The cause of the intellectual exodus was, of course, almost entirely attributable to the rise of Hitler and the Nazis to power in January 1933 and the rapid purging of "Jewish science" and scientists from their positions in German universities, as well as from other influential civil service jobs. In the wake of these purges came other successful fascist movements in nations such as Austria. Lazarsfeld informs us that after the Conservative Party came to power in Austria in 1934 it "overthrew the constitution, outlawed the Socialist Party, and established an Italian-type fascism."[8] Lazarsfeld's position in the *Gymnasium* was eliminated and most of his family in Vienna was imprisoned. That "brief moment in history," alluded to by Hans Zeisel, came to a dramatic end in 1933. In his personal intellectual memoir, Lazarsfeld chose not to place

[8] Ibid. p. 276.

his experience in a broader context[9], but we should do so since his experiences paralleled those of many others who became important figures in the American academy and because those early experiences influenced Lazarsfeld's later interests and choices.

As I said, Lazarsfeld was the beneficiary of a Rockefeller Foundation traveling fellowship program. It may have saved his life; it surely transformed it. This Rockefeller fellowship initiative in the 1920s and 1930s, long before the idea for the National Science Foundation or the National Institutes of Health had been born, did as much as almost any other program to internationalize science and to facilitate intellectual exchange between European and American universities.[10] Surely in the 1920s the balance of this intellectual trade flowed far more to Europe from the United States than in the opposite direction, although many of the great intellectual figures in European science had been supported by these fellowships to visit, lecture, and join the "invisible colleges" of science growing up in the best of the new research universities in the United States.

In the early decades of the 20th century, Germany was the Mecca for those interested in university based physical science. This is made amply clear by the domination of the Germans in the early Nobel Prizes in chemistry and physics. While American universities were already producing extraordinary biologists working on problems in genetics during the first two decades of the 20th century (people like Thomas Hunt Morgan working at Columbia for example), the physical sciences and their practical industrial applications were preeminent in European and in German universities in particular. We tend to forget that the American research universities were young and rather sleepy institutions even in terms of science at the beginning of the 20th century, and with a few exceptions, really did not "take off" until after World War II. Hitler changed all of this within a few months during 1933. Even the most loyal German scientists, like the extraordinary chemist Fritz Haber, were dismissed from their positions over the objections of many of their colleagues, if they had any Jewish heritage. Others

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[9] This was undoubtedly true because he knew the purpose of the volume that Fleming and Bailyn were putting together and that the experiences of others with migration would be conveyed in their essays in the same volume.

[10] The great American physicist, I.I. Rabi was on a traveling fellowship in Europe between 1925 and 1927. During his travels, Rabi reported meeting many other young Americans scientists including Edward U. Condon, F. Wheeler Loomis, Robert Oppenheimer, Linus C. Pauling, John C. Slater, and Edwin C. Kemble. See, Charles Weiner, "The Refugees and American Physics," in Fleming and Bailyn, *Intellectual Migration*, pp. 190-234, esp. 195-196

who could see the dark clouds gathering, like the Hungarian born John von Neumann and Albert Einstein left early before they were forced out; others were simply dismissed and sought refuge in other countries. Thomas Mann, who was a reluctant émigré by 1933, said that Germany, "lacked any sense of evil" and that it had "relapsed into darkest barbarism" to which he would "never yield, but sooner die than come to terms with it."[11] Hitler's attack on the basic values at the core of creative scientific work and the total erosion of the norm of universalism and meritocracy produced dramatic and rapid declines in the quality of the research universities and institutes.

Roughly one quarter of the pre-1933 German physics community was lost to the country as a result of the purges associated with the passage of the Law for the Restoration of the Career Civil Service that threw out Socialists and non-Aryans (one quarter Jewish blood was sufficient to be classified as such) from their civil service jobs. Since university positions were civil service positions as were those associated with the prestigious Kaiser Wilhelm institutes, Jewish civil servant were replaced by younger, Aryan scientists and scholars beginning in April 1933. Among those lost to the great German physics community were Einstein, Schrödinger, Stern, Bloch, Born, Wigner, Bethe, Herzberg, Hess and Debye among Nobel laureates. Richard Courant, Herman Weyl and other mathematicians left as well. Among the physicists who later turned to the biological sciences, lost to the United States were Max Delbrück, and the great physicist Leo Szilard. Szilard says in his memoir, "I visited America in 1931. I came here on Christmas Day 1931, on the *Leviathan*, and stayed here for three months… In the course of 1932 I returned to Berlin where I was privat-dozent at the University. Hitler came into office in January '33, and I had no doubt what would happen. I lived in the faculty club of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in Berlin-Dahlem and I had my suitcases packed. By this I mean that I literally had two suitcases which were packed standing in my room; the key was in them, and all I had to do was turn the key and leave when things got too bad."[12]

These scientists were exceptionally talented, with world-class originality and academic experience; they were of priceless value to any academic community. There

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[11] Quoted on p. 129 in John Cornwell, *Hitler's Scientists: Science, War, and the Devil's Pact.* New York: Viking Press, 2003.

[12] L. Szilard, "Reminiscences" in Donald Fleming and Bernard Bailyn, (eds), *Intellectual Migration Europe and America 1930 – 1960*. p. 95.

were other scientists, like Enrico Fermi, who escaped Fascism from Italy, or Nils Bohr from Scandinavia and others from elsewhere in Europe who, fearful of what was unfolding, left Europe to take up residency at British and American universities. The Fascist nations of the time not only lost many of their scientific leaders, but they lost exceptional talent in both the social sciences and humanities. Lazarsfeld was, of course, not alone in taking up residency in the U.S. Desperate to leave Europe in 1938, Theodor W. Adorno, for one, took a job in New Jersey working on the radio research projects of no one other than Paul Lazarsfeld. Humanists such as Erwin Panofsky, Leo Spitzer, and Erich Auerbach left. In October 1933 psychoanalysis was "banned from the Congress of Psychology in Leipzig as 'Jewish science'. Psychoanalytic literature was burned and members of the psychoanalytic community centered in Berlin began to disperse rapidly to save their lives. Even Sigmund Freud, old and frail, was forced to leave Vienna with his daughter Anna in 1938."[13]

Germany's unfathomable loss of talent was America's unfathomable gain. The German university system has not yet fully overcome the devastation caused by the intrusion of National Socialist politics into the conduct of the university system in the early 1930s. Indeed, in two recent studies of the reputations of about 500 universities throughout the world, the German universities and those in other fascist nations of the time, can hardly be found among the top 50.[14] From the mid-1930s forward the flow of talent began to move toward American research universities that were, for the most part, highly receptive to the intellectual immigrants from European science, social science, and humanities.

These men of science (and there were few women), of which I include Paul Lazarsfeld, not only provided a critical mass of talent for emerging academic departments of quality that could begin to compete for talent with the very best

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[13] For an essay on humanist scholars who migrated during this period, see Harry Levin, "Two *Romanisten* in America: Spitzer and Auerbach" in Fleming and Bailyn, *Intellectual Migration*, pp. 463-484.

[14] Two organizations, one the Shanghai Jiao Tong University Institute of Higher Education in China, the other with the Center for Science and Technology Studies in Switzerland, have recently published the results of separate studies of the reputations of roughly 500 universities around the world. The web sources are: for the Chinese study, http//ed.sjtu.edu.cn/ranking.htm; for the Swiss study, http://www.cest.ch/de/aktuell.htm, and http://www.cest.ch/Publikationen/2002/CEST_2002_6_Preprint.pdf. The highest ranked German university in the 2003 Chinese study was the University of Munich, ranked 48th.

universities in the world, but they also helped to transform many of the fields that they entered. The intellectual migration of people like Lazarsfeld and the other scientists, when combined with the growing number of very talented American scientists, set the stage for the "take-off" of the American research university that occurred after World War II. By 1945, many of the immigrant scientists had earned their stripes as active participants in the Manhattan Project and in other parts of the war effort.

For many in this creative group of "newcomers," the migration afforded them an opportunity to shift their own angles of intellectual vision and to pursue long-standing interests that might not have been possible otherwise - even in a stable European system. In part, this could be attributed to the greater flexibility in the structure of universities in the United States and to the huge enthusiasm at places like Cal. Tech., MIT, Chicago, Princeton, Harvard, and Columbia, among many other universities, for the potential of new paradigmatic ways of addressing older scientific problems. So, for example, after working in America on problems related to nuclear fission and the possibilities of constructing an atomic bomb, the great physicist, Leo Szilard, who had been influenced by Schrödinger's famous 1943 essay, "What is Life?" chose to recast his intellectual attention to fundamental biological problems. Similarly, Max Delbrück turns from physics to the creation of modern molecular biology. The work of the phage group and those who Delbrück and Luria wished to educate in molecular biology developed through the "invisible college" that was created through the annual summer conferences held at Cold Spring Harbor.

The presence of these talented "foreigners" also led to significant departures for the fields that they entered in American universities. They were at once "insiders," and "outsiders" who provided new disciplines with the benefits first of the perspectives that they gained from their European experience and later with the perspectives gained from being newly assimilated American scholars and scientists who became leaders in their fields. These scholars also had access to a growing number of exceptionally talented students. Paul Lazarsfeld, trained as an applied mathematician, had already turned to social issues and published on them, but once in the United States he was able to expand his own "effective scope" to include multiple disciplines – not least of which was sociology – and become a pioneer in developing modern empirical social science methods. By his own admission, Paul knew little about American sociology when he

arrived in the United States. In summary, I'm suggesting that although there was a loss of place, there was also a gain in the degrees of freedom that was experienced by these intellectuals and they used their creative impulses to engender enormous energy into new disciplines in the American research university.

To be sure, the prospects of a new life in an open society had less appeal to some of these scholars and scientists and only a limited influence on their choice of problems. Necessity also had something to do with changing foci of attention. For example, when Adorno came to the U.S. he worked, as I noted, on the radio project with Lazarsfeld and later on the influential studies of the authoritarian personality with social science colleagues at Berkeley. For Adorno, it seems, these projects would not have been ones of his choice; in fact, for Adorno and others, their time in the United States was a time in "intellectual exile" from their roots in Europe. Adorno, in his reflections on his experience in the United States during this period, said, "I consider myself European through and through, considered myself as such from the first to the last day abroad, and never denied it."[15] Once they had the opportunity they returned home.

The growth of entire fields, including quantitative, empirical, social science research cannot, of course, be attributed solely to the efforts of emigrés like Paul Lazarsfeld. But in those early days of the disciplines in American research universities, the critical number of people required to influence the direction of a discipline was relatively small – in sociology as well as molecular biology. In fact, Lazarsfeld and a relatively few others, like the uniquely talented mid-westerner, Samuel Stouffer, were responsible through their own work and their intellectual progeny for seeding a new type of work in sociology that now has deep roots and a firm tradition.

In the two decades that followed the European migration of scholars, a new intellectual chemistry was born in the United States by mixing two groups of socially mobile scientists and scholars. The "horizontal" socially mobile European scholars often merged their efforts with products of the new American "vertical" social and academic mobility – those beneficiaries of a relatively new openness to talent in American society regardless of religious origins or economic wealth. The "vertical" and "horizontal" intersected and led to extremely fruitful cases of "out breeding." We see this illustrated

[15] Paul F. Lazarsfeld, "An Episode in the History of Social Research", p. 338.

in the collaborative relationship that took hold between Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton – each a product of these different streams of mobility. Lazarsfeld, who came from a bourgeois background despite it socialist leanings, seemed very American in his entrepreneurial efforts to link the American university with industry – and to develop applied social research that would fall squarely into what today we would call "Pasteur's quadrant" (research that was both curiosity and mission driven). Merton, who came from a Jewish background and grew up in a poor section of Philadelphia, which provided him with certain cultural riches, like the public library, was an exemplar of the extraordinarily talented and intellectually curious youngster who now had some opportunities to attend graduate school at Harvard and obtain faculty positions at the major research universities. In fact, after the War the improved opportunity structure brought large numbers of Jewish immigrant scientists and scholars together with the children of Jewish immigrants in the United States (who often came from less cultured, more "proletariat" Jewish nations of Eastern Europe rather than from the "bourgeois" countries like Germany). These new combinations had a great deal to do with the rise to international preeminence of these institutions. They may have seemed like an "odd couple," as Robert K. Merton says in his essay on working with Lazarsfeld, but through selective affinities and through their desire to "make new disciplines," they combined to create a new type of chemistry that propelled American universities toward greater distinction.

Immigrant scholars who have been highly innovative often feel that they straddle two worlds without being fully embraced by either. Lazarsfeld perceived himself as such a marginal person – not fully accepted by the American academy because he was a Jewish foreigner with an noticeable accent who studied seemingly low brow topics, such as why people listen to certain radio shows or why they bought Maxwell House coffee – marketing research done in collaboration with captains of industry.[16] Most indicators of acceptance, except for the crucial one of self-identity, would suggest otherwise. Within two decades of taking up his position at Columbia in 1940, his status was anything but marginal. He was recognized widely as one of America's leading social scientists whose path-breaking work in the United States led to his election as president of the American Sociological Association and election to the U.S. National Academy of Sciences – a very rare event for a sociologist in those days. He also maintained a very significant

[16] This follows closely the discussion in David L. Sills, "Paul F. Lazarsfeld 1901-1976. *Biographical Memoirs."*

following in Europe, especially in France (Paul was a true Francophile) and was the first American sociologist to be given an honorary degree by the Sorbonne in 1972.

The intellectual migration not only strengthened the American research universities, strengthened our scientific and scholarly capacities, but it also indicated to others throughout the world that the United States would welcome international scholars and students and would, if they were judged more able than others, welcome them into the ranks of the faculties of these universities. The number of foreign students and faculty who began to migrate to the United States after World War II increased rapidly and made it possible for these universities to grow in quality and reputation. One datum speaks to this point: Roughly one-third of Columbia University's current tenured faculty was born in nations other than the United States. In fact, the quality of American research universities is today significantly dependent on the continued opportunities offered to talented students and scholars from abroad, especially in science and engineering fields.

The importance of the flow of talent to the United States that began in earnest during the 1930s is placed in fresh perspective today when the tradition of American universities being the great importer of scientific and technical talent is under threat. Today, with their obsession on needs for national security in the war on terrorism, President George Bush, Attorney General John Aschcroft and other members of his administration and the Republican controlled Congress, have abused American civil liberties, and have created a hostile atmosphere for foreign students and scholars in the United States. Unreasonable detentions, searches, fingerprinting, interrogations, are creating barriers to the continued flow of students and scholars who want to study, teach, or conduct research in the United States. This past year, applications from Chinese students to American research universities were off by about one-third compared to the prior year. Similar declines have been observed for applications from other nations as well. The USA Patriot Act limits the opportunities for research and study among students from a select number of nations – based solely on nationality. These policies are fundamentally discriminatory and they undercut the core values of universities. If pursued further, they threaten the vitality of this increasingly important American institution – perhaps the only American industry today with a positive balance of trade.

Given his life history, Lazarsfeld was, of course, interested in attacks on academic freedom. One of his major studies focused on the effects of McCarthyism on civil liberties at American colleges and universities. In *The Academic Mind*, he and Wagner Thielens examined the responses of social science faculty members to the growing pressure during the Cold War years to purge the universities of Communist Party members, former members, and fellow travelers. McCarthy was, of course, no more able to find an internal communist conspiracy in the universities than he was in finding one in Hollywood, but he managed to destroy careers and lives in the process of creating a national hysteria and paranoia over a non-existent threat. Substantial apprehension settled on the college campuses where there were, in fact, purges and where professors became concerned about what they said and what they taught. Lazarsfeld wanted to find out the extent of the apprehension, the types of apprehension, and the causes and contexts in which it increased or declined. One of Lazarsfeld's few abiding substantive interests was in academic freedom and political abuses of free inquiry and open communication in universities. How could it be otherwise coming from his background?

Lazarsfeld's: His Scholarly Contributions – Past and Present

Let me turn briefly now to Lazarsfeld's contributions to the social sciences. Paul Lazarsfeld was an enormously energetic man who was curious and relentless. His ideas seemed to spring forth from continual conversation – conversations with colleagues in many academic fields, with leaders in industry, and with his students. He was essentially an intellectual innovator and leader who liked to work through collaborations, and often actively crossed disciplinary boundaries to build interdisciplinary research groups. He also was persuaded that he could convince any bright student or colleague to work on *his* problems – those he thought were of fundamental interest. In fact, much of Lazarsfeld's and Merton's influence can be seen through the array of their students who developed areas that each found of great interest. The strength of the gravity around both Paul and Bob was such that many of these students could not escape their pull; others had no interest in trying to escape; and some suffered by continual efforts to break free from these extraordinary mentors.

There is widespread agreement among students of Larzarsfeld,[17,18,19], and his close former colleagues[20,21], about what might be regarded as Paul's most basic scholarly and institutional contributions. Lazarsfeld transformed "public opinion polling methods into survey research, that is, into the analytical use of sample surveys to draw inferences about causal relations that affect the actions of individuals…"[22] He pioneered "in the use of survey panel methods, that is, the further transformation of public opinion polling beyond cross-sectional surveys into panels involving two or more interviews of the same sample (or 'panel')." These methods allowed him to study change in attitudes and behavior of individuals over time in a more precise way than had been done before. He was the "putative father" of audience and mass communications research. Paul simply created the field of mass communications research, which included the early collaborative work with Frank Stanton at CBS on radio research. His "two-step flow" model of influence describing how personal relationships mediate mass communications and its influence on attitudes and behavior is still used today. Through his studies of how the interaction among mass communications, social relationships, and attitudes shape action, Lazarsfeld demonstrated that mass media affect action in an indirect way – mediated by the opinion leaders who use the mass media for their own purpose as well as by social context. Lazarsfeld thus played a major role in the development of the market-research industry.

Paul Lazarsfeld "initiated the methods that have come to dominate the empirical analysis of voting behavior, both in sociology and in political science."[23] His work on voting behavior, which was the scholarly precursor to election polling and public opinion surveys and analysis that are commonplace today, is still having a substantial impact.

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[17] Seymour Martin Lipset, "The Academic Mind at the Top: The Political Behavior and Values of Faculty Elites, " The Paul F. Lazarsfeld Lecture, Columbia University Center for the Social Sciences, February 12, 1982; published in Public Opinion Quarterly (1982) Vol. 46: 143-168.

[18] David L. Sills, "Paul F. Lazarsfeld 1901-1976: A Biographical Memoir"

[19] Allen H. Barton, "Paul Lazarsfeld As Institutional Inventor," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research Vol. 13 No. 3, 2001*: 245-269.

[20] Robert K. Merton, "Working with Lazarsfeld: Notes and Contexts" in Jacques Lautman and Bernard-Pierre Lécuyer (eds), *Paul Lazarsfeld (1901-1976): La Sociologie de Vienne à New York.* Editions L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 1998. Based on a talk delivered at Colloque Paul F. Lazarsfeld 15-17 décembre 1994, Université de Paris-Sorbonne (Paris IV).

[21] Raymond Boudon, "Introduction" *Paul F. Lazarsfeld On Social Research and Its Language* R. Boudon (editor), Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993: 1-29

[22] James S. Coleman, "Paul F. Lazarsfeld: The Substance and Style of His Work."

[23] ibid

He "was one of the 'founders' of modern mathematical sociology" through his work on latent structure analysis and through his teaching. As James Coleman said, " … Lazarsfeld's empirical concerns were as strong as his methodological or formal concerns. His interest was in solving substantive problems, and his use of mathematics was continually guided by this interest."[24] His work on latent structure analysis and mathematical sociology were efforts to go beyond positivistic thinking and behaviorism of the day and to explore how he could handle unobservable ideas. This work influenced scores of students, most notably Coleman, who made seminal contributions that built upon Paul's mathematical interests. Lazarsfeld assessed his own contributions in a conversation reported by John Shelton Reed, another of Paul's very distinguished research assistants. Lazarsfeld said "he'd had only four original ideas in his life. When asked what they were, he listed the elaboration scheme, panel analysis, latent structure analysis, and… contextual analysis…Lazarsfeld said that everything he had done had been a matter of working out the implications of those four ideas." "No false modesty, though," Reed tells us. "[A]fter saying that, he added, 'But that's four more than most people, and three more than it takes to make a reputation.'"[25]

What were some of the common themes or threads that we can see woven into Lazarsfeld's work? In his essay analyzing Lazarsfeld's main "intuitions" or "contributions," Raymond Boudon discusses Lazarsfeld's continuing interest in the analysis of action and in his efforts to understand causes for action. He was willing to accept both scientific experimental and quasi-experimental methods (including qualitative analysis) as part of the toolkit of the empirical social researcher. In studying action, Lazarsfeld perceived that "a given situation normally gives birth to several types of response." This is what he found in his earliest work on unemployment in Marienthal – different responses to the loss of work (reinforcement or destruction of the nuclear family). For Larzarsfeld, the "story" lies in understanding why there were these different responses and under what conditions you could expect one or another response. Understanding the consequences of action required specification and sometimes that specification could come only from further qualitative analysis or through an inquiry into "deviant cases" as Lazarsfeld called those cases that seemed to run counter to one's

[24] ibid

[25] Quoted from John Shelton Reed, "A Research Assistant's Recollections." Presented at the Paul F. Lazarsfeld Centennial Celebration and Conference, Columbia University, September 29, 2001. Accessed from the web on May 9, 2004 at: http://www.angelfire.com/blues/jsreed/pfl.html.

predictions or theory. There was much that could be mined from close analysis of these "deviant cases," according to Lazarsfeld. His analysis of the multiple effects of certain causes, which we see in his earliest work, later finds more formal expression in his famous "elaboration scheme," (that examined two variable relationships in light of third variables that are either antecedent or intervening in time between the independent and dependent variable) and his interest in understanding "contextual effects." He wrestled with problems of causation, never entirely successfully, in trying to understand how attitudes influences behavior and what determined changes in attitudes.

Clearly, Lazarsfeld was not the first to do empirical social research, but as Boudon points out, Paul's work was oriented toward answering the "*why*" type questions rather than the descriptive *"what"* and *"how"* type questions. This was abundantly clear in his teaching. Most of Lazarsfeld's Ph.D. oral examinations at Columbia – at least the one's I know of – honed in on issues of causation, spuriousness, causes for change over time. It was not unusual for him to send students to the blackboard and ask them to construct tables and analyze them – particularly 16 fold turnover tables.

It was not, of course, without careful thought that Lazarsfeld titled one of his most important collections of papers "The Language of Social Research." What did he mean by "language?" For Paul methodology was not the same as technology, although the two were often confused. The tools of research, the technology of research represented in statistical methods used by data analysts, are the products of methodology. Methodology emerges from a set of general intellectual attitudes and orientations rather than from a set of rules or principles.[26] Boudon suggests that to Lazarsfeld, "Methodology does not aim to answer questions of the type "'What should be done?' It proposes instead to look at convincing studies in order to understand why they are convincing, why they appear to generate genuine new knowledge."[27]

In depth attention to the meaning of words and concepts and their explication was part of the job of the methodologist – as much as it would be the task for the literary critic. Lazarsfeld invoked Carl Hempel's formulation of "*explication"* in social research:

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[26] Raymond Boudon, "Paul F. Lazarsfeld: On Social Research and Its Language" Introduction, p. 12.
[27] Ibid. p. 13.

> Explication aims at reducing the limitations, ambiguities, and inconsistencies of ordinary usage of language by propounding a reinterpretation intended to *enhance the clarity and precision of their meanings* as well as their ability to function in the processes and theories with explanatory and predictive force.[28]

For Lazarsfeld, methodology was almost a literary form since it depended on in-depth analysis of language and translating language into more formal methods of data collection and analysis. He was determined to understand the language of variables and the relationships between concepts and indicators; he strove to produce a systematic underpinning for these relationships in the form of mathematics, yet he always was interested in what could not be done with mathematics and what required qualitative or historical inquiries. Titles of papers such as "The Art of Asking Why?" suggest the role of the methodologist was to clarify and organize, to formalize the language used to uncover the determinants of action. The meaning of words and concepts, such as "causation," and their prior treatment by philosophers like David Hume or Immanuel Kant and their further development in his own hands greatly interested Lazarsfeld. In a very different way, his long-time colleague Bob Merton was consumed with the history of language and ideas.[29] They had common ground to stand on in their interest in aspects of the history of ideas. The mechanism for expressing methodological innovation was through survey design and analysis and in the study of social change through the use of panel analysis. Both Lazarsfeld and Merton were very much aware that, as Charles Tilly put it, "…no one… can pursue empirical social research effectively without deploying and testing two interdependent bodies of theory simultaneously: a theory embodying explanations of the phenomenon under investigation, and another theory embodying explanations of the *evidence* concerning the phenomenon."[30]

Many commentators on Paul Lazarsfeld's work have debated whether or not he was a "fox" or a "hedgehog" or both. Bob Merton believed, as do I, that both he and

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[28] Carl Hempel, *Fundamentals of Concept Formation in Empirical Research.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952, as quoted in Paul F. Lazarsfeld, et. al. (eds.) *Continuities in the Language of Social Research*, New York: The Free Press, 1972, p. 2.

[29] Merton's interest in language and words is well known and can be seen in much of his work – in his development of concepts, such as "the self-fulfilling prophecy," and in his two books devoted to the history of words and phrases: *On the Shoulders of Giants: A Shandian Postscript*, and the posthumously published (with Elinor Barber), *The Travels and Adventures of SERENDIPTY*

[30] Charles Tilly, "Event Catalogs as Theories," *Sociological Theory 20:2 July 2002, p. 249*. This is the published version of the paper that Tilly presented at the Columbia University Centennial Celebration in 2001. Merton's interest in the sociology and history of science led him, of course, to consider the "theory" that lies in the uses of scientific instruments and methods.

Lazarsfeld were fundamentally interested in broad theoretical or methodological problems and their particular studies represented "strategic research sites" for the larger problems to be studied of action and explication or of unanticipated consequences or conflict and its attenuation. His papers, books, monographs, and Bureau reports covered a broad range of topical interests. Regardless of the subject addressed, however, there was always a methodological problem lingering close to the surface. It was not that Lazarsfeld had an abiding interest in mass communication or voting behavior. He used these studies to develop innovative methods. So, if *The Academic Mind* was about undermining civil liberties and academic freedom on American college campuses during the Cold War, it was also, for Paul, despite his substantive interest in attacks on free inquiry, an effort to develop methodological ways of understanding the influence of social networks, of contextual variables, and of group properties on the formation and change in attitudes and on action. His own assessment of his work focused on the methodological rather than the substantive contributions.

The influence of Paul Lazarsfeld can only be partially captured through a discussion of his published work, as significant as that has been in Europe and the United States. His influence can be found as well in his intellectual progeny – the substantial number of exceptionally gifted and creative students that he taught and who were his protégés. For about 15 years in the 1950s and 1960s, Lazarsfeld and Merton had an enormous impact on the field through the students that they had trained. Bob Merton, reflecting on his collaboration with Lazarsfeld, wrote: "This long retrospect finds me all the more persuaded that a most consequential result of Paul's and my working together clearly went beyond the few collaborations in print and, for that matter, beyond our cognitive influences on each other. Rather, it was of a different sort, one nicely summed up better than a century ago by the French mining engineer and self-taught sociologist, Frédéric Le Play: The most important thing to come out of the mine, he wrote, is the miner. In much the same spirit, it can be said that the most important thing to come out of Columbia sociology back then were the students."[31] Seymour Martin Lipset, who studied with both Paul and Bob, said in his 1982 Lazarsfeld Lecture at Columbia, "Paul Lazarsfeld … taught me almost everything I know about formulating research problems

[31] Robert K. Merton, "Working with Lazarsfeld", pp. 193-199.

and analyzing empirical data…."[32] I'm not sure that Paul would qualify for some as a role model, but for me and others his way of confronting a problem, of insisting that we start with an interesting question or idea rather than with an existing data set, and that we focus on how you could empirically gather data to test the idea within the context of theory, became a model for organizing an inquiry. He wanted his students to be able "to tell a story."[33] Indeed, for some of their students, it seemed ironic that Paul was always asking how our ideas fit with theory, while Bob was always enjoining us to focus on how we might empirically test our theoretical ideas.

Paul's intellectual heirs, to their credit, did not become mannerist painters in the style of Lazarsfeld, but became exceptionally creative and in many ways different from him.[34] Thus, Paul's pattern of intellectual influence can be traced to more recent generations of sociologists and other social scientists through their own students, as well as along other fault lines through the influence of Robert Merton, whose students were also influenced either directly or indirectly by Lazarsfeld. Tracing these anthropological linkages would surely take me far a field from our focus on Paul's work and the subjects of our conference. One thing is surely true. Although his work continues to have a direct influence on scholars and social scientists, the majority of his "discoveries," like those of any extraordinary scientist, is incorporated today into the work of contemporary social

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[32] S. M. Lipset, "The Academic Mind at the Top," p. 143.

[33] I can recall as a graduate student seeing Paul late at night in his Fayerweather office at Columbia with his loyal and able assistant Helen Houdeskova sitting in a chair taking dictation from Paul. This was before the age of computers: data were analyzed with the Bureau's famous "counter-sorter"; correlation coefficients were computed with adding machines; and drafts of papers had to be typed and retyped. Paul's method of dealing with such technological problems was to dictate drafts to Helen. On the night in question, Paul was composing a draft of a paper and held in his hands a set of three by five index cards on which he kept his notes. He would dictate to Helen while pacing back and forth incessantly in his office. He would discard each index card when he was finished with it and each would land on the floor in some disorganized fashion only to become furniture and new obstacles for Paul's pacing. I was never sure whether Paul ended the dictation, which might occur at any hour during the night, when he finished with the cards or when re ran out of room to move. I never could capture this style of composition. It is perhaps no wonder that almost all of these drafts were offered up to Merton for Bob's editorial assistance.

[34] Some of the following students were associated more with one of the two men than the other, but each studied in a serious way with both: Peter Blau, James S. Coleman, Lewis A Coser, Elihu Katz, Mirra Komarovsky, Seymour Martin Lipset, Peter H. Rossi, and Alice Rossi, all former presidents of the American Sociological Association, plus others such as Allen Barton, Stephen Cole, Rose Laub Coser, Alvin W. Gouldner, Anthony Obershall, David Sills, and John Shelton Reed, to only name a few more.

scientists without direct attribution – it has undergone the inevitable process of what Robert Merton called "obliteration through incorporation."

Even so, I should not minimize the large, continuing, direct impact that some of his work has in contemporary social science. Having been present at the birth of using citation analysis to measure scientific impact, I examined the rate of citation to Lazarsfeld's work over the past decade compared with the citations to a few leading members of the sociological community. I compared the number of citations to Paul's work in the years between 2000 and 2004 with the citations to the current president and president-elect of the American Sociological Association (ASA), as well as with two other leading sociologists who are members of the ASA Council, and with one chairman of a major department of sociology in the United States. Over the five-year period for which I collected data from the Science Citation Index, Paul had a total of 374 citations to his work[35]; the average number of citations received by the small comparative group of elites was 408 for the same time period, with a range in the group from 138 to 681 citations. If we examine the previous five-year period from 1995-99, Lazarsfeld had 444 citations to his work compared with an average of 275 for the comparative group of 5 stars in the field. In short, considering the half-life of citations, which in sociology is probably about a decade, and despite the fact that Paul died in 1976, he holds his own quite well even today against leading sociologists in the field. In fact, his most cited work continues to be *The People's Choice*, which was first published in 1944 with an expanded edition published in 1948. His work has diffused into many different fields and is used today as much by students in the discipline of "communications" and in social psychology as in sociology.

Inside the Bureau and the Department of Sociology: Personal Reflections

Many commentators have noted Paul's obsession with building social science research organizations to carry out empirical research. Through the creation of "his babies," the Columbia University Bureau of Applied Social Research (and before that, similar organizations in Vienna and at the University of Newark), Lazarsfeld produced

[35] These data were collected in May 2004 and the numbers would probably change since new citations are being noted during the rest of 2004. I want to thank Esther Shin, my assistant, for collecting these data.

the prototype of the university-based social research organization, a prototype that has been the model for many other research centers, both in the United States and abroad.[36,37]

The Bureau was the prototype, but even the Bureau, which offered on-site training for graduate and post-doctoral students, was not in itself a school of empirical research that would train social scientists and grant them degrees in empirical research and methods. Lazarsfeld was attempting to reshape the way knowledge would be generated from within the social sciences. The pattern that he envisioned, which ran quite counter to Merton's preferred work style, was one where collaborative projects involving senior colleagues, graduate students and technical staff would become the basic unit of creation – much closer to the way laboratory science generates knowledge than was the case in the social sciences of his day. Lazarsfeld's impulse, as I've noted, was to collaborate. In fact, a high proportion of his published and unpublished work was the result of collaborations. At a time when women were rarely found among the professoriate (although they could be found in substantial numbers among sociology graduate students), Paul had many women collaborators who worked at the Bureau and were among his coauthors.[38]

The Department of Sociology at Columbia, with its satellite Bureau of Applied Social Research, was a truly remarkable place during that three-decade period from the 1940 through 1970. Its extraordinary quality was not limited to Merton and Lazarsfeld. It attracted a distinguished group of faculty (many of whom eventually populated the leading departments of American sociology for decades) and for the quality of students who studied there.[39]

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[36] When Lazarsfeld came to the United States, the only social research organization that was at all comparable and that predated the Bureau was the Institute for Research in Social Science, founded by Howard Odum in 1924 at the University of North Carolina

[37] Lazarsfeld was also instrumental in obtaining Ford Foundation's financial support to establish the renowned Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences in 1954, even if, after the fact, he thought the Center idea was "a travesty" – an unfortunate deviation from his original idea for a professional school for advanced social research training.

[38] Among other women collaborators were Marie Jahoda, Herta Herzog, Marjorie Fiske, Hazel Gaudet, and Patricia Kendall.

[39] The Department had an ethos that placed great value on original ideas – whether theoretical or methodological. It was a difficult place in which to work because the standards were set at a high level and there was a sense of some students being among "the chosen" and others who were not. It was infused with tremendous intellectual energy that was infectious to many of us. There

As many exceptional faculty members as there were in the department during those years, the intellectual core of the Department was unquestionably dominated by the presence of Lazarsfeld and Merton.[40] Although I did not enter this drama until 1964, there was excitement in the department about legitimating the field of sociology and demonstrating that with the framework of constructing and elaborating "theories of the middle range" that sociological studies could produce results of high theoretical and empirical quality that would achieve acclaim, and would complement the best developments in economics, anthropology, political science, social psychology, and history. Students were taught to give their empirical work a narrative shape that was interesting, and with a form not entirely unfamiliar to lovers of mysteries (of which Merton and Lazarsfeld were two), where the development of the plot and the interpretation would be structured to unfold before the observer or reader of the paper and where there was, in fact, high value placed on producing surprising, unexpected, or counterintuitive results that would come often by trying to invert or change the angle of vision on a problem. Little emphasis was placed on statistical tests of significance or statistical models, which led appropriately to substantial criticism of this school of work. Nor was much of Lazarsfeld's earlier work deeply concerned with "sociological variables." Much of survey research had a distinctly individualistic and even social psychological bent to it – mirroring Lazarsfeld's own training. Much of this way of "doing sociology" was taught through example or as part of "apprenticeships" rather than either by formula or direct instruction – and it could best be seen as exemplified in the style exhibited (but not easily reproduced) in the papers by Lazarsfeld and by Merton.

The Lazarsfeld and Merton famous "collaboration" for 35 years was, in fact, a curious one. There can be no doubt from their collective testimony that each influenced the other enormously, but that mutual influence or effect cannot be seen in their

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were different intellectual networks and subcultures within the Department and there were as always political and other forms of social conflict. There was an implicit hierarchy among the faculty and among the students and there was a sense of competition for position. But the overwhelming majority of students felt that they were being well trained by the faculty who were truly at the cutting-edge of the discipline.

[40] Some members present in the Department during these years were, among others, Herbert Hyman, Robert Lynd, Robert MacIver, Bernard Barber, William J. Goode, Allen Barton, C. Wright Mills, Sigmund Diamond, Amitai Etzioni, Immanuel Wallerstein, Daniel Bell, Theordore Caplow, Juan Linz, Kingsley Davis, Myra Komarovsky, Seymour Martin Lipset, Peter Blau, Morris Zelditch, and Harriet Zuckerman

collaboration on formal papers or books. Their total collaborative output was 6 papers. None of these six papers would be included among the seminal works of either scholar, and only two collaborative efforts, by my reckoning, can be seen as significant pieces: the paper "Friendship as a Social Process" that they coauthored in a *Festschrift* for Robert MacIver; and their co-edited volume *Continuities in Social Research: Studies in the Scope and Method of "The American Soldier."* Even the paper on friendship as a social process has an unusual structure. It was really two essays, one by Merton on sociological propositions about friendship patterns in two small communities, and the second by Lazarsfeld, in which he tries to formalize these propositions in order to sharpen the focus of analysis of different patterns of behavior. The essay ends with a 10 page "Epilogue" by Merton that he describes as an effort by "the guinea pig who was subjected to this experiment in continuity to report to the experimenter, and to other observers, what benefits, if any, have been gained from the harrowing experience."[41] Merton, who was always careful with words, suggests that this was a curious form of collaboration, almost two separate essays within a single paper. The result is an extremely interesting paper in which Lazarsfeld uses his famous 16-fold turnover table for the purposes of specifying the concepts, mapping sequences, and the various effects over time of ideas put forward in the Merton piece of the essay.

At the end of the day, Merton and Lazarsfeld provided students with an exceptionally rich environment where the two giants complemented each other in several ways. The most obvious was the emphasis on theory or methods within the overall framework of middle range theorizing and hypothesis testing. But the other dimensions were of equal importance. We could see two totally different styles of research lead to extraordinary results. In Merton, we found the most influential proponent of structural-functional analysis (in its "modern form") that was interested in describing patterns of behavior and examining both the positive and negative consequences of these patterns, as well as the unanticipated consequences of these patterns of behavior – and the concern with mechanisms that sustained the prevailing pattern in a state of conflict or stasis. We saw a great lecturer who could pull off magic in the classroom, and who was the most careful and precise editor of a student's

[41] Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton, "Friendship as a Social Process: A substantive and methodological analysis." In Morroe Berger, Theodore Abel, and Charles Page, (eds). *Freedom and Control in Modern Society,* New York: Van Nostrand, pp. 18-66, quoted at p. 56.

manuscript. In Lazarsfeld, we found someone who was principally interested in studying action and the causal nature of relationships, who would push students to move from fuzzy ideas to precise conceptualization and measurement, who was far more at home in a seminar room in more casual conversation than in the lecture hall, who believed in the collaborative enterprise, and who would never lose sight of "the story to be told," or the idea to be tested. Both moved from problem to measurement and then back to the problem. While both appreciated technology, they were never driven by it. The combination was a rare one for those who could study with both.

The students felt part of a mission that was led by people with exceptional intellects, who were rigorous and extremely demanding – demanding to the point where many of the brightest dropped out of the graduate program because of their incorrect belief that they could not meet the standards set by their mentors. Nonetheless, the ambiance made us proud to be sociologists at a time when the discipline was often the subject of some scorn in the pages of magazines like *The New Yorker* for its excessive use of jargon and the poor writing by its practitioners. Much of the empirical work was done at the Bureau. It was carried out almost invariably on a shoestring in a dingy, mildew smelling physical environment, where graduate students, researchers, and professors worked into all hours of the night. The University did little to support the Bureau. As poor as the physical environment was, however, there was a sense of richness in the exploration of ideas together as part of a community.

Lest I demonstrate conclusively that I have moved from youth through middle age into the terminal category of "how well you look," and being unwilling to lapse further into nostalgia or even worse sentimentality, let me conclude with an anecdote. Late in his career when Paul was to receive an honorary degree from, I believe, the University of Chicago he met Anna Freud who was also being honored that day. She asked Paul: "Are you the little Paulie Lazarsfeld I used to know in Vienna?" Acknowledging that he was the very same, Freud said, "Well, we have come a long way, haven't we?"[42]

I am delighted to be here celebrating the work of Paul Lazarsfeld. I am sure it would also have delighted Paul to hear the papers over the next two days – not so much

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[42] This anecdote was told to John S. Reed by Lazarsfeld and is reported in John Shelton Reed, "A Research Assistant's Recollections."

because of what it would tell him about the impact of his own work, but more appropriately on the new directions in the social sciences that have been built on his ideas.

Thank you.

May 29, 2004 draft

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