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# "Perhaps we can hit upon some medium of course": Rockefeller philanthropy, economic research, and the structure of social science--1911-1946

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“Perhaps we can hit upon some medium of course”:  
Rockefeller philanthropy, economic research,  
and the structure of social science–1911-1946

by

David Lee Seim

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
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Ames, Iowa

2007

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Carnegie Corporation	CC
Committee on National Income	CNI
Economic Foundation	EF
General Education Board	GEB
Institute for Government Research	IGR
Institute of Economics	IE
International Education Board	IEB
International Health Board	IHB
Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial	Memorial
National Bureau of Economic Research	NBER
National Research Council	NRC
Oriental Education Commission	OEC
Rockefeller Archives Center	RAC
Rockefeller Foundation	Foundation
Social Science Research Council	SSRC

## ABSTRACT

In January 1957, Merle Curti published “The History of American Philanthropy as a Field of Research.” Curti believed the time was right for historians to ask: “how important has relatively disinterested benevolence been in giving expression to, and in promoting at home and abroad, a major American value—human welfare?” Historians have done much research over fifty years to answer Curti’s question. Some historians argue that philanthropic benevolence has been relatively unbiased when supporting research to solve social and economic problems; these historians interpret philanthropic support of social research as generally “compatible” with unbiased selection of research problems and methods. Other historians believe philanthropic financial assistance has been incompatible with the ideal of neutral and detached social research, that is, that philanthropic support is often in “conflict” with this ideal. During the first half of the twentieth century, the premier philanthropic organizations supporting social research to lift the human prospect were the Rockefeller Foundation and the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial. In this dissertation, I work with published literature and archival materials to show that Rockefeller philanthropies were important between 1911 and 1946 in promoting an improved human condition in the United States and around the world. I respond to previous historians with my thesis that neither the “compatibility” nor “conflict” explanations best describe the relationship between Rockefeller philanthropy and social science. The best description is what some recent historians describe as a “complexity” relationship.



## CHAPTER 1. ROCKEFELLER PHILANTHROPY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

### 1.1 Introduction

During the first half of the twentieth century, Rockefeller philanthropy found ways to support social science without getting in trouble. I study this accomplishment over the period from 1911 to 1946. The year 1911 was when the United States Supreme Court decided *United States of America v. Standard Oil Corporation*, while 1946 was when the U.S. Congress passed the “Full Employment Act.” In the *Standard Oil* decision, basic economic logic was used to argue that a new corporate structure called a “trust” was an excessive restraint on free market competition. Thirty-five years later, economic policy advisors used sophisticated, empirical science to argue that the federal government could use policy tools to achieve full labor employment. Social science of quite differing levels of maturity was at the basis of these two government decisions. In this dissertation, we go through this thirty-five-year period and discover how economics and other social sciences changed from abstract argument to rigorous discovery of knowledge.

### 1.2 Rockefeller philanthropy and my thesis

In 1911 the U.S. Supreme Court ordered the break-up of John D. Rockefeller’s Standard Oil Corporation. The American public took the news as confirming what they already knew: Rockefeller business practices were criminal. Ida Tarbell had, after all, exposed Rockefeller activities in her serialized “History of the Standard Oil Company,” published in *McClure’s* between 1902 and 1905. Over these same years, various media

pieces reported negatively on operations at a “Sociological Department” at the Rockefeller’s mining company in Colorado. President Theodore Roosevelt was willing to label Rockefeller himself as an “evil” and “sinister” man.<sup>1</sup>

But also by 1911, John D. Rockefeller was in the business of donating large sums of money to charity concerns. Rockefeller established his first philanthropic organization in 1901 as the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, and by 1911 he was making arrangements to create an umbrella organization to be called the “Rockefeller Foundation.” The Rockefeller Foundation indeed got its legal charter in 1913 and quickly became one of the most powerful philanthropies of all time.<sup>2</sup>

Historians, since at least the 1950s, have asked the question: For what reasons did the Rockefellers donate great sums of money? Was the primary reason pure disinterested benevolence, or did the Rockefellers have a different objective? Was there some feeling of guilt that motivated Rockefeller philanthropic gifts? Were Rockefeller donation practices in some sense to launder ill-gotten gains? Were the Rockefellers’ massive donations parts of a strategic design to support the long-term success of capitalism? Perhaps Rockefeller gifts somehow really stemmed from a genuine philanthropic spirit? These are the kinds of

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<sup>1</sup> Ida Tarbell interviewed Standard Oil’s customers, competitors, business partners, and company officials. She provided some response to Rockefeller’s 1899 congressional testimony, when it seemed to many observers that nothing could be extracted from Rockefeller in the way of useful information; see “Testimony of John D. Rockefeller,” U.S. Industrial Commission, Preliminary Report on Trusts and Industrial Combinations, 56<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session (December 30, 1899), Document No. 476, Part 1, 794-97. Tarbell’s conclusion was that Rockefeller used bribery, espionage, and played with “loaded dice.” Tarbell’s view was that the Rockefellers’ financial fortune came from exploitation of workers and consumers; see Robert C. Kochersberger, Jr., “Introduction,” in Robert C. Kochersberger, Jr., ed., *More than a Muckraker: Ida Tarbell’s Lifetime in Journalism*, xxiv-xxv, 66-86. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994). For information on the “Sociological Department” see Frank J. Weed, “The Sociological Department at the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, 1901 to 1907: Scientific Paternalism and Industrial Control,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 41 (2005): 269-84. For Roosevelt’s opinion of Rockefeller see Ron Chernow, *Titan: The Life of John D. Rockefeller* (New York: Random House, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> A basic introduction to the history of Rockefeller philanthropy has already been published, and shall be cited here; Gerald Jonas, *The Circuit Riders: Rockefeller Money and the Rise of Modern Science* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989).

questions historians have asked since at least 1957, when historian Merle Curti spoke programmatically to historians and asked, “who can doubt that the character and dimensions of American civilization may be illuminated by sustained inquiries into American experience in giving?” My own belief is that John D. Rockefeller and his son John D. Rockefeller Jr. donated money because they held a certain kind of model of the appropriate roles of business leaders, politicians, non-profit leaders (including philanthropists), and scientists and technocrats in capitalist society.<sup>3</sup>

Historians have long debated whether the Rockefellers had ulterior motives when deciding to support social research. Some historians argue that the Rockefellers seem to have given money in an attempt to direct social research in ways that would help Rockefeller business interests. Other historians declare the Rockefellers did not try to do this. Not much middle ground has been tried, perhaps because there has been no firm principle on which to base such inquiry. My thesis is that such middle ground does exist, and that what the Rockefellers tried to accomplish was to remedy an essential missing piece in the modern business-politics-society model: that there were not yet enough well-trained scientists to play a needed role of detached experts responsible to study whatever social problems might arise from all participants in capitalism acting in good faith.

### 1.3 The initial idea for Rockefeller support of social research

John D. Rockefeller had a family. By 1911, Rockefeller’s son was firmly joined in the project to use the family’s financial fortune for philanthropic purposes. Rockefeller Jr.

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<sup>3</sup> Merle Curti, “The History of American Philanthropy as a Field of Research,” *American Historical Review* 62 (January 1957): 352-63, 363.

established himself through eight years' experience leading operation of the Rockefeller family's General Education Board (created 1902), a philanthropic branch designed primarily to allocate funds to promote better education, especially in the American South. In 1911 Rockefeller Jr. opened the question whether to use Rockefeller money to support social science, when he created his own philanthropy that he initially called the "Committee," but which was soon named the "Bureau of Social Hygiene." However within a couple years Rockefeller Jr. decided it was not the right time to get involved in supporting social research; his new philanthropy should focus instead on assisting education programs. But what Rockefeller Jr. really established between 1911 and 1913 was that he could make his own philanthropic decisions. Rockefeller Jr.'s benefactor commitment was welcomed by his father, and also approving of Rockefeller Jr.'s preferred life dedication was Frederick T. Gates, long-time assistant to Rockefeller. Once the Rockefeller Foundation was legally established, Rockefeller handed the rein to his son, with Gates staying on as an advisor.<sup>4</sup>

Rockefeller Jr.'s decision to create a Bureau of Social Hygiene began a long-running project at the Rockefeller philanthropies to regularly evaluate how active Rockefeller giving should be in supporting social research to lift human welfare, and perhaps even promote specific directions of social change. Any decisions whether to get involved in supporting social research would be ultimately up to Rockefeller Jr. to make. All evidence suggests that Rockefeller Jr. had a deep concern about the condition of society. In fact, another decision Rockefeller Jr. made in 1911 was to assign his major business duties to a roster of

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<sup>4</sup> Raymond B. Fosdick, *Adventure in Giving: The Story of the General Education Board* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962): 3-12; Raymond B. Fosdick, *John D. Rockefeller, Jr.: A Portrait*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1956): 116-120.

professional managers, which was the final decision he believed was required to begin applying Rockefeller wealth to “social purposes.”<sup>5</sup>

The Rockefeller Foundation was created at a time when American society was widely recognized as riddled with deep problems of poverty, alcoholism, race conflict, crime epidemics, labor violence, and the like. Societal leaders were taking on a reformist mindset. Initially they called for reform through a mix of ameliorative charities, but they soon recognized the need to add scientific research aimed at social control. Some of the nation’s wealthiest industrialist families – families such as the Carnegies, Rockefellers, and Sages – were especially concerned about the viable future of capitalism. All three of these families got interested in becoming philanthropists. The so-called “Progressive” period was the time when philanthropic activity made a shift away from remedial, patch-work strategies to focus on addressing fundamental causes of social problems. All three leading industrialist families developed a hope that modern scientific methods could provide the knowledge necessary for real and genuine reform. The Rockefellers, in particular, began a process that would become a long-running experiment to discover how philanthropic funds might be used to support scientific social research to help make the world a better, healthier and happier place.<sup>6</sup>

#### 1.4 Periods of Rockefeller support of social science

<sup>5</sup> Fosdick, *John D. Rockefeller, Jr.*, 142. For general information about research on poverty during the early-twentieth century see Alice O’Conner, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Since about the 1950s, numerous books and articles have been written about the influence of philanthropic benevolence on human welfare during the twentieth century. The most complete survey study of Rockefeller philanthropy, in particular, is Gerald Jonas, *The Circuit Riders: Rockefeller Money and the Rise of Modern Science* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989). Many other relevant publications are cited throughout this dissertation.

Four distinct periods are identifiable in the Rockefeller experiment to support economics and related social research. During the 1910s, persons at the Rockefeller Foundation interacted with a small number of economists to debate whether to establish a division at the Foundation that would do economic research and dispense economic ideas. The Foundation decided not to do this. For about a three-year period, however, they tried a small-scale version of such a research division.<sup>7</sup>

Between 1918 and 1922, a new branch of Rockefeller philanthropy known as the “Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial” began supporting welfare agencies specializing in assisting mothers and children. In 1922 and 1923, the Memorial moved to begin supporting scientific social research for the reason that many kinds of problems impacting mothers and children stemmed from broader economic and social causes. For about eight years the Memorial supported social research by various means: fellowships for university researchers; grants for specific projects done by teams of university researchers; block grants to support large clusters of projects pursued by major academic research centers; an independent endowment for a “Social Science Research Council” responsible for dispensing money to research projects; and, support of a small number of independent economic research institutes led by trusted economists who were free to pick their preferred research topics. The period between 1922 and 1929 was a trial-and-error phase designed to determine how much success could be attained by using these methods to support social research.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Discussions of this episode include David Grossman, “American Foundations and the Support of Economic Research, 1913-29,” *Minerva* 20, 1-2 (Spring-Summer 1982): 59-82; and Soma Hewa, “Toward the Well-Being of Mankind: Rockefeller Philanthropy and the Problem of Economic Research,” *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 18, 11/12 (1998): 85-129.

<sup>8</sup> Up to the present time the most thorough study of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial remains Martin Bulmer and Jean Bulmer, “Philanthropy and Social Science in the 1920s: Beardsley Ruml and the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, 1922-29,” *Minerva* 19, 3 (Autumn 1981): 347-407.

The Memorial's social science program ended in early 1929 and was absorbed into a new Division of Social Science at the Rockefeller Foundation. Methods of supporting economics and related social research turned more self-initiated, as the Foundation responded to Depression-era conditions which suggested that radical change might be needed. Perhaps society even gave implicit permission for the Foundation – one of few deep pockets remaining in society – to step forward and direct economic and social change. More directive attention went to identifying specific economic research projects, and independent economic research institutes were created, mostly in Europe. Efforts were made to turn university-based research centers more in the direction of economic research as well.<sup>9</sup>

Late in the 1930s and into the period of the Second World War, another phase unfolded as what was called the “new” social science program at the Division of Social Science turned its focus toward specific research fields. The Rockefeller Foundation phased out the project to develop broad, fundamental social science, as a conclusion was reached that whatever had been accomplished along such lines was perhaps the best that could be expected at that time.<sup>10</sup>

### 1.5 Previous research and my thesis

A question to be asked of all four periods is whether persons in power at the Foundation and the Memorial attempted to promote preferred research agendas and even preferred policy implementations. In other words, were financial awards in conflict with the

<sup>9</sup> The best study to date of this period of Rockefeller support of economic research is Earlene Craver, “Patronage and the Directions of Research in Economics: The Rockefeller Foundation in Europe, 1924-1938,” *Minerva* 24, 2-3 (Summer-Autumn 1986): 204-22.

<sup>10</sup> This shift, taking place between about 1938 and 1946, has not really been explored in detail yet. One study focusing on European attention during this period is Darwin H. Stapleton, “Joseph Willits and the Rockefeller's European Programme in the Social Sciences,” *Minerva* 41 (2003): 101-114.

potential for truly objective and unbiased social research? Or, did persons responsible for awarding grants for social research succeed at producing a sufficiently diverse range of projects and research results as to neutralize any danger of ideological, cultural, economic, or political bias? I will argue that many important questions can be asked in response to these “conflict” and “compatibility” positions. Leaders at the Rockefeller philanthropies responsible for supporting social research did have their biases; yet they also created principles and mechanisms to successfully neutralize these biases. We cannot really understand the true nature of potential bias, or the principles and mechanisms to neutralize such bias, until we gather enough cases of grant proposals and awards to allow our observation of complex dynamics within and between grant decisions. A restatement of my thesis, then, is that a particular idea overrode the question of whether Rockefeller philanthropy did or did not attempt to direct social research toward preferred research problems and policy solutions.

To further communicate my thesis, I would like to explain a new concept used by historians – especially historians of religion & natural science – that can succeed in the history of philanthropy & social science: the so-called “complexity” thesis. Historians of science and religion have developed a fine historiography to hash out the development of the “conflict,” “compatibility,” and “complexity” arguments in their discipline. Most prevalent of these arguments has been the conflict view, which holds that science conflicts with religion in the sense that science and religion are two systems of ideas each trying to hold their boundaries, and occasionally expanding to interact with each other (for example when religious leaders approve or disapprove of specific scientific ideas, or when leaders in science approve or disapprove of religious explanations). By the early-twentieth century, a series of



important works supported the “conflict view” that there was “warfare” between science and religion.<sup>11</sup>

By the 1950s, historians responded with a second possible position: that although they are different systems of ideas, science and religion are not necessarily separate systems of explanation, and are actually “compatible” with each other. New notions were introduced that religious ideas can be studied as historical evidence, and that new scientific worldviews can help provide clearer interpretations of established religious ideas. Yet both the “conflict” and “compatibility” interpretations still included an idea that religious institutions have a choice whether to attempt to control the use of new scientific understanding. Historians of science and religion introduced a compromise position by the 1980s and 1990s: that in virtually every major episode in the history of science and religion, scientific ideas and religious ideas are actually a single combined system. A kind of test was even enacted, of whether an historian can take a scientific idea that eventually proved odd and mistaken, and somehow come to a sympathetic account of how the idea could have been held. This latter group of historians – proponents of the “complexity” thesis – emphasizes that to reach full understanding of earlier scientific ideas requires detailed analysis of specific case studies – an analysis which uncovers evidence from actual thoughts, words, and actions at an earlier time.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Two introductions to this debate are Ronald L. Numbers, “Science and Religion,” *Osiris* 1 (1985): 59-80; David B. Wilson, “The Historiography of Science and Religion,” in Gary B. Ferngren, et al., eds., *The History of Science and Religion in the Western Tradition* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000): 3-11.

<sup>12</sup> A study representing the complexity approach is John Hedley Brooke, *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). A familiar case study in the history of science and religion is the Genesis account of six days of divine creation and the question whether this account fits with scientific understanding of billions of years of natural creation. To some people the two creation descriptions are irreconcilably in conflict, while to others the two descriptions can be interpreted as compatible. To other persons still, the real issue is that religious ideas and scientific ideas are not separate systems of ideas but are each capable of affecting each other and changing with each other, so that neither body of ideas is fixed. Other

The main point about this “complexity” idea within the history of religion and natural science is that certain attributes of the move toward this view are recognizable in the history of philanthropy and social science. Today’s historians studying the “progressive” era in U.S. history have made great strides toward understanding what happened during the transition from ameliorative charity to support of fundamental social research. Historians studying societal effects of philanthropy begin in the period around 1900 to 1910, and they ask how the great philanthropies really came to be? Why did a few incredibly wealthy families create foundations, and what were goals did they have for these foundations? Merle Curti directed historians in 1957 when he asked, “how important has relatively disinterested benevolence been in giving expression to, and in promoting at home and abroad, a major American value—human welfare?”<sup>13</sup>

In 1981, historians of American philanthropy, Barry Karl and Stanley Katz, summarized one strain of thought by saying that “Foundations came into existence because American society was unable to maintain a social order which corresponded to its passionately held localist ideals.” Karl and Katz argued that creators of the great foundations wanted to help define a new social order and were willing to support social research to do this. Major foundations emerged at a time of uncertainty among the nation’s ruling elite about how to solve serious problems accompanying the industrialization process. To Karl and Katz, the worry among philanthropists at the beginning of the twentieth century was that

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well-known case studies are whether the Bible allows that a Copernican earth can orbit the sun, whether Newtonian gravitation can allow a God to come along from time to time and reset a destabilized arrangement of planets and stars, whether Darwinian evolution by natural selection can allow any place for divine guidance of the direction of evolution, and whether quantum mechanics can allow a God that “throw’s dice.” Recent scholarship tends to argue there are few if any major case studies fitting solely the “conflict” or “compatibility” positions; i.e., that what generally is at play is a complex combination of maturing religious ideas and changing scientific findings, such that one side or the other in the supposed ‘warfare’ between religion and science is never really reacting to a fixed and stationary other.

<sup>13</sup> Curti, “The History of American Philanthropy as a Field of Research,” 352.

political reform activities would soon create a business climate devoid of opportunities for business success. Big and powerful federal government therefore should be avoided, especially if the nation's business leaders could accomplish the correction themselves. The great foundations were created to direct scientifically-founded reform activities so that the public would never reach a point of crying for government to lead the reform. Such an argument represents one possible explanation for the rise of the great foundations; it is a "conflict" explanation.<sup>14</sup>

In another series of writings through the 1970s and into the 1980s, historian of progressivism Ellis Hawley studied the origin of the great foundations from an alternative framework of a "managed society." In various writings, Hawley explored a "search for order" that took place within an anti-statist American political mindset between the 1900s and 1920s. The rise of a "technocratic" elite in American society resulted in a new kind of state-society relationship that corresponded with a decline of popular democracy and public participation in policy formation. Hawley's view has been summarized recently by Meg Jacobs: "As philanthropic organizations made the transition from agents of ameliorative relief to centers of social-scientific investigation, they helped to spawn the birth of a new technocratic elite culture." Newly trained communities of scientific and technology experts participated in designing an administrative state, which was a new kind of state far removed from everyday politics. The main idea to Hawley's line of explanation would be that philanthropic foundations arose because of an opportunity to support the work of scientific experts who could truly do good things to help government guide society. Scientists and

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<sup>14</sup> Barry D. Karl and Stanley N. Katz, "The American Private Philanthropic Foundation and the Public Sphere, 1890-1930," *Minerva* 19 (Summer 1981): 236-270.

technocrats would take over leadership of economy and the state. These scientists and technocrats also needed to show that capitalism worked. Here, then, was a second possible reason for the origin of America's great foundations: to financially support the science and technology experts who had good motives and would accurately recognize that capitalist society works. This is a "compatibility" explanation.<sup>15</sup>

Two alternative explanations have thus been developed. Persons such as Karl and Katz and their followers on the one hand, and persons such as Hawley and his adherents on the other, have developed two ways to see that the period from the 1900s to the 1920s was an experimental time for finding new institutional arrangements in a society increasingly managed by scientists and technocrats. There was also third possibility for the relationship between business, government, and society – which was the view the Rockefellers adhered to. For our purposes, it is this third possible relationship between business, government and society which represents the framework for a "complexity" explanation in the history of philanthropy and social science.

Recent historians developing positions between the extremes of "conflict" and "compatibility" have recognized that the founders and leaders of America's great philanthropies were, fundamentally, caring people. Yet these founders and leaders were also people who held specific models of what kinds of duties successful business leaders had as

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<sup>15</sup> See Ellis Hawley, "Herbert Hoover, the Commerce Secretariat, and the Vision of an 'Associative State,' 1921-1928," *Journal of American History* 61 (1974): 116-40; Hawley, *The Great War and the Search for a Modern Order, 1917-1933* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979). Supporting Hawley's view are such historians of American philanthropy as Guy Alchon and Meg Jacobs: Guy Alchon, *The Invisible Hand of Planning: Capitalism, Social Science and the State in the 1920s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985): 118-20; Alchon, "Mary Van Kleeck and Socio-Economic Planning," *Journal of Policy History* 3, 1 (1991): 1-23; Meg Jacobs, "Constructing a New Political Economy: Philanthropy, Institution-Building, and Consumer Capitalism in the Early Twentieth Century," in Ellen Condliffe Lagemann, ed., *Philanthropic Foundations: New Scholarship, New Possibilities* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999): 101-18, esp. 101.

reform leaders as well. A couple middle-position arguments have recently been tried, yet these arguments lack any middle position founded on a fundamental principle such as the organizing frameworks of “power interests” (which supports the conflict view) and “scientific expertise” (which supports the compatibility view).<sup>16</sup>

The conflict-compatibility debate about Rockefeller philanthropy and its impact on social research has been pushed forward by Donald Fisher and Martin Bulmer. Fisher allies himself more with the Karl-Katz explanation, whereas Bulmer defends a stance fitting more with Hawley’s perspective. Fisher thus tends to be highly critical, interpreting the use of social science grants by Rockefeller philanthropy as manipulative, and even as captured by capitalist goals. Fisher’s position is that unfettered scientific inquiry was incompatible with Rockefeller funding of it. Bulmer’s opposite view is that Rockefeller philanthropy has been quite compatible with scientific freedom, and that leaders at Rockefeller philanthropy tried hard to ensure that scientific freedom was maintained. Fisher and Bulmer thus adopt polar positions that create space for the kind of challenging case study needed to clarify the reality of a middle position. Filling this intermediate ground will be exciting work.

The development of the complexity model works best for major case studies possessing rich historical detail. When it comes to philanthropy and social science, it seems no case study provides more evidence than Rockefeller philanthropy. The kind of complex interplay now recognized in major revolutions in natural science may also hold true for the relationship between Rockefeller philanthropy and social research – meaning that a similar

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<sup>16</sup> Examples of the idea that some kind of a middle position may be best in the end include Salma Ahmad, “American Foundations and the Development of Social Sciences between the Wars: Comment on the Debate between Martin Bulmer and Donald Fisher,” *Sociology* 25, 3 (August 1991): 511-20; Theresa Richardson and Donald Fisher, “Introduction: The Social Sciences and Their Philanthropic Mentors,” in Theresa Richardson and Donald Fisher, eds., *The Development of the Social Sciences in the United States and Canada: The Role of Philanthropy* (Stamford, CN: Ablex Publishing Co., 1999): 3-21.

analytical framework used by historians of religion and natural science can apply to accumulated evidence in the history of philanthropy and social science. The question faced by Rockefeller philanthropists was how much control to attempt to exert over scientific methods and discoveries. Early leaders of Rockefeller philanthropy knew they were part of a societal experiment to discover the best arrangement of modern social institutions: What would be the best mix of public, profit, non-profit, and professional/expert institutions to foster a society best allowing for progress by means of competitive business enterprise? As those persons who endowed and oversaw Rockefeller philanthropy favored some kind of long-term capitalist system, the question – emphasized again – was this: Was Rockefeller support of social research disinterested with respect to specific class interests?

I aim to discover what impacts Rockefeller philanthropy had on social research. I study whether leaders of Rockefeller philanthropy pursued personal goals and ideologies through their grant decisions. I answer that, for the most part, they did not. I determine what these leaders did was try to work out a new model of institutional arrangements in a society in which a philanthropic duty was to decide how active philanthropists needed to be in supporting social research. The two realms of philanthropy and social research were not really separate after all, partly because discovery of successful philanthropic strategy was, itself, a kind of research project. The two realms also were not separate because in the modern business-government-society model, there was a missing piece, a fourth component that was to be the detached and objective “social research establishment.” The new model needed to be a business-government-society-science model, and the structure of social science within this model needed to be developed without business, government, or society

gaining primary control over the content of scientific social research. Creation of such structure was what persons at Rockefeller philanthropy worked to accomplish.

## CHAPTER 2. EARLY APPROACHES TO PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT OF SOCIAL RESEARCH–1902-14

### 2.1 Introduction

America’s first great philanthropic foundations – the Carnegie Institution, the Russell Sage Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation – were established between 1900 and 1913. Early in their development, all three foundations looked for ways to support social research. The difficult issue was how to support research that might reach conclusions about particular social and economic policies that the American public should prefer. The organization most carefully evaluating potential problems associated with supporting social and economic research was the Rockefeller Foundation.

### 2.2 Early foundation support of “scientific” social research–1902-15

Early in the twentieth century, a handful of social research projects were financially supported by major philanthropies. These applications of foundation funds tended to be limited in scope and executed under the leadership of a single social scientist.<sup>17</sup>

Andrew Carnegie established the Carnegie Institution of Washington in 1900. Motivated by a unique blend of philanthropic philosophy with social Darwinism, an early idea at the Carnegie Institution was to identify particular social groups in suffering who truly merited financial charity. Two years after its founding the Carnegie Institution established a division of economics and sociology, appointing Carroll D. Wright, an established industrial economist, as director. Wright’s responsibility was to adhere to the Carnegie Institution’s

<sup>17</sup> Early recognition of the “great American foundations” is in Leonard P. Ayres, *Seven Great Foundations* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1911).



now-formalized mission: “to encourage, in the broadest and most liberal manner, investigation, research, and discovery, and the application of knowledge to the improvement of mankind.” Wright put together a team of researchers, some fifteen in number, to evaluate social and economic consequences of state-level social legislation. The one substantial project eventually completed by the division was a labor history. The division of economics and sociology at the Carnegie Institution never became more than a few economists working on separate parts of one project, as the division’s studies were mostly completed by 1909 (the year of Wright’s death). The Carnegie Institution closed its division of economics and sociology in 1917, and its multi-volume report, *History of Labor in the United States*, was published the following year.<sup>18</sup>

Social research was also supported by the Russell Sage Foundation (founded in 1907). Beginning in 1907, the Sage Foundation conducted research for municipalities interested in contracting research services. The Sage Foundation’s research strategy became an important part of what is known as the “social survey movement.” Social surveys, typically taking place in urban settings, were considered useful to help guide reform efforts. Researchers doing the surveys accumulated data on urban areas, most notably Springfield, Massachusetts, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania – the latter famously known as the “Pittsburgh Survey.” These two surveys had a positive impact on the development of social science, particularly through the work of sociologist Robert E. Park at the University of Chicago. The

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<sup>18</sup> Carnegie Institution, *History of Labor in the United States* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1918). See Nathan Reingold, “National Science Policy in a Private Foundation: The Carnegie Institution of Washington,” in Alexandra Oleson and John Voss, eds., *The Organization of Knowledge in Modern America, 1860-1920* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979): 190-223. For information on the completion of Wright’s project after his passing, see Malcolm Rutherford, “Wisconsin Institutionalism: John R. Commons and His Students,” *Labor History* 47, 2 (May 2006): 161-180.

Sage Foundation's survey studies contributed to the creation, in 1916, of a "Division of Industrial Studies."<sup>19</sup>

The Pittsburgh Survey, in particular, was conceived in 1906 and executed between 1907 and 1912. Done under the leadership of Paul Kellogg of the New York Charity Organization Society, the survey was the first one made of a major city. Kellogg directed several dozen researchers to try and somehow measure all conditions of life and labor in the Pittsburgh "district," which at the time was among the nation's most intensively industrialized regions. In addition to a large number of iron and steel factories included in the survey, also included was the town of Homestead, a nearby milling and textile center. Research for the Pittsburgh Survey produced six volumes of reports which came to symbolize the severity of urban industrial problems for society as a whole. The Pittsburgh Survey was primarily a record of problems, however, and not of proposed solutions.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> John M. Glenn et al., *The Russell Sage Foundation, 1907-1946* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1946); Michael Gordon, "The Social Survey Movement and Sociology in the United States," *Social Problems* 21 (Fall 1973): 284-298. The Sage Foundation supported the research of Mary Van Kleeck who by 1906 concluded that such problems as child labor and excessive daily work hours for women "could not be controlled by prosecuting one employer, but required a concerted effort to stimulate public opinion on the basis of facts secured from the workers themselves"; see Mary Van Kleeck, "Working Hours of Women in Factories," *Charities and the Commons* (October 16, 1906): 13-21. Van Kleeck started a "Committee on Women's Work," which officially was brought into the Sage Foundation in 1910 to investigate working conditions of New York City women. In 1916 the Sage Foundation connected Van Kleeck's committee and the social survey project in a "Division of Industrial Studies"; see Guy Alchon, "Mary Van Kleeck and Social-Economic Planning," *Journal of Policy History* 3, 1 (1991): 1-23.

<sup>20</sup> In addition to the seven volumes of data, the survey itself was published as Paul U. Kellogg, ed., *The Pittsburgh Survey* (New York: Charities Publication Committee, 1910). Other important studies in the social-survey movement were Manuel C. Elmer, *Technique of Social Surveys* (Lawrence, Kansas: World Co., 1917); Shelby M. Harrison, *Social Conditions in an American City* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1920). For useful histories of the Russell Sage Foundation, see David C. Hammack and Stanton Wheeler, *Social Science in the Making: Essay on the Russell Sage Foundation, 1907-1972* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1994); see also William J. Breen, "Foundations, Statistics, and State-Building: Leonard P. Ayres, The Russell Sage Foundation, and U.S. Government Statistics in the First World War," *Business History Review* 68 (1994): 451-82. For more information on the Pittsburgh Survey and its importance in the history of social science, see the collected essays in Maurine W. Greenwald and Margo Anderson, eds., *Pittsburgh Surveyed: Social Science and Social Reform in the Early Twentieth Century* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996).

At the Rockefeller philanthropies, John D. Rockefeller Jr. made a decision to get involved in supporting social research in 1910. The precipitating event was his being named chairman of a grand jury investigating the so-called “white slave traffic” in New York City. The grand jury hearings revealed that no such traffic existed, but that what really existed was much prostitution and police corruption. Recognition of the particular “social evil” of prostitution prompted Rockefeller Jr. to create his own philanthropy as the “Bureau of Social Hygiene,” established in 1911. The purpose of Rockefeller’s new bureau was to investigate problems of prostitution and associated issues of police work. Rockefeller Jr. hired a young New York attorney, Raymond B. Fosdick (formerly a student of Woodrow Wilson at Princeton University), to study European police handling of alcoholism, pauperism, and prostitution. Rockefeller also recruited Abraham Flexner to undertake a survey study of prostitution in major cities across Europe. The goal in combining Fosdick’s study and Flexner’s study was to learn what kinds of policies might be suited to the American situation. The Bureau of Social Hygiene had four founding trustees and worked with no permanent endowment, as instead each year Rockefeller Jr. provided the bureau with a yearly budget.<sup>21</sup>

In 1913, sociologist Havelock Ellis published an independent report on prostitution, pauperism, alcoholism, and the like. In *The Task of Social Hygiene*, Ellis defined social hygiene not in the usual connotation of treating specific situations one at a time, but as an idea to execute a purifying reorganization of all of society. In sweeping language he

<sup>21</sup> The four trustees were: Rockefeller Jr., Jerome Greene (advisor to the Rockefeller family), Starr Murphy (personal attorney to the Rockefeller family), and Paul Warburg (an economist friend of Rockefeller Jr.). See Jennifer Gunn, “A Few Good Men: The Rockefeller Approach to Population, 1911-1936,” in Theresa Richardson and Donald Fisher, eds., *The Development of the Social Sciences in the United States and Canada: The Role of Philanthropy* (Stamford, Conn.: Ablex Publishing Corp., 1999): 97-115, esp. 102-3; also Charles E. Harvey, “John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and the Social Sciences: An Introduction,” *Journal of the History of Sociology* 4, 3 (Fall 1981): 1-31, esp. 2-3, 11. Abraham Flexner’s report on medical education was financially supported primarily by the Carnegie Corporation and the Rockefeller Medical Institute; see Raymond B. Fosdick, *Chronicle of a Generation: An Autobiography* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958).

declared: “It is the control of reproduction of the race which renders possible the new conception of Social Hygiene” As a result of such public attention to the subject of social hygiene, the main approach taken by Rockefeller Jr.’s bureau was to not get involved in this increasingly controversial research, but to help financially support an independent organization, the American Social Hygiene Association, which was created in 1913 as an educational organization. Rockefeller Jr.’s Bureau of Social Hygiene would continue such support into the early 1920s.<sup>22</sup>

Another early example of social research begun by a philanthropic organization was at the Carnegie Corporation of New York, founded in 1911 with an endowment of \$125,000,000. The Carnegie Corporation was designed as a channel through which some of Andrew Carnegie’s immense wealth could begin supporting education. The Carnegie Corporation moved quickly and within two years managed to outspend even the federal government in the support of education, by \$5.6 million to \$5.0 million. Within their focus on education, the Carnegie Corporation decided to include some research aimed not so much at discovering scientific truths about human learning, but at teaching ideas about American values. By about 1919, the Carnegie Corporation’s initiation of this project was dubbed the “Americanization Study.” The project, which involved a series of commissioned studies, was directed primarily by University of Chicago sociologists, especially Robert E. Park and William I. Thomas. Commissioned studies aimed to understand processes whereby new immigrants get re-socialized as Americans. A policy objective also existed, which was to help states and cities better handle their burgeoning immigrant populations. The

<sup>22</sup> Havelock Ellis, *The Task of Social Hygiene* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1913), p. 16. See also Linda J. Rynbrandt, “Caroline Bartlett Crane and the History of Sociology: Salvation, Sanitation, and the Social Gospel,” *American Sociologist* 29, 1 (1998): 71-82.

Americanization Study produced some noteworthy publications by the early 1920s, however the study ended by about 1922.<sup>23</sup>

### 2.3 Ideas for a Rockefeller-supported “Institute of Economic Research”

In May 1913, John D. Rockefeller worked with his son, John D. Rockefeller Jr., as well as a small group of trusted advisors to legally create the Rockefeller Foundation. One of these advisors, a long-time Rockefeller friend and associate, Frederick T. Gates, wrote the Foundation’s mission statement and charter. The mission for the Foundation was to serve “The Well-being of Mankind Throughout the World.” Gates also stated the goal for the Foundation was “to promote the well-being and to advance the civilization of the United States and its territories and possessions and of foreign lands in the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge, in the prevention and relief of suffering, and in the promotion of any and all the elements of human progress.” Included in the Foundation’s purposes were to support ongoing research by other agencies and institutions, as well as to assist in the “establishment and maintenance” of new agencies and institutions.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Noteworthy products of the Americanization Study were Sophonsba Preston Breckenridge, *New Homes for Old* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1921); W.I. Thomas, Robert E. Parks, and Herbert Miller, *Old World Traits Transplanted* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1921). See Ellen Condliffe Lagemann, “The Politics of Knowledge: The Carnegie Corporation and the Formation of Public Policy,” *History of Education Quarterly* 27, 2 (Summer 1987): 205-20; Ernest W. Burgess, “In Memoriam: Robert E. Park, 1864-1944,” *American Journal of Sociology* 49, 5 (March 1944): 478. Some additional background concerning social science in the “Progressive Era” is in John L. Recchiuti, “The Rand School of Social Science during the Progressive Era: Will to Power of a Stratum of the American Intellectual Class,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 31 (1995): 149-61.

<sup>24</sup> “Charter of the Rockefeller Foundation,” Chap. 488, Laws of New York, for 1913. Reprinted as “Schedule A” in “Information Furnished by The Rockefeller Foundation in response to Questionnaires Submitted by United States Commission on Industrial Relations,” submitted 25 January 1915. Nine persons were included in the “Charter of the Rockefeller Foundation,” entered into New York State records on May 14, 1913. The stated purpose of the charter was to create a body corporate “for the purpose of receiving and maintaining a fund or funds and applying the income and principal thereof to promote the well-being of mankind throughout the world.” In addition to Rockefeller Sr. and Rockefeller Jr., the other seven charter members were: Frederick T. Gates, Harry Pratt Judson, Simon Flexner, Starr J. Murphy, Jerome D. Greene, Wickliffe Rose, and Charles O.

By the time of official creation of the Rockefeller Foundation, an idea in the mind of the Rockefellers was to consider creating a division at the Foundation that would focus on supporting social research. During 1912 and 1913, Foundation representatives participated in an ongoing conference with economists to determine if the time was right to create an economic research institute. A number of America's economists and business leaders had a notion that opponents of big business were in the business of peddling misinformation. Such mischief needed to be countered, and a way to do so would be to provide true facts – which presumably would favor big business. The conference, organized by AT&T's president Theodore N. Vail, was attended by such leading scholars as Edwin F. Gay, Dean of the Harvard Business School, and Harry Pratt Judson, President of the University of Chicago. Also attending was Jerome D. Greene, Secretary of the Rockefeller Foundation. In listening to business proponents voice their opinions, Greene observed that a common goal was “to see whether something might be done to relieve the general unrest” so prevalent between workers and management in the industrial workplace. Conference participants generally held a view that much unrest owed to “agitators” and “demagogues” dispensing “misinformation” about the doings of America's businesses. The economists and business leaders seemed agreed that the spread of false ideas needed to be countered. “What was needed,” Greene took note, “was a constant chain of correct information, put before the public by a sort of publicity bureau, with the special idea of reaching not so much the better educated members

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Heydt. See Barbara Howe, “The Origins of the Rockefeller Foundation,” in Robert F. Arnove, ed., *Philanthropy and Cultural Imperialism: The Foundation at Home and Abroad*, 1-25 (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1980); see also Raymond B. Fosdick, *The Story of the Rockefeller Foundation* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952), p. 15.

of the community, as the middle and lower classes upon which the demagogues chiefly preyed.”<sup>25</sup>

Greene communicated with the Rockefellers regarding the perceived need for such an institute. He agreed with conference participants that the primary need for the institute was to get the public to better understand real facts about the American economy, with the idea being that once accurate facts were communicated, the public would be more sensible in what kinds of government policies it supported. The chief benefiting party, Greene explained to the Rockefellers, would be “the business interests of the country [who] as a whole have everything to gain and nothing to lose by the dissemination of accurate information as the starting point for intelligent public opinion and wise legislation.”<sup>26</sup>

Around the year 1913, situations in the American industrial workplace were changing rapidly. The American public viewed big business quite differently than just a decade or so earlier. Much industrial conflict was taking place, and such violence seemed highly irrational. The United States Congress even created a “Commission on Industrial Relations,” whose purpose was to discover why such conflict was happening. The commission held congressional hearings, and among those called to testify was John D. Rockefeller.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Jerome Greene, “Principles and Policies of Giving: Memorandum,” Rockefeller Foundation Draft Report, 12 (1913), pp. 15-16, RAC–RF, R.G. 3, Series 910, Box 10, Folders 10-11. Worthy of note is that as early as 1907, Theodore Vail expressed an idea that business leaders could benefit by forming such a research institute. This earliest idea for such an institute came about when Vail introduced a plan to support business leaders in a project to compile accurate and untainted information. Such a research group, Vail believed, could be seen as sufficiently unbiased that their arguments and recommendations would be accepted by the American public. See David M. Grossman, “American Foundations and the Support of Economic Research, 1913-29,” *Minerva* 20, 1-2 (Spring-Summer 1982), 59-82, esp. 59-62; see also John M. Jordan, ed., “To Educate Public Opinion: John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and the Origins of Social Scientific Fact-Finding,” *New England Quarterly* 64, 2 (June 1991): 292-7.

<sup>26</sup> “Rockefeller Foundation, History Source Material,” RAC–History-Source Material, Volume 3, Series 900, pp. 676-677.

<sup>27</sup> See Graham Adams Jr., *The Age of Industrial Violence, 1910-1915: Activities and Findings of the United States Commission on Industrial Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966).

The Foundation's own conference participants discussed what a new economics research institute might do. There were two basic ideas. In addition to the idea to dispense accurate information to counter misinformation, an alternative purpose might be to do research to discover new facts about the economy. The latter expectation was that any new facts would likely help big business. While proponents of the research-based approach for an institute believed what was urgently needed were basic facts, they also agreed with the need to counter misinformation. Yet most conference participants supported only an information bureau, tending to believe the state of economic knowledge was sufficient as it was – i.e., that better distribution of existing knowledge was all that was needed. Yet on this point Greene disagreed. His personal experience involved years of contact with economists, including in particular Edwin Gay. Over the next year or so, Greene and Gay would each play influential roles at the personal attention of the Rockefellers.<sup>28</sup>

#### 2.4 Gates's philanthropic model for the Rockefeller Foundation—by 1913

Frederick Gates, the author of the Rockefeller Foundation's motto and charter, joined Greene in considering alternative ideas for an economics institute. As a long-time associate of Rockefeller Sr., Gates actively assisted Rockefeller philanthropy for nearly a quarter century. By the 1910s he trusted friend and counsel. Gates's consistent ideal was to focus on discovering fundamental facts about the forces underlying social progress. Yet the question, as always, was how best to do this. Gates addressed this question over the preceding quarter

<sup>28</sup> See Herbert Heaton, *A Scholar in Action: Edwin F. Gay* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968).



century by developing a framework of rules for philanthropic giving – a framework actually developed by focusing on medical and public health examples.<sup>29</sup>

Gates's framework for philanthropic giving is worth understanding. Gates came to the attention of Rockefeller Sr. during the late 1880s while assisting fundraising efforts for a new Baptist academy of higher education in the Midwest. George A. Pillsbury, owner of the famous flour mills in Minneapolis, began the endowment campaign and appointed Gates as Executive Secretary of the American Baptist Education Society. It was in this capacity that Gates personally obtained a \$600,000 pledge from Rockefeller Sr., who made the donation on a condition that \$400,000 more be raised in matching funds. The raising of these matching funds became the test of Gates's abilities, and he earned Rockefeller's trust by successfully executing the challenge. Although Rockefeller initially hesitated to support the new academy any further than this, Gates remained confident that he could "immediately convince Rockefeller and others both of the crying need for a strong university in the West, and the possibility of enlisting a broad popular support for it." Gates successfully recommended Chicago as the best location for the school, and indeed, the new institution became the University of Chicago – founded in 1889, and opened in 1892.<sup>30</sup>

Rockefeller hired Gates by the end of 1891. He brought Gates to New York City to help fix some difficulties in his gift-giving efforts. Gates assumed directorship of

<sup>29</sup> A variety of general works dealing with the subject of Rockefeller philanthropy discuss the role of Gates. See Raymond B. Fosdick, *The Story of the Rockefeller Foundation* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952); Fosdick, *John D. Rockefeller, Jr.: A Portrait* (New York: Harper and Row, 1956); Allen Nevins, *A Study in Power: John D. Rockefeller, Industrialist and Philanthropist* (New York: Scribner, 1953); see also James E. Fell, Jr., "Rockefeller's Right-hand Man: Frederick T. Gates and the Northwestern Mining Investments," *Business History Review* 52, 4 (1978): 537-61. Gates personally described different positions he held in Rockefeller philanthropy, including chairmanship of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, the General Education Board, and the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission; see Frederick T. Gates to A.S. Ochs, Editor of *New York Times*, January 18, 1912, RAC-RF, Gates Collection, Box 3, Folder 5.

<sup>30</sup> Frederick T. Gates, *Chapters in My Life* (New York: Free Press): 86-7; Allen Nevins, *John D. Rockefeller* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940): 210-1.

Rockefeller's charity organization, at a time when Rockefeller was still focused mostly on his business interests. What Gates found was a mess. Rockefeller's philanthropic efforts were being overrun by thousands of appeals for money each year. (Gates even once counted as many as an estimated fifty thousand appeals in one month.) Grant applications came from all over the world, and control mechanisms were entirely absent for monitoring what was done with the money. Gates began formulating guiding principles as a way to end the waste of funds, and he also created directorship boards and instituted a competitive system for the winning of grants. Above all, Gates recognized the importance of knowing where money went, and why it went where it did.<sup>31</sup>

One of Gates's early projects for Rockefeller was to reign in confusion over various branches of Baptist Foreign Mission Societies receiving Rockefeller funds. These societies tended to compete with each other to obtain their shares of Rockefeller's generosity. Often times these societies duplicated each others' activities, with resultant squabbling coming off as "selfish" and "unjust." Gates tackled the problem by cutting off direct funding and employing review boards to account for every dollar. With the accounting approach in place, Gates could now create what he called a "principle of wholesale giving." He promoted competition to get rid of "worthless" and "redundant" organizations, and every grant application was scrutinized. No longer were many small grants awarded to many different charities, as fewer large grants were now to be awarded to fewer recipient groups, who would

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<sup>31</sup> Gates, *Chapters in My Life*, 159-64. The fourteen guiding rules are stated in Frederick T. Gates to John D. Rockefeller, January 18, 1892, RAC-RF, Gates Collection, Box 3, Folder 57.

then oversee additional rounds of distribution of funds, reporting back to Rockefeller essentially as “wholesalers.”<sup>32</sup>

Gates quickly established “guiding principles” for fundraising. The main idea of “wholesale giving” was to avoid excessive scattering of donations, or what Gates called the “sins of scatteration.” Gates recorded twenty-two rules of fundraising. These rules ranged from the importance of a clean and well-dressed appearance, to speaking in finely enunciated language, to adoption of a “gentle management” approach. One rule was to convince any potential donor “that he is *giving* it, not that it is being taken from him with violence.” Gates also had an especially revealing rule: “Let the victim talk freely, especially in the earlier part of the interview, while you use the opportunity to study his peculiarities. Never argue with him... Give your fish the reel, and listen with deep interest.” Clearly Gates wanted to emphasize a range of points, but above all his point was to have an accounting system in place and to be forward-thinking in one’s philanthropic work.<sup>33</sup>

From the early 1890s to the early 1910s, Gates continued developing his rule-governed system of philanthropy. He refined an idea of “scientific philanthropy” along the way. With the accounting system and the stated principles and wholesale method in place, a chief objective for Gates was that the successful giving of funds must be that which “work[s] for all humanity, which penetrates everywhere.” Rejection should be made of any grant proposal unable to meet rigorous standards of “how” money would be used, and “why” it was to be used. The idea of “scientific philanthropy” was based on a notion of long-term

<sup>32</sup> Gates, *Chapters in My Life*, 161-3, 277; Nevins, *John D. Rockefeller*, 294-5. See also John Ettling, *The Germ of Laziness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981): 66.

<sup>33</sup> Frederick T. Gates, “How to Canvas for Money,” April 20, 1891, RAC-RF, Gates Collection, Box 3, Folder 61. This 1891 letter evidently was found by chance, many years later, and somehow made its way into the Gates Collection at the Rockefeller Archives.

efficiency in giving. It was an idea that philanthropy was a kind of social science in and of itself – that, in other words, philanthropists needed to experiment to discover what methods of philanthropy work best. The notion of scientific philanthropy was consistent with Rockefeller Sr.'s own idea, as he expressed it in 1909, that “the best philanthropy” is that which worked on “finalities,” and which aims to “cure evils at their source.” By the time of the Foundation’s meetings with economists, the idea of “scientific philanthropy” was in place as an idea to target grants to the most effective places for promoting social progress.<sup>34</sup>

Gates also had ideas about how scientific progress works. In particular he studied the relationship of anatomy and physiology to medical applications. In exploring the nature of medical research, he was struck by how far certain aspects of medicine were from being scientific. Doctors were still very limited as to what they could usefully do, and what was needed was to strengthen the scientific basis of medical knowledge. As Gates got informed about the relationship between fundamental science and medical application, he came to believe what was crucially important was the careful targeting of available funds. Gates founded his medicine-based model on high optimism that all problems are solvable so long as they are pursued with direct, plug-ahead persistence – that well-placed research funds should be able to produce progress in medicine as well as in all other scientific fields. A common source of many social problems, Gates even believed, was physical disease – the “prolific root of every conceivable ill,” be it economic, mental, physical, moral, or social.

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<sup>34</sup> The idea of “scientific philanthropy” was probably in place as early as about 1897; see Frederick T. Gates, *Chapters in My Life*, 185-6; John D. Rockefeller, *Random Reminiscences of Men and Events* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1909): 112. As Rockefeller wrote at length in his chapter on “The Difficult Art of Giving”: “The best philanthropy, the help that does the most good and the least harm, the help that nourishes civilization at its very root, that most widely disseminates health, righteousness, and happiness, is not what is usually called charity. It is, in my judgment, the investment of effort or time or money, carefully considered with relation to the power of employing people at a remunerative wage, to expand and develop the resources at hand, and to give opportunity for progress and healthful labour where it did not exist before.”(p. 2 of ch. 6).

With all society's problems ultimately stemming from physical sources, scientific philanthropy needed to focus on discovering "urgently needed solutions."<sup>35</sup>

By the time of the 1912-13 discussion about a possible Institute of Economic Research, Gates's philanthropic model (with its focus on a small number of competitive grant recipients) was in place at the Rockefeller Foundation. Gates had even shown how to apply such a model in 1912, when he helped the wife of Rockefeller, Laura Spelman Rockefeller, allocate grant awards to four Baptist welfare organizations. In that particular case, Rockefeller called upon Gates to help evaluate the quality of each applicant organization. Gates recommended the awards be focused away from church endowments, and he strongly hoped Rockefeller's wife would follow this recommendation to ensure that no unfortunate gift-giving precedent would be established.<sup>36</sup>

## 2.5 The debate over an "Institute of Economic Research"

Discussion about the proposed economics institute got serious through 1913. Greene, secretary of the Rockefeller Foundation, recorded his belief that an economics institute should be created, and he introduced the idea to the Foundation trustees. The trustees then discussed whether more outside advice was needed, and on October 22, 1913, they approved a plan for preliminary personal conferences about possibly creating a "Committee of Leading

<sup>35</sup> Gates, *Chapters in My Life*, 180-1, 186. As Gates described in a later letter to John D. Rockefeller Jr., "scientific philanthropy is not attained with superficial remedies, palliatives, artificial reliefs. It seeks, insofar as it is wise, to find out the underlying causes and remove them, and will be content with nothing else." Frederick T. Gates to Rockefeller, Jr., May 7, 1924, RAC-RF, Gates Collection, Box 3, Folder 59.

<sup>36</sup> Starr J. Murphy to Frederick T. Gates, June 19, 1912; Frederick T. Gates to John D. Rockefeller, Sr., June 22, 1912, RAC-RF, Gates Collection, Box 3, Folder 47. Religious motives of John D. Rockefeller Sr., Laura Spelman Rockefeller, and John D. Rockefeller Jr. are explored in Soma Hewa, "The Protestant Ethic and Rockefeller Benevolence: The Religious Impulse in American Philanthropy," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior* 27, 4 (December 1997): 419-52; and Charles E. Harvey, "Religion and Industrial Relations: John D. Rockefeller Jr. and the Interchurch World Movement of 1919-1920," *Research in Political Economy* 4 (1981): 199-227.

Economists and Business Men.” The goal for such conferences, as stated by Greene, was “to invite suggestions as to the desirability of establishing an organization for the study of important social and economic questions vitally affecting the welfare of society at the present time.” Five one-on-one meetings were held by December, and Greene concluded these meetings showed economists “were favorable to the establishment of some sort of agency for the scientific investigation of economic subjects.” Greene informed the Foundation trustees of this conclusion in their December meeting. The trustees then recommended that further conferences be held, and Greene quickly arranged for an outside group of economists, led by Wesley C. Mitchell of Columbia University, to submit a preliminary proposal for an economic research institute, by January 1914.<sup>37</sup>

Greene then set about assembling an advising committee of economists. Most of these economists believed, as did Greene, that better fundamental research was needed in economics, because society’s most urgent problems were fundamentally economic in nature. By April Greene got some committee feedback: significant value should exist in establishing an institute to do basic research, as it would be through better science that the path to social reform would be made clear. Perhaps, then, the goal for an institute should be more than to merely dispense information. Greene’s economist friend, Edwin Gay, described a reason for favoring an institute to do fundamental research: “The work now done in the universities is

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<sup>37</sup> See “Information Furnished By The Rockefeller Foundation In Response to Supplementary Questionnaire Submitted by the United States Commission on Industrial Relations,” 19 pp., esp. p. 43, January 7, 1915. The five personal conferences were held with Dean Edwin F. Gay of Harvard University, Professor J. Laurence Laughlin of the University of Chicago, Mr. John Koren, President of the American Statistical Association, President Charles W. Eliot of Columbia University, and Professor Wesley C. Mitchell of Columbia University. When the trustee’s subcommittee introduced the idea to “establish an institute or bureau for the study of economic questions,” the Foundation reported that, by vote, the Foundation trustees gave authority on October 22, 1913 for additional personal conferences to be held regarding the idea. See also “Memorandum Concerning a Proposed Economic Bureau,” January 21, 1914, RAC–RF, R.G. 3, Series 910, Box 2, Folders 10-11. See also Soma Hewa, “Toward the Well-Being of Mankind: Rockefeller Philanthropy and the Problem of Economic Research,” *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 18, 11/12 (1998): 85-129.

almost entirely the work of individual students writing theses for their doctorates, necessarily circumscribed in scope, usually far from thorough, and by the very nature of things apt to be scattered.” Such research was not scientific. Yet there was potential for rigorous economic science to be practiced. Gay believed any initial projects for an economics research institute were unlikely “to be comprehensive and thorough investigations of large subjects,” but that work needed to begin somewhere; “there is a real need for such an institute.” In a follow-up statement, Gay further emphasized that it ought to be “insisted” at the outset “that the primary purpose is the discovery of truth,” and that any dissemination of information by an institute would be “only incidental.” With Gay’s strong shift away from any information-and-persuasion role for an institute, some serious debate was now initiated.<sup>38</sup>

Greene found the economists willing to explore various alternative arrangements for an institute that might get Foundation approval. Special issues of importance were to maintain political neutrality and scholarly integrity beyond reproach. Scientific methods would need to be emphasized, and appropriate management oversight also needed to be implemented. Mitchell, for example, explained that any potential real-world relevance for such an institute “would depend primarily upon the impartiality of its management and the strictly scientific character of its productivity.” “[I]n the long run,” he added, “the practical benefits of science can be secured more quickly following the natural growth of knowledge than in following the natural growth of popular issues.” Mitchell favored an institute to do fundamental research first. He believed in the need to expand knowledge before attempting

<sup>38</sup> Edwin F. Gay to Jerome D. Greene, March 4, 1914, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folders 10-11; Edwin F. Gay to J. Laurence Laughlin, April 21, 1914, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folders 10-11; see Grossman, “American Foundations and the Support of Economic Research”; Hewa, “Toward the Well-Being of Mankind.”

to apply it: “Just as science affords the chief means of improving the practice of medicine, so science affords the chief means of improving the practice of social regulation.”<sup>39</sup>

Greene strongly wanted an institute to pursue a comprehensive research program. He wanted something beyond the kinds of single-project forays being tried by other major philanthropies. These other research approaches, Greene even suggested in a January 1914 report, held little promise of getting “to the very foundations of the great economic and social problems of the day.” Greene, in drawing on the analogy to medical research, believed an economics institute should operate in ways resembling the workings of the Rockefeller Institute of Medical Research (over which Greene was also in charge as general manager). Greene declared that the best kind of economics institute would be one active in conducting fundamental research.<sup>40</sup>

As to Rockefeller Jr., he recorded thoughts on the matter, saying that “For several years I have been discussing with various people the desirability and possibility of establishing an Institute of Economic Research.” Rockefeller Jr. believed in research objectives as well as persuasion objectives for the institute, saying that what was needed

<sup>39</sup> Wesley Clair Mitchell, “Memorandum,” Rockefeller Foundation Draft Report, January 1914; also F.W. Taussig to Jerome D. Greene, February 27, 1914, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folders 10-11. A point made by a number of the economists was that selection of the institute’s staff could go a long way toward providing the institute with respected status. Some economists also worried that any excessive contact directly with the Rockefellers would be detrimental to the institute. (In another paper at about the same time, Mitchell clearly had an idea that economic science would not cure social ills so much as it could help serve as a means to an end: “In the class war, there is no scientific basis for peace. Give the victory in the struggle to anyone among the contending classes, and let it define to what end it wished to use its dominant power, then there will be a chance to work out scientifically the means to employ”; see Wesley Clair Mitchell, “Note: Social Progress and Social Science,” Delivered to the San Francisco Radical Club, November 1915, Wesley Clair Mitchell Papers, Columbia University Libraries, New York.)

<sup>40</sup> Jerome D. Greene, “An Institute of Economic Research,” Rockefeller Foundation Draft Report, January 1914, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folders 10-11. As Yale President Arthur Hadley pointed out in January 1914, the institute would need to be able to direct “to completion a long, complicated and difficult investigation,” while encouraging scholarship standards of the highest degree and “catholicity of interest in economic social problems.” See also Jerome D. Greene, “An Institute for Social and Economic Research,” Rockefeller Foundation Draft Report, March 1914, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folders 10-11.



before anything else was “to create a saner attitude on economic and social problems by providing a center for scientific examination of questions of the day uninfluenced by politics or business gain, whose function would be to make accessible in popular form the results of scientific study, to stimulate understanding of economics, and attract the ablest young men to find careers in that field.” Rockefeller Jr. – under the outside advisement of Edwin Gay in particular – was willing to consider establishing an entire division at the Foundation to focus on economic research.<sup>41</sup>

The trustees approved an exploratory committee of economists “to make a selection of problems of economic importance which could be advantageously studied.” On March 18, 1914, the conference was held at the home office of the Rockefeller Foundation. In attendance were Charles Elliot and Edwin F. Gay of Harvard, J. Lawrence Laughlin and Leon C. Marshall of Chicago, Wesley Mitchell and John Bates Clark of Columbia University, Henry C. Emery and Arthur Hadley of Yale University, and John Koren of the American Statistical Association. Representing the Rockefeller Foundation were Gates, Greene, and Rockefeller Jr. Attending economists supported the idea for a new institute primarily to study economic problems “as would require the accumulation of a large body of statistics or the extension of research in different parts of the world.” Participants considered whether any new and important economic findings were likely in the near-term, or only as a long-term prospect. A main topic of discussion was to compare a research focus against a publicity focus, and Greene and Gates began developing opposing views on this subject.

<sup>41</sup> “Rockefeller Foundation, History Source Material,” RAC–History-Source Material, Volume 3, Series 900, 676-7. For more on the division of economic research, see Herbert Heaton, *A Scholar in Action: Edwin F. Gay* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952): 91-92; also David Grossman, “American Foundations and the Support of Economic Research.”

Whereas Greene supported a research focus, Gates preferred a main focus on public persuasion. Rockefeller Jr. would start tending toward the latter view as well.<sup>42</sup>

The economists all favored an institute to bolster the scientific status of economics. They wanted fundamental research to promote “better conditions for the cultivation of the social sciences than were possible under any university or government auspices.” They also wanted an institute that “would have the necessary funds to provide investigators whose whole time would be given uninterruptedly to the work and to assure them the support of an adequate staff.” The economists were basically agreed that the main goal should be to advance basic knowledge.<sup>43</sup>

Opinions were freely shared by many participants at the March conference. Koren believed the primary purpose for an institute “was necessarily the collection of facts to perform the same service in the field of economics and sociology as an institution for medical research in the domain of public health.” Mitchell argued that rapid industrialization in many nations “is proceeding by an extremely crude method of trial and error, sadly wasteful of money, time and human strength.” What was needed to prevent any more “blundering experiments” was “to acquire and to disseminate genuine knowledge in the field of economics and other social sciences.” Laughlin made a point about a need to prevent outside observers from seeing the new institute as a competitive rival to university-based research; avoiding any such perception would minimize the chance of universities reacting

<sup>42</sup> Frederick T. Gates, “In Opposition to Endowment of Economic Research,” 1914, RAC–RF, Gates Collection, Box 2, File 24. The direct words from the Rockefeller Foundation are from their description of goals submitted to Congress in January 1915. “Information Furnished By The Rockefeller Foundation In Response to Supplementary Questionnaire Submitted by the United States Commission on Industrial Relations,” 19 pp., esp. 44, January 7, 1915. See also Henry C. Emery, “Memorandum,” Rockefeller Foundation Draft Report, March 1914, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folders 10-11.

<sup>43</sup> “Rockefeller Foundation, History Source Material,” RAC–History-Source Material, Volume 3, Series 900, 679-80.

coldly to such an institute. Laughlin added a succinct analogy to help distinguish between discovery of knowledge and dispensing of knowledge: “The carp must be caught before it can be cooked; investigative results and new ones yet to come must be had before any distribution can take place.” What was urgently needed, all were agreed, was better factual understanding of complex problems of a modern industrial economy. Following the meeting, Greene, in a report, decided that an economics institute was to be officially recommended.<sup>44</sup>

Immediately following the conference, the Foundation’s Executive Committee authorized the next step: an “exploratory committee” of five persons (namely, Gay, Laughlin, Thomas W. Page, Victor Morawetz, and Harry A. Wheeler) who were assigned the task “to consider further the desirability of establishing an Institute for Economic Research, to make a selection of such problems of economic importance as would in their judgment be advantageously studied through such an agency, to recommend a method of organization, and to present an estimate of the approximate cost of initiating and carrying on the work to be first proposed.”<sup>45</sup>

Also following the conference, Gates provided Rockefeller Jr. with a report. If the main purpose of an institute was to do fundamental research, then Gates ought to lead the opposition. Gates recommended an institute focusing only on problems already present in society, and in most cases such problems boiled down to faulty information dispersal.

Economic research was different from medical research, as basic economic research was

<sup>44</sup> “Rockefeller Foundation, History Source Material,” RAC–History-Source Material, Volume 3, Series 900, 679-80. J.L. Laughlin, “Memorandum,” Rockefeller Foundation Draft Report, undated, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folder 10-11; Jerome D. Greene, “An Institute for Social and Economic Research,” Rockefeller Foundation Draft Report, March 1914, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folders 10-11.

<sup>45</sup> Direct words from the Rockefeller Foundation are from their description of goals submitted to Congress; “Information Furnished By The Rockefeller Foundation In Response to Supplementary Questionnaire Submitted by the United States Commission on Industrial Relations,” 19 pp., esp. 44, January 7, 1915.

actually unnecessary. “Life is short; time is fleeting,” Gates declared. “We cannot do everything, we can do only a few things. The selection of the things we undertake to do is therefore of the first importance. Now, if we are to do something in the field of economics, it seems to me that we ought to select, if we can, that department which is most urgent and of most practical importance.” The only “urgent” matter was better distribution of existing ideas. There was no place for the word “urgent” when it came to fundamental economic research. Gates made an analogy: “Medical research is urgent; but...the sort of economic research that [researchers] can do with this fund is not at all urgent, because its results will have no immediate and perhaps not even a distant practical value. What is urgent in economics is not research, but a clearer apprehension by the masses of the people and the voters of the United States of the simpler and more fundamental economic laws.” Economics is merely made up of obvious and well-known principles, Gates believed, and all that is known in economics is all that needs to be known. Of the nature of economics, Gates believed “the field of research is perfectly clear-cut. The ills to be remedied are well known; they are catalogued.” The fundamental truths of economics are, as Gates told Rockefeller, “just as well known by economists and people of culture as the bones that make up the bony structure of the body are known to physicians.” There was another problem as well, which was that an economics institute likely could not get hold of enough economic data to make any real progress, as businesses were unlikely to relinquish current data, and “the data valuable yesterday is useless today”; here, then, was another reason why there could be no scientific truths discoverable by economists. Whereas researchers in medicine could identify

causes of ailments; “you are going to be handicapped always in economic science, as you are not in the physical sciences and in medicine.” Gates recommended a “modest” approach.<sup>46</sup>

Gates took some time to explore what the word “urgent” might mean. Whereas Gay believed fundamental research was urgently needed on its own terms (i.e., that fundamental research was needed even if such research was not quickly directed to any pressing needs), “I agree with him,” offered Gates, “that the sort of economic research that he can do with this fund was not at all urgent, because its results will have no immediate and perhaps not even a distant practical value.” To Gates, the really urgent need was for public calm, for a decrease in “all the violence and the strikes of the country.” The chosen topic for study by an economics institute ought to be “most urgent and of most practical importance,” it should be readily solvable, and it should be of a kind “that can be solved by the researches of one man.” These were tough criteria to meet.<sup>47</sup>

The trustees met in April. They invited Harvard’s Edwin Gay to help guide their discussion. They debated possible first research projects for an institute, and to foster useful

<sup>46</sup> Frederick T. Gates, “In Opposition to Endowment of Economic Research,” March 19, 1914, RAC–RF, Gates Collection, Box 2, Folder 24, pp. 1, 6. Writing to Rockefeller Jr., Gates expressed: “As I reflect on the interview of yesterday with the five experts on economics, the impression which I have long held, only deepened by the conference, make me uneasy. I fear we are going to be disappointed;” Frederick T. Gates to John D.

Rockefeller, Jr., March 19, 1914, RAC–RF, Gates Collection, Box 2, Folder 24.

<sup>47</sup> Gates, “In Opposition to Endowment,” 2-5. See also Frederick T. Gates to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., March 19, 1914, RAC–RF, Gates Collection, Box 2, Folder 24. In the memo “In Opposition to Endowment,” Gates writes on the data problem: “What I am coming to is this: The question of economics and political economy, if of value, will have to be studied on a national scale and authoritatively, and it seems to me that the only way to elicit the information of value is by government commission..., but these inquiries cannot be privately made. Economists will have to depend for their information on other sources than private sources.” Examples of wrong ideas to be countered were: (1) if people worked fewer hours to produce fewer goods, this would lead to greater demand for these workers’ labor; (2) the idea that poor people are poor solely because the wealthy are taking more than their share of the aggregate wealth. (In another memo about the same time, Gates added that an urgent need was to teach peaceful relations between management and labor. An economics institute ought to teach the value of cooperation, thereby educating people on the value of living with the status quo. The pernicious problem in society was unionist “demagogues” spreading mistaken ideas. If only laborers could be taught how impossible it was “that labor as a whole can have increase of wages except [as] capital as a whole shall have a decrease of interest and rent” – only then could “the world will be happier and wiser, a better and more comfortable place for us all to live in, and human suffering reduced”; see Frederick T. Gates, “Capital and Labor,” RAC–RF, Gates Collection, Box 1, Folder 9, pp. 1, 5.)

debate the trustees made some effort to include a mix of views in an exploratory committee. Gay, at one extreme, advocated for an institute to do fundamental research. Victor A. Morawetz, a New York attorney friend of the Rockefellers, was there to represent the position favoring an institute based solely on a “propagandistic point of view.” Morawetz had, earlier in that year, contacted Rockefeller Jr. to express his preference for a “bureau of economic publicity,” and so Morawetz was suited to defend such a position.<sup>48</sup>

This trustee’s exploratory committee held at least two group meetings, and on August 4, 1914, they unanimously recommended that an institute be created, and that a first project be started and carried on for one year. The project would be a test for whether a permanent institute would then be suitable. Four members of the exploratory committee said they wanted to study prices, which was an economic problem connected to many other economic problems. One committee member recommended focusing on a “concrete” problem such as profit sharing. All committee members were agreed that no person at the Rockefeller Foundation was to do any of the actual research. The committee prepared a report stating what was needed was to consider “the general character of the work to be undertaken by a proposed Institute of Economic Research and, if possible, to recommend a subject or subjects appropriate for its initial investigation.” The committee declared its belief that a single team of economists “could not prepare and fully discuss a comprehensive list of topics which would require a careful survey of the whole economic field.” “[I]n the opinion of the committee, it is expedient that the proposed Institute should address itself primarily to the full and dispassionate investigation of problems of fundamental scientific interest, and that

<sup>48</sup> Edwin F. Gay to Jerome D. Greene, April 17, 1914, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folders 10-11; Victor A. Morawetz and John D. Rockefeller Jr., letters from January-April 1914, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folders 10-11.

the work it does should be of such solidity as to establish firmly its repute as a competent and indispensable organ of research.” The report of the trustee’s exploratory committee favored an institute for basic research.<sup>49</sup>

The report dated August 4<sup>th</sup> and officially compiled by Gay was then submitted to all the Foundation’s trustees. The specific proposal in the report was that the first project should be a study of prices. Criteria were that the selected problem should be something difficult for government to get involved in, and that it should be one that was too big for university resources. The economists who settled on a study of prices saw the problem of price levels as an undisputed public concern. As Gay put it, a study of prices would produce results “singularly adapted to the use of methods that are in the strictest sense scientific.” The price study would be one from which “results of great value could be obtained without arousing suspicions that the study was carried on for selfish or for class interests.” Along with Gay’s report, Victor Morawetz was invited to submit a minority statement recommending an alternative first project aimed at explaining to the public the nature of industrial problems of profit sharing. Such a problem seemed urgent, to Morawetz, and even seemed likely to be more successful than any study of prices.<sup>50</sup>

Gates read Gay’s report and sent a response letter to Rockefeller Jr. Gates asked the question: What does the Rockefeller Foundation believe economics to be? Gates again emphasized that economics was not a clear-cut science. Unlike medical research on disease,

<sup>49</sup> “Information Furnished By The Rockefeller Foundation In Response to Supplementary Questionnaire Submitted by the United States Commission on Industrial Relations,” 19 pp., esp. 45, January 7, 1915. “Report of Committee to the Rockefeller Foundation,” August 1914, 1-2, 4, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folders 10-11.

<sup>50</sup> Edwin F. Gay, “Report of Committee to Rockefeller Foundation,” Rockefeller Foundation Draft Report, August 4, 1914, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folder 10-11; Victor A. Morawetz to Jerome D. Greene, August 5, 1914, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folders 10-11.

Gates knew of no particular problem in economics that “urgently needs solution.” He saw no need for an institute to do basic research. Only an institute aimed at persuading the public would be valuable to America’s business leaders. “Beware of an institute of economic research. It is the last thing needed. But create if you can a bureau of economic publicity that for once shall be really popular and efficient and do not count the cost.”<sup>51</sup>

Rockefeller Jr. personally applied some thought to points presented by the two opposing camps. He decided he wished to leave open an option to pursue perhaps a little of both kinds of activities, that is, some basic research and some dispersal of information. “Perhaps we can hit upon some medium of course,” Rockefeller Jr. wrote to Gates, “which will give us the things most desirable from each point of view.”<sup>52</sup>

## 2.6 Real-world labor unrest–1913-14

All the while that Foundation trustees and the participating economists debated alternative objectives for an economics institute, a new factor unfolding in the United States was an upwelling of violent events in western mining country. A series of embroiling troubles arose, which by the end of 1914 would contribute mightily to preventing any economics research institute from happening.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Frederick T. Gates to John D. Rockefeller Jr., August 18, 1914, RAC–RF, Gates Collection, Box 3, Folder 58. Gates also provided Rockefeller with an additional memorandum describing his worries about public criticism of any research institute; Gates said: “Insofar as the disbursements of the Rockefeller incorporated philanthropies have been rigidly confined to two fields of philanthropy [i.e., medicine and public health] they have been almost universally commended at home and abroad. Where they have inadvertently transgressed these limits, they have been widely and in some particulars perhaps not unfairly condemned”; see Frederick T. Gates, “Principles of Philanthropy as a Science and Art,” RAC–RF, Gates Collection, Box 2, Folder 26.

<sup>52</sup> John D. Rockefeller Jr. to Frederick T. Gates, August 24, 1914, RAC–RF, Gates Collection, Box 3, Folder 58.

<sup>53</sup> Raymond B. Fosdick discusses Ludlow briefly in Raymond B. Fosdick, *John D. Rockefeller Jr.: A Portrait* (New York: Harper, 1956): 144, 158.



During the period of about 1910 to 1914 (and especially during the latter couple years of the period), severe labor conflicts transpired in various industries in the United States. Particularly brutal were conflicts at mining locations in the West. As the public learned about labor unrest at the mines, they got angry with the Rockefellers, who were majority owners of the largest mining company in the United States, the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company.<sup>54</sup>

On April 20, 1914, after a year and a half of conflicts and strikes in western mining regions, violence broke out at the mining camps at Ludlow, Colorado. An infamous case of deadly violence soon called the “Ludlow massacre” resulted in no fewer than thirteen women and children burned to death by evidently out-of-control state militia – militia who were said, in the press, to have been recruited by the Rockefellers to squelch the strike. As the militia opened fire on striking miners, they killed at least forty men as well. The Ludlow tragedy enraged thousands of miners and sympathizers throughout the region, resulting in mass property destruction. Events reached a point that President Woodrow Wilson sent in federal troops, who while ostensibly not taking sides, soundly defeated the unionized miners. And so, as in 1902 when Tarbell published her exposé, and as in 1911 when the Supreme Court ruled against the Rockefeller’s Standard Oil trust, the public again saw the Rockefellers as an enemy. And this time the Rockefellers were especially vilified in the media. As today’s historians have concluded, not only was the situation at Ludlow a costly ‘victory’ for the Rockefeller family, “John D. Rockefeller, Jr., never entirely overcame the onus of his disastrous intractability against the union nor, in the eyes of many early-twentieth-century

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<sup>54</sup> See Howard M. Gitelman, *Legacy of the Ludlow Massacre: A Chapter in American Industrial Relations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988).

Americans, did the enormous philanthropies of the Rockefeller family fully compensate for the tragedy at Ludlow.”<sup>55</sup>

To make matters worse, on April 6<sup>th</sup>, just two weeks prior to the Ludlow tragedy, Rockefeller Jr. had been called to testify before the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Mines and Mining. Rockefeller spoke in vigorous defense of his mining company and its management practices. The Rockefeller family was thus on record in the nation’s newspapers as seeming to believe little was wrong with the way their mines and mining camps were operated.<sup>56</sup>

The matter of what Rockefeller Jr. really tried to communicate to Congress was that he did care. Rockefeller Jr. was clear in his words making the recurring point that he worried but was constrained to doing so in a context of a modern business-society model. It was this model that was really the key issue, as it was the basis for what Rockefeller Jr. believed about how to handle industrial conflict. The model was also the basis for Rockefeller Jr.’s beliefs about the roles of philanthropic organizations and social scientific research. When Rockefeller Jr. was asked by the subcommittee on April 6<sup>th</sup> whether he believed one director of a public company “should take the responsibility for the conduct of the company?,” he answered, in principle, “no.” “[I]t would be impossible for any man to be personally responsible for all of the management of the various concerns in which he might be a larger

<sup>55</sup> Mining camp violence was often brutal. During what is called “the great coalfield war” of 1914, nearly one hundred people were killed in total. Forty persons are believed to have died on the particular day of the “Ludlow massacre,” including the two women and eleven children who suffocated in the so-called “Black Hole of Ludlow” (a refuge pit beneath a destroyed tent). The thirteen innocents were killed when militiamen torched the strikers’ tent colony. A well-balanced source is George S. McGovern and Leonard G. Guttridge, *The Great Coal-Field War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972). Richard Maxwell Brown, “Violence,” in *The Oxford History of the American West*, eds. Clyde A. Milner II, et al. (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994): 394-28, esp. 411.

<sup>56</sup> For Rockefeller’s testimony, see “Statement of John D. Rockefeller, Jr.,” U.S. Congress, House Hearings, Subcommittee of the Committee on Mines and Mining, 63<sup>rd</sup> Congress, Second Session, *Conditions in the Coal Mines of Colorado*, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1914): 2841-916.

or small stockholder. It would be simply impossible to do that, and all that any man can do is to find the ablest men that he can find, and put the responsibility squarely on them.”

Rockefeller relied on a modern model of stockholdership in asking: Could every stockholder be responsible for actions by a manager of a company? No, he answered. Furthermore, he had attended no meetings of the company’s board of directors since the strike activities began in September 1913, and neither had his father. This lack of personal attention was despite months of media reports concerning the urgency of the situation, which therefore meant to the public that Rockefeller Jr. had not tried to personally confirm whether media reports of intimidation, violence, and militia activities were true.<sup>57</sup>

## 2.7 Not the time for economic research

Rockefeller Jr.’s trusted advisor, Gates, offered some relevant opinion during the time of escalation to the Ludlow tragedy. Early on in the period of conflict, Gates decided the time was not right to establish an economics institute, of any kind. As early as March, in an aforementioned memorandum to Rockefeller Jr., Gates recommended backing away from any kind of institute that might have more than just one leading scientist. “I would,” he stated, “...put far forward into the indefinite the dream of an Institute of Economic Research as an organization corresponding in any way to research institutions as we know them.”

Gates placed his sights at finding one trial project that would rely on one economist studying one urgent and solvable problem. Any research findings should even be solvable in a year’s

<sup>57</sup> “Statement of John D. Rockefeller, Jr.,” 2851-2. Rockefeller also answered questions about how much ownership the Rockefellers held in the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company, the nation’s largest mining company. Taking into account all ownership measures, the family owned about forty percent (pp. 2841-6).

time, and would need to be easily tested and related to concrete matters. So once Ludlow happened, would others at the Foundation decide Gates's idea was the right path to follow?<sup>58</sup>

Even though any kind of approach for an economics institute was made less likely to be workable after Ludlow, one specific kind of publicity project was now truly "urgent." The project was a reactionary publicity campaign funded directly by the Rockefeller family, which began when Rockefeller Jr. brought in Ivy Lee, a noted public relations expert of the day, to try and reduce what the Rockefellers interpreted as the main problem still: public misunderstanding.<sup>59</sup>

Also in the aftermath of Ludlow, Rockefeller Jr. committed himself to one particular idea of Gates: that a single notable economist should be recruited to make one study. Greene, as Foundation Secretary, was asked to contact an old friend, William Lyon Mackenzie King. King, who was an economist trained at the University of Chicago and Harvard University, was a reputable labor expert (who would later be Prime Minister of Canada). Greene asked King through June and July 1914 – even prior to Gay's August report then – if enough of a break from any partisan engagement was believed achievable that "would permit you to advise large interests I represent in regard to present labor difficulties and probable far-reaching studies looking toward the future." Here, then, was the urgent problem that might be studied by an economics research institute: not prices (as many wanted), and not profit sharing (as Morawetz wanted), but labor difficulties in general. Potentially such a study could be an acceptable middle course.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Gates, "In Opposition to Endowment," March 19, 1914, 6-7.

<sup>59</sup> Grossman, "American Foundations and the Support of Economic Research," 69.

<sup>60</sup> Correspondence between Jerome D. Greene and W.L. Mackenzie King, June-July 1914, RAC-RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folders 10-11. King's expertise was trade unions. A political science undergraduate at the University of Toronto (1895), King studied trade unions as early as the late 1890s while a graduate student at

King responded positively to the idea. He visited New York City on August 1 – again prior to Gay’s report – and met with Rockefeller Jr. to agree on industrial relations as the focus. Gates then appointed King and arranged a one-year contract with the Foundation. The goal for King was to discover a path to improved labor-management relations, and King agreed to investigate the “great problems of industrial relations” and to do a project that was, as King saw it, “to be intensive study rather than extensive investigation.”<sup>61</sup>

King’s contract began officially on October 1, 1914. As a result of preliminary meetings between King, Rockefeller Jr. and Greene, the Foundation stated King’s project as to conduct “an investigation of the great problem of industrial relations, with a special view to the discovery of some mutual relationship of labor and capital which would afford labor the protection it needs against oppression and exploitation, while at the same time promoting its efficiency as an instrument of economic production.” King was invited to outline his method for an investigation that would make the largest possible contribution to solving the labor-conflict problem. “It is our desire,” expressed the Foundation, “that the scope should be

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the University of Chicago and at Harvard University. King also worked in Canadian government in various capacities since 1900, including in the Canadian Department of Labour where he served as Deputy Minister from 1900 to 1908. Between 1900 and 1908, King worked as conciliator and mediator in at least 36 labor strikes in Canada. See “Exhibit A. Summary of Mr. King’s Experience With Labor Problems,” in Information Furnished by The Rockefeller Foundation in response to Questionnaires Submitted by United States Commission on Industrial Relations, submitted 25 January 1915, 50-1.

<sup>61</sup> F.A. McGregor, *The Fall and Rise of Mackenzie King: 1911-1919* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1962): 93; “Rockefeller Foundation, History Source Material,” RAC–History-Source Material, Volume 3, Series 900, 703. As Greene subsequently expressed to King in October 1914, he had in mind that the results of King’s studies would “give a practical application to the best plans for the amelioration of industrial conditions”; see Jerome D. Greene to W.L. Mackenzie King, October 30, 1914, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folders 10-11; see also J.D. Greene, “Future Organization of the Rockefeller Foundation,” 1914. As Rockefeller Jr. later stated it for the congressional commission, he wanted it known that on August 1, 1914, he contacted King, because “I felt increasingly the importance of finding some way of adjusting industrial disputes and preventing their recurrence.” One goal for King’s project, Rockefeller said, was a hope for “the opportunity for collective bargaining, for easy and constant conferences with reference to any matters of difference or any grievances which may come up, and any other advantages which may be derived from membership in the union”; see “Statement of John D. Rockefeller, Jr.,” Before United States Commission on Industrial Relations, at Washington DC, May 20-21, 1915, 5-6.

as broad and comprehensive as possible, for only as a result of such an intensive investigation can we hope to be in a position to make helpful suggestions looking toward the improvement in industrial relations.”<sup>62</sup>

When the decision was made to bring King on board, the idea to create an Institute of Economic Research, perhaps as a division at the Rockefeller Foundation, was still considered a possibility. Greene continued studying whether to bring such an institute into existence. He was even pleased when King’s research got underway, seeing King’s project as evidence that a broader research program might be undertaken. In a letter to Gay, Greene acknowledged “the close relationship which the work [of King] may have to the subjects in which an Institute of Economic Research will be interested.” He recommended that any expanded research program, “preceding any report that Mr. King may make within the next year or two, ought to be of the kind that an Institute of Economic Research would most appropriately father.” Of special continuing importance would be “keeping clear of controversial issues.”<sup>63</sup>

When Gay’s and Morawetz’s reports came on August 4th, Greene still had in mind an institute to perform data collection and analysis. Writing in response to the two reports he reiterated for the Foundation’s Executive Committee that the existence of King’s research did

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<sup>62</sup> These quotations were provided to the United States Congress by the Rockefeller Foundation in December 1914; see “Information Furnished by the Rockefeller Foundation in Response to Questionnaire Submitted by the United States Commission on Industrial Relations,” December 4, 1914, 10-11, 13. In some later testimony before Congress, the Foundation cited the words it communicated to King when he started his work: “The problem is so vast and the difficulties are so largely inherent in human nature that a complete solution is not to be had in five years or in a generation. On the other hand, it might be expected that hard study for a year or two could yield much light on the problem and particularly on the very question whether such studies could be profitably pursued for a longer or an indefinite time under such auspices and with such resources as the Rockefeller Foundation could provide.” King was clear at the outset, then, that there were no plans to organize any staff beyond himself. King did select one outside economics advisor, an economics professor Foerster of Harvard University, to compile a bibliography of existing publications on industrial relations, of which there were about five thousand titles; see “Information Furnished By The Rockefeller Foundation In Response to Supplementary Questionnaire Submitted by the United States Commission on Industrial Relations,” January 7, 1915, 37-8.

<sup>63</sup> Jerome D. Greene to Edwin F. Gay, July 2, 1914, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Folders 10-11.

not preclude pursuit of expanded research projects by an economics institute. A full-scale research institute could even assist King's efforts, as "The great undertaking Mr. King is about to enter will require a large amount of data; we will need an instrument for research and for the proper collection of material such as a properly organized Institute of Economic Research could furnish."<sup>64</sup>

Greene also responded to Gay's and Morawetz's reports. He asked for some clarifications and said he approved of the idea to initially study prices. Yet he wanted to know more about discussions concerning alternative forms of possible directorship for the institute. The official recommendation in Gay's report was that the institute should be run by three economists. Yet Gay's personal preference, as Greene had also learned, was for Wesley Mitchell as a lone director. There was also the dissenting report by Morawetz which recommended something of a rotating directorship. Greene asked Gay: "Will you consider the advisability of writing me a letter which will serve both as a rejoinder to Mr. Morawetz's proposition and an elaboration of the argument in favor of the majority report." Greene recognized a study of prices would be useful, especially given that research into price problems would "be fundamental to almost all other possible or profitable studies, and that is the only reason you have recommended it."<sup>65</sup>

Gay's report received attention from Gates as well, who still supported the propaganda approach. In a letter to Rockefeller Jr. (already noted), Gates opined that the

<sup>64</sup> Jerome D. Greene to Members of the Executive Committee, August 27, 1914, RAC-RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folders 10-11.

<sup>65</sup> Jerome D. Greene to Edwin F. Gay, August 10, 1914 and August 18, 1914, RAC-RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folders 10-11.

truly urgent objective was to “get before all reading and thinking people,” from the lowest demagogues to the finest ministers, “a few of the elemental principle of economics.”<sup>66</sup>

No doubt by late August people in the Rockefeller Foundation knew that events at Ludlow, though over with in terms of physical violence, were just beginning to have their potential impact of negative publicity on the Rockefellers. The United States Congress was calling for investigative hearings, which indeed would take place in just a few months’ time. Trustees of the Rockefeller Foundation met, on October 21, 1914, and they discussed Gay’s and Morawetz’s reports. The trustees decided no immediate action should be taken. A main reason stated by the trustees was “the fact that since the question of establishing an Institute for Economic Research had been under consideration, an Investigation of Industrial Relations had been instituted under the direction of Mr. W.L. Mackenzie King.” Gates and Rockefeller Jr. quickly expressed agreement with the trustees, and by the end of October it was made official: no economics institute. Greene also accepted the decision, though he had to express it was “a disappointment,” partly out of his personal confidence that “King’s work will demonstrate the need for the Institute.”<sup>67</sup>

We will see in the next chapter that King’s appointment to make the intensive study of industrial relations – a study motivated by Rockefeller interests at Ludlow – would soon be interpreted as the creation of an experimental social science division at the Foundation.

<sup>66</sup> Frederick Gates to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., August 18, 1914, RAC–RF, Gates Collection, Box 3, Folder 58.

<sup>67</sup> See for example W.L. Mackenzie King to Jerome D. Greene, October 21, 1914; Jerome D. Greene to Edwin F. Gay, October 28, 1914, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folders 10-11. “Information Furnished By The Rockefeller Foundation In Response to Supplementary Questionnaire Submitted by the United States Commission on Industrial Relations,” January 7, 1915, 45. John D. Rockefeller Jr., to Frederick T. Gates, August 24, 1914, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folders 10-11. As recorded in the Foundation’s year-ending report for 1914-15, the idea for an Institute for Economic Research, which was “actuated by the desire to study the causes of social and industrial unrest,” was turned down mostly because the purpose for the institute was not easily agreed upon at the present time; see *President’s Review and Annual Report for 1915* (New York: Rockefeller Foundation, 1915): 25.



## CHAPTER 3. NEW PRINCIPLES FOR PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT OF SOCIAL RESEARCH–1914-23

### 3.1 Introduction

By late 1914, the Rockefeller Foundation had a new division to do social research: a “Division of Industrial Relations,” headed by William Lyon Mackenzie King. The division was envisioned so that King could develop one major study that would resemble what was already accomplished with the Sage Foundation’s survey of urban working and living conditions, as well as what was nearing completion by the Carnegie Institution’s division of economics and sociology. Like the tentative steps taken by the Sage Foundation and the Carnegie Institution, what was created by the Rockefeller Foundation was a project headed by one important figure willing to comprehensively study of one concrete and important problem: industrial labor conflict. King’s study – although it ended up being published outside the Rockefeller Foundation – would help pave the way for a new branch of Rockefeller philanthropy to be created between 1918 and 1923.

### 3.2 King’s industrial research study–1914-15

In October 1914, W. L. Mackenzie King began his project for the Rockefeller Foundation. King followed a research approach that he personally explained to the Foundation, as in a letter to Edwin Gay, King recorded that he and Rockefeller Jr. believed the planned study of labor issues would meet “the desire to make an important contribution toward our knowledge of the causes of the prevailing unrest.” King intended to use rigorous and objective methods to explain what was happening to cause such events as the tragedy at

Ludlow. King's research was supported by the Foundation trustees, who favored a project to discover "if any substantial improvement in the relations between capital and labor could be worked out on a basis compatible with sound economics." King's research was also approved by Foundation Secretary Jerome C. Greene, who saw it as a starting point toward a "far-reaching study of the labor question in America." Greene believed in the value of social research for gathering facts on important problems, and he supported the idea that King should undertake "investigation of the great problem of industrial relations, with a special view to the discovery of some organization or union, or at any rate of some mutual relationship of capital and labor which could afford to labor the protection it needs against oppression and exploitation while at the same time promoting its efficiency as an instrument of economic production." The main idea, in other words, was that King's research findings ought to be able to help improve the conditions of workers as well as owners.<sup>68</sup>

What was still needed was to precisely define the boundaries on King's relationships to the Rockefeller Foundation and the Rockefeller family. Officially King worked for the Foundation, as direct ties to the Foundation seemed far preferable to having the public perceive King as working for the Rockefeller family. Yet what the public would end up seeing was, to some extent, beyond the Foundation's control. The public tended to see King and his research activities as further evidence of Rockefeller wrongdoing. And in reality King did end up having various kinds of contact with Rockefeller Jr. King conveyed to Rockefeller Jr. some personal estimation of potential impacts of European war conditions on business interests in oil and mining. King groomed Rockefeller Jr. for personal meetings to

<sup>68</sup> The period of King's hiring by the Rockefeller Foundation is studied in some detail by David M. Grossman, "American Foundations and the Support of Economic Research," *Minerva* 20, 1-2 (Spring-Summer 1982): 59-82, esp. 69-72. "Rockefeller Foundation, History Source Material," RAC-History-Source Material, Volume 3, Series 900, 697, 702; see also Chapter 2, fn 46.

be held with workers and management at Ludlow. King even made personal trips to Colorado during 1915 to form first-hand understanding of local conditions. Finally King groomed Rockefeller Jr. for a series of appearances before the United States Congress.<sup>69</sup>

### 3.3 Rockefeller Jr.'s congressional testimony–1914-15

Through the latter two-thirds of 1914 the nation stood stunned by news of labor violence, especially what happened at Ludlow. The U.S. Congress had questions for Rockefeller Jr., and on December 4, 1914, Rockefeller Jr. met a request for information by submitting responses to a series of twenty-nine questions. A number of the questions aimed to learn about King and the purpose for the Foundation's Division of Industrial Relations. In addressing the question, "What were the facts, reasons and considerations which led to the establishment of the Industrial Relations Division of the Foundation?," the Rockefeller Foundation said that labor violence was an urgent problem and that the research goal was to use social science to discover its causes. The Foundation took time to describe in basic detail the work they asked King to perform.<sup>70</sup>

A month later, on January 7, 1915, the Foundation was called again to testify to subcommittee questions. Asked if King had reported anything about his methods and the organization of his research, the Foundation stated: "He is proceeding as a student who is carefully surveying a special field of work, with a view to ascertaining in the first instance how far investigation of the great problem of Industrial Relations has been already profitably

<sup>69</sup> Henry S. Ferns and B. Ostry, *The Age of Mackenzie King* (London: Heinemann, 1955). More positive views are in Fred A. McGregor, *The Fall and Rise of Mackenzie King, 1911-1919* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1962); Robert M. Dawson, *William Lyon Mackenzie King: A Political Biography* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1958).

<sup>70</sup> "Information Furnished By The Rockefeller Foundation In Response to Questionnaire Submitted by the United States Commission on Industrial Relations," December 4, 1914.

carried out by others, and determining as to wherein further investigation may be made to advantage.” The Foundation emphasized for the subcommittee that it would make no attempt to influence King in “the questions he may wish to ask or the course he may wish to follow, in pursuing the work he has undertaken for the Foundation.” Also noted by the Foundation was that no interim progress reports were being asked for.<sup>71</sup>

Rockefeller Jr. was brought back before Congress again, this time on January 25, 1915. He prepared an eleven-page statement which noted in opening that “The Commission has asked my view as to what extent the stockholders and directors of a corporation are responsible for the labor conditions which are produced.” Rockefeller’s answer was essentially no different from his previous testimony, only a bit more detailed. He explained that in any publicly-owned business there are many different responsibilities that have “to be divided and vested” in many different persons, including stockholders, directors, officers, managers, workers, and others as well. The one legitimate thing that a large stockholder such as Rockefeller Jr. can do is attempt to exercise “moral influence” over persons who actually run the daily operations of a company. Such influence was what Rockefeller said he tried to exert. When it comes to labor conditions in particular, “so far as they are within the control of a corporation, [they] are a matter for which the officers of the corporation are primarily responsible and with which they, by reason of their experience and their first-hand acquaintance with the facts, are best qualified to deal.” When asked if he believed it was wrong for laborers to strike, Rockefeller Jr. stated: “I believe it to be just as proper and advantageous for labor to associate itself into organized groups for the advancement of its

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<sup>71</sup> “Information Furnished By The Rockefeller Foundation In Response to Supplementary Questionnaire Submitted by the United States Commission on Industrial Relations,” January 7, 1915, 36-9.

legitimate interests, as for capital to combine for the same objects.” Only in this way, Rockefeller Jr. believed, could collective bargaining processes accomplish the fairest results for all parties. Rockefeller Jr. added, with some emphasis, that he had the “deepest concern” about the suffering that has happened among laborers and their families at Ludlow. He hoped there could be found adequate ways to prevent this from happening in the future, and this was what King’s study was all about. The Foundation’s new division was needed because in terms of making a modern business-society model work, what was needed was more scientific research aimed at getting the mechanism of public stock ownership to succeed.<sup>72</sup>

Rockefeller Jr. was invited once more to testify, this time on May 20, 1915. In response to much public and media reaction to what he supposedly previously told the commission about having “no knowledge” of conditions in the Colorado coal fields, Rockefeller Jr. stressed he indeed had kept quite informed. “I have sought to inform myself and have not hesitated to make suggestions looking towards more adequate representation on the part of the employees and participation by them in the determining of matters pertaining to their working conditions.” Rockefeller Jr. again stressed his earlier words to Congress, “that I have studiously avoided anything that might afford ground... for the belief that in any particular I was seeking to dictate a policy or to arbitrarily control any situation.” Rockefeller Jr. wanted it clear on the record that all policies in Colorado prior to the strike “were decided

<sup>72</sup> “Statement of John D. Rockefeller, Jr.,” Before United States Commission on Industrial Relations, at New York City, January 25, 1915, 1-3, 7-8. A critical reading of the message being conveyed by Rockefeller in his January 1915 meetings with Frank P. Walsh’s commission is in Graham Adams Jr., *Age of Violence, 1910-15: The Activities and Findings of the United States Commission on Industrial Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966). Adams studies factors and episodes associated with labor violence just prior to the First World War, and he sees a young and inexperienced Rockefeller Jr. “plead[ing] almost total ignorance.” Rockefeller was put in a position where “the tycoon admitted that he had not visited the company in ten years. He did not know how many of the employees worked twelve hours a day or seven days a week,” and so on. “[T]he millionaire disclaimed any familiarity with CFI’s [Colorado Fuel and Iron Company] policies toward home ownership, rent charges, or company stores.” What is valuable about Adams’s interpretation is this was how the nation interpreted Rockefeller’s testimony at the time.

upon and carried out by the executive officers at Denver without asking our advice.” Yet he also wanted it known that, in December 1913, his New York office even directly invited an investigation of the ongoing mining-camp unrest by three federal judges. Finally he wanted put on record the many things he and others in the New York office did in the two months following the Ludlow tragedy: such as providing for injured employees and their families, asking for intervention by disinterested mediators, and even requesting that an adjudication board to be appointed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.<sup>73</sup>

When Rockefeller Jr.’s four testimonies from December 1914 to May 1915 are taken altogether, what stands out is that the U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations asked him tough questions. They investigated the Rockefeller family’s business and philanthropic motives, and they called upon Rockefeller Jr. and others to testify on relationships between the Rockefeller family, the Rockefeller philanthropies, King’s activities, and various other research organizations. One such organization, the New York Bureau of Municipal Research, reported to the commission that they had received direct support from the Rockefellers since 1907. The original director of the bureau, Frederick A. Cleveland, even recalled for the commission that his dismissal from his directorship was partly because he disagreed with certain conditions attached to receiving financial support from Rockefeller Sr. Also brought up by the commission was the issue of Rockefeller Sr.’s previous offers to help financially support publications by the United States Chamber of Commerce. This attempt, which was not accepted by the Chamber of Commerce, became further evidence held against the

<sup>73</sup> “Statement of John D. Rockefeller, Jr.,” Before United States Commission on Industrial Relations, at Washington DC, May 20-21, 1915, 1-2, 5.

Rockefellers as persons attempting to gain too much power over potential government oversight of business.<sup>74</sup>

Much criticism by the House commission during the four hearings perhaps had some basis. During the early 1910s, for example, the Rockefellers indeed gave money to the New York Bureau of Municipal Research. Both Rockefeller Sr. and Jr. had also considered providing financial support to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to help in publishing economic data. One lesson to be learned from the concerns of the House commission was that direct donations by the Rockefeller family could prove problematic.<sup>75</sup>

Following all of Rockefeller Jr.'s congressional testimonies, more than ever the public turned to questioning King's relationship to the Rockefeller family. In addition to the congressional criticism and media distain, many intellectuals and scholars were also increasingly critical of the Rockefellers. Particularly disapproved of was Rockefeller Jr.'s testimony in which he claimed that, when it came to King's studies, in no way was the Rockefeller Foundation attempting to control the uses of social science for Rockefeller business purposes. Particularly Rockefeller Jr. emphasized the large number of academic economists who were being consulted by the Rockefeller Foundation. Rockefeller Jr.'s congressional testimony showed him believing that the problem of industrial relations around the nation was a problem that social scientists could speedily discover solutions to. When Rockefeller Jr. hired King, he was doing what was right according to a framework of modern business-society relations. The framework was one in which different groups all needed to

<sup>74</sup> "Statement of William H. Allen," Before the United States Commission on Industrial Relations, Final Reports and Testimony, VIII-IX (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1916): 8327-42. Allen's summary testimony was damning. The hearings succeeded in raising many questions about the Rockefellers.

<sup>75</sup> For more on Frederick Cleveland and the New York Bureau of Municipal Research in particular, see Jane S. Dahlberg, *The New York Bureaus of Municipal Research: Pioneers in Government Administration* (New York: New York University Press, 1966).

play their part, and the real problem resulting in all the violence was that social scientists had been slow to make their required contribution. The Rockefeller Foundation, with its new division, was trying to help remedy this. Rockefeller Jr. had been thinking “there was something fundamentally wrong in the condition of affairs which rendered possible the loss of human lives, engendered hatred and bitterness and brought suffering and privation upon hundreds of human beings.” In fact it was Rockefeller Jr. ’s resolve to help perfect the new business-society model that led him to appoint King: “I determined that insofar as lay within my power I would seek means of avoiding the possibility of similar conflicts arising elsewhere...It was in this way that I came to recommend to my colleagues in the Rockefeller Foundation the instituting of a series of studies into the fundamental problems arising out of industrial relations.”<sup>76</sup>

#### 3.4 King’s project continues–1915-17

As to King and his study of labor problems, the purpose of the project got adjusted slightly in response to everything that was happening. In some of their testimony for Congress, the Foundation emphasized that King’s project fit with the Rockefeller Foundation’s mission statement:

Having in mind that hardly any relation in life is more far reaching than the industrial relation, and particularly having in view the growing tendency to misunderstanding and lack of harmony between employers and employees, resulting in great injury to both as well as to the general public, the Foundation has felt that no subject could be

<sup>76</sup> United States Commission on Industrial Relations, Final Reports and Testimony, VIII-IX; “Rockefeller Foundation, History Source Material,” RAC–History-Source Material, Volume 3, Series 900, 698.



more worthy of study, and that if it could work out sound and substantial improvements in the relation of capital and labor, it could hardly do anything better calculated 'to promote the well-being of mankind,' for which purpose the Foundation was created.<sup>77</sup>

The Foundation emphasized that in no sense would King's research "be local or restricted, or carried on with particular reference to any existing situation, or to the conditions in any one country." King's research was to be objective in spirit and execution in every way. When asked by Congress what kinds of investigations King aimed to pursue, the Foundation answered this was being "left to Mr. King to decide." The hope was simply "that by careful study of world experience there may be disclosed methods of adjusting individual relations which if applied will prove of permanent value." King's work, "in spirit and in method, will be akin to that of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research. In so far as Mr. King's inquiries have to do with industrial controversies, his attitude will be that of a physician who investigates the nature and causes of the pathological conditions with which he has to deal, with a view, if possible, to the discovery of effective remedies."<sup>78</sup>

The Foundation redefined King's role in October 1915, clarifying his position solely as a scientific researcher, and not as an advisor. Foundation trustees placed King's one-year budget entirely within the Division of Industrial Relations and made clear that King's duty

<sup>77</sup> "Information Furnished By The Rockefeller Foundation In Response to Questionnaire Submitted by the United States Commission on Industrial Relations," December 4, 1914, 11-12.

<sup>78</sup> "Information Furnished By The Rockefeller Foundation In Response to Questionnaire Submitted by the United States Commission on Industrial Relations," December 4, 1914, 11-13, 16-17. The Rockefeller Foundation strongly emphasized "that the purpose of this inquiry is not to apportion blame in present or past misunderstandings, nor to justify any particular point of view; the sole purpose is to be constructively helpful." The Foundation also noted an idea in the works to create an economics institute – what they called a "Committee of Leading Economists and Business Men" – the idea for which had been informally discussed over a few years, even prior to 1913 (pp.14-15).

was to produce a broad and general study, with no special focus on the Ludlow situation. King would, indeed, continue with the broader approach until completing his report.<sup>79</sup>

Also in October 1915, Rockefeller Jr. made a personal trip to Colorado to make his first-ever visit with employee representatives of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company. Speaking with employees, company officials, and other miners' representatives, Rockefeller Jr. outlined his vision of what he wanted to convince the group of workers is "the best thing for us all." Rockefeller Jr. spoke in terms of all groups in society obligated to work together to make capitalism work. Workers must fulfill their appropriate economic and social roles. Managers and owners are to play their roles as well. Rockefeller could not have endeared himself highly to the workers when he emphasized his belief that miners and their families always get their fair pay. Furthermore, it is actually the Rockefeller family that often gets nothing, if not even less than nothing (i.e., a financial loss), by the simple act of operating the company which always makes sure to pay workers' wages first. Employee representatives were quite unable to relate to Rockefeller Jr.'s notion that workers, managers, and company officials are all "in our own family."<sup>80</sup>

Mackenzie King completed his study by the end of 1916. What King created was a somewhat idiosyncratic method of scientific presentation. He blended together an extensive quantity of data summaries and tables with various personal observations in an attempt to introduce his observations and conclusions in ways that would to lend an air of objectivity to the overall enterprise. King's numerous tables and charts seemed especially designed to put a scientific gloss to the whole affair. All the Foundation leaders, including Rockefeller Jr., it

<sup>79</sup> Rockefeller Foundation, "Minutes," October 27, 1915, RAC-RF.

<sup>80</sup> John D. Rockefeller Jr., *Address by John D. Rockefeller Jr., Delivered at Pueblo, Colorado, October 1915* (Denver: W.H. Kistler, 1915).

turned out were dissatisfied with King's results. George E. Vincent, the new President of the Foundation, freed King to publish the report on his own accord, and King officially ceased his work for the Foundation. He published his extremely detailed study as *Industry and Humanity*, in 1918.<sup>81</sup>

Dissatisfaction at the Rockefeller Foundation with the results of King's research left the Foundation wondering if research on any kind of social problems might face fundamental limits of practicality and execution. Perhaps, they alternatively wondered, the Foundation might have insisted on tighter control over what they wanted from King (even though, of course, there were many reasons at the time why the Foundation had decided not to do this). If the Foundation was to be a grant-awarding institution with an interest in social research, then a question needed to be addressed: How might prospective projects in social science be evaluated for Foundation financial support without overly evaluating any potential research findings and their implications?

By 1916 and 1917 the Rockefeller Foundation recognized they needed to consider ways to attain sufficient separation between the Rockefeller family, the Rockefeller Foundation, and any research supported by the Foundation. The family moved to further dissociate themselves from decisions at the Foundation, as Jerome Greene and Ivy Lee drew lines between ties to be continued and ties to be severed. The Foundation needed to place a tight definition on what it would mean to not be an "operating" institution (i.e., an institution doing research), but a grant-awarding institution only.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>81</sup> McGregor, *Fall and Rise of Mackenzie King*, 215-26, 247-8. See also William B. Spaulding, "Why Rockefeller Supported Medical Education in Canada: The William Lyon Mackenzie King Connection," *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 10 (1993): 27-76. King published his book as *Industry and Humanity: A Study of the Principles Underlying Industrial Reconstruction* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1918).

<sup>82</sup> See Grossman, "American Foundations and the Support of Economic Research," 75.

### 3.5 Principles for establishing new institutes–1915-20

In the aftermath of the abandoned attempt to create an economics institute and of the failure of King’s project to meet expectations, Foundation Secretary Jerome Greene initiated new discussion concerning potential requirements for creating a Rockefeller-supported social research division. One person with whom he interacted was Edward C. Pickering, a leading physicist of the day. If the idea for any kind of “Division of Social Research” was now eliminated, Greene wondered if a long-term partnership could even work between a philanthropic organization and university-based research. To get such a partnership to work, what would be important would be to identify legitimate rationale to serve the interests of both parties. Through his discussion with Pickering, Greene hoped to better understand the appropriate degree of separation between a philanthropic foundation, university researchers, and any eventual uses of research results. Pickering, actually, initiated the exchange of ideas by asking for \$50,000 from the Foundation. Pickering hoped to disperse the money as small grants-in-aid to established “men of genius” in physics. Dispersal of funds was to be administered solely by a committee comprised of members of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Pickering’s request provided Greene with an opportunity to think through a tangible situation, and to state some rules. Though Greene respected Pickering, he had to decline the request. It would be in poor judgment, Greene determined, to begin “diverting a great Foundation from its true function of experiment, discovery, initiative, and demonstration, to being a mere bag of money.” One extreme solution thus was out, as a foundation could not react to each and every research problem simply by handing over money. The long-running principle of philanthropy at the Rockefeller Foundation –

espoused for roughly a quarter century by Gates, as well as by Rockefeller Sr. – forbid such a thing anyhow. Yet how much could the Rockefeller Foundation direct overall actions taken with granted money? Again a medium position needed to be found. The question therefore was: How to find a middle course between no control and complete control over the direction of philanthropically supported research?<sup>83</sup>

The Rockefeller Foundation already recognized they did not want to have too much input into any specific social research to be done on Foundation funds. Perhaps some guidance could be obtained from what was happening in the physical sciences? Philanthropic support of research in the physical sciences was beginning to be done by establishing entirely independent research institutes. Notable cases were the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research (created by John D. Rockefeller in 1901) and certain dimensions of the Carnegie Institution of Washington (created by Andrew Carnegie in 1902). These institutes were showing that philanthropic organizations could help develop research communities in the physical sciences on a fairly large scale. Yet still unshown was that financial support could be successfully directed to individual researchers.<sup>84</sup>

Pickering, a national leader in the “endowment of research” cause, did not give up exploring the problem at hand. He got into additional discussion with geneticist Thomas Hunt Morgan, who like Pickering was a Foundation-supported scientist. The two discussed the Rockefeller Foundation’s proper role in supporting research, and in particular, they discussed possible frameworks that might allow Rockefeller funds to be used for grants to

<sup>83</sup> See Robert E. Kohler, “Science, Foundations, and American Universities in the 1920s,” *OSIRIS* n.s. 3 (1987): 135-64, esp. 138. See also Howard Plotkin, “Edward C. Pickering and the Endowment of Scientific Research in America, 1877-1918,” *Isis* 69 (1978): 44-57, esp. 52-6.

<sup>84</sup> George W. Corner, *A History of the Rockefeller Institute, 1901-1953: Origins and Growth* (New York: The Rockefeller Institute Press, 1964); E. Richard Brown, *Rockefeller Medicine Men: Medicine and Capitalism in America* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979).

train specific individual researchers. Pickering recognized that such grants could help improve education, whereas Morgan emphasized that such grants could be used to assist researchers to try new scientific methods potentially capable of producing examples of outstanding science – examples of a kind that could then be used to instruct entire scientific communities how to do better science. Pickering and Morgan may or may not have shared specific details of their discussion with Greene, but their basic ideas were surely present in the thinking that Greene and others were doing at the time.<sup>85</sup>

The kinds of discussion represented by the exchanges between Greene, Pickering, and Morgan are typical of what leading scientists were considering by 1916. Greene, in particular, came to recognize one field of social research that could probably be financially supported: that the Rockefeller Foundation should establish an independent organization as an “Institute for Government Research” (IGR). Greene got an exploratory committee approved to assess the idea, and with a Foundation grant of \$50,000 the committee did good work. They asked: How might problems of federal and state governance be studied with truly scientific methods? The committee recommended creating a private research organization with responsibilities to study the efficiency of federal government. An assumption was that such research would be relatively uncontroversial, given that whatever government was doing, it should at least be doing it efficiently. There was, therefore, a valid place for social research to determine whether efficient action was really what government was doing. The goals of government were not going to be questioned, but what would be studied was how

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<sup>85</sup> Robert E. Kohler finds no firm evidence that this specific 1916 dialogue between Pickering and Morgan directly reached the Rockefeller Foundation. However the strong suggestion is that such a topic of debate was typical of the time; Kohler, “Science, Foundations, and American Universities,” 138. See also Gerald Jonas, *The Circuit Riders: Rockefeller Money and the Rise of Modern Science* (New York: Norton, 1989): 60-62, 84-86.

well government met its specified goals. Under the directorship of Greene as well as Frederick A. Cleveland (who had been director of New York's Bureau of Municipal Research), the exploratory committee worked to develop a research program for an IGR, and the Foundation officially established the IGR in 1916 "to make investigations on problems of governmental administration and advise legislators and administrators upon request." Robert S. Brookings, a reputable young economist, was appointed as director of the IGR, and the institute quickly built a solid program under financial support of the Foundation.<sup>86</sup>

Also in 1916 another noteworthy organization was established as the National Research Council (NRC). Spearheaded in large part by Pickering, specifically as a solution to the problem he discussed with Greene and Morgan, the NRC was an organization to help coordinate and financially support the physical sciences. Inaugural chairman of the NRC was James Rowland Angell, under whose leadership the NRC quickly proved its value. Before long the NRC got itself considered for philanthropic support, which it received from both the Rockefeller Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation in 1919. The major endowment – to the tune of five million dollars – came from the Carnegie Corporation. Initial interest of Rockefeller philanthropy was to learn how to administer fellowships, and the Foundation proposed supporting fellowships in the physical sciences to be administered by the NRC.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Jerome Greene and Raymond Fosdick both served on the exploratory committee. For information on the creation of the Institute for Government Research see William F. Willoughby, "The Institute for Government Research," *American Political Science Review* 12 (February 1918): 49-62; also Charles A. Beard, *The Promotion of Research in the Technical Problems of Government* (New York: National Institute of Public Administration, 1924). It might be noted that, in 1919, Brookings would turn to Carnegie philanthropy for substantial additional support for the IGR; see Charles B. Saunders, Jr., *The Brookings Institution: A Fifty Year History* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1966).

<sup>87</sup> On the Rockefeller Foundation's support of the NRC, see Nathan Reingold, "The Case of the Disappearing Laboratory," *American Quarterly* 29 (1977): 79-101. See also Corner, *A History of the Rockefeller Institute*; Nathan Reingold, "National Science Policy in a Private Foundation: The Carnegie Institution of Washington," in Alexandra Oleson and John Voss, eds., *The Organization of Knowledge in Modern America, 1860-1920* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979): 313-42. The "community development" understanding of

With a goal to better connect private science to public purpose, the NRC succeeded in persuading philanthropists that scientists truly care about the public welfare. The NRC showed that scientists could be trusted to use grants in the interest of pursuing unbiased research, which therefore served the public interest. The NRC worked according to a committee structure, with different committees responsible for organizing cooperative research projects in different fields as well as between overlapping fields. The NRC committees were responsible for selecting fellowship recipients, and any philanthropists who gave money to the NRC quickly learned the NRC could be trusted to direct funds to useful research areas.<sup>88</sup>

With its Rockefeller and Carnegie funds, the NRC did good work showing how to administer research fellowships. They also showed how to begin building “research centers.” In fact these two levels of attention – individual fellowships and research centers – were connected, in that fellowships could be used to draw the best talent into specific disciplines as well as to particular locations (such as up-and-coming science schools like Caltech, Stanford, and MIT). In both cases fellowships could be used to help build research communities.<sup>89</sup>

Although the NRC was an organization of physical scientists, the chairman of the organization, James Angell, was actually a behavioral scientist. Angell had been one of the founders of the psychology department at the University of Chicago at a time when

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the sponsorship of physical science early in the twentieth century is Robert Kohler’s; see Kohler, “Science, Foundations, and American Universities.”

<sup>88</sup> Rexmond C. Cochrane, *The National Academy of Sciences: The First Hundred Years, 1863-1963* (Washington, DC: National Academy of Sciences, 1978), chapters 9 and 10; Ellis W. Hawley, *The Great War and the Search for a Modern Order* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1979), chapters 5 and 6. See also Daniel J. Kevles, “George Ellery Hale, the First World War, and the Advancement of Science in America,” *Isis* 59 (1968): 427-37.

<sup>89</sup> *National Research Council Fellowships, 1919-1938* (Washington, DC: National Research Council, 1938); Myron J. Rand, “The National Research Fellowships,” *Scientific Monthly* 73 (1951): 71-90.



psychology was generally considered to be the most matured of the social and behavioral sciences. Angell would leave the NRC in 1920 to take his experience leading a successful five-year building period and assume directorship of the Carnegie Corporation. Once at the Carnegie Corporation, Angell hired a former student of his, Beardsley Rumel. As Angell's assistant, Rumel (a 1915 psychology Ph.D. from the University of Chicago under Angell's directorship) joined Angell for Angell's one year at the helm of the Carnegie Corporation. Angell implemented a major organizational shift at the Carnegie Corporation by directing an increased level of financial resources toward developing university-based research centers. While continuing to support both the IGR and the NRC, the Angell-led Carnegie Corporation got some new programs started. Whereas the previous main purpose for the Carnegie Corporation had been to distribute money to other Carnegie programs, the shift made by Angell was to use Carnegie money as block grants to directly build university graduate schools in the physical sciences. Here, then, was an additional part of the picture for how to help develop scientific communities.<sup>90</sup>

Angell's point of view had been influenced by Pickering's long-running message, as well as by discussion with NRC activist Robert Millikin. Millikin even published an open recommendation in 1919, calling on philanthropists to take the lead in helping develop university-based research centers. Millikin's plan, which encouraged philanthropic awards of direct aid to universities, was along the line of a question still open at the Rockefeller

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<sup>90</sup> During his time at the NRC, James Angell published "The Organization of Research," *Scientific Monthly* 11 (1920): 26-42. A couple years later, but also on the subject of what the NRC was doing, he published "Reasons and Plans for Research Relating to Industrial Personnel," *Journal of Personnel Research* 1 (1922): 1-6. See also W.S. Hunter, "James Rowland Angell, 1869-1949," *Biographical Memoirs of the National Academy of Sciences* 26 (1951): 191-208; James R. Angell, "Autobiography of James Rowland Angell," in C. Murchison, ed., *A History of Psychology in Autobiography* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1961).

Foundation: Should any amount of the Rockefeller Foundation philanthropy be used to directly support specific research areas in university settings?<sup>91</sup>

### 3.6 The social sciences during the World War–1915-19

The First World War was a watershed event in many ways, including in the history of social science. Some of this importance had to do with psychological testing, which was refined substantially during the war. Within the military's program of administering psychological tests, a number of newly minted psychology Ph.D.s experienced first-hand the use of behavioral science in society. Among persons receiving training in developing and administering psychology tests for prospective soldiers were Robert Yerkes, James Angell, and Beardsley Ruml. Also during the war there were other applied uses of social science. One example was to help formulate government policy as, notably, the War Industries Board drew on the expertise of economists and other social scientists, including Robert S. Brookings, to identify effective monetary allocations to different wartime needs. Some social scientists were also employed in governmental information and war-support campaigns, the idea being that social scientists could be specialists at persuading people. This latter idea, in fact, was catching on in the business world as well, as psychologists were already being used to help develop advertising campaigns for various consumer products.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Robert A. Millikin, "The New Opportunity in Science," *Science* 50 (1919): 285-297. See also Maurice J.G.C. Caullery, *Universities and Scientific Life in the United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1922); Robert E. Kohler, "Philanthropy and Science," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 129, 1 (1985): 9-13.

<sup>92</sup> For a contemporary assessment see Harold D. Lasswell, *Propaganda Techniques in the World War* (New York: Knopf, 1927). See also Barry D. Karl and Stanley N. Katz, "The American Private Philanthropic Foundation and the Public Sphere, 1890-1930," *Minerva* 19 (Summer 1981): 236-270; Nancy K. Bristow, *Making Men Moral: Social Engineering during the Great War* (New York: New York University Press, 1996); David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1980): esp. 45-92.

When the war ended, a shortage of scientific manpower suddenly existed in certain fields in the United States; for as the economy improved, businesses recruited more researchers than ever before. Business needs included specialists in physical sciences of various sorts, and also included social scientists. A response to this needed to be to encourage more partnership between philanthropies and university-based science departments. Universities were beginning to increase their emphasis on research prestige, and as university status was getting judged more and more on the basis of research production, universities needed money to help increase such production; the supply of science graduates to universities definitely needed to be boosted. By about 1920, one of the first persons in a philanthropic position of power to recognize this demand factor was Wickliffe Rose, at the Rockefeller Foundation. Rose – who we will discuss in a moment – tended to believe scientists inherently bring with them a progressive way of thinking.<sup>93</sup>

### 3.7 The NBER and the Institute of Economics–1918-20

Meanwhile, the Harvard economist Edwin Gay interacted again with persons at AT&T and the Rockefeller Foundation. Gay initiated a new appeal for an economics institute, specifically proposing a study of income distribution in the United States, which was a newly recognized problem during a brief but severe post-war recession. In communication with Malcolm C. Rorty, a vice president at AT&T, Gay argued that an income-distribution study was urgently needed in the interest of national economic

<sup>93</sup> For contemporary perspectives see J.J. Carty, *Science and Business* (Washington, DC: National Research Council, 1924); T.L. Kibber, “Business Research – Significance and Technique,” *Journal of Social Forces* 4 (June 1926): 722-9. See also Laurence R. Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965): esp. cha. 3; Roger L. Geiger, *To Advance Knowledge: The Growth of American Research Universities, 1900-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Patrick J. McGrath, *Scientists, Business and the State, 1890-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

performance. A goal already of some interest to Rorty was the possibility that “a considerably greater degree of political stability than exists now could be brought about if certain of the fundamental facts of industry and business were determined with accuracy or within reasonable limits of error.” Rorty was willing to offer his company’s data, thus taking care of that recognized need, and Gay and Rorty began considering whether the Harvard Business School might be appropriate as home base for a new economics research institute.<sup>94</sup>

Gay, however, lacked confidence that Harvard’s resources were up to the task. He decided to put Rorty in touch with Columbia University economist Wesley Mitchell, who along with Gay had already been through the in-depth discussion that was part of the earlier effort at the Rockefeller Foundation to establish an economics research institute. Gay and Mitchell each recognized the basics about what was needed for institutional independence for such an institute, and it was in the context of such recognition that Gay encouraged Rorty to consider Mitchell’s qualifications as a possible director of such an institute. Mitchell liked the ideas that Rorty and Gay presented. And so, based loosely out of Columbia, Mitchell, Gay and Rorty quickly established what was initially named the “Committee on National Income” (CNI). Mitchell got some committee working rules stated at the outset, and he made clear his belief that the “character of economics is such as to require co-operation” between many researchers representing many subfields of economics. The committee would need to be made fairly sizeable if it was to be truly useful, as well as to be neutralized in any political

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<sup>94</sup> Quoted in Herbert Heaton, *A Scholar in Action: Edwin F. Gay* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968): 93.

views. The founding parties were all agreed that much more was needed than merely a single researcher studying a single problem.<sup>95</sup>

In the winter of 1919-20, from out of the CNI a national research organization was born: the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER). At a much larger scale than the original CNI, the NBER was in a way a successor organization to the U.S. government's Central Bureau of Planning and Statistics, a wartime organization that had ceased receiving governmental support after the war. Gay and Mitchell had both been active in helping direct projects at the Central Bureau, and now they worked together to establish the National Bureau as an independent institution with an aim to provide scientific data analysis for policymakers. Consistent with the idea to seek out greater fundamental knowledge, the explicit mission of the NBER was "to encourage in the broadest and most liberal manner investigations, research and discovery and the application of knowledge to the well-being of Mankind." NBER procedures were established to try and assure objective research results: "...to conduct, or assist in making of, exact and impartial investigations in the field of economics, social and industrial science, and to this end co-operate with governments, universities, learned societies and individuals." Mitchell asked whether some way might be found to achieve social progress that would be better than the "jerky" old reformist movements that resulted from so many waves of agitators over preceding decades. Mitchell wanted high quality scientific planning for social change. "Are we not intelligent enough to devise a steadier and more certain method of progress?," he asked. The NBER was, to Mitchell, an organization to help with the "intelligent experimenting and detailed planning"

<sup>95</sup> Heaton, *A Scholar in Action*, 93-5, 97. Mitchell believed the management committee should be comprised of scholars, and that among them should be included "conservative and radical elements in such manner as to secure the widest acceptance of its findings"(p. 94).

that modern society needs. The NBER, without any direct connections to government, was to be a truly independent and professional social science organization. Mitchell wanted a blend of theoretical and empirical methods to be practiced in the NBER, and he especially emphasized the need for systematic interplay between the two – thereby making the two really become part of one method. Mitchell was adamant about the need to transform economics from a field based on dusty old theory to one founded on tangible, factual research; this was what the NBER needed do if it was to show it deserved Rockefeller support.<sup>96</sup>

What needed to be proven to Rockefeller philanthropists was that the NBER could succeed as a truly non-ideological, non-partisan research organization. One of the first projects the NBER completed was *Income in the United States*, a report going a long way toward establishing that the NBER could do objective and unbiased research. The NBER earned its first major endowment from the Carnegie Corporation, when Angell provided funds for general research support. With this money a series of NBER research successes were quick to follow. NBER researchers showed ways to deal with large quantities of data, as well as how to obtain accurate measures of total national income, income distribution, rates of unemployment, and temporal patterns within business cycles. The Carnegie Corporation also allowed some funds to be earmarked for specific research projects at the NBER, with one such project, recommended in December 1921 by Secretary of Commerce

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<sup>96</sup> This episode in the life of Mitchell is also discussed in Lucy Sprague Mitchell, *Two Lives: The Story of Wesley Clair Mitchell and Myself* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953): 350-61 (quotation on the NBER mission statement on p. 351; quotation regarding Mitchell's idea about the need for cooperation on pp. 350-351). See also Wesley Clair Mitchell, "Statistics and Government." Quotation of the purpose of the NBER from Heaton, *A Scholar in Action*, 197. Information about Mitchell and the NBER is in Dorfman, vol. 4, pp. 360-377. Notable persons working at the NBER during its early years included Arthur Burns, Milton Friedman, Simon Kuznets, and George Stigler; see Arthur F. Burns, ed., *Wesley Clair Mitchell: The Economic Scientist* (New York: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1972).

Herbert Hoover, being a study of labor unemployment rates during business cycles. Hoover asked that research results be obtained in less than six month's time, to be presented to President Warren G. Harding. The NBER undertook the project on the understanding that their duties were strictly limited to fact-finding, and that they were to make no policy recommendations. The NBER completed the project.<sup>97</sup>

During the middle 1920s, another line of commissioned NBER projects aimed at policymakers was one involving investigation of immigration. Yet another line of studies was initiated when Hoover, in his service to President Calvin Coolidge, requested a study focusing on recent changes in the U.S. economy. This latter study got published in 1929, under the title *Recent Economic Changes*. The point about these NBER accomplishments was that an independent economic research group showed they could achieve professional and scientific status – doing so by about 1921 or so.<sup>98</sup>

In February 1922, the Carnegie Corporation began financial support of another new research organization, which was the brainchild of Robert Brookings. The new group, the “Institute of Economics” (IE), was directed by Harold Glenn Moulton, a professor of political economy at the University of Chicago. Brookings’s plan for the new institute drew on his experience with the Rockefeller-created IGR, which was still in operation. The IE would be structured not as teams of economists working on one or two projects at a time (as with the NBER), and certainly not as a single economist working on a single project (as with

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<sup>97</sup> See John B. Judis, *The Paradox of American Democracy: Elites, Special Interests, and the Betrayal of Public Trust* (New York: Pantheon, 2000): 19-20, 30. Judis says the goal at the National Bureau was “to be above class, party, and interest” – that persons at the bureau “saw their role as conciliatory, as bringing classes and interests together rather than siding with one against the other... They nourished public trust in government by defending and explaining complex decisions that the ordinary voter did not have time to study. And they carried forward a tradition of disinterested public service against the venality and corruption that interest groups have often encouraged in political life.”

<sup>98</sup> Heaton, *A Scholar in Action*, 197-198.

the Rockefeller Foundation's short-lived Division of Industrial Research), but would try another approach. The IE was to be structured as a loose-knit collection of economists dealing with many projects at once. Through communications with Henry C. Pritchett of the Carnegie Corporation, Brookings had it arranged that the IE could be established as an organization separate from the IGR. A main objective for any research project at the IE was not to evaluate government efficiency (as the IGR was doing), but was to gather data useful to provide to civil servants and government policymakers. Director Moulton had it placed into the IE's by-laws "that the primary function of the trustees is not to express their views on the scientific investigations conducted by the Institute, but only to make it possible for such scientific work to be done under the most favorable auspices."<sup>99</sup>

Moulton dealt with the matter of arranging IE economists into different research fields within the institute. He assembled a staff carefully arranged to study four main areas of economics: agricultural economics; industrial and labor issues; international commerce; economic reconstruction problems (particularly those in Europe). Moulton recruited Edwin G. Nourse, an Iowa State College professor of agricultural economics, to direct the agricultural economics section. He placed Thomas Walter Page, a University of Virginia economist and former member of the U.S. Tariff Commission (i.e., the 'Taft Tariff Board'), in charge of research in international commerce. Isadore Lubin, a Michigan-trained economist with experience on the War Industries Board, was deemed well-suited to guide IE research on industrial and labor issues. Moulton personally directed research dealing with international economic reconstruction. Moulton's research group produced a notable study in

<sup>99</sup> Saunders, *The Brookings Institution*, 29. See also Donald T. Critchlow, *The Brookings Institution, 1916-1952: Expertise and the Public Interest in a Democratic Society* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1985).



1923 on *Germany's Capacity to Pay*, the argument of which was that post-war reparations and the reconstruction plan imposed by the Treaty of Versailles were scientifically impractical. When evaluated with solid economic analysis, the only possible conclusion was that Germany could not afford to do what other nations ordered it to do. A thin line rested between data analysis and policy advocacy in the study, but at least the policy conclusions were fairly uncontroversial, and were widely agreed upon at the time.<sup>100</sup>

The IE proved successful, and five years after its creation, Robert Brookings came up with yet another idea. Seeing that the Rockefeller-initiated IGR and the Carnegie-supported IE were both successful, Brookings decided in 1927 that the two organizations should be joined. In fact there was another organization that Brookings also had helped create in the early 1920s which was the Brookings Graduate School – as a place where many Memorial- and Social Science Research Council-supported fellowship recipients went to school. In 1927 the Brookings Graduate School would be joined with the IGR and the IE to become the “Brookings Institution.” However the moves to create the IE and later to put the IE within the Brookings Institution were not moves directly instigated by the Rockefeller Foundation or by the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>100</sup> David M. Grossman, “American Foundations and the Support of Economic Research, 1913-29,” *Minerva* 20, 1-2 (Spring-Summer 1982):59-82, esp. 80. Other good sources on the Institute of Economics, which in 1927 became part of the Brookings Institution, are Joseph G. Knapp, *Edwin G. Nourse: Economist for the People* (Danville, IL: The Interstate Printers & Publishers, Inc., 1979); Malcolm Rutherford, “On the Economic Frontier: Walton Hamilton, Institutional Economics, and Education,” *History of Political Economy* 35 (Winter 2003): 611-53.

<sup>101</sup> A fine study of the early history of the Brookings Institution is Donald T. Critchlow, *The Brookings Institution, 1916-1952: Expertise and the Public Interest in a Democratic Society* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1985). For information on the relationship between Rockefeller funds and the Social Science Research Council see Donald Fisher, *Fundamental Development of the Social Sciences: Rockefeller Philanthropy and the United States Social Science Research Council* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993). The Social Science Research Council is discussed in some detail in Chapter 8 herein.

### 3.8 Guiding principles at the Rockefeller Foundation–1918-23

When we left things with the Rockefeller Foundation we had Jerome Greene in discussions with Edward Pickering, in 1916, about how to build university-based research communities. We also had an idea that another figure at the Foundation, namely Wickliffe Rose, was thinking about the same problem.

Also at the Foundation was George E. Vincent, who did not side with any plan for direct financial aid of the kind that was proposed by NRC advocate Robert Millikin in 1919, and which Angell at the Carnegie Corporation was in fact willing to try. Vincent, who served as Foundation President from 1917 until 1928, was a sociologist, trained University of Chicago, who knew something about the social sciences. Vincent was also familiar with the committee structure created by the NRC. Approving of the value of such a structure as a way to minimize any potential troubles for philanthropists, Vincent directed the Rockefeller Foundation to begin providing money to the NRC – which in turn could direct money to universities.<sup>102</sup>

Another leader at the Foundation between the mid-1910s and mid-1920s was, as stated, Wickliffe Rose. By about 1920, Rose got to a point that he was permitted to try such a plan as Angell instituted at the Carnegie Corporation. Rose began work at the Rockefeller Foundation as director of the International Health Board (IHB) in 1914. One of the Foundation's first major projects at the IHB, taking place immediately after Rose's appointment, was to send Rose around the world to visit countries experiencing greatest incidence of hookworm. Rose's next project, which stemmed partly from his discoveries with

<sup>102</sup> Gerald Jonas, *The Circuit Riders: Rockefeller Money and the Rise of Modern Science* (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989): 88-95.

the hookworm study, was to address a shortage of public health administrators around the world. Rose set up a system of public health agencies, as well as helped establish rigorous standards for health officials. Rose then focused on establishing schools of public health at certain universities. This work, which in ways followed Angell's approach at the Carnegie Corporation, included establishment of a fellowships program aimed at recruiting talented researchers and teachers to these programs. Rose brought in Simon Flexner (who was already connected with the Rockefeller Institute of Medicine) to help out, and with Flexner focusing on selecting prospective research fellows, Rose could focus on administering field operations. It seems it was through his contact with Simon Flexner that Rose clarified some ideas about the relationship between fundamental science and real-world applications, as an idea similar to what Gates expressed during the 1913-14 deliberation over a possible economics institute.<sup>103</sup>

Following rapid success at the IHB, in 1919 Rose was selected by Rockefeller Jr. to take the helm of the Rockefeller Foundation's General Education Board (GEB), where Rose introduced a program to offer general endowment money to U.S. colleges and universities. The money at first tended to be pledged on a matching funds basis, but because matching funds too often failed to come through as advertised, a backlog of GEB commitments soon accumulated. In 1920 the GEB had \$9.4 million in outstanding commitments it was prepared to pay but could not. Such a backlog placed a severe limit on the kinds of new grant pledges the GEB could make. Rose reacted by getting GEB efforts reorganized according to a strategy of "regional centers." Following a model again resembling what Angell was

<sup>103</sup> Robert E. Kohler, "Science and Philanthropy: Wickliffe Rose and the International Education Board," *Minerva* 23 (1985): 75-95. See also Raymond B. Fosdick, *The Story of the Rockefeller Foundation* (New York: Harper, 1952): chap. 4; John Farley, *To Cast Out Disease: A History of the International Health Division of the Rockefeller Foundation (1913-1951)* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

developing, Rose used his available money at the GEB to begin selecting the best universities, including some regional choices (such as Vanderbilt and Texas), as well as some land-grant selections (including Cornell and Wisconsin).<sup>104</sup>

Rockefeller Jr. came to quite appreciate Rose, and in 1923 Rose was moved from the GEB to the helm of the International Education Board (IEB), where Rose could further apply the philanthropic model he was helping develop. Rose put into action a direct-aid program by connecting together a network of advisors already existing in Europe (and with whom Rose was acquainted through his earlier directorship of the IHB), who could help in selecting grant recipients in their respective home countries.<sup>105</sup>

Through all his appointments from 1914 to 1923, Rose became a leader in helping form a post-war vision for the Rockefeller Foundation. Rose had his central principle, which was to focus on a limited number of high-quality research groups as his preferred grant recipients. He also had an idea that grants were to be made only to those persons who seemed best prepared to lead “community development.” Rose’s objective, in his own words, was to “make the peaks higher.” In community development, the main goal is to find ways to develop the collective ability of an entire community of scientific experts. What Rose refined between 1914 and 1923 was, in a real sense, a new version of “scientific philanthropy” – which was that idea Gates introduced even prior to official creation of the Rockefeller Foundation. An important lever point for Rose’s version of such an approach was to award grants to particular individuals who were seen as the most favorable recipients based largely on their anticipated abilities to lead research-community development. A follow-up hope was

<sup>104</sup> General Education Board, *Annual Report, 1918/19* (New York: General Education Board, 1919): 68-69; General Education Board, *Annual Report, 1924/25* (New York: General Education Board, 1925): 7-8.

<sup>105</sup> See Kohler, “Science and Philanthropy.”

that the few supported leaders and their expert communities would proceed to produce fine examples of educational centers that other schools would then emulate. The challenging requirement was to find the right places to inject the always-limited philanthropic funds. Rose was one person in a series of philanthropy directors who had built and refined a valuable model. It was a model that was about to be followed by another leader of a Rockefeller philanthropic organization.<sup>106</sup>

There is one more preliminary note to be made: Jerome Greene was still an important figure at the Rockefeller Foundation into the 1920s. While serving as Secretary of the Foundation, Greene became aware of Angell's new approach at the Carnegie Corporation. Similar in ways to Angell's method as well as to the approach enacted by Rose, Greene agreed that a measure of philanthropic success should be the measure of stimulating specific scientific communities. Greene wanted the Foundation to avoid supporting plain and undistinguished research, believing it was too easy for returns on financial support to be measured by a mere quantity of research papers produced. An alternative and superior measure could involve keeping track of links between research grants and expansion of graduate training – where training of new researchers could, in turn, lead to the building of better research programs. Grants could be targeted to stimulate specific research areas, which would grow with expanding quantities of innovation and discovery. For Greene, as for others, the “community development” approach was based on an idea that resulting benefits

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<sup>106</sup> Rose also included a fair number of grants designated for buildings and equipment. When tasked with the duty to quickly devise a program for the IEB, Rose also created a crash-program in response to dire conditions in Europe. Working with his lever-point model for determining where and how to inject philanthropic support, Rose found that while there was no way that philanthropic foundations could address all relief and recovery needs in Europe, a core number of schools and scientific fields might be supported to stimulate broader recovery forces. Rose particularly recognized a need to include industrial and agricultural education in Europe; see Kohler, “Science, Foundations, and American Universities in the 1920s,” 140.

would ultimately exceed initial investments, perhaps doing so by a kind of ‘multiplier effect.’ This idea of ‘exponential’ results from infused funds was perhaps the fundamental idea underlying a financial move about to be made with one Rockefeller philanthropic organization in particular.<sup>107</sup>

### 3.9 The “Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial”–1918-22

In October 1918, John D. Rockefeller Sr. established a philanthropic organization in memory of his late wife, Laura Spelman Rockefeller, who died three years earlier. The new organization was named the “Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial.” The “Memorial,” as it was known, was the fifth philanthropic organization established by the Rockefellers.

Beginning with an initial capital endowment of \$74 million, the Memorial had a charter purpose to make donations in the interest of women and children, which had been of greatest concern to Rockefeller’s wife. Through its first few years in existence, the Memorial firmly maintained its focus on such concerns.<sup>108</sup>

Activities supported by the Memorial were oriented around reform movements directly concerning the welfare of women and children. Early grant recipients included the American Child Health Association, the East Harlem Health Center, and the Maternity Center Association of Manhattan. Among other grant recipients were such social welfare

<sup>107</sup> Robert E. Kohler calls this change a shift from a “demand-side” to a “supply-side” strategy, and as an adoption of “business methods” for creating social scientific communities; Kohler, “Science, Foundations, and American Universities in the 1920s,” 136-138, 148. See also Salma Ahmad, “American Foundations and the Development of the Social Sciences between the Wars: Comment on the Debate between Martin Bulmer and Donald Fisher,” *Sociology* 25, 3 (August 1991): 511-520, esp. 513. For Greene’s views, see Jerome D. Greene, “Memorandum on the Policy of the Rockefeller Foundation with Reference to the Concentration or Extension of its Field of Giving,” May 23, 1916, RAC–RF.

<sup>108</sup> By 1918, the other branches of Rockefeller philanthropy were the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research (1901), the General Education Board (1903), the Bureau of Social Hygiene (1911), and the International Health Board (1914). Five years after the LSRM was established, the International Education Board (1923) was founded.

organizations as the Young Men’s Christian Association, the Young Women’s Christian Association, the Boy Scouts of America, the Girl Scouts of America, and the Salvation Army. Other donations went to famine relief in Asia, emergency relief for post-war reconstruction in Europe, and to Baptist churches around the world. In all cases the main goal was to help women and children. A primary objective of early grants by the Memorial was stated by the Memorial as “promoting on interdenomination[al] lines the physical, intellectual and moral welfare of the young men and women of this country.”<sup>109</sup>

Early work of the Memorial was based on five “fields” of interest. Religious organizations were considered important as channels for getting aid to women and children, and roughly one-third of total dispersed funds between 1919 and 1922 went to religious organizations, the majority to Baptist churches in the United States and Canada. Another substantial portion of funds – approximately 16% of total funds allocated between 1919 and 1922 – went to emergency relief in post-war Europe and in famine-stricken China. Here, again, feeding and sheltering of women and children was a primary concern. Approximately 7% of funds went to the field of public health, mostly to treat infants and younger children. Educational work accounted for 9% of funds, most of which went to Christian educational organizations in Asia and the Near East. The fifth field of donations was child development programs. During and immediately following World War I, the umbrella *raison d’être* for all projects supported by the Memorial was consistently and always the health and well-being of mothers and children. Within such a framework, however, it started making some sense that parent education concerning matters of child development could also be supported. But what

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<sup>109</sup> Report of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, 1919-22, RAC-LSRM, Series II, Box 1, Folder 2, p. 7.

kinds of parent education programs, and what kinds of other grant assistance, could be rationalized as fitting with the Memorial's stated purpose?<sup>110</sup>

From 1918 to 1922, the Memorial operated directly out of the office of John D. Rockefeller Jr., with the main executive overseeing the Memorial being W. S. Richardson. In tune with the philosophy of the Rockefeller Foundation, an ideal goal held by those at the Memorial was to not merely address symptoms but to discover ways to prevent problems. Yet although such a goal was true from the beginning of the Memorial, Memorial activities during its first four years had little connection to studying fundamental causes. By 1921 there was some dissatisfaction with the Memorial's performance, as much of what was done during its first four years could be evaluated, especially by persons within the Rockefeller Foundation, as quite unremarkable in nature. To trustees and officials at the Rockefeller philanthropies, there was no question but that the Memorial lacked direction. Management procedures at the Memorial were an unorganized hodge-podge of interactions between trustees and officials, with nothing particularly decisive resulting along the line of discovering true causes of social problems.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Between 1919 and 1922, the Memorial added a small level of funds (less than one-half of one percent of total appropriations) to support projects in scientific research. Some support was provided for scientific work through the Bureau of Vocational Information, for example, and a small amount of funds was even allocated to the Madame Curie Radium Fund – this being done when funds for procurement of radium for educational experiments was lacking. Yet in neither case were these funds directed toward performing any kind of social science research. *Report...1919-22*, RAC-LSRM, Series II, Box 1, Folder 2, 7. On the infant health movement see Richard A. Meckel, *Save the Babies: American Public Health Reform and the Prevention of Infant Mortality, 1850-1929* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

<sup>111</sup> For some brief history of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, see a summary in RAC-Index Room, "Special Collections, Registers/Inventories, Kerr-Loukes, Guide to the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial," processed December 10, 1969. A more detailed history is Leonard Outhwaite, "The Life and Times of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial," n.d., 152 pp., RAC-LSRM, Series I, Box 5, Folder 49. Finally, a concise introduction is in Martin Bulmer and Joan Bulmer, "Philanthropy and Social Science in the 1920s: Beardsley Ruml and the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, 1922-29," *Minerva* 19, 3 (Autumn 1981): 347-407.



In November 1921, Edward Embree, Greene's successor as Foundation Secretary, contemplated the Memorial's admirable ideals. He observed that certain areas of science, such as child nutrition and pre-natal care, might fit well with the Memorial's stated purpose. The Memorial might also try supporting research on infant and maternal illness and mortality, and might even find benefits from studying the impact of housing conditions on infant and maternal health. These were all interesting possibilities – and there were other, similar possibilities to be thought of as well.<sup>112</sup>

An important person at the Rockefeller Foundation who stated an opinion on the subject of the Memorial's undistinguished performance was Rockefeller Jr., doing so at the end of 1922: "It is becoming more and more clearly recognized that unless means are found of meeting the complex social problems that are so rapidly developing, our increasing control of the physical forces may prove increasingly destructive of human values." Rockefeller Jr.'s point was that the social sciences needed to stop lagging so far behind the rate of technological progress made possible by advancements in the physical sciences. The idea that it was not good enough to address symptoms alone was an idea shared by many at the Foundation and the Memorial. The Memorial decided, by late 1921, to search for a new, full-time director.<sup>113</sup>

### 3.10 Appointment of Beardsley Ruml–1922

In fairly quick time, certain leaders at the Rockefeller Foundation and the Memorial expressed their support for Beardsley Ruml, the former student and protégé of James Angell.

<sup>112</sup> Bulmer and Bulmer, "Philanthropy and Social Science," 353.

<sup>113</sup> *Report of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial for Period from October 8, 1918 to December 31, 1922*, RAC-LSRM, Series 1, Box 2, Folder 1.

Ruml was 27 years old at the time. Ruml's supporters included George Vincent, President of the Foundation, and Raymond Fosdick, a Memorial trustee. Another who supported Ruml for the position was Angell, who was now president of Yale University. Various respected scientists in academia also supported Ruml. So, Fosdick contacted Rockefeller Jr. in December 1921 to make the official recommendation. Fosdick believed Ruml would emphasize a scientific focus while sticking close enough to the Memorial's charter concerns. In the letter that made the recommendation, Fosdick expressed his own idea of a somewhat expanded program for the Memorial that would increase the emphasis on such fields as pre-natal care, child nutrition, nurse training, and the like. Ruml was soon hired as Director of the Memorial.<sup>114</sup>

Ruml came to the Memorial with knowledge of psychology research that, as historians note, showed him "the intellectual power of a scientific approach to human problems." Although Ruml was still quite young in 1922, when he began his directorship duties he had done many things to distinguish himself. A graduate of Dartmouth College in 1915, Ruml earned a psychology Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in two years, with a dissertation on mental testing. He then worked on personnel selection for the War Department, followed by a brief period spent assisting Angell at the Carnegie Corporation. Ruml was even appointed directly by Rockefeller Jr. during 1921 to make informational surveys of the New York Public Library, the American Museum of Natural History, and the

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<sup>114</sup> Abraham Flexner is an example of a prominent scientist who supported Ruml for the position; see Abraham Flexner to James R. Angell, November 28, 1921, Beardsley Ruml Papers, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 1; George E. Vincent to Raymond B. Fosdick, November 28, 1921, RAC-RF, R.G.3, Series 900, Box 2, Folder 19; Raymond B. Fosdick to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., December 3, 1921, Raymond B. Fosdick Papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Box 7.

Metropolitan Museum of Art – all as prospective grant recipients for Rockefeller Jr.'s personal funds.<sup>115</sup>

Ruml arrived at the Memorial in late spring 1922. Substantial redirection of Memorial funds was under serious discussion at the time, and various in-house communications helped prepare the Memorial to develop a new focus. As already noted, Embree, prior to Ruml's hiring, emphasized maintaining the traditional focus on health and welfare of children and mothers while also developing new facets of support so long as these were of related concern. Fosdick went a bit further than Embree, and in October 1922 he drew a distinction between two basic kinds of programs capable of receiving attention: an "education and food program," representing projects to improve the conditions of "backward" peoples; and a "social science program," aimed at improving the conditions of "advanced" peoples. Both programs would go beyond focusing only on children and mothers, as success of the social sciences program "must depend not on the application of methods now known, but on methods yet to be discovered." Here was a far-reaching idea: begin focusing on developing new scientific methods. Embree and Fosdick expressed views typical of the kinds of ideas available for Ruml to consider when he arrived at the Memorial. Another, complementary new idea came from Leonard Outhwaite, a newly hired assistant to Ruml, who in 1923 explored areas of research that ought to be in line with the Memorial's traditional focus, and added an ideal to promote "the status of the social sciences and the development of scientific

<sup>115</sup> Quotation from Bulmer and Bulmer, "Philanthropy and Social Science," 368. See also Barry D. Karl, *Charles E. Merriam and the Study of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), cha. 7; Robert E. Kohler, "A Policy for the Advancement of Science," 483-485. Useful sources for biographical information about Ruml are C. Hartley Grattan, "Beardsley Ruml and his Ideas," *Harper's Magazine* 204 (May 1952): 72-86; and Broadus Mitchell, "Beardsley Ruml," *Dictionary of American Biography* 1955-60 (New York: Scribner's, 1970): 558-560. Some of Ruml's work directly for Rockefeller Jr., such as that concerning the American Museum of Natural History, is in RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 11, Folder 123.

studies in the social science field.” Outhwaite recommended more study be made of contact points between “social science” and “social technology” – that is, of contacts between discovery of knowledge and applications of knowledge.<sup>116</sup>

Ruml came to the Memorial at a time when new ideas were clearly being bandied about. It was also a time when the Memorial’s endowment was substantially increased by the Rockefellers. Yet with the increased endowment and with the hiring of Ruml there was also a sense in the works that the Memorial might not last very long. From the beginning of Ruml’s tenure, the sense was that a new kind of emphasis for the Memorial was to be something of a crash program to discover, once and for all, if a philanthropic foundation really could successfully support fundamental social science. Though there perhaps was some license for Memorial leaders to use the enlarged endowment quickly, there was also a need to use it carefully; it was, after all, a potentially one-time opportunity to build some really good things. By October 1922, Ruml clarified his directive ideas, which he presented in a memorandum that is well-known in the history of social science. Ruml stated in the memorandum – which will be studied in opening the next chapter – that he envisioned building a new kind of social science that could attack real-world problems. The new science would be capable of bridging the cultural lag between the science of physical nature and the science of man and society. One key to success for the Memorial’s new program would be to create a more equal relationship between natural science and social science. Also important

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<sup>116</sup> Edward Embree to Raymond B. Fosdick, November 18, 1921; Embree to Fosdick, November 26, 1921, RAC–LSRM, Series II, Box 2, Folder 31. Fosdick believed the education and food program “is essentially one directed toward the improvement of the conditions of life of backward people, of creating for them standards and facilities now existing elsewhere in the world, whereas the social science program is directed at the improvement of conditions of life of the most ‘advanced’ peoples and societies...Improvement in the latter case must depend not on the application of methods now known, but on methods yet to be discovered”; see Raymond B. Fosdick, “Education, Food and Social Science,” October 2, 1922, RAC–LSRM, Series II, Box 3, Folder 39. Outhwaite shared his ideas in Leonard Outhwaite to Beardsley Ruml, June 16, 1923, RAC–LSRM, Series II, Box 3, Folder 39.

would be to find meaningful lines that might be drawn through the division of labor in social science – lines that would be useful for more clearly defining the different social sciences in order to build “scientific communities.”<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Beardsley Ruml, “General Memorandum by the Director,” Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial (also titled: “Memorial Policy in Social Science”), October 1922, RAC–LSRM, Series II, Box 2, Folder 31.

## CHAPTER 4. RUMI'S PLAN AND SUPPORT OF RESEARCH IN PSYCHOLOGY–1922-28

### 4.1 Introduction

In late spring 1922, Beardsley Ruml began his work at the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial. By that fall he had a comprehensive plan in place, which he presented to the Memorial trustees as a “General Policy Memorandum.” Ruml described a plan for what to do with many millions of dollars available to kick-start a worldwide program of social research based on rigorous scientific methods. Ruml’s number one advisor at the Memorial, Lawrence K. Frank, quickly produced a companion memorandum to further help guide new Memorial policy. One of the first projects pursued by Ruml, Frank, and others who led the Memorial into a new phase in its existence was to support psychology research aimed at helping the general public adapt to a rapidly industrializing world.

### 4.2 Ruml’s policy statement–1922

Shortly after arriving at the Memorial, Ruml began clarifying his expectations for what needed to be done. An early offering of Ruml’s perspective is in a Memorial summary statement of results for its first four years. Ruml used the opportunity to introduce his ideas to Memorial personnel and to emphasize the need for greater support of scientific research. He believed in attending to research that would show “rather immediate relations to measures of human welfare”; yet he also added that “The Memorial’s interest in scientific research is essentially humanitarian, having as its foundation a belief that knowledge and understanding of the natural forces that are manifested in the behavior of people and of things will result

concretely in the improvement of conditions of life.” New knowledge needed to be discovered, Ruml believed, and knowledge also needed to be assessed for what it could contribute to “concrete” social improvement over the long run.<sup>118</sup>

In October 1922, Ruml presented his “General Memorandum on Memorial Policy.” The centerpiece idea in the memorandum was a goal to rigorously study social conditions and their causes. Ruml spoke optimistically of a world of impending breakthroughs in the body of substantiated knowledge about human beings and their societies. He also used a familiar analogy to communicate a message of lament: “All who work toward the general end of social welfare are embarrassed by the lack of that knowledge that the social sciences provide. It is as though engineers were at work without an adequate development in the sciences of physics or chemistry, or as though physicians were practicing in the absence of the medical sciences.” Ruml identified that “The direction of work in the social fields is largely controlled by tradition, inspiration and expediency, a natural condition in view of our ignorance of individual and social forces.” A better scientific program needed to be established, and it needed to be a program based on demonstrated principles.<sup>119</sup>

Ruml’s memorandum can be studied in detail. Ruml took time in the memo to summarize the past and present of social science, but what he really cared about was setting a future course. He noted that the Memorial had a discretionary budget of approximately two

<sup>118</sup> *Report of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, 1919-22*, RAC-LSRM, Series II, Box 1, Folder 2, p. 7.

<sup>119</sup> Beardsley Ruml, “General Memorandum by the Director” (also titled “General Memorandum on Memorial Policy in Social Science”; also titled “General Policy Memorandum”), Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, October 1922, RAC-LSRM, Series II, Box 2, Folder 31; copy also located in Series III, Box 63, Folder 677. A few historians have discussed Ruml’s memorandum in some detail; see Donald Fisher, *Fundamental Development of the Social Sciences: Rockefeller Philanthropy and the United States Social Science Research Council* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993): 33; Kenneth Prewitt, *Social Sciences and Private Philanthropy: The Quest for Social Relevance* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Center on Philanthropy, 1995): 19. Most extensive is the study made by Martin Bulmer and Jean Bulmer, “Philanthropy and Social Science in the 1920s: Beardsley Ruml and the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, 1922-29,” *Minerva* 19, 3 (Autumn 1981): 347-407, esp. 361-8.

million dollars for 1923, and that to use the money wisely it would be “desirable to choose the general field of endeavor so that it will be rich enough in opportunities to measure up fully to the resources available for its cultivation.” Ruml wanted to use principles of scientific philanthropy and the model of community development. He wanted to find the best entry points for injected money, which would be locations capable of getting to root causes. Ruml identified eight fields that might be considered to be social “sciences,” and he believed all these fields were needed.<sup>120</sup>

In addition to scientific philanthropy and community development, Ruml recognized that another guiding principle should be to discover what kinds of scientific programs could be directly extended from established Memorial interests. He kept in mind established interests in social welfare as he focused on developing the social sciences as a whole. He explained: “An examination of the operations of organizations in the field of social welfare shows as a primary need the development of the social sciences and the production of a body of substantiated and widely accepted generalizations as to human capacities and motives and as to the behavior of human beings as individuals and groups.”<sup>121</sup>

It was clear to Ruml that many university researchers were not yet doing true social science. University faculty spent too much time teaching, and university research facilities were typically too few in number. Social research in the universities remained “largely deductive and speculative,” typically performed “on the basis of second-hand observations, documentary evidence and anecdotal material.” Such sources of knowledge were little help to anyone wanting truly progressive “social engineering.” Ruml used an idea of “cultural lag”

<sup>120</sup> “General Memorandum by the Director,” 8.

<sup>121</sup> “General Memorandum by the Director,” 9.



to argue what was urgently needed from social scientists was to match realized results of technological control over society with scientific understanding of what is really happening in society. The idea of “cultural lag” was a kind of catchphrase in 1922, owing to a recent academic treatment by Columbia University sociologist William Fielding Ogburn, in the 1922 book *Social Change with Respect to Culture and Original Nature*. Ogburn’s thesis was that acute social problems owed to an imbalance between the technological and economic sectors on one hand, and the cultural and political sectors on the other – and that new policies of social control therefore were needed.<sup>122</sup>

Ruml proposed a fundamental shift for the social sciences. Ameliorative grants were no longer the proper goal, as the social sciences were to be tools for a cadre of experts to use to help lift human welfare. All that was needed was more fundamental knowledge in the experts’ tool kits. The increase in fundamental knowledge should be attainable by putting social scientists in “a far more intimate contact...with concrete social phenomena.” Ruml believed the best place from which to launch the scientific attack on social problems was the university setting, as universities possessed “stability of organization” and maintained a “wide range of professional opinion” alongside “scholarly and scientific standards of work.” University researchers were also creating “reasonably effective channels of inter-university communications” which could be further strengthened. The Memorial was well positioned to help build on a base already present in the universities, to create scientific research communities.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>122</sup> “General Memorandum by the Director,” 11-12. William F. Ogburn, *Social Change With Respect to Culture and Original Nature* (New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1922). For another, contemporary view of the prevalence of deductive methods in social research, see Charner M. Perry, “Inductive vs. Deductive Method in Social Science Research,” *Southwestern Political Science Quarterly* 8 (June 1927): 66-74.

<sup>123</sup> “General Memorandum by the Director,” 13-14.

Ruml recognized that guiding principles and goals were needed. The chief principles were that scientific research needed to be done by permanent organizations, and that the Memorial should never carry out its own investigations. Organizations doing Memorial-supported research ideally should feature a combination of graduate and undergraduate programs, so that research activities could be closely connected to teaching. Fellowship programs were to be used to bring quality faculty into university-based social science. New journals and book presses were needed to enable social scientists to make their discoveries known. Ruml discussed a series of strategies to make all this happen: strengthen a few existing reputable research centers; get some fellowships programs into operation; help create a guiding committee of perhaps ten or so leading social scientists who would advise on important research problems and methods; do real-world experiments; continue to assist the advancement of knowledge in parent education and child development, particularly in real-world conditions such as New York City. Persons doing science needed to be connected to persons applying scientific findings, thereby showing that science could truly benefit from access to real-world “laboratories.”<sup>124</sup>

A key instrument for putting the whole process into action would be multi-year grants. A few philanthropies – including the Memorial as well as the Russell Sage and Carnegie organizations – were in good positions for doing this. “Their resources are large enough and permanent enough to make it possible by planning over a period of years to attack really fundamental situations and to reach relatively remote ends. Work of this kind the contemporary generation is not organized to do.” Ruml added that “the responsibility of the foundations would seem to be most satisfactory assumed through the choice of a program

<sup>124</sup> “General Memorandum by the Director,” 19-22.

requiring effort and support, which they are uniquely qualified to render.” The Memorial was ready to help lead the way by supporting a limited number of established institutions, primarily universities. Ruml strongly recommended the Memorial should leave it mostly to grant recipients to determine their preferred usage of funds, and that there was real value in placing as much responsibility as possible on those persons actually overseeing and conducting the research. All parties needed to know that what was ahead would be “the work of a period of years, perhaps a decade.”<sup>125</sup>

Ruml’s policy statement was approved by the trustees and quickly became well-known among leading social scientists. James Angell, now President of Yale University, received a copy of the memorandum from Ruml and replied that Ruml’s proposal seemed “sufficiently flexible and at the same time sufficiently specific to try out what could be done.” John M. Glenn, Director of the Russell Sage Foundation, also contacted Ruml, hoping to learn more about the new policy. Ruml shortly provided Glenn with copies of various grant proposals as the Memorial started to receive them from different universities. These proposals revealed the extent to which universities were responding positively to the new policy.<sup>126</sup>

Ruml’s other main project was to begin surrounding himself with a fine group of officers. He met fairly often with George Vincent, President of the Rockefeller Foundation,

<sup>125</sup> “General Memorandum by the Director,” 30-31.

<sup>126</sup> James R. Angell cited Ruml’s memorandum in James R. Angell to Beardsley Ruml, October 10, 1922, in which Angell writes: “I shall be greatly gratified if you are able to get your Board to adopt your program. It seems to me sufficiently flexible and at the same time sufficiently specific to try out what could be done in the general field outlined.” Angell added that universities seemed to offer “the most fruitful agencies through which at present to inaugurate such a program.” See also Beardsley Ruml to James R. Angell, October 6, 1922, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 79, Folder 823. John M. Glenn, as General Director of the Russell Sage Foundation, asked Ruml for information about the Memorial’s new policy; John M. Glenn to Beardsley Ruml, October 29, 1924. Ruml provided Glenn with copies of project proposals from Chicago, Yale, Harvard, the University of North Carolina, and the Brookings graduate school, all during 1924; Ruml to Glenn, December 1, 1924, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 112, Folder 1114.

to exchange ideas and gain advice. He also interacted with Arthur Woods and Raymond Fosdick, both of whom were already at the Foundation as trustees. Ruml appointed Woods as acting president of the Memorial, a position Woods would hold from November 1922 through December 1928. Fosdick would remain a Foundation trustee, but over the next six years would have much input to the guidance of the Memorial. As a legal scholar who had helped Rockefeller Jr. do research on municipal problems in New York City and on reform efforts of interest to the New York Bureau of Social Hygiene, Fosdick was keenly interested in social science, believing the social sciences were finally beginning to approach “the growing edge of things.” Throughout the life of the Ruml-led Memorial, Fosdick would serve as the Rockefeller family’s most direct contact to the Memorial.<sup>127</sup>

Ruml moved quickly to recruit new assistants. In 1923 he recruited Lawrence K. Frank, a Columbia-trained economist. Frank taught business and commerce at the New School for Social Research between 1920 and 1922, and had interests in anthropological and psychiatric approaches to behavior analysis as well. Frank also had seen social problems first-hand while studying mortality in New York’s Lower West Side. Frank came in to specialize in child development and welfare programs, and he was asked by Ruml to evaluate these programs and develop future plans. Ruml brought in Leonard Outhwaite the same year. Outhwaite had wide-ranging sociological interests, including race and race relations. Over the next few years Ruml also brought in Sydnor Walker, Edmund E. Day, and Guy Stanton

<sup>127</sup> Rockefeller Foundation biography: Raymond Blaine Fosdick, RAC–Biography File, Fosdick, RAC-LSRM, Series II, Box 2, Folder 21. Raymond B. Fosdick, *Chronicle of a Generation* (New York: Harper, 1958): 276-284. Eventually it would be Fosdick who was put in charge of the reorganization of the Rockefeller Foundation during 1928 and 1929. Fosdick was also later named president of the Rockefeller Foundation, from 1936 to 1948. Information on the relationship between Fosdick and Rockefeller, Jr., is in Fosdick, *Chronicle of a Generation*, 217; also in Peter Collier and D. Horowitz, *The Rockefellers* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976): 138-144.

Ford. Walker specialized in overseeing the Memorial's support of social welfare research. Day, originally a professor of history at the University of Michigan, had interests in history as well as economics, and would (in 1929) be made head of the social science division of the Rockefeller Foundation. Ford, a history professor at the University of Minnesota, seems to have been more of a generalist in his Memorial duties.<sup>128</sup>

Ruml also began setting a manner of interaction with Memorial trustees. He adopted a consistent approach, whereby he would present policy resolutions to the trustees as these were drafted by himself. When it came to a specific grant application that Ruml wanted approved, his style was to present the original application to the trustees. However in cases that he did not favor, Ruml attempted to save the trustees any trouble by summarizing the application's content and indicating his preference for decline. It seems clear that the trustees, who were responsible for awarding the money, typically knew what Ruml wanted. Ruml thus placed the trustees within the fold of his all-important goal to separate decisions about financial support from all specific matters concerning the research to be supported.<sup>129</sup>

#### 4.3 Program clarifications–1923

Shortly after presenting his policy memorandum, Ruml asked Frank, the trained economist in the group, to produce a companion policy memorandum in the form of a survey report. Frank's task was to determine, somewhat more tangibly, what was needed to put Ruml's new policy into action. Frank's background suited the task of making a detailed

<sup>128</sup> Some summary of Ruml's recruitment of his fine group of officers is in Leonard Outhwaite, "The Life and Times of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial," n.d., 152 pp., RAC-LSRM, Series I, Box 5, Folder 49.

<sup>129</sup> Examples are in various agenda from trustee meetings; see Bulmer and Bulmer, "Philanthropy and Social Science," 360.

survey of the condition of all social science programs in American colleges and universities.<sup>130</sup>

By March 1923, Frank produced a lengthy report aimed at exploring what social science is. “The Status of Social Science” overviewed where social science came from and where it might be able to go. Frank evaluated five main social sciences (economics, sociology, political science, psychology, and anthropology) and recognized how historical circumstances helped cause all five social sciences to be mostly non-empirical in their methods. Fortunately some hints existed at least of a quantitative shift in the works. Frank found that fifteen universities maintained doctoral programs in the social sciences, but he also noted that few recent doctoral dissertations made empirical investigations of concrete situations. Frank tallied a list of subjects studied by recent doctorates to establish that nearly all dissertations were “works of scholarship, involving library studies and consultations of records.” The “backwardness of the social sciences” was to be lamented; in an especially sorry state was training “in scientific methods,” as even a most basic statistics course was required curriculum at only a couple of schools. Two main reasons accounted for the backwardness of the social sciences: “the tendency toward work of scholarship and the absence of training in scientific method are ultimately attributable to the dominant tradition of the social sciences and to the lack of adequate funds to support investigations and experiment.” There just wasn’t enough money in the universities to allow teachers to escape

<sup>130</sup> Some biographical information on Frank is in *Curriculum vitae*, Lawrence K. Frank, RAC-LSRM, Series II, Box 2, Folder 22. Frank’s primary field of emphasis at the Memorial was child studies. On Frank’s contributions to this field during his time at the Memorial, see Elizabeth Lomax, “The Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial: Some of its Contributions to Early Research on Child Development,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 13 (July 1977): 283-293; Steven L. Schlossman, “Philanthropy and the Gospel of Child Development,” *History of Education Quarterly* 21 (Fall 1981): 275-299; Hamilton Cravens, *Before Head Start: The Iowa Station and America’s Children* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1993). On Frank and economics see Joseph Dorfman, *The Economic Mind in American Civilization*, vol. 5 (New York: Viking, 1959): 497-502.

from crushing teaching loads. “The most promising method of giving assistance to these teachers would be to establish a research bureau or institute,” Frank advised, “which would supply the needed clerical, statistical, and other help required for any worthwhile investigation.” Publishable research could especially be improved by putting researchers in touch with statistical assistants. “[T]he growth of science was ultimately conditioned by the availability of scientists,” who needed to have opportunities to actually to do science. If the old ways were to be broken, much money would be needed.<sup>131</sup>

The field of economics served Frank as a clear illustration. Various aspects of economics were worth exploring to find out how best to begin supporting the social sciences as a whole. The “scientific output has been very small” in economics, and economists themselves recognized “there is an absence of real scientific work in their field.” Deficiencies in methodological training owed partly to the fact that a limited number of fellowships were available for economics graduate students; and this was a situation similar to other social sciences. Economics and other social sciences genuinely progress only when “concrete problems” are addressed: “...it is just in proportion that a science has addressed itself to specific problems that scientific progress has been made, for obviously the most general questions are not susceptible of treatment until a body of proximate facts and a knowledge of relationships have been obtained by study of specific, concrete situations and conditions.” The older approach to social research based on “speculative” studies to “purify definitions” and “classify” cases was faulty. Such science was stuck in typological thinking and used data

<sup>131</sup> Lawrence K. Frank, “The Status of Social Science in the United States,” March 1923, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 62, Folder 679, pp. 1, 6-7.

just as “the naturalist who classifies, compares and judges animal forms and activities, but stops with the superficial aspects.”<sup>132</sup>

Frank agreed with Ruml that it would be “necessary to take a long term view” to build a new structure of social science based on rigor and experimentation. Again Frank illustrated with economics, as he asked what kind of social science do businessmen now want? “[B]usiness men find that the academic economic science tells them little about the concrete situation with which they are concerned. Economists are looking at the whole of economic life in its long term trend, seeking wide generalizations, while business men are concentrated upon scientific situations.” Social science research was being done in many businesses mostly to understand economic forecasting and managerial efficiency. Business organizations were getting ahead in the world of social science not only because they valued it more, but also because they “have the funds to pay for investigations and tabulations, while the universities have not.” As a result, “the scientifically inclined men in the universities are being taken over by business organizations.” More of the modern, empirical kind of economic science was needed in universities, and this science would need to be built in two phases: first develop a truly scientific “habit of mind”; then focus on improving scientific methods and discovering knowledge. Research fellowships could help in both phases. Fellowships would support younger scholars while they got better training in scientific methods. Frank admitted, however, that “it would require a period of years to work out methods of research and experiment, to train investigators and to clear the ground.”<sup>133</sup>

<sup>132</sup> Frank, “The Status of Social Science,” 10-12.

<sup>133</sup> Frank noted a need to offset increasing business power. He opposed the sponsoring of social scientists by such companies as General Motors, largely for the reason that such research was not aimed at wider social problems. Such a presence of social scientists in service to business interests needed to be counteracted; Frank, “The Status of Social Science,” 6-8, 9-12, 25. The two phases, in Frank’s words, were: “the training of the



An experimental mindset would be key. “[E]xperiments, by varying conditions and circumstances, bring out and disclose what ordinary observation had failed to note.” The older-style work on classification and definition-building would even benefit from “the stimulus of experimental work because the prevailing categories of social science are so largely inherited from moral and ethical disputes of the past.” One way to get past problems associated with the older, morally-weighted social science would be to emphasize better, more objective methods. “One aspect of social science which is related to this question of experimental study is this: in general, efforts at social research are classified as radical, liberal or conservative.” Frank meant by this that “agencies doing research work today in economics and sociology are known...under one of these three classifications,” and that this was a serious problem that could be helped by doing more experiments. “[S]ocial research in the absence of experimental work, tends inevitably to become or to appear apologetic or polemic, to play the role of disputant and attorney, rather than that of scientific inquirer.” An objective stance would be able to help social scientists avoid being pejoratively labeled as possessing one or another kind of political bias.<sup>134</sup>

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young men and women, who are entering the science, in the habit of mind called scientific method and the accumulation of a body of verified knowledge and of techniques for investigation and experiment.” In some detail Frank described the training required to help meet these needs. Especially he emphasized the need to establish research fellowships, though not by direct gift to universities at first, but initially through particular faculty members “who are in sympathy with this enterprise”; Frank, “The Status of Social Science,” 17-8, 22.<sup>134</sup> Social scientists needed to get better at selecting questions “which give the basis of a scientific problem.” Too often the questions being asked were more of the nature of ethical debate or assignment of responsibility for something gone wrong. “No one would confuse a trial by jury with a scientific inquiry, yet in many cases ‘social research’ has been in the nature of an assize upon society or some portion of society trying to fasten blame or to exonerate various groups in society.” In what turned out to be rash oversimplification, Frank idealistically believed that “The very conditions of an experiment would force the investigators to give up disputed categories and debated concepts and turn to the basic phenomena of group behavior,” and that “the assumptions and preconceptions...at wide variance” between different social scientists “would be rapidly eliminated.” Frank, “The Status of Social Science,” 24-7.

Frank made three recommendations for the way forward: lighten teaching loads; change teaching methods to be more in contact with research activities; increase research fellowships. All three changes would help make social scientists more available to do actual science. Graduate-level training in methods of scientific research needed to be strengthened, and one idea was to have a research fellowships program run by having teachers recommend students believed worthy of support. Ultimately the best solution would be to focus on the younger generation, who were the ones who would need to break the chains of the old ways. “[T]he processes of changing the formalized teaching of social science would be started with the young students of today and a way out of the speculative inertia of social science opened.” The younger generation indeed really yearned for this.<sup>135</sup>

Frank’s overall message fit well with Ruml’s presentation of five months earlier. As revealed in the words of Ruml from October 1922 and Frank from March 1923, a recognized tension in social science was between historical and empirical research. By no means were Ruml and Frank the only ones who recognized such a tension. The tug between the two styles of social science had been long-debated, at least since the 1880s. It could seem no side was yet winning, and so perhaps some added money could be a tipping force. The traditional, archival method of social science was inexpensive, based as it was on existing materials, largely historical in nature. Library and archival materials typically were used to try and establish regularities in human behaviors and social institutions over time. Newer approaches to social research were beginning to get based more on empirical observation. The shift to the uncertain world of empiricism was a change trying to take place across the social sciences. Psychologists began such a move as early as the 1870s and 1880s. Other fields trying to

<sup>135</sup> Frank, “The Status of Social Science,” 20-22.

make the move included sociology, where researches since the 1900s were establishing increasingly empirical methods, as well as political science since the 1910s. Economists, although they had begun developing more mathematical approaches during the 1870s and 1880s, were lagging a bit. Yet recent economic studies (such as by Irving Fisher in the United States and Arthur Pigou in Great Britain) were beginning to change this. An increasingly valuable research tool for all the social sciences by the 1920s was statistics.<sup>136</sup>

Ruml and Frank joined in stating the primary objective for the Memorial: to promote empirical science. Even though Ruml had to wait about a year before various financial commitments at the Memorial could let up enough to loosen the leash on grant awards, he would definitely make the move when he could. In preparation for the opportunity, Ruml consulted with leading thinkers in social science. With G. Elton Mayo, for example, Ruml discussed problems in industrial research. Mayo's research impressed Ruml mightily, and he obtained for Mayo a three-year personal grant so that Mayo could continue at the University of Pennsylvania rather than return to his home institution, the University of Queensland, in Australia. Ruml also shared ideas with Charles Merriam, of the University of Chicago. Merriam's ideas for rigorous social science interested Ruml, and the two communicated

<sup>136</sup> See Dorfman, *The Economic Mind in American Civilization*, 352-3, 360-377; Edward Shils, *The Calling of Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980): 183-8, 215-7; Dorothy Ross, "The Development of the Social Science," in Alexandra Oleson and John Voss, eds., *The Organization of Knowledge in Modern America, 1860-1920* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press): 107-38; David Cohen, *J.B. Watson, The Founder of Behaviorism: A Biography* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979); Gordon W. Allport, "The Historical Background to Modern Social Psychology," in G. Lindzey, ed., *Handbook of Social Psychology*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1954): 67-68. See also Joseph Ben-David, *The Scientist's Role in Society* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1971): 147-52. Some contemporary views of economics in particular were Lawrence K. Frank, "The Emancipation of Economics," *American Economic Review* 14 (March 1924): 37-8; F.W. Hoffer, "Five Years of Ph.D. Research in Economics and Sociology," *Journal of Social Forces* 4 (September 1925): 74-7.

often on the subject of Merriam's ideas to develop a national-level organization that might help promote better methods of social research.<sup>137</sup>

Ruml recognized he arrived at the Memorial at an important time in the history of social science. It was a time when society was trying to determine what social science was, and what it could do. The big question was how best to support social science. There was little if any government support of social science during the early 1920s (with one minor exception being a small amount of support for rural sociology), and Rockefeller philanthropy was in a powerful position. Ruml had much money to work with, and he and Frank a plan: discover how to award money so that social science could have the best chance to do the most good.<sup>138</sup>

#### 4.4. A possible "research center" at the University of Pennsylvania–1923-28

The year 1923 was when Ruml began using Memorial funds the way he wanted. The first month of the year he received the university contact that initiated his effort to try building his first research "center." The letter came from the University of Pennsylvania, and it proposed developing a psychology project capable of connecting to other social sciences.<sup>139</sup>

By about 1920, psychology was likely the most developed of the social and behavioral sciences. What was called the "new" psychology had been emerging by the

<sup>137</sup> Ruml was impressed not only with Mayo's scholarly ideas and research, but also with Mayo's ability to interest "manufacturers" in the possibilities; Beardsley Ruml to Arthur Woods, 26 May 1923, RAC-LSRM, Series II, Box 4, File 45. In addition to Ruml-Merriam correspondence in the Rockefeller Archives Center, a number of Ruml-Merriam correspondences are in the Charles E. Merriam Papers, Special Collections Department, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago, Box 39, Folder 10.

<sup>138</sup> See Edward Shils, *The Present State of American Sociology* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1948): 8-9.

<sup>139</sup> Letter from the University of Pennsylvania, January 17, 1923, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 75, Folders 790-1.

1890s, and psychologists increasingly considered themselves professional experts.

Psychologists respected early experimental work by German “psychophysicists” dealing with matters of sensation and perception, often by using reaction-time experiments. Also admired was William James’s 1890 book, *Principles of Psychology*, which strongly emphasized the need for empirical methods. James’s own method, which he called upon other psychologists to accept, was called “functionalism.” The idea of functionalism was to study habits and other measurable behaviors as adaptive functions; even the human mind could be included in functional analysis, in that it was seen as adapted to its environment. Two years following James’s *Principles*, twenty-six charter members established the American Psychological Association, and in 1894 the new organization helped establish the *Psychological Journal*. (A smaller group of psychologists had actually begun the *American Journal of Psychology* in 1887, but their journal was not particularly scientific until its editors moved to match the journal of the American Psychological Association.)<sup>140</sup>

Closer to the period of Penn’s application to the Memorial, John B. Watson published an important paper in 1913, on “Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It.” Watson advocated the use of objective, empirical science, based exclusively on externally observable behaviors. Watson’s message was deterministic, however, in believing that the way an organism interacts with its environment owes to an aggregate of inborn, innate properties that await awakening by environmental stimuli. In 1916, the famous “Stanford-Binet test” – i.e., the “IQ test” – made its public debut telling psychologists that a specific objective measure might even exist for the qualities of what are inherently in a particular human brain. The IQ

<sup>140</sup> Jill G. Morawski and Gail A. Hornstein, “Quandary of the Quacks: The Struggle for Expert Knowledge in American Psychology, 1890-1940,” in JoAnne Brown and David K. Van Keuren, eds., *The Estate of Knowledge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991): 106-33.

test, like Watson's argument-based metaphysical assumption, relied on a deterministic construct.<sup>141</sup>

Enter, now, the new psychological projects of the 1920s, which could make use of deep pockets. Research of the 1920s would be research marking the beginning of the so-called "age of learning" in professional psychology. It is in this context that Penn's research proposal came forth.<sup>142</sup>

In January 1923, faculty members at the University of Pennsylvania responded to Ruml's statement of Memorial policy by inquiring whether the school might receive a block grant, which was a grant of a kind that would be largely left to the institution to determine how to use. Penn researchers had an interest in the relationship between harsh industrial working conditions and problems of psychological well-being. A high level of maladjustment of mental habits and beliefs seemed to be a working out of a powerful "irrationality" principle in industrial society. Penn researchers needed to study industrial workers in real-world situations. The school's Department of Industrial Research was unique, they argued, in being "the only [department] in the country which has effectively brought into association a group of employers of a community for the study of personnel problems under university auspices." As led by industrial economist Joseph Willits, the department noted they had forged contact between business interests and university researchers, and that such contact

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<sup>141</sup> See John M. O'Donnell, *The Origins of Behaviorism: American Psychology, 1870-1920* (New York: New York University Press, 1985). See also Hamilton Cravens, *The Triumph of Evolution: American Scientists and the Heredity-Environment Controversy, 1900-1941* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), esp. cha. 2; Cravens, "The Behavioral and Social Sciences," in Mary Kupiec Cayton and Peter W. Williams, eds., *Encyclopedia of American Cultural & Intellectual History*, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2001): 669-77.

<sup>142</sup> By the end of the 1920s it would be possible for psychologists suddenly to believe there were "seven psychologies"; see Edna Heidbreder, *Seven Psychologies* (New York: Century, 1933). Also useful for understanding the diversity suddenly present in psychological thought by about 1930 is Edwin G. Boring, *A History of Experimental Psychology* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1950).

seemed a promising way to better understand the “irrationality” principle as it pervaded everyday life.<sup>143</sup>

Shortly following Penn’s initial inquiry, Penn’s industrial sociologist and psychologist, G. Elton Mayo, also submitted a project description. Mayo reported he had observed an extreme psychological manifestation during wartime, and he now recognized a milder version of the same manifestation in everyday life. “Probably the work done by psychiatrists in ‘shell-shock’ hospitals with soldiers has, more than any other psychological achievement, drawn attention to the curability of many mental disorders. It has also drawn attention to the wide distribution of mental disorder, lack of ‘balance’ and unhappiness through the modern community.” Wide-spread occurrence of low-level ‘shell-shock’ is “an untouched social problem of large dimension”; it is a widespread occurrence bringing not “reason” in the economy and society, but much “unreason.” It seemed beyond doubt, to Mayo, “that prejudice, emotion and unreason are responsible for the origin and perpetuation of a great part of our social ills.” Unlike what had been believed by earlier social scientists, “irrationality of the type discussed by the crowd psychologists is not an inborn character of the human mind, but originates during the lifetime of the individual.” Mayo advocated not an innate biological approach, but an approach much more environmental in nature.<sup>144</sup>

Mayo was a well-known scientist, known personally by Ruml, and whose work Arthur Woods was also familiar with. Born in Australia, Mayo was a professor of

<sup>143</sup> The University of Pennsylvania’s request for funding, dated January 17, 1923, was interpreted by the Memorial as “too industrial in nature”; see “University of Pennsylvania, Department of Industrial Research.” Penn next recommended exploring an area that “in time may result in opening a field of real usefulness.” The area was the relationship between psychology and personnel problems. The presence of G. Elton Mayo was something Penn believed put Penn in position to extend from studying “problems of an economic nature” (i.e., sources of labor supply, labor turnover as a community problem) to problems spanning a broader context. RAC–LSRM, Series III. Box 75, Folders 790-791.

<sup>144</sup> G. Elton Mayo, Project Description, March 1, 1923, pp. 1-2, RAC–LSRM, Series III. Box 75, Folders 790-791.

psychology and physiology at the University of Queensland when the “Great War” broke out. He had been developing a kind of medical psychology, based on recognition that physical ailments can provoke psychological ailments, and also sometimes visa-versa. Shortly before the war, Mayo got a chance to make friends with British anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, while the latter was visiting instructor at the University of Melbourne. The two spent many hours together discussing anthropology and sociology, and Mayo learned especially about the cultural role of superstition and irrational belief. Mayo was thus well-prepared in a range of social sciences when he got an opportunity in 1923, with Memorial as well as NRC support, to come to the University of Pennsylvania. Mayo’s goal at Penn was to expand his medical psychology by doing research on the impact of factory work on workers’ bodies and minds. Mayo worked under the direction of Joseph Willits to explore ideas to connect medical research and industrial institutions.<sup>145</sup>

Ruml arranged personal meetings with Mayo and Willits by May, reporting back to Woods that he “had a profitable day in Philadelphia...going over the work of Willits and Mayo. I was very favorably impressed, not only by the quality of the work Mayo has done, but by the way he has interested manufactures in the possibilities.”<sup>146</sup>

Penn got its grant, and its research program got started and grew over time. Mayo guided researchers doing studies in Philadelphia factories, especially in a number of large textile works. Another group of Penn researchers joining the project under Willits’s guidance was at Penn’s Wharton School of Commerce. An idea connecting Willits’s business-school researchers into the larger project at Penn was an idea that “social science” needed to be

<sup>145</sup> See Richard C.S. Trahair, *The Humanist Temper: The Life and Work of Elton Mayo* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Books, 1984): esp. 83-5, 171-95.

<sup>146</sup> Beardsley Ruml to Arthur Woods, May 20, 1923, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 25.



joined with a university department representing “social technology,” which was what the Wharton School represented. Potential research areas for Willits’s group, as he stated in May 1923, included such things as medical insurance issues, labor turnover rates, and studies of wages and earnings. The central idea remained, however, that all these areas might be connected to a study of the irrationality principle in society. The connection between psychology research and the projects to be studied by the commerce professors, began, Willits explained, from the “original idea [of Mayo] to treat a factory as if it were a ‘shell-shock’ hospital and to examine every individual in it with the object of discovering: 1<sup>st</sup>, In what respect his attitude to life was abnormal or defective. 2<sup>nd</sup>, The effect of such abnormality or defect upon collaboration in work within the factory.” The goal for Willits’s research team was to discover what kinds of things the harsh factory environment of the day could do to workers in terms of their quality of everyday life.<sup>147</sup>

Penn’s program branched into a number of projects through the 1920s. The central focus of all projects was to explain economic and social conditions in terms of psychological causes. Penn’s program achieved some successes, and by 1927, researchers in the Wharton School tied their projects together under the idea of “Industrial Problems of Individual Adjustment, which involves cooperation of the Physiologist, the Psychologist and the Economist for effective solution.” The operative word, here, was “cooperation.” Penn

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<sup>147</sup> By May 1923, Penn prepared reports (e.g., “Studies in Process in the Industrial Research Department”) identifying six projects, all fairly economic in nature. Joseph Willits, a professor in Penn’s Wharton School of Commerce, corresponded with Ruml regarding connections between economics and psychology; see Beardsley Ruml to Joseph Willits, January 29, 1923; Willits to Ruml, May 14, 1923; Willits to Ruml, May 29, 1923; Willits to Ruml, October 1, 1923; RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 75, Folders 790-791. In the submission by Willits of May 14<sup>th</sup>, he explained that work he was doing under an earlier, direct endowment from John D. Rockefeller, Jr., “related very closely to the work of the psychiatrist.” This was also the letter in which Willits explored the psychology-economics connection as it began from the “original idea” of Mayo. Communications between Mayo, Willits and Ruml continued over many years; see RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 75, Folders 790-791.

researchers were aware that many social problems needed the attention of specialists in multiple fields of social science. All lines of research pursued by Penn researchers aimed to discover what kinds of impacts modern society can have on the mental well-being of people. Willits, writing in 1927, emphasized that perhaps the greatest benefit to be achieved from connecting all these projects together “has been the gradual extension of scientific contacts that are available for effective cooperation.”<sup>148</sup>

Penn researchers worked to change people in order to better orient them to a changed world. This was no ameliorative program. It was a program aimed at fundamental change, even if there was some acceptance of the status quo. If the research choice was between changing a person’s environment or changing a person to fit their environment, Penn tended to choose the latter; they chose, in other words, to advance their research with a kind of *ceteris paribus* assumption to deal with a changed world as it happened to be. This was not the only way to try and change things, of course, as projects could also be aimed at discovering ways to change people’s economic, social, and cultural environments. Such projects were parts of other fields in the division of labor in social science, as Ruml set to building it.

#### 4.5 Other industrial psychology programs–1923-26

Another university interested in building a research program based on psychology was Yale University. Yale researchers wanted to focus on developing basic psychological research. On Yale’s faculty was the eminent figure, Robert M. Yerkes, who was a friend of Ruml. Similar to the situation at Penn, Yale’s faculty had theoretical as well as applied

<sup>148</sup> Joseph Willits to Beardsley Ruml, April 25, 1927, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 75, Folder 792.

interests. Yale shared Penn's idea to help orient people to a changed world, and Yale's grant application, pursued through much of 1923 and 1924, declared that suddenly rapid social changes were resulting in maladjustments requiring new methods of "social control."<sup>149</sup>

In May 1923, Yale President James Angell contacted his old friend Ruml to test the prospect of a new psychology institute at Yale. Ruml invited a proposal, and Angell complied by stating the argument:

There is unquestionably great need at the present moment for the development of psychology – using the term in the broadest sense – to contribute light and guidance for the solution of many problems of our present social order. In part this light should come from a thoroughgoing study of the earliest conditions out of which humanity has developed, not only our human ancestors, but also the more primitive types of animal life in whose activities we may hope to discover some of the deep lying factors in human nature which occasion in us perplexity, both as individuals and as members of civilized society.<sup>150</sup>

Rather than focus on environmental explanations, as Penn was doing, Yale recognized the need to do more work on biological explanations. The goal still remained to use environmentalist methodology to redirect behaviors, and Angel believed it even "conservative" to say "we are at the very threshold of the most important advances in our

<sup>149</sup> Yale University File, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 79, Folders 823-828. See also James Reed, "Robert M. Yerkes and the Mental Testing Movement," in Michael M. Sokal, ed., *Psychological Testing and American Society, 1890-1930* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990): 234-60.

<sup>150</sup> James R. Angell to Beardsley Ruml, May 4, 1923; Beardsley Ruml to Jame R. Angell, February 8, 1924; James R. Angell to Beardsley Ruml, February 20, 1923, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 79, Folders 823-828.

understanding of human activities and our ability, particularly through educational methods, to control human life for the betterment of all future generations.” Psychologists were at the threshold of a new age, and with the help of other social sciences, psychologists would soon be able to better “orient” people’s “social bearings” to a changed world.<sup>151</sup>

Yale psychologists wanted to tackle projects in at least five areas: normal human behavior; comparative psychology; testing methods; aberrant mental behavior; and “racial, and particularly primitive, human behavior in its cultural and social aspects.” In the latter category was included “sex research.” Angell advertised the presence at Yale of Robert Yerkes, who was a scientist generally considered on par with Mayo. Following some clarifying interaction between Ruml and Angell, Yale submitted a revised proposal stating their goal that “the field of study will include the basic psycho-biological factors, with due emphasis upon the neurological and instinctive aspects of behavior, upon the social traits of man, both primitive and civilized, upon peculiarities of race, climatic habitat, and cultural and economic status.” Yale’s main goal was to do research on the natural bases of psychological science; this would be research, Angell added, that “will especially stress aberrant forms of behavior,” attempting “to orient... forms of abnormality in their individual and social bearings.”<sup>152</sup>

Yale’s proposal clearly was a bit different from the one submitted by Penn. Whereas Penn’s interest centered on a particular principle of social psychology, Yale’s program

<sup>151</sup> An interest that Angell expressed was for a “Psycho-Biological Institute,” which Yerkes also supported; see James Rowland Angell to Beardsley Ruml, May 4, 1923; Ruml to Angell, February 8, 1924; Angell to Ruml, February 20, 1923, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 79, Folders 823-828.

<sup>152</sup> “Preliminary Formulation of Plan for Institute of Psycho-Biology at Yale University,” attached with James R. Angell to Beardsley Ruml, March 1924, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 79, Folders 823-828. See also Randall D. Wight, “The Pavlov-Yerkes Connection: What Was Its Origin?” *Psychological Record* 43 (1993): 351-60; Donald A. Dewsbury, “Robert Yerkes, Sex Research, and the Problem of Data Simplification,” *History of Psychology* 1 (1998): 116-29.

aimed to learn about a wide range of deep bases of behavior. The scientific ideas and research methods of Yerkes – who was originally a specialist in animal behavior – were much respected by social scientists, and Yale’s research rationale fit with what Ruml and the Memorial trustees could approve. Yale received a fine block grant, to be used for projects that Yerkes and Angell were trusted to use keen discretion to select. The research program underway at Yale would, by the late 1920s, turn into a pair of fine institutes: an Institute of Psychology and an Institute of Human Relations.<sup>153</sup>

In addition to the workplace-psychology studies at Penn, another group interested in such studies was the National Research Council, which as early as 1922 indicated their interest to study psychological problems associated with the industrial workplace. What the NRC recognized was that numerous research groups in industrial and occupational psychology needed some kind of coordinative body to assist in sharing results. Also likely to be useful, according to the NRC, would be increased research coordination in the development of occupational “fitness” tests. The NRC advocated a “purely psychological” approach to “the study of techniques of setting tests of fitness for certain occupations found in civil service, business, and industry.” Ruml believed the Memorial should help by providing some assistance for this coordinative research need, and the Memorial did so, beginning in 1923.<sup>154</sup>

<sup>153</sup> James H. Capshew, “The Yale Connection in American Psychology: Philanthropy, War, and the Emergence of an Academic Elite,” in Theresa Richardson and Donald Fisher, eds., *The Development of the Social Sciences in the United States and Canada: The Role of Philanthropy* (Stamford, Conn.: Ablex Publishing Corp., 1999): 143-54; Mark Arthur May, “A Retrospective View of the Institute of Human Relations at Yale,” *Behavior Science Notes* 6 (1971): 141-72. For more information on Ruml’s interactions with Robert Yerkes in particular, see John H. Stanfield, *Philanthropy and Jim Crow in American Science* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985): 64, 68-70.

<sup>154</sup> See C.E. Seashore to Beardsley Ruml, April 10, 1922; also Seashore to Ruml, March 31, 1922. In their provision of some assistance, the Memorial’s stated goal was to work through the NRC “to establish an organization to serve as a clearing house for information regarding the progress in public personnel

Another research group interested in studying psychology issues in the industrial workplace was the National Institute of Industrial Psychology. In 1923, the NIIP declared a need to better understand the changing harshness of the industrial workplace. The NIIP could help develop better occupational fitness measures, and they received Memorial funds for a five-year project to research ways to make life better for industrial workers. The NIIP's application openly disclosed their willingness to "undertake on behalf of Industrial and Commercial firms private investigations." The group's official statement of purpose reiterated the same message, recording that "Communications are invited from firms in regard to any problems in which they think the Institute may be able to render them assistance." So, in possibly recognizing that Penn's field studies in Philadelphia factories necessarily interacted with private business interests (because this was an interaction perhaps required to gain access to useful data), the Memorial was willing to support research by another organization interested in working directly with private requests.<sup>155</sup>

The idea to do industrial psychology research for private interests was not even new with the NIIP. During the decades preceding Charlie Chaplin's famous, neurotically twitching, assembly line worker in *Modern Times* (1936), the problem of an industrially damaged "psyche" was fairly familiar. One of the nation's more prominent psychologists, James McKeen Cattell, founded the Psychological Corporation in 1921, as a kind of contact organization through which social scientists could be located and hired as private consultants.

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administration and to conduct and stimulate original research in that field"; Lewis Meriam to G.F. Willoughby, April 20, 1922, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 49, Folder 519. See also Stanfield, *Philanthropy and Jim Crow*, 68.

<sup>155</sup> See Charles S. Myers to Beardsley Ruml November 20, 1923; Ruml to Myers December 21, 1923; Myers to Ruml January 25, 1924. The statement of willingness to undertake projects for industrial and commercial firms is in the opening statement in the organization's journal, *The Journal of the National Institute of Industrial Psychology*, begun in January 1922. See also "National Institute of Industrial Psychology: Statement Prepared for the Information of the Trustees of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial," 1924, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 56, Folder 610.

The best-known example of such consultancy, of course, was the famous “Hawthorne Studies.”<sup>156</sup>

The rapid rise of the “new” behavioral science is typified by the series of experiments done in 1924 in an AT&T-Western Electric factory at Hawthorne, Illinois, on the west side of Chicago. A team of MIT electrical engineers with sociological interests set up the experiment with the support of the NRC’s psychology research group. The engineers arranged a classic experimental design with a control group and an experimental group. Work conditions were systematically altered for the experimental group, including such things as changing work station positions, changing lighting levels, and the like. However when the engineers measured for any productivity changes they actually found both the control group and the experimental group got more productive. Both groups, it turned out, knew one basic fact about the experiments: the experimenters were measuring whether productivity improved. This fact alone led both groups to want to produce more. A subsequent series of experiments between 1927 and 1931 tried various adjustments, including clustering employees into smaller work groups. Yet by the end of the additional experiments the researchers still could only conclude that each factor in the workers’ environment was so interconnected with all other factors that no single factor could be isolated for its measurable contribution to productivity. Eventually one researcher would work on clarifying what the Hawthorne studies truly revealed, and this person was Elton Mayo.<sup>157</sup>

<sup>156</sup> For some information on private-sector hiring of social scientists, see Loren Baritz, *The Servants of Power: A History of the Use of the Social Sciences in American Industry* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1960).

<sup>157</sup> Richard P. Gillespie, *Manufacturing Knowledge: A History of the Hawthorne Experiments* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Yeh Hsueh, “The Hawthorne Experiments and the Introduction of Jean Piaget in American Industrial Psychology, 1929-1932,” *History of Psychology* 5, 2 (2002): 163-89.

#### 4.6 The beginning of a research center at Harvard University–1926-28

In 1926, at the encouragement of Lawrence Joseph Henderson, an eminent Harvard University biochemist and physiologist, Mayo moved from the University of Pennsylvania to Harvard University's School of Business Administration. Harvard researchers expressed interest of their own in studying psychological adjustment problems in the workplace, and soon it would be Harvard, rather than Penn, that would become one of Ruml's major research centers.<sup>158</sup>

The scientific status of social research at Harvard was fairly advanced in many fields by the middle 1920s – except, it turns out, sociology and industrial psychology. Anthropology research was underway at Harvard's Peabody Museum since the late 1860s, and a department of political economy was established in 1879 at the school. Departments of psychology and of government were established during the 1890s. However Harvard had not established a sociology department (and would not until 1931). A key question is why Harvard waited so long to establish sociology, and the direct answer is sociology was not seen as scientifically “rigorous” enough to fit with the established organizational structure at Harvard. This changed when money came in.<sup>159</sup>

The major framework for social research at Harvard into the 1920s was a long-running Department of Social Ethics, which in a sense oversaw all other social research and inquiry at the school. Charles William Eliot, Harvard's president of forty-one years (1869-

<sup>158</sup> John Parascandola, “L.J. Henderson and the Mutual Dependence and the Mutual Dependence of Variables: From Physical Chemistry to Pareto,” in Clark A. Elliot and Margaret W. Rossiter, eds., *Science at Harvard University: Historical Perspectives* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 1992): 167-90, esp. 181-4.

<sup>159</sup> Lawrence T. Nichols, “The Establishment of Sociology at Harvard: A Case of Organizational Ambivalence and Scientific Vulnerability,” in Clark A. Elliot and Margaret W. Rossiter, eds., *Science at Harvard University: Historical Perspectives* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 1992): 191-222, esp. 217.



1909), strongly favored an activist, reformist approach to social inquiry, and in 1905 he spearheaded creation of the social ethics program.<sup>160</sup>

When Harvard made its Memorial grant proposal in 1926, psychological research was at the center of the proposal, especially for an experimental program to study mental health problems in the workplace. Harvard believed that great benefit might result from applying Mayo's approach to a program focusing on connections between human physiology, psychology, and the workplace. Harvard's James Curtis declared "that the cultural benefits of Dr. Mayo's work to industry and business are of tremendous importance," and Leonard Outhwaite, at the Memorial, informed Ruml that Mayo's newest ideas made sense as a way to deal "with maladjusted individuals in industrial life and with the conditions in industry which tend to generate and foster maladjustment." Harvard's proposal was fairly similar to Penn's successful proposal three years earlier. Harvard's reputation and Mayo's presence there basically were the only factors really needed for grant approval, especially in that Mayo was one about whom Ruml said "it is always great fun to have a party with." In early 1927, a grant was approved for Harvard to study various facets of workplace psychology, including industrial fatigue, within a program dubbed "individual industrial efficiency" studies. Soon enough Harvard became one of Ruml's four major university research centers in the United States.<sup>161</sup>

What grew especially quickly on Memorial funds were the Harvard Psychological Clinic, created during 1926, and the Fatigue Laboratory (in the Harvard School of Business Administration), which opened in 1927. One specifically advertised goal at Harvard was to

<sup>160</sup> Nichols, "The Establishment of Sociology at Harvard," 192.

<sup>161</sup> James Curtis to Raymond B. Fosdick, February 17, 1926; Leonard Outhwaite to Beardsley Ruml, April 29, 1926. See also Beardsley Ruml to Elton Mayo, March 15, 1924, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 53, Folder 572. Harvard's Fatigue Laboratory was directed by Lawrence J. Henderson and was based in the business school.

make progress at separating psychology from philosophy, which ended up happening, although not completely until 1934. Additionally impacted by the infusion of funds was the end of the social ethics program, which came in 1927.<sup>162</sup>

By 1929, the year that the Memorial's program was absorbed into the Rockefeller Foundation, Harvard's main research attention would also include economic studies of industrial hazards. It seems that in many ways Harvard's new programs were an expansion of what was initially begun at the University of Pennsylvania, when Mayo was there. Something also added at Harvard was an emphasis in international relations, which – as we will see – was actually part of an entire field of social science that Ruml and the Memorial worked to promote. The case of Harvard is one in which much more detail surely could stand to be understood than is done herein. The research center created at Harvard had the central methodological goal to transform fields of social research that were still in the philosophical, even “social gospel,” tradition into genuinely scientific fields. The Harvard research center – it should also be noted – was actually the last of Ruml's five university-based research centers to come into shape.<sup>163</sup>

The idea that Ruml and the Memorial worked to help develop certain new “fields” of social science will be taken up in Chapters 6 and 7. In those two chapters, our focus will turn to understanding how many smaller-scale projects were supported at a variety of universities,

<sup>162</sup> Parascandola, “L.J. Henderson and the Mutual Dependence and the Mutual Dependence of Variables,” 184; Nichols, “The Establishment of Sociology at Harvard,” 193, 226-8, 235.

<sup>163</sup> One specific Memorial appropriation to Harvard, of \$155,000, came in May 1927 to cover a four-year period for the study of industrial efficiency. For some additional information on the social sciences at Harvard, see Paul Buck, ed., *The Social Sciences at Harvard: From Inculcation to the Open Mind* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965); Charles E. Harvey, “John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and the Social Sciences: An Introduction,” *Journal of the History of Sociology* 4, 3 (Fall 1982): 1-31, esp. 21.

in coordinated ways. Before that, however, four other university-based research centers are studied in Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 5. RESEARCH “CENTERS” IN ECONOMICS, SOCIOLOGY, AND POLITICAL SCIENCE–1922-28

### 5.1 Introduction

Between 1923 and 1928, the Memorial built five major university “research centers.” Each center had its own special focus. Fields of focus at Harvard University, as explored in the last chapter, included industrial psychology and industrial sociology. Also developed as part of Harvard’s project to transform ethical inquiry into empirical analysis, was international affairs. We will now learn, in some detail, about the Memorial’s four other centers, at the London School of Economics (focusing on wide-ranging economic studies), the University of Chicago (focusing on cultural “assimilation” and “local community building”), the University of North Carolina (focusing on race-relations research), and Columbia University (focusing on law, economics, and politics).

### 5.2 Professional political science, sociology, and economics by the 1920s

In differing degrees, persons involved in research in political science, sociology, and economics made serious strides by the 1920s. All three of these social sciences were on their way to becoming professionalized as fields of expertise.

The idea of a “science” of humans and societies of course far predates the 1920s. After all, David Hume wrote in 1741 his essay “That Politicks may be reduc’d to a Science.” The field of political science began turning professional in certain ways between the 1880s and 1910s. The journal *Political Science Quarterly* got started in 1886, yet seventeen more years went by before the American Political Science Association got off the ground. The new

association started the *American Political Science Review* in 1906. But still Arthur Bentley could famously declare in 1908: “We have a dead political science.” After a dozen or so more years, Charles E. Merriam finally declared, in 1921, that the research tools were beginning to exist for a “new science of politics.” Merriam had in mind an empirical science that would be based on testable hypotheses. Merriam believed, specifically, that rigorous methods for political science would build directly upon the “behaviorist” approach in psychology. So, in the face of some resistance – notably Charles A. Beard’s “anti-scientism” – a project was underway to see what could be done to build a new, empirical political science.<sup>164</sup>

Sociology became an academic, professional enterprise in certain ways as early as the 1860s, when the American Social Science Association was created (in 1865) as an effort to bring organized attention to problems of crime and pauperism. The first sociology professorship in the United States waited, however, until 1893, when social gospel minister Albion Small received an appointment at the University of Chicago’s new sociology department, begun one year earlier. Small initiated the journal *American Journal of Sociology* in 1895. Still, for about the first ten to fifteen years of the journal, little was accepted for publication that could reasonably be called rigorous science. In 1905, academic sociologists began meeting as a national organization, the American Sociological Society. One breakthrough empirical work that these scientists could fruitfully discuss was W.E.B. Du Bois’s recent case study, *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899). But in terms of any

<sup>164</sup> Arthur F. Bentley, *The Process of Government: A Study of Social Pressures* (Evanston: Principia Press of Illinois, 1949 [1908]); Albion Small, *The Meaning of Social Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1910); Charles A. Beard, “Political Science in the Crucible,” *New Republic* 13 (November 17, 1917): 3-4; Charles E. Merriam, “The Present State of the Study of Politics,” *American Political Science Review* 16 (August 1922): 274-81. See also Albert Somit and Joseph Tanenhaus, *The Development of American Political Science: From Burgess to Behaviorism* (New York: Irvington Publishers, 1982).

breakthrough methodologies that could enable sociological conclusions to transcend any singular case study, it was the “social survey” approach, created during the 1890s and 1900s outside of the universities, which provided such a thing. Persons such as Jane Addams and others in the “settlement-house movement” became leaders in the use of the social survey method during these decades, using the method with a social and political agenda. And so, into the 1920s a problem with sociology, much like that with economics, was the continuing danger of insufficient separation between objectivity and advocacy.<sup>165</sup>

The situation in economics was fairly similar to sociology and political science by the 1920s. The period of professionalizing economics began as early as the 1880s and took place mostly in the United States. The American Economics Association was formed in 1885, and the next half dozen years saw the creation of multiple scholarly journals in the field. However persons purporting themselves to possess unique “expertise” in economics (as obtained through graduate-level training) regularly got involved political arguments, which was a potential problem persisting into the 1920s. Eventually the rise of new mathematical methods (such statistics in the 1930s, and proof-based methods and “model-building” in the 1940s) would provide ways for economists to attempt to fully separate themselves from

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<sup>165</sup> On the rise of sociology as an objective social science see Thomas L. Haskell, *Emergence of a Professional Social Science: The American Social Science Association and the Nineteenth-Century Crisis of Authority* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977); Patricia M. Lengerman, “The Founding of the American Sociological Review: The Anatomy of a Rebellion,” *American Sociological Review* 44, 1 (1979): 185-98; Mary O. Furner, *Advocacy and Objectivity: A Crisis in the Professionalization of American Social Science* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1975); Roscoe C. Hinkle, *Founding Theory of American Sociology, 1881-1915* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980); Robert C. Bannister, *Sociology and Scientism: The American Quest for Objectivity, 1880-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987). See also Mary Jo Deegan, *Jane Addams and the Men of the Chicago School, 1892-1918* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1918).

politics. A first step towards this separation was the availability of new financial resources during the 1920s.<sup>166</sup>

The social sciences of political science, sociology and economics were well split from each other by the 1920s. A main reason for this separation was the effort by practitioners of the different social sciences to each be recognized as persons with specialized knowledge and abilities, i.e., as experts. Many social scientists had an idea that the 1920s and 1930s would be the time to reintegrate the social sciences into a unified package.<sup>167</sup>

### 5.3 The London School of Economics–1923-28

In September 1923, the London School of Economics began a long-running relationship with Rockefeller philanthropies. The LSE was in a process of trying to reestablish all its programs thoroughly on a foundation of the latest research in social science. LSE administrators contacted persons at the Memorial to introduce their understanding that

<sup>166</sup> A contemporary view is Allyn A. Young, "Economics as a Field of Research," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 42 (November 1927): 1-25. More recent historical studies include Robert L. Church, "Economists as Experts: The Rise of the Academic Profession in the United States, 1879-1920," in Lawrence Stone, ed., *The University in Society*, vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974): 571-610; William J. Barber, *From New Era to New Deal: Herbert Hoover, the Economists, and American Economic Policy, 1921-1933* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Perry Mehrling, *The Money Interest and the Public Interest: The Development of American Monetary Thought, 1920-1970* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997).

<sup>167</sup> Patrick Geddes, "Proposed Co-Ordination of the Social Sciences," *Sociological Review* 16 (January 1924): 54-65; Albert G. Kellar, *Starting Points in Social Science* (Boston: Ginn, 1925); Edward C. Hayes and Charles A. Ellwood, eds., *Recent Developments in the Social Sciences* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1927); William F. Ogburn and Alexander Goldenwieser, eds., *The Social Sciences and Their Interrelations* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1927); Harold G. Moulton, "Co-operation in Social Science Research," in Leonard D. White, ed., *The New Social Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930). See also E.K. Francis, "History of the Sciences: Some Reflections on the Re-integration of Social Science," *The Review of Politics* 13 (July 1951): 354-74. Different historical treatments of the tug between specialization and integration during the early twentieth century, see Henricka Kuklick, "Boundary Maintenance in American Sociology: Limitations to Academic 'Professionalization,'" *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 6 (1980): 201-19; Franz Samuelson, "Organizing for the Kingdom of Behavior: Academic Battles and Organizational Politics in the Twenties," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 21 (January 1985): 33-47; J.W. Burrow, "Coherence and Specialization in the Social Sciences in the Early 20th Century," in Michael Harbsmeier and Mogens Trolle Larson, eds., *The Humanities between Art and Science: Intellectual Developments, 1880-1914* (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1989): 1-31.

the Memorial “may be prepared to consider a proposal for assisting research in Economics and Social Science” at the school. LSE faculty had two lines of projects in mind. One line would depend upon “immediate opportunities for investigation,” and might include a range of economic and sociological problems to be studied. Likely projects ranged from economic resources of undeveloped lands, to causes of unemployment, to population studies of various sorts (including eugenics). The second, much longer-term focus would be to “make a systematic study of economic phenomena in their bearing on social welfare.” Within a few months, in the following January, the Memorial awarded a five-year, \$1.4 million grant, supporting both options.<sup>168</sup>

Ruml particularly liked the relationship begun in September between the Memorial and the LSE. Founded twenty-eight years earlier, the LSE was becoming the preeminent British university for the study of economics, sociology, and political science. LSE faculty paid special attention to research and teaching at the graduate level. In the September 1923 correspondence, Ruml shared ideas with William Beveridge, the school’s director, as the two struck a friendship. In particular they shared ideas about the need to promote social research addressing “concrete” problems. Important for Ruml’s assessment of LSE prospects was the way Beveridge displayed an interest to transform the school from an institution based on

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<sup>168</sup> The description of the LSE’s two proposed lines of research is in “Promotion of Economic Research,” September 21, 1923, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 55, Folders 592. Donald Fisher looks at interactions between Rockefeller philanthropy and LSE, Oxford University and Cambridge University between 1919 and the early 1940s, and he finds that approximately forty percent of 108 fellowships granted to these schools by the Memorial and the Foundation between 1924 and 1940 went to economic research. Donald Fisher, “American Philanthropy and the Social Sciences in Britain, 1919-1939: Reproduction of a Conservative Ideology,” *Sociological Review* 28, 2 (May 1980), 277-315. See also Martin Bulmer, “Beardsley Ruml and the School Between the Wars: An Unsung Benefactor,” *LSE Magazine* 64 (November 1982): 5-6; Rolf Dahrendorf, *LSE: A History of the London School of Economics and Political Science, 1895-1995* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).



part-time students and instructors (as well as burdened by housing and endowment shortages) into an elite institution.<sup>169</sup>

The Memorial's decision in January was to grant extensive general support. Awarded money included funds for general endowment, for library and building improvements, and for research. Development of a program in international studies was included, as was a decision to endow a chair of political economy to allow visiting professors, such as Harvard's Allyn Young, to teach there. LSE researchers had many choices they were free to make about how to use their Memorial funds, and they decided to use a sizeable amount of their money to help minimize teaching loads of senior faculty, thereby allowing more research to be done.<sup>170</sup>

In July 1925, LSE faculty members shared with the Memorial some new ideas they were formulating about the foundation and structure of social science. LSE social scientists wanted to clarify dividing lines between different social sciences, as well as make a "study of the borderlands" between social science, other sciences, and non-sciences. Fitting with what many social scientists were beginning to recognize, a unity of social science was believed needed because most kinds of social problems required cooperative attention of more than one social science. LSE researchers aimed to "deal first with the study of the natural bases of the social sciences, as the most important development now to be made in the field of the social sciences." The "natural bases" of social science would serve to link together the school's two research lines, in "economic relations" and in "politics and social relations."

<sup>169</sup> Additional useful information about the history of the London School of Economics is in Sydney Caine, *The History of the Foundation of the London School of Economics and Political Science* (London: Bell, 1963); José Harris, *William Beveridge: A Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977): esp. cha. 11.

<sup>170</sup> The Memorial's LSE materials are in RAC-LSRM, Series I, Box 1, Folder 5 and Box 2, Folder 16; also in Series III, Box 55, Folders 592-595 and Box 56, Folder 599.

“To complete the circle of the social sciences a third group of studies is required, dealing with the natural bases of economics and politics, with the human material and with its physical environment, and forming a bridge between the natural and the social sciences.” The LSE faculty believed the “addition of the missing third to the existing structure of the School would be perhaps the most important step that could be taken now for the development of the social sciences.” To complete the continuity of social science, more development was needed in such fields as anthropology, social biology, economic psychology, geography, agriculture studies, and public health. Work to unify all the social sciences into a seamless web was immensely important: “Apart from its direct value in advancing the borders of human knowledge, it would confer a great indirect benefit by bringing the natural and social sciences into contact and importing the methods of the former into the latter.” The LSE faculty concluded their aim was to make the social sciences methodologically more like the natural sciences.<sup>171</sup>

LSE researchers’ work with Memorial funds included efforts to introduce new methods of analysis across the social sciences. One such method, originally developed by anthropologists, was known as functional analysis. The “functionalist” method was developed as a way to make anthropology a social science capable of studying all aspects of a society. The method was used to learn how any society meets its various necessary functions. Similar to certain ideas being explored by anthropologists at the University of Chicago and Columbia University (as we will see), LSE social scientists wondered if their new “functionalist” research method might apply to contemporary problems even in

<sup>171</sup> LSE faculty presented their ideas on the structure of social science in “Memorandum from the London School of Economics and Political Science,” July 1925, esp. 1-2, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 55, Folder 592. A supplementary memo, again suggesting the idea of a “borderlands” between natural sciences and social sciences, is “The Natural Bases of the Social Sciences,” undated, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 55, Folder 594.

industrialized societies. Industrialized societies may be more functionally differentiated than primitive ones, largely because of greater specialization of labor, but the same basic life-supporting functions still must be met by any society. At the LSE, the functionalist approach was advocated particularly by Bronislaw Malinowski, who expressed to the Memorial his goal to broadly apply the method. Malinowski, an aforementioned friend of Mayo at the University of Pennsylvania, specialized in studying the benefits that primitive societies receive from their variety of superstitions and other unusual beliefs. Malinowski centered his interest on learning about “the practical influence of social science upon policies.”<sup>172</sup>

Malinowski developed his ideas at a time when anthropology was, in a sense, just ready for development of the functionalist method. In addition to case studies made by living among natives (which was a method also superbly employed by Malinowski), a newer research approach in anthropology was Franz Boas’s emphasis that language, culture, and race are distinctly separate attributes of humans living in society. Through a series of studies dating from the 1890s, Boas and his followers (the so-called “American Historical School”) supported the view that race differences are not fixed and are not measurable with anthropometric methods, i.e., that the ideas and values of different peoples are dependent on their cultures which produce them. With Boas’s contributions and his many followers, anthropology became something of a profession. Boas’s researches prepared anthropologists

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<sup>172</sup> Ruml invited Malinowski’s visit in November 1925, the invitation being made under the European Fellowship Program in the Social Science; see Beardsley Ruml to Bronislaw Malinowski, November 12, 1925, LSRM minutes, pages 25060-1. Malinowski was considered desirable for a traveling fellowship for the reason, as stated by Charles Merriam, that he “is the first anthropologist I have met who says he wishes to change anthropology from an antiquarian study to some relation with living social interest, and who wishes to tie up with biology, psychology, and other social studies.” With more scholars like Malinowski, Merriam added, “something might be started in the good old field of social science”; Charles Merriam to Beardsley Ruml, April 24, 1926. Malinowski’s words are from his report at the end of his travels, as submitted to the Memorial in 1926; RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 55, Folders 592-99. See also Michael W. Young, *Malinowski: Odyssey of an Anthropologist, 1884-1920* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

to develop the functionalist analysis by delving into commonalities between wide-ranging cultures, based on a confidence that all societies ultimately must solve the same core group of problems.<sup>173</sup>

The main focus for Memorial funds at the LSE was economics, helping to produce numerous noteworthy publications. Some publications dealt with concrete problems, though others dealt with abstract theories and concepts. LSE researchers accepted their freedom to try just about any kind of research method they wished. Perhaps their expression to the Memorial of an interest to complete the unity of social science corresponded with some allowance they had to include projects not obviously “concrete” in the usual sense. Notable among early Memorial-supported research accomplishments at the LSE were such landmark studies in economic theory and economic history as R.H. Tawney and Eileen Power’s *Tudor Economic Documents* (1924), A.L. Bowley’s and Margaret Hogg’s *Has Poverty Diminished?* (1925), T.E. Gregory’s *The First Year of the Gold Standard* (1926), and R.H. Tawney’s *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (1926).<sup>174</sup>

Memorial funds were also used to recruit established economists to the LSE from other institutions, which 1928-29 research appointments of Harvard economist Allyn Young and Oxford economist Lionel Robbins being most noteworthy. While Young stayed for just

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<sup>173</sup> See George W. Stocking, Jr., ed., *The Franz Boas Reader: The Shaping of American Anthropology, 1883-1911* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974): 63. See also Marvin Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory: A History of Theories of Culture* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1968); Nocolas, Peterson, “‘Studying Man and Man’s Nature’: The History of the Institutionalization of Aboriginal Anthropology,” *Australian Aboriginal Studies* 2 (1990): 3-19; Robert Thornton, “Malinowski and the Birth of Functionalism,” in J.T. Fraser and M.P. Soulsby, eds., *Dimensions of Time and Life: The Study of Time* (Madison, Conn.: International Universities Press, 1996): 251-66.

<sup>174</sup> An area of ongoing historical debate is the impact of Memorial and Rockefeller Foundation policy on the direction of social research. Donald Fisher’s thesis is that because of Rockefeller interest in realistic and empirical social research, the rate and magnitude of change from deductive theory to empirical research in Britain “had been largely due to Rockefeller influence”; Fisher, “American Philanthropy and the Social Sciences in Great Britain,” 295.

one year, Robbins remained for the remainder of his long career as a joint appointment of the University of London and the London School of Economics. Probably the most famous LSE study supported by the Memorial's block grant was, in fact, Robbins' *Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science*, published in 1932. Also worthy of note is one type of research favored by the Memorial and performed by LSE social scientists, which was the empirical social survey; a major project, begun in 1927 by a team of economists and sociologists, was the "New Survey of London Life and Labour."<sup>175</sup>

These and other works at the LSE were not the result of Memorial and LSE leaders agreeing on particular problems to study, but were the product of block-grant money generally allocated so that researchers could figure out how best to enhance an overall framework of unified social science. As Nobel laureate economist Friedrich Von Hayek later pointed out, Memorial funds helped out a great deal at the LSE. "It is scarcely too much to say that during most of the Beveridge era the growth of the School was dominated by the new developments, financed mainly from Rockefeller funds, which affected chiefly the library, the development of entirely new fields of teaching, and the provision for research." Perhaps the new fields of research and teaching would not have been so readily achieved if LSE researchers had limited their attention to fields already comfortably concrete in nature. The infusion of Memorial funds to the LSE produced, in fairly short time, Ruml's sole

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<sup>175</sup> Research methods used in LSE's "New Survey of London Life and Labour" represented a major improvement upon the kinds of methods used in a similar survey completed a quarter century earlier; see Kevin Bales, "Charles Booth's 'Survey of Life and Labour of the People in London, 1889-1903,'" in Martin Bulmer, Kevin Bales, and Kathryn Kish Sklar, eds., *The Social Survey in Historical Perspective, 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991): 66-110.

European university research center – as well as one of the premier social science universities in the world.<sup>176</sup>

#### 5.4 The University of Chicago–1923-28

The University of Chicago was established in 1892, with significant financial support from John D. Rockefeller Sr. Chicago's main focus from the outset was to sustain an outstanding graduate program, and by the 1920s, one of the premier graduate programs there was sociology, which was strongly influenced by the Sage-supported survey movement as well as by the Carnegie-supported Americanization Study. These methods were getting combined and extended into a program of community studies that was something of a social-ecology approach soon dubbed the "Chicago School" of sociology. Robert E. Park's research for the Americanization Study brought notice to Chicago by the late 1910s, as did the superb ethnographic study by William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (1918-21), which introduced the pure and unsentimental concepts of "social disorganization" and "social reorganization."<sup>177</sup>

In 1921, Park and Ernest Burgess published their breakthrough textbook, *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*, which aimed to prove that "all social problems turn out to be

<sup>176</sup> Friedrich A. von Hayek, "The London School of Economics, 1895-1945," *Economica* 13 (February 1946): 25; see also Harris, *William Beveridge*, 263-71. The success of the LSE program has been studied in some detail in a dissertation by Salma Ahmad, "Institutions and the Growth of Knowledge: The Rockefeller Foundation's Influence on the Social Sciences between the Wars," Ph.D. dissertation, Manchester University, 1987.

<sup>177</sup> Interaction between the Memorial and the University of Chicago has been studied by Martin Bulmer, "The Early Institutional Establishment of Social Science Research: The Local Community Research Committee at the University of Chicago, 1923-30," *Minerva* 18, 1 (Spring 1980): 51-100; and, Martin Bulmer, *The Chicago School of Sociology: Institutionalization, Diversity, and the Rise of Sociological Research* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). Park and Thomas can both be credited with establishing "scientific" methodology in sociology; for the case in favor of Thomas see Rudolf K. Haerle, Jr., "William Isaac Thomas and the Helen Culver Fund for Race Psychology: The Beginnings of Scientific Sociology at the University of Chicago, 1910-1913," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 27 (1991): 21-41.

problems of social control.” Another Chicago social scientist, Charles Merriam, wondered if actual exertion of social control might help solve the problem that people were not participating effectively in the political process. This notion – “social control” – was a key idea that brought the philanthropic foundations and the social scientists together. An idea at Chicago was that survey methods joined with applied experiments in cities would produce answers as to what the mechanisms of social control could really accomplish. The city of Chicago itself was seen as a “research laboratory,” and in 1929 Park wrote the seminal chapter generalizing the method: “The City as a Social Laboratory.”<sup>178</sup>

The University of Chicago began receiving substantial Memorial support in late 1923, and by the end of 1928 grants to Chicago would exceed \$3 million. Rumml approved of the Chicago social scientists and their framework for analysis, called “local community research.” The main idea, stimulated by Park and Burgess, was to perform rigorous social analysis by “mapping” all the regularities of encounters and interactions in a community. This method recognized that all people as well as social groups interact in a great societal web, or “social ecology.” Local community research projects pursued at Chicago employed research skills of economists, sociologists, political scientists, and even psychologists. Social scientists in all these fields interacted with social workers.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess, *Introduction to the Science of Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1921): 785; Robert E. Park, “The City as a Social Laboratory,” in Thomas V. Smith and Leonard D. White, eds., *Chicago: An Experiment in Social Science Research* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929). The mantra “social control” was introduced during the 1890s by sociologist Edward A. Ross; on the history of ideas about social control beginning about 1920, see Morris Janowitz, *The Last Half-Century: Social Change and Politics in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

<sup>179</sup> Early contacts between the University of Chicago and the Memorial were made by economist Leon C. Marshall and sociologist/political scientist Charles E. Merriam, in the fall of 1923; L.C. Marshall to Beardsley Rumml, August 23, 1923; Charles E. Merriam to Beardsley Rumml, October 30, 1923; Merriam to Rumml, November 27, 1923. In his October correspondence, Merriam presented a list of “Suggested Topics for Long Time Survey,” emphasizing a dozen or so areas of political-science research capable of making the field more scientific. See also Martin Bulmer, “The Early Institutional Establishment of Social Science Research”; Fred H,

In March 1924, Chicago received a substantial, three-year Memorial grant for its community research program. Similar to researchers at other schools, Chicago researchers focused attention on a rapidly changing world. They proposed wide-ranging projects, but with central concerns focused on problems of immigrant housing, immigrant welfare, ethnic and race relations, criminality, and issues of inter-group violence. The best-known studies by Chicago social scientists dealt with problems associated with immigrant assimilation and with conflict between racial and ethnic groups. Chicagoans strongly emphasized a need to obtain uniform, “scientific forms” of data measurements for all social problems, which would be measures that would help their research be relevant as a general method.<sup>180</sup>

A number of noteworthy studies were made of the assimilation of different racial and immigrant groups into the city of Chicago. Charles S. Johnson, on appointment of the Chicago Commission of Race Relations, produced *The Negro in Chicago*, in 1922. Social problems of urgent concern were interpreted as consequences of greatly increased black migration to northern cities following the world war. An especially brutal result had been Chicago’s 1919 race riots. In addition to matters of race relations after the war, the “nationality question” was significant. An important study of immigrant assimilation was *Old World Traits Transplanted*, published in 1921 by W.I. Thomas (in collaboration with Robert Park and Herbert A. Miller). Thomas focused on group relations, especially between a

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Matthews, *Quest for an American Sociology: Robert E. Park and the Chicago School* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1977). For information about the “social ecology” approach, see Daniel Breslave, “The Scientific Appropriation of Social Research: Robert Park’s Human Ecology and American Sociology,” *Theory and Society* 19 (1990): 417-46; Emanuel Gaziano, “Ecological Metaphors as Scientific Boundary Work: Innovation and Authority in Interwar Sociology and Biology,” *American Journal of Sociology* 101 (1996): 874-907.

<sup>180</sup> For information on the three-year grant see L.C. Marshall to Beardsley Ruml, March 7, 1924. Early research projects in the community perspective are listed in Chicago’s “Memorandum” to L.K. Frank, March 9, 1925, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 70, Folder 744. For analysis of the Chicago focus on tangible data, see Jennifer Platt, “The Chicago School and Firsthand Data,” *History of the Human Sciences* 7, 1 (1994): 57-80.



majority white culture and minority immigrant or “racial” groups. While any group conflict could be either minor or severe, the ultimate outcome of group conflict would inevitably be assimilation. In 1928, in *The Ghetto*, Louis Wirth showed such a process in action for the history of Chicago’s Jews. The Memorial thought of the Chicago community research method in terms of possibilities for extending it to include “the negro in industry and negro employment.”<sup>181</sup>

Leon C. Marshall, a University of Chicago economist, served as director of the National Council of Social Sciences. This new organization had a goal to make social research studies as useful as possible for educational purposes. Marshall believed in promoting greater communication between social scientists, which should help toward this goal. Ruml was friends with Marshall as well as with Charles Merriam. Merriam did wide-ranging research in political science, and he was an established leader in social science. Merriam was recognized especially for his spearheading efforts to establish the Social Science Research Council in 1923. Through the 1920s, Marshall and Merriam each shared ideas with Ruml.<sup>182</sup>

Marshall’s way of sharing ideas was through pamphlets and reports, which he authored and provided to Ruml. Probably in late 1923 or early 1924, Marshall produced a

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<sup>181</sup> Charles S. Johnson and Chicago Commission on Race Relations, *The Negro in Chicago: A Study of Race Relations and a Race Riot* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922); Charles S. Johnson, *The Negro in American Civilization* (New York: Henry Holt, 1970); Frederic Thrasher, *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927); Louis Wirth, *The Ghetto* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1928). “Race Relations and Negro Work, 1926-27,” RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 98, Folder 996. See also Naomi Farber, “Charles S. Johnson’s *The Negro in Chicago*,” *American Sociologist* 26, 3 (1995): 78-88.

<sup>182</sup> On the work of Marshall with the NCSS, see Edgar Dawson, “The Social Studies,” *Journal of Social Forces* 1, 1 (November 1922): 22-4; see also Michael Lybarger, “Origins of Modern Social Studies, 1900-1916,” *History of Education Quarterly* 33 (1993): 455-68. For early contacts between Merriam and Ruml, see Charles E. Merriam, “Suggested Topics for Long Time Survey,” October 30, 1923. Merriam emphasized twelve areas of study. See also Charles E. Merriam to Beardsley Ruml, November 27, 1923, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 70, Folder 744.

pamphlet titled “Introduction to Social Studies” in which he explored relations between the social sciences. Ruml appreciated the pamphlet and freely handed out copies of it. Ruml then requested a second report from Marshall, one aimed at exploring ideas about social science education for engineers, which included technological engineers as well as social engineers. This memorandum, quickly provided in February 1924, had a central concern that there be “general recognition” that “an outstanding deficiency in the preparation of engineers is in the realm of the social sciences and business administration.” Marshall held optimism that enough progress was already made in the social sciences “to enable interesting experiments to be made rather quickly and with quite as much probability of successful outcome as one could ask in experimental work.” The idea of “experimental work” was, to Marshall, to be considered in the context of an engineering mindset for social scientists – an idea, in essence, that social knowledge must be put into action.<sup>183</sup>

In November 1925, Marshall put together another report on the question of social science education for engineers. This time he aimed to bolster experimental applications of knowledge by “indicat[ing] the importance of instruction in economics and the other social sciences in an engineering curriculum.” Marshall emphasized a belief that “Engineers are concerned with the effective control of natural materials and forces – usually in terms of costs and returns, and always in terms of the social and economic institutions of our day.” Persons receiving an engineering education – i.e., an education which at the Memorial would have been called a “social technology” education – needed to know the latest discoveries about social, economic, and political institutions of the day. Only with such knowledge could

<sup>183</sup> Early on in his communications with the Memorial, L.C. Marshall sent Beardsley Ruml copies of his pamphlet titled “Introduction to Social Studies.” Marshall then provided the requested memorandum on social science for engineers in February 1924; see L.C. Marshall to Beardsley Ruml, February 5, 1924, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 70, Folder 744.

engineers be the best possible engineers serving the public welfare. The urgent goal was to overcome cultural lag, which was the perceived fact that applications of new technologies generally occur before society's social, economic, and political institutions are prepared to handle them.<sup>184</sup>

Some persons at Chicago, like some at the LSE, worked to explore potential wide application of anthropology's functionalist method. The hope was that the functionalist approach would prove suitable for the study of modern problems in industrial societies. In addition to the block-grant funds, a supplemental grant was made to Chicago's anthropology department in 1925, enabling, among other things, the three-year appointment of Edward Sapir, a follower of Boas's environmentalist view and leader in the functionalist movement. The preeminent functionalist, Bronislaw Malinowski, also joined Chicago's faculty, brought over from the LSE on a Memorial fellowship in 1926. Writing to Ruml, Malinowski reported his greatest interests were to work on "the practical influence of social science upon policies" and to help clarify "the place assumed by science in American life, especially by social science."<sup>185</sup>

A noteworthy effort to apply anthropology's functionalist method to modern society was Chicago-trained sociologist Robert S. Lynd's pursuit of his "Middletown" project, which received Memorial funding in 1924. In at least two ways Lynd's project fit with the kind of social science Ruml wanted. It was a project in unified social science, and it was a study

<sup>184</sup> Marshall's 1925 report on social science education for engineers is titled "Report of S.P.E.E. Committee on Economic Content of Engineering Education," L.C. Marshall, November 1925, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 70, Folder 744.

<sup>185</sup> Bronislaw Malinowski to Beardsley Ruml, 1926 travel report, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 56, Folder 599. Edward Sapir was a leading cultural anthropologist of the day. Trained as a student of Franz Boas, Sapir came to Chicago in 1925 with a career already established in Canada. Sapir remained at Chicago for six years. Chicago's department of anthropology carried on its own interaction over many years with the Memorial; RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 70, Folder 746.

attempting to reduce the level of “irrationality” in an industrializing community. Lynd adopted a “sociological-anthropological” method for studying the town of Muncie, Indiana, as a kind of average American town.<sup>186</sup>

Additional grants were made to Chicago for the appointment of full-time research professorships in the social sciences. Appointed to different Chicago departments in 1927, for example, were Simon Leland, Henry Schultz, and L.L. Thurstone. The same year, the Memorial gave \$1.1 million to be used for building a new Social Sciences Research Building at Chicago. Among still other Memorial grants made to Chicago during the middle to late 1920s were grants of \$60,000 going to Charles Merriam to study civic education and of \$30,000 to L.C. Marshall to study business education. The University of Chicago Press received \$100,000 to support social science publications. Between 1923 and 1928, the Memorial granted approximately 3.4 million dollars to the school, making Chicago its largest university recipient of Memorial funds.<sup>187</sup>

In 1927, Max Mason, President of the University of Chicago, wrote a letter to Ruml about the possibility of creating a unified social science. Mason expressed a view that all sciences – social as well as physical – were really one body of science. It was time, he

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<sup>186</sup> Robert S. Lynd and Helen M. Lynd, *Middletown* (New York: Harcourt-Brace, 1928). For a lengthy critical comment by Raymond Fosdick on the direction of Lynd’s research during 1925, see Charles E. Harvey, “John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and the Social Sciences: An Introduction,” *Journal of the History of Sociology* 4, 3 (Fall 1981): 1-31, esp. 15; Charles E. Harvey, “Robert S. Lynd, John D. Rockefeller Jr., and Middletown,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 79 (December 1983): 330-54.

<sup>187</sup> Louis Leon Thurstone, a pioneer in psychology measurement, was at Chicago from 1924 until his death in 1955. Simon E. Leland was a Chicago economist from 1929 to 1946. Henry Schultz, who died suddenly in 1938, was a particularly important Chicago economist during the 1920s and 1930s. Other Memorial grants to Chicago included \$750,000 awarded in 1927 (over seven years) to support the School of Social Service Administration, \$500,000 in 1929 for the University’s general endowment, and a number of smaller grants for specific projects. Grants to Chicago covered building funds, publication subsidies, research professorships, graduate student support, clerical staff, and equipment. In addition to what is considered at different places herein, more information having to do with these and other Chicago grants is in RAC–Spelman Fund, Series 5, Box 6, Folder 806.

believed, to move from studying “pathological incidents in society” to making scientific discoveries concerning “the great fundamental processes in society.” Mason asked for a combination of grants exceeding 1.7 million dollars, and with his request he submitted a statement of research needs in the social sciences. The overriding view at Chicago was that “All science is one; but clearly the particular branches of science which can best serve man in mastering and shaping his social environment to the end of effective living together are the social sciences.” Mason proposed that Chicago researchers could critically revamp graduate education to establish the following:

[That] the present welter of miscellaneous formal factual courses dealing usually in a routine way with ‘problems of the day’ – and thus often more concerned with pathological incidents in society than with the great fundamental processes – must yield to a functional arrangement in which a relatively small amount of formal instruction will open the student’s mind to a preliminary understanding of the framework, the fundamental processes, the driving forces and the institutions of social living, and another amount of formal instruction to equip the student with essential methodological tools.

The two keys would be the distinction between formal instruction and methodological tools, and the idea of a “functional arrangement” of graduate course materials.<sup>188</sup>

<sup>188</sup> Max Mason to Beardsley Ruml, April 23, 1927. A report that the full award was made is in Beardsley Ruml to Max Mason, May 10, 1927, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 70, Folders 744-745.

Another person at Chicago who especially supported the new overall approach to social science education was Marshall. Writing in 1928, Marshall agreed with Mason's emphases and wrote that social science education ought to target the discovery of fundamental processes. Marshall presented his matured thinking for a social science graduate program centering on a "tool-skills and tool-knowledges" approach. He described an idea to connect the program in "the engineering aspect" of social science to a corresponding "fusion program" in basic social research. What was needed for a high-quality graduate education was a rigorous approach, and Memorial support was needed to develop teaching materials for a tightly arranged, eight-part course of study in "Tool-Skills and Tool-Knowledges Foundational for Advanced Work." The eight courses, mixing formal instruction and methodological tools, were to be: quantitative methods, accounting and statistics; societal background (i.e., "the economic and political order"); historical background of economic and business life; historical background of conceptual thinking; legal background and legal technique; technological background and scientific training; language skills; modern conceptual thinking.<sup>189</sup>

Marshall even added a corresponding 1928 memorandum on the "three schools of social technology" in operation at the University of Chicago, which were the law school, the school of social service administration, and the school of commerce and administration. These schools represented the university's educational arrangement for "the engineering aspect of the so-called social sciences." In all fields of social science and social technology, Marshall wanted to find the way to "A greater amount of research work of a true rather than a

<sup>189</sup> L.C. Marshall, "University Work in Economics and Business," February 23, 1928, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 70, Folders 744-745. See also F. Stuart Chapin, "Methods of Conducting Research Courses for College Students," *Publications of the American Sociological Society* 17 (December 1922): 168-77; Leon C. Marshall, "The Development of the Social Sciences," *Journal of Political Economy* 35 (April 1927): 292-8.

formal cooperative character.” What was needed, he emphasized, was encouragement of “true cooperation and synthesis in social science work.”<sup>190</sup>

The history of changing ideas at Chicago from the early to late 1920s seems quite representative of the kind of overall change in the Memorial’s interaction with social science. Ruml was consistently impressed by Chicago’s efforts to build connections between social science and social technology.<sup>191</sup>

### 5.5 University of North Carolina–1924-28

In early 1924, Ruml was struck by some ideas of another friend, Howard W. Odum, a sociology professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. A subject of Odum’s thinking that especially interested Ruml was a theory of leadership evolution in the American South. Odum wanted to explain why the South was so acutely maladjusted, lagging so far behind the rest of the nation. The South could be helped by applying all the social sciences, Odum argued, and he specifically recommended that some useful new research programs could be run at his school. Ruml responded by traveling to Chapel Hill to meet with Odum.<sup>192</sup>

<sup>190</sup> L.C. Marshall to Beardsley Ruml, March 28, 1928, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 70, Folders 744-745.

<sup>191</sup> On the nature of Chicago sociology, see Robert E. L. Faris, *Chicago Sociology, 1920-1932* (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1967); Harold D. Lasswell, “The Cross-Disciplinary Manifold: The Chicago Prototype,” in Albert Lepawsky et. al. eds., *Search for World Order* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1971); Ruth Shonle Cavan, “The Chicago School of Sociology, 1918-1933,” *Urban Life* 11, 4 (January 1983): 407-20; Tony Burns, “The Theoretical Underpinnings of Chicago Sociology in the 1920s and 1930s,” *Sociological Review* 44 (1996): 474-94.

<sup>192</sup> Howard W. Odum to Beardsley Ruml, April 15, 1924, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 74, Folder 776. Howard Odum’s graduate studies were with G. Stanley Hall at Clark University and Franklin H. Giddings at Columbia University. Following teaching stays at the University of Georgia and Emory University, Odum settled in at the University of North Carolina in 1920. This appointment was fresh off his publication of *Social and Mental Traits of the Negro* (New York: Longman, 1919). In 1922 Odum established *The Journal of Social Forces*. He also did much work to develop a graduate program in the social sciences at UNC. See Howard W. Odum, “University Training and Research in the Social Sciences,” *Journal of Social Forces* 3 (November 1924): 139-46. See also Rupert B. Vance and Katherine Joher, “Howard W. Odum,” *Journal of Social Forces* 33 (March

Ruml and others at the Memorial had a growing interest to support studies of race and race relations. Perhaps a major research center could even be supported to specialize in studying conditions of African-American communities in the United States. Odum was optimistic that the new center (a “Negro studies” program) would come to exist at the University of North Carolina; but it turned out Ruml needed to do much interacting with Odum to get this project underway. Meeting in May 1924, Ruml and Odum talked about building UNC into a Memorial-supported research center, believing there was great potential to develop the social sciences at UNC. The two also discussed an idea “to make a general survey of the different [southern] institutions which are offering training for social work, to discover what this field of activity might offer for the Memorial.”<sup>193</sup>

Following the meeting, Odum began an effort to summarize in writing his concerns about leadership evolution in the South. He produced a paper to explain the shortage of national leadership produced by southern schools, declaring the South had real potential for progressive improvement, and that turning this potential into reality “is a Southern promise.” One deficiency in the South, he declared, was “the failure so far to make quick adjustments to social change and to the shortness of time for the evolution of new types” of leaders. Southern social institutions, like institutions in the North, were lagging; and they were even worse off than in the North. A deficiency related to this was “that the South lacks experience and training for the newer leadership” needs for a changed world. The South is in such “poverty...in experience and training,” Odum explained, as to need real help from the outside. In a follow-up letter to Ruml, Odum recommended particular developments that

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1955): 203-217; Guy B. Johnson and Guion Griffin Johnson, *Research in Service to Society: The First Fifty Years of the Institute for Research in Social Science of the University of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980).

<sup>193</sup> See Lawrence K. Frank to Howard W. Odum, June 5, 1924, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 74, Folder 776.



could greatly help the South. Above all he advocated exchange fellowships and exchange professorships, each of which could be used to transport leading scholars “south to east, east to west, east to south, south to west, and so on” – thus ensuring that more leading scholars would spend time in the South.<sup>194</sup>

The University of North Carolina would indeed become a major research center of the kind Ruml appreciated. Although UNC was fairly small and financially poorly endowed during the early 1920s, Ruml evidently was friends not only with Odum, but with the school’s president, Harry Woodburn Chase. Ruml appreciated the southern location of UNC, as well as some research work already in progress at the school. Ruml’s purpose in his first visit with Odum at Chapel Hill really was to encourage UNC to apply for a major block grant. Following his visit, Ruml shared thoughts on the value of bringing UNC into the fold. “I have never seen a university where the desire to serve the people of the state is as strong as in North Carolina,” he said, as he cited strong connections between social science and social technology, and between university departments and state agencies. “The Engineering Department advises the Highway Commission, the School of Commerce is a member of the State Harbor and Shipping Board, the School of Public Welfare is technical advisor to the State Public Welfare Commission. The scientific people are both competent and aggressive and all ready for cooperative work.” UNC had all the basic prerequisites to satisfy Ruml: a science focus; an applications focus; a willingness to connect the two; and an established pattern of interaction with policymakers. Ruml appreciated some particular efforts by Odum as well, who between 1924 and 1926 constructed a comprehensive survey course to deal with

<sup>194</sup> Howard Odum, “A Southern Promise,” RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 74, Folder 776, 4-7, 23. The follow-up letter is Howard W. Odum to Beardsley Ruml, December 1, 1924, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 74, Folder 776.

all major issues in social science. UNC was considered an outstanding candidate for a major grant.<sup>195</sup>

Odum submitted a broad grant proposal to Ruml in May 1925. The proposal included a range of projects, including some focusing on the Memorial's interest in projects extending beyond the state-level of interest. One idea was to publish African-American traditional songs. Other ideas were to study black migration around the South, as well from the South to the North. Odum also had in mind a comparative study of economic concerns facing African Americans in North Carolina and Mississippi. He supported an idea, expressed by UNC sociologist Guy B. Johnson, to generally study Southern community interaction from the point of view "of two races living progressively together."<sup>196</sup>

Unlike what had happened so quickly for Penn, Yale, Harvard, LSE and Chicago, Odum's grant proposal for UNC was not ready for immediate approval. Leonard Outhwaite stepped in to provide some assistance. He informed Odum that proposed projects needed to be stated with greater clarity, and that one area of research that quite interested Ruml – yet which Odum was having some difficulty getting concrete with – was the study of race and race relations. In a flurry of letters between the two, Outhwaite and Odum tried to get at this greater clarity. Outhwaite finally came to the point that he emphasized a request of a dear friend: "Now be a good fellow. Forget everything else for a while, get an old hat, a pipe, go for a walk and think over exactly what it is that you think you might do by way of Negro study during the current year at North Carolina. Set down the specific topics of Negro study that you feel you are best equipped to deal with adequately." Outhwaite hoped Odum could

<sup>195</sup> Quotation from Beardsley Ruml to Arthur Woods, May 12, 1924, RAC-LSRM, Series II, Box 3, Folder 39. Correspondence between Ruml and Chase is in RAC-LSRM, Series III, SS6, Box 74, Folder 781.

<sup>196</sup> Howard Odum to Leonard Outhwaite, May 12, 1925, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 103, Folder 1039.

be coaxed to set to paper “the whole plan [that] will be consonant both with the purposes of your Institute and the University situation, and also with the known priorities of the Memorial.” Outhwaite asked Odum to “Set down something of the scope and the method that you think will be involved in each study,” as Ruml is “clamoring for just this type of statement from you.”<sup>197</sup>

In the case of the Outhwaite-Odum interaction during late-summer 1925, we find exact evidence of the kind of encouragement that might lead an historian to conclude the Memorial only granted funds for research projects that it could agree with at the outset. However an alternative interpretation could fairly be that Ruml simply wanted enough concreteness to a project, any project, to be able to make a large grant truly feasible.

Odum successfully crystallized a proposal with research projects fitting with the “concrete problems” approach. By the end of September 1925, he listed seven specific fields for study. The fields were race and race relations in the South, projects covering negro business enterprise, credit facilities for negroes, studies of county convict camps, a statistical study of crime in North Carolina, a study of negro offenders, studies of negroes given the death penalty in North Carolina, and cultural studies of negro song and folk beliefs. With this particular proposal from UNC, the Memorial was able to get started building the desired major research center focusing on race and race relations. Such a center was potentially a controversial, high-stakes game for the Memorial, and Ruml at least had some comfort knowing the basic directions in which trusted friends would take the program.<sup>198</sup>

<sup>197</sup> Quotation from Leonard Outhwaite to Howard Odum, September 19, 1925. RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 103, Folder 1039.

<sup>198</sup> Howard Odum to Leonard Outhwaite, September 19, 1925; “Preliminary Suggestions for Studies of Concrete Negro Problems,” September 23, 1925; Beardsley Ruml to H.W. Chase, October 7, 1925. RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 103, Folders 1039-1042, esp. 1039.

The Memorial made an initial award to UNC of only \$97,500, which was to be used to help establish an Institute for Research in Social Science. The Institute was run by a small board of university administrators and senior faculty, with Odum – who was already director of UNC’s School of Public Welfare – appointed director of the new institute. Between 1924 and 1928, the Memorial further supported the institute to a tune of over \$400,000. UNC social scientists and graduate students studied many aspects of life in the South, focusing especially on living and working conditions of blacks, factory relations between workers and management, and economic problems throughout North Carolina. A number of projects were of previously established importance to the Memorial, such as studies of fundamental causes of criminal behavior, agricultural market problems, and industrial working conditions. Other projects related to specific conditions in North Carolina. UNC did especially fine research on traditional music and culture in African-American communities. Ultimately the problem areas studied at UNC involved nearly the totality of economic and social life in the South. Furthermore, with the use of Memorial funds, UNC’s School of Public Welfare also quickly became recognized as a leading southern program in social work.<sup>199</sup>

The most important factor underlying Memorial support of UNC as a research center was probably the fact that Odum was a well-regarded social scientist. Even prior to 1924, Odum was building a project to better interconnect the social sciences at UNC. He had published *Social and Mental Traits of the Negro* in 1919, had a comprehensive social-science

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<sup>199</sup> The UNC research program on black crime is noted in Leonard Outhwaite’s 1926 memorandum, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 100, Folder 1015, p. 5. The Memorial’s high impression of UNC’s music studies is cited, for example, in the Memorial’s memorandum of 1927, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 98, Folder 996, p. 7. For information on the Institute for Research in Social Science see Guy B. Johnson and Guion Griffin Johnson, *Research in Service to Society*, esp. chaps. 1 and 2.

course in place, and was known to be working on a textbook to help unify the social sciences, which he produced in 1927.<sup>200</sup>

In addition to everything else getting started at UNC, Odum found something kind of fun he wanted to do. In September 1924 he recommended a car trip. The idea stemmed from Odum's dream to start "an all Southern renaissance." Odum got into an exchange of letters with Ruml as the two hashed out ideas for additional research programs to help the South. Odum recommended visiting six southern state universities, and some serious trip planning got started. The trip actually happened the following April, as Odum and Ruml were joined by UNC president Harry W. Chase and Memorial assistant director Leonard Outhwaite. The group evidently visited nine southern colleges and universities in rapid succession.<sup>201</sup>

As to progress at UNC, many research programs were begun there between 1925 and January 1929, which was the date of the end of the Memorial. One important program was "Negro Studies," which germinated largely through discussions between Odum, Ruml, and Outhwaite. Outhwaite wrote Odum a letter with his understanding of what the Memorial saw as the heart of the matter: that "so far as the American Negro is concerned, the problem of his

<sup>200</sup> Howard W. Odum, *Social and Mental Traits of the Negro* (New York: Longman, 1919); Odum, *American Masters of Social Science* (New York: Holt, 1927).

<sup>201</sup> Odum proposed the automobile trip to help the Memorial consider whether it "would undertake to study in a broader way than heretofore attempted the needs of an all-Southern renaissance." The six schools Odum recommended were the University of Virginia, University of South Carolina, University of Georgia, University of Alabama, University of Mississippi, and University of Tennessee; Howard Odum to Beardsley Ruml, September 26, 1924. As the trip got planned for April 1925, President H.W. Chase was invited to join, and Chase wrote to Ruml, "The only thing that you and I must do is to hold Odum down on the number of engagements he wants to make for us. I want us to have plenty of time to loaf"; H.W. Chase to Beardsley Ruml, March 3, 1925. Odum, in the meantime, added the University of Florida, Emory University, and a stop in Birmingham. Odum recommended the group of four should get to each school and have a meal with a committee there, to "have them talk to us and tell us about such work as they wish." The following morning, Chase and Ruml (the "distinguished guests") would have a chance to rest, "while I as 'James' and Outhwaite as 'Man Friday' attend to the details." Neither of the two distinguished guests would be scheduled for any formal talks, thus making the situation really quite close to a true vacation. The group planned to spend essentially one full day at each campus, and this was what they did; Howard Odum to Beardsley Ruml, March 26, 1925, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 74, Folder 776.

economic status and economic opportunities is extremely important.” If economic opportunity could come first for blacks, then many good results should follow. Odum agreed, offering that Outhwaite was “right in saying” the economic situation is the foundation point for getting major change underway. All persons were agreed that “concrete information” on specific research problems was what was needed first.<sup>202</sup>

UNC’s institute made valuable studies of black culture and race relations in the upper South. Yet it was along the line of race studies that the institute’s work became sensitive. In 1925, for example, UNC sociologist Guy B. Johnson wrote a paper declaring a kind of policy position for UNC’s research. Johnson believed what was needed for any experiments to improve race relations was at most a slow and steady rate of change. Reformers ought not put into immediate policy action all available conclusions coming from scientific study. The main reason for Johnson’s stance regarding policy delay had to do with the level of resistance to be expected in the South. A social scientist working on problems of race and race relations, Johnson explained, “would have trouble down here if he tried to put into immediate action the ideas he had developed from his study of the race problem, but I think we are absolutely free to study what we please and to form any opinions that we think the facts justify.”<sup>203</sup>

UNC’s Institute for Research in Social Science got much public recognition in North Carolina. According to one news article at the time, the Institute “has a single aim: to improve the State.” The goal of the institute was to “collect and sift existing knowledge in the social field” so that “no public official in the State ought ever be in doubt about where to

<sup>202</sup> Leonard Outhwaite to Howard Odum, February 18, 1925; Odum to Outhwaite, February 24, 1925, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 103, Folders 1039-1042, esp. 1039.

<sup>203</sup> Guy B. Johnson to Leonard Outhwaite, May 12, 1925, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 103, Folder 1039.

apply for information regarding any question of public interest.” One cited research goal was to learn how much of each person’s tax bill goes to dealing with crime enforcement expenditures such as policing, jailing, reform, and the like. The institute also inquired whether the majority of crime really is committed by “semi-idiots.” If so, it was asked, what would be the least expensive way to keep these people out of such mischief? The institute also studied what roads the state required to get all products to market. What seemed important about this latter matter, according to the news piece, was the degree of objectivity involved. The study, the news piece said, “is being made by a man who owns no town lots or marketable timber, who doesn’t give a hoot whether a proposed railroad runs yan-side or this, but who has spent years studying transportation as an economic problem.” The article also cited approval of the institute’s “Studies in Social-Industrial Relationships,” which were designed to get a little more happiness for people by helping smooth a transition in North Carolina from an agricultural to a semi-industrial economy. Over the first three years of work at the Institute, research projects were seen as quite broad indeed. “It [the institute] does not inquire into the mysteries of chemistry or physics, for those are natural sciences, sciences of nature. It does not inquire into the origin of Greek verbs, for that is the science of language. But whatever touches society, that is, men in more or less organized groups, is within its fold.”<sup>204</sup>

## 5.6 Columbia University–1925-28

<sup>204</sup> The undated news clipping, believed to be from 1928, is in *The News and Observer*, Raleigh, North Carolina, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 74, Folder 788.

In February 1925, Columbia University applied for a Memorial grant. Bearing some resemblance to arguments presented by the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Chicago, Columbia's faculty cited a rapidly changing world as the chief reason why the social sciences needed strengthening. Columbia added a unique line of reasoning, suggesting that social science had recently passed through an accelerated shift in an attempt to overcome cultural lag by increasing its quantitative nature. Much acclaimed by 1925 was the book *Negro Migration* (1920) by Columbia sociologist T.J. Woofter, which represented the first application of multiple regression techniques in social science.<sup>205</sup>

As the Columbia faculty saw things, the fact that “research in the social sciences has turned largely from qualitative to quantitative methods” was one reason why more cooperative organization was needed between the social sciences. There were two special needs for better social science then: to play catch-up to the changed social world; to get more interconnected with each other, thereby focusing the benefits attainable from quantification. In words that likely pleased Ruml, Columbia social scientists explained they wanted “to consider ways and means whereby their common interests in research in the Social Sciences might be encouraged and supported through mutual cooperation.” Columbia wanted to organize communications between multiple social science departments at the school, “which have a common interest in encouraging research in the social sciences generally.” Especially needed was tightened communication between social science in the economics department

<sup>205</sup> “Columbia University–Social Science, February 25, 1925,” RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 50, Folder 526. For information about social science at Columbia prior to 1925 see Robert W. Wallace, “Starting a Department and Getting It Under Way: Sociology at Columbia University, 1891-1914,” *Minerva* 36 (1998): 69-79. For information pertaining to the 1920s see Robert W. Wallace, “The Struggle of a Department: Columbia Sociology in the 1920s,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 27 (1991): 323-40; Stephen P. Turner, “The World of Academic Quantifiers: The Columbia University Family and Its Connections,” in Martin Bulmer, Kevin Bales, and Kathryn Kish Sklar, eds., *The Social Survey in Historical Perspective, 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991): 269-90.



and social technology in the college of business. Columbia also reported that an overall coordination plan for the social sciences was already under discussion at the school for several years.<sup>206</sup>

Columbia's faculty was fairly specific in their grant proposal, stating an interest to pursue thirteen projects. These projects ranged from studies of animal behavior, to research in anthropology (under the guidance of Franz Boas), to analysis of international economics. While some projects fit with established areas of Memorial interest, others fit best to Columbia's own ideas about helping to unify social science. One project, which was to do research in the economics of business corporations, was something that Columbia described in detail to reveal an overall aim to be "a systematic and critical study of the laws – both judicial and legislative – governing the organization, control, and financing of American business corporations." Columbia faculty had in mind a style of economic analysis willing "to criticize existing law from the point of view of its effectiveness in service to the public welfare, and even to suggest what changes in the law are desirable." Columbia hoped for Memorial approval to study government policies based on rigorous economic evaluation. It would also be "essential to study, more systematically than has ever been done before," the nature of "corporate conduct which is conditioned by this law." They added: "Economics, like all the other social sciences, tends to lag behind the development of the social institutions which form its subject matter."<sup>207</sup>

<sup>206</sup> "Columbia University–Social Science, February 25, 1925," RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 50, Folder 526.

<sup>207</sup> The February proposal and subsequent letters provided detailed description of the thirteen projects capable of benefiting from financial assistance. These projects received a five-year grant on May 28, 1925. The project to do research in the economics of the business corporation is described in a letter dated March 21, 1925, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 50, Folder 526.

Columbia got a substantial grant in May 1925. The school became, along with Harvard, LSE, Chicago and UNC, one of the Memorial's five academic research centers worldwide. Whereas each of the other four centers had a clear special focus, Columbia's projects were fairly wide-spread. Columbia's program grew quickly, and by 1926 the school even proposed a stand-alone project, one aimed at studying economic, cultural and political situations in contemporary France. Conditions in France were seen by Columbia researchers as representing "a most significant laboratory of the social sciences," a place where capitalism, communism, socialism, nationalism, and fascism were battling it out. The Memorial approved the grant, and by 1929 the total number of projects operated with Memorial financial support at Columbia would expand to thirty-one. Projects in operation by the end of the decade at Columbia included research on black migration, economics of industrialization in the Far East, and many, many others.<sup>208</sup>

Five major university research centers were in place by 1925. Yet in addition, there were also a variety of specifically targeted research fields under development with Memorial support. In the preceding chapter, for example, we identified the case of a research field in industrial psychology. Other fields of social science capable of being developed into specific research fields by means of sponsoring smaller projects at many schools included race relations, social and economic conditions in the American South, social and economic

<sup>208</sup> Columbia University's Council for Research in the Social Science undertook the study of contemporary France, described by Columbia professor Carlton J.H. Hayes as "a most significant laboratory of the social sciences" owing to "its fiscal and economic conditions, its chief governmental problems, its sociological trends, its popular response, on the one hand to communism and socialism, and, on the other, to nationalism and fascism"; Carlton Hayes to Beardsley Ruml, December 26, 1925. The Memorial approved funding to locate an economist, a sociologist and two historians (as well as secretarial and research assistance) in France from 1926 to 1928; see Council for Research in the Social Sciences to Nicholas Murray Butler, February 18, 1926; Council for Research in the Social Sciences to Nicholas Murray Butler, November 23, 1926. Thirty-one projects were listed in "Report of the Council for Research in the Social Sciences to the University Council, October 15, 1929-Columbia University." RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 50, Folders 527-528.

conditions in the American West, non-capitalist economies, land use and population change, human biology, child development and welfare, international relations, coordinated collection of social statistics, business cycle research, social science perspectives within the area of humane studies, and the interaction between social science and legal studies. These dozen or so fields are studied in the next three chapters.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Some historians do not consider the program at UNC to be one of the Memorial's "major" research centers. This view may owe to later interpretations by people at the Rockefeller Foundation that UNC and the University Virginia combined to form a unique "southern" center. I believe Ruml quite clearly interpreted the UNC program to count as a "major" center in its own right.

## CHAPTER 6. RESEARCH “FIELDS,” PART ONE–1922-28

### 6.1 Introduction

Beardsley Ruml’s program to build five university-based research “centers” took place at the same time when he and the Memorial officers focused on building a number of “fields” of social research. Ruml and the Memorial officers did this by means of supporting smaller-scale projects at many schools. Specific fields of research emphasized by the Memorial and studied in this chapter are the following: race relations in the United States; general social and economic conditions in the American South; social and economic conditions in the American West; studies of non-capitalist economies.

### 6.2 Race relations as a scientific field–1925-28

The Memorial’s main research center for studies in race relations was at the University of North Carolina. A question for the Memorial was what other kinds of smaller centers or specific projects might be useful for advancing studies of race and race relations. A program already active in researching certain aspects of race relations was the community research program at the University of Chicago. Columbia University researchers, located as they were at the edge of the “Harlem Renaissance,” also did research on African Americans living in a major northern city. By 1925, the Memorial decided to add support of other university researchers to study particular issues in race relations.<sup>210</sup>

<sup>210</sup> The most substantial studies of the race-relations program begun by the Memorial are John H. Stanfield, *Philanthropy and Jim Crow in American Social Science* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985); Stanfield, “Northern Money and Southern Bogus Elitism: Rockefeller Foundation and the Commission on Interracial Cooperation Movement, 1919-1929,” *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 15 (Summer 1987): 1-22.

A third race-relations study taking place in the North was at Western Reserve University, in Cleveland. In 1925, faculty members at Western Reserve applied for a grant to research urban issues of various sorts in a maladjusted world. Social scientists at the school were obtaining a firsthand view of extreme hardship. “Modern urban life has created a radically different society. There are many persons who cannot adjust themselves effectively to this new society; their need for assistance has made social work an imperative necessity.” To help provide social-work assistance, professors at Western Reserve wanted to do empirical research on family welfare, child welfare, group services, health administration, and public health nursing. Especially severe in Cleveland was the climate of race relations, which related to all five aspects of the research that Western Reserve intended to study. Western Reserve received a grant.<sup>211</sup>

In February 1926, Fisk University, a traditionally African-American institution in Nashville, applied for a five-year grant to study the economic progress of African Americans, especially in the South. The premier objective expressed in Fisk’s application was to uncover “well-attested” and “true facts” about the causes of the African-American condition in American society. Faculty members at Fisk proposed establishing a department of social science at the school, and they requested some additional funds to help develop black leadership programs. This latter idea fit well with Howard Odum’s ideas at UNC, which were known to be appreciated by Ruml. The Memorial awarded Fisk a grant, and in evaluating the success of the Fisk program the following year, the Memorial saw that “considerable

<sup>211</sup> The statement of Western Reserve’s research approach is from “A Review of the Aims and Methods of the School of Applied Social Sciences,” November 1925. The Memorial encouraged Western Reserve to clarify additional research projects, specifically in childrearing studies dealing with both black and white groups in Cleveland; see Maud Morlock to Lawrence K. Frank, February 3, 1925; Maud Morlock to Lawrence K. Frank, April 4, 1925, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 62, Folder 666.

progress” was made and should continue to be made “in the development of scientific studies dealing with negro economic and social life.”<sup>212</sup>

The same year the Western Reserve researchers received support to do research in Cleveland, the Memorial added support for a race-relations study in another northern city, Providence, Rhode Island. Problems of race relations were considered appropriate for scientific study by Brown University scientists. If the Memorial truly wanted scientific understanding of forces impacting race relations in urban life, then Providence was uniquely set up as a natural experiment, the Brown faculty argued. The professor to be in charge of the project was sociologist Bessie Bloom Wessel, who was new to the school’s faculty. Ruml, being unfamiliar with Wessel, requested information from outside people until he was satisfied with the decency of Wessel’s “personality” and of the genuinely “scientific” nature of her proposed project. James Quayle Dealey, chair of the Department of Social and Political Science at Brown, wrote Guy Stanton Ford at the Memorial to report on a meeting of Brown faculty. Dealey conveyed words of unanimous confidence in Wessel, and added that Brown’s faculty asked that funds “for a period of three years be granted so as to give a fair opportunity to make a thorough study of racial situations in the city of Providence. Related departments agree to give hearty cooperation in bringing the study to a successful conclusion.” In addition to this cooperative message, Dealey added, “I need not remind you that Providence, with its industrial population so largely foreign in birth and descent,

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<sup>212</sup> Fisk University proposed a department of social science with a rationale that creating such a department would improve all their social science courses, which in turn would help the school develop black leaders “who will more fully understand the social background, problems and possibilities of their race in America.” Through improved social research it would also be possible “to assemble well-attested facts about the Negro.” Fisk received a five-year grant. “Proposed Department of Social Science, Fisk University,” RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 52, Folder 550. Quoted Memorial words are from “Race Relations and Negro Work, 1926-27,” RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 98, Folder 996, p. 6.

furnishes a splendid field for a racial study involving a constructive program.” What Dealey had in mind for a racial study, then, included not only blacks and whites, but various immigrant groups as well.<sup>213</sup>

Brown received its grant. After a few years of success with their “Study of Ethnic Factors in Community Life,” Wessel applied for additional funding. Only this time the funding was not to go to Brown University, since Wessel was returning to her old school, Connecticut College. The project she now proposed was an expansion of the study already done in Providence, which developed to involve race relations as well as population and migration issues. The program at Brown had been successful enough to serve as a training ground for many younger researchers to take their knowledge and apply it to experiments in other cities. A project that began by including a “single study testing out techniques for the examination of population changes” was now ready to develop as a project “to supply a working base for any students who might be interested in experimental work in this field,” as well as “the use of laboratory techniques in the study of community problems.” Perhaps there was even some potential to build a national-level research program. The expanded project

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<sup>213</sup> Bessie Bloom Wessel, a professor of economics and sociology who moved from Connecticut College to Brown University in 1925, was in charge of an urban sociology program at Brown already showing success. Financial assistance was what was needed for further success. The project Wessel described was a study from the perspective of community research – an approach, she argued, that “is quite rare”; Bessie Bloom Wessel to Guy Stanton Ford, April 29, 1925. The interview that found the Memorial was “favorably impressed with Mrs. Wessel’s personality” was Guy Stanton Ford and L.K. Frank, “Interview with Bessie Bloom Wessel,” May 21, 1925. The Memorial contacted quite a number of people for feedback on the qualities of Wessel and her research. Assurance was wanted that Wessel was up to the task, and that Brown was willing to cooperate with her study. Throughout the process of the Memorial obtaining such information it seems others at Brown tweaked the project slightly, turning it into one aimed at studying migration issues as well as race relations; for example, James Quayle Dealey to Guy Stanton Ford, May 25, 1925, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Subseries-Folder 8. Dealey was a noted sociologist and author of James Q. Dealey, *Sociology: Its Development and Applications* (New York: Appleton, 1920).

would aim to use real-world applications to test social science findings, and Wessel received her grant renewal.<sup>214</sup>

Of course the major location for studies of race and race relations needed to be the American South. Southern attitudes associated with race relations were, according to many persons at the time, in a state of acute maladjustment. Ruml and others at the Memorial decided much attention should to be directed to Southern race relations research beyond the capacity of UNC and a few smaller projects such as at Fisk University. In various grant applications as well as in-house documents, problems of race relations were seen as stemming largely from underlying economic circumstances. If, for example, the problem of concern was different rates of criminal behavior for whites and blacks, then root causes were seen as largely economic. If the focus was contribution to industrial production, African Americans might be seen as representing an underemployed economic asset. The Memorial's focus for its research in race relations was to identify "concrete problems," especially those for which comparable classes of facts could be obtained for whites and blacks. By such means, scientific studies would result in better understanding of conditions in African-American communities. An urgent question existed: How to best apply scientific methods to race and race relations? A related question was also clear: Was there perhaps some best and most appropriate rate of change to be advocated for fixing problems of race relations in the United States?

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<sup>214</sup> Bessie Bloom Wessel to Edmund E. Day, April 16, 1928; Bessie Bloom Wessel, "Memorandum for Dr. Day," 1928; see also Benjamin Marshall to Edmund E. Day, June 6, 1928; RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 51, Folder 533. The Connecticut project produced an article, Bessie Bloom Wessel, "Ethnic Factors in the Population of New London, Connecticut," *American Journal of Sociology* 35, 2 (September 1929): 263-70. See also William A. Satariano, "Immigration and the Popularization of the Social Sciences, 1920-1930," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 15 (1979): 310-20.



In January 1925, at a time when Leonard Outhwaite at the Memorial and Howard Odum at UNC were still discussing how to establish the UNC studies of “concrete Negro problems,” the Memorial obtained a memorandum from an outside advisor, James W.C. Dougall. Dougall reported on the condition of southern black education, and based on his research in six states from Virginia to Louisiana, he focused not on educational methods in practice but “on the social reactions of negro education”; he focused on “the study of results as they are to be seen in the life of the negro communities and the relationship existing between white and colored people in the South.” The pernicious problem, Dougall found, was not any intrinsic inequalities between whites and blacks, but ideas that white southerners harbored about such inequalities. The really difficult problem was going to be how to educate southern whites. Fortunately there were groups of southern whites who were leading the advance of an equalitarian mindset. “The proof of the negro’s progress lies not only in what he has accomplished when given the chance but by the growing sentiment of faith in his possibilities which can be clearly seen in all sections of the South.” A fundamental factor was that “The South has begun to feel the negro’s value as an economic asset in the community. It has been seen that the South must offer greater inducements if the Negro is to refuse the call of the North with its greater wages, more abundant school facilities, and the removal of disadvantages, fears, and persecutions.”<sup>215</sup>

Another race research report was produced in April 1926 by Leonard Outhwaite. Outhwaite submitted thirty-five pages (a 9-page summary letter and a 26-page memorandum) to Ruml and Arthur Woods. The purpose of Outhwaite’s report was to “set out some general

<sup>215</sup> James W.C. Dougall to Guy Stanton Ford, May 18, 1925; James W.C. Dougall, “A Memorandum of Some Observations Made in Connection with Negro Education During a Tour of the Southern States,” January 28, 1925, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Subseries 8, Box 100, Folder 1016, pp. 3, 12.

facts regarding the position of the Negro in American social life.” Outhwaite addressed possible future research methods. “[A]n increasing acquaintance with the field leads me to believe that the general approach and methods [presently] advocated are the most likely to yield scientific and social results.” Yet scientific methods involved no quick-cure solution for the race problem “as a whole,” or “as a thing in itself.” In words that fit with the new functionalist method developed by anthropologists, Outhwaite said what he believed reasonable science should do: the goal should be to make “systematic” study along “broad functional lines of the various physical and social facts on which Negro life is based.” What was needed was to study all aspects of race and race relations as a whole. Studies of any particular facet of African-American life “should, wherever possible, be joined to similar studies or activities being carried on in the whole group” in the larger American society. At a time when Ruml and many others were focusing on notions about the ‘unity of social science,’ Outhwaite emphasized that not all scientific methods might be appropriate for studying race. Certain measurement fields, such as psychometry and anthropometry, for example, were anathema and to be excluded. At the other extreme, a “major field of genuine social as well as scientific importance” was psychopathology, particularly given that “hospital facilities for insane Negroes” were severely lacking.<sup>216</sup>

Outhwaite recommended a number of specific areas to focus on. Useful would be to study “negro crime and the negro criminal.” Other areas benefiting from increased attention would include “negro business and negro credit,” “negro education,” and “negro legal justice.” Underlying many research problems were needs to investigate economic and social

<sup>216</sup> Leonard Outhwaite, “The Negro in America,” 1926, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 100, Folder 1015, pp. 1-4. See also John H. Stanfield, “Leonard Outhwaite’s Advocacy of Scientific Research on Blacks in the 1920s,” *Knowledge and Society* 4 (Summer 1987): 87-101.

factors. “New economic and social pressures are developing and migration continues as a symptomatic phenomenon,” Outhwaite observed. “In particular the mores and social customs which served an older generation as methods of control and of adjustment are breaking up or are no longer adequate.” Broken community ties were cause as well as consequence of increased black migration. Accelerating patterns of black migration were something widely perceived as a serious problem, and community-level studies might be a key research approach to help solve it – particularly given Outhwaite’s emphasis on “mak[ing] our problems specific rather than general, approaching the whole field along a variety of functional lines.” Functional lines of analysis, Outhwaite argued, should include living conditions (such as building, housing, sanitation), economic conditions (such as employment, business, credit), health conditions (both physical and mental), education, social and political relationships, and legal and penal problems. When functionally separated, “the problems of Negro life are largely parallels of the problems of White life but appearing in a different context.” For a successful research program in race and race relations, the research focus needed to be on working “with concrete materials” while using the best available scientific methods.<sup>217</sup>

All persons who were interested in a research field in race relations unfortunately needed to be realists. Perhaps recalling what UNC sociologist Guy Johnson had already expressed as a notion that changes in southern race relations would need to be done slowly, Outhwaite believed that pursuit of a scientific approach to problems of race and race relations “should not obscure the fact that we are faced... with the belief, and the behaviors growing out of the belief, that these physical differences are attended by differences in capacity and

<sup>217</sup> Leonard Outhwaite, “The Negro in America,” 3, 6-9.

adjustment which demand, for one group, necessary specialized treatment.” What mattered, in effect, was not any truth or fallacy of race equality by any measure; what mattered was that too many people still believed in inequality: “that as a social phenomenon, race counts because we think it counts.”<sup>218</sup>

The Memorial proceeded to compile its own report on race relations in 1927. This policy statement, titled “Race Relations and Negro Work,” provided reasons for pursuing a “reasonable” rate of change. Evaluating a recent “intensification of effort” in the field of race relations research, the Memorial declared its own viewpoint: “That development in this field should take place slowly is both natural and desirable.” The report added words regarding society’s perception of a need for slow change in race relations. “That progress should be slow arises in part from the very nature of the field: from the fact that many of the important features of negro life and interracial relations have in the past been the subject of imperfect knowledge and acrimonious debate rather than of scientific inquiry.” The Memorial adhered to the commonly held view at the time that the situation was just not ripe for any rapid social change in the South. However there was a counterpoint idea as well, in that one particular contribution to slow progress was “the fact that aside from the sensational features of racial and social conflict there has been a certain public apathy which is frequently reflected in the work of organizations whose activities might properly cover negro as well as white welfare.” The problem, it was important to be clear, was that many welfare organizations had failed to do equal coverage of white-community circumstances and black-community circumstances.

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<sup>218</sup> Leonard Outhwaite, “The Negro in America,” 5.

Southern states were therefore especially far behind in “the general rate of the development of social and scientific progress.”<sup>219</sup>

Leading persons at the Memorial held great faith in the potential for achievements of the highest order by African Americans. The belief was that what happened in the American South was a kind of social evolutionary accident. The slow approach to remedy was to be taken not because of any belief that individual persons in the African-American community weren't capable of rapid self-improvement, but because of an idea that the greatest prospect for long-term success in lifting the African-American community out of its forced impoverishment was to provide opportunities for the entire community to lift itself as one. “[T]he amount of work undertaken [in race studies] has to a certain extent been determined by deliberate Memorial policy,” the 1927 report concluded. The report further explained: “That progress should be slow arises in part from the very nature of the field: from the fact that many of the important features of negro life and interracial relations have in the past been the subject of imperfect knowledge and acrimonious debate rather than of scientific inquiry.” “The Memorial has felt that an orderly development along a variety of lines, negro education, the development of public welfare agencies and of channels for inter-racial cooperation was greatly to be preferred to a sudden or spectacular development in any of these fields.” All work needed to be done as a unified project, performed in the careful way that true science requires. The overall rate of change would be slow and steady because it needed to be based “upon the results of scientific studies and deliberate inquiry.” All applied activities also needed to be done with the full participation of those persons needing to do the community improvement. It is “wise to use every reasonable device to encourage negro

<sup>219</sup> “Race Relations and Negro Work, 1926-27,” 1927, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 98, Folder 996, pp. 1-2.

participation in undertakings directed at the development of negro welfare” – what were needed, in other words, were very special kinds of social experiments that could not go on without a great level of active community involvement.<sup>220</sup>

### 6.3 Social and economic conditions in the American South–1925-28

Support of additional studies in race relations was not the only way the Memorial could build new projects capable of connecting to research activities at UNC. Soon after UNC got its initial grant, other southern schools contacted the Memorial wanting somehow to connect to the broad program at UNC. Such schools had an idea to form a kind of larger southern “center,” as no fewer than three universities reacted with keen interest to connect to Memorial-supported research at UNC.

In January 1925, Vanderbilt University asked the Memorial if they might join with UNC. Vanderbilt suggested that by doing so they would be able to help coordinate the social sciences between schools. New conceptual breakthroughs might also be added by the manner in which Vanderbilt could connect a number of social science departments at their school. Vanderbilt University Chancellor, J.H. Kirkland, hoped to set a personal meeting with Ruml to discuss ideas for research projects. Kirkland’s letter described the present organization of

<sup>220</sup> “Race Relations and Negro Work,” 1927, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 98, Folder 996, pp. 1-2. It seems the Memorial culminated four years of inquiries and evaluative reports on race research by planning a national conference. Through 1927 and 1928, leaders at the Memorial organized a conference on “Race Problems in the United States in the Light of Social Research,” the purposes of which were to survey existing research and plan a future research program. Working with the Social Sciences Research Council and the Russell Sage Foundation, the Memorial helped pull off the conference, which took place in Washington, DC, in December 1928. Participants produced reports on many topics relating to the African-American community, such as health, education, industry & agriculture, housing & education, crime, citizenship, and race relations. Conference reports were brief statements generally declaring that more research was needed. The reports, which were evidently all compiled by social scientists from outside the Memorial, seemed to suggest that it was time to start getting the move on; see RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 98, Folders 998-1001. Another group supported by Memorial funds was the National Urban League, which had interests in working for race equality; RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 100, Folders 1011-14.

the social sciences at Vanderbilt featuring thirteen instructors divided between five departments: history; political science; economics; sociology; and commerce. Kirkland described twenty-four current and potential future projects, ranging from “the economic position of the negro,” to “the county court in Tennessee,” to “the social origins of the aggressive personality.” Many projects focused on problems relevant to the state of Tennessee. A primary goal was to tighten connections between social scientists at the school, which would be helped by adding three or four new professorships to fill gaps in the unified structure of social science. Using the Memorial’s kind of language, Vanderbilt also drew some attention to what was going on at the school in the area of training undergraduate and graduate students in “social technology.”<sup>221</sup>

Ruml responded by asking that more thought be given to unique contributions Vanderbilt could make. It took until November 1925 for Ruml actually to interview Chancellor Kirkland, yet when he did, Ruml provided additional guidance. He explained that the Memorial wanted not “to simply support the traditional type of teaching in social science,” but to focus on projects that show “an interest in any new experiments in that field that might be undertaken.” More clarification in Vanderbilt’s proposal remained needed, Ruml said, and so pressure was on Vanderbilt to think of innovative experimental approaches, especially for teaching social science.<sup>222</sup>

In January 1926, Ruml contacted Vanderbilt’s Social Sciences Dean Walter L. Fleming to try to help Vanderbilt move in a direction that could get grant approval.

<sup>221</sup> J.H. Kirkland to Beardsley Ruml, January 19, 1925; J.H. Kirkland, “The Social Sciences in Vanderbilt University, Resources and Plans,” March 1925. Vanderbilt also submitted a report focusing on social work training at Vanderbilt; “Report on Provisions for Training in Social Technology,” 1925, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 78, Folder 815.

<sup>222</sup> Beardsley Ruml interview with J.H. Kirkland, November 17, 1925, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 78, Folder 815.

Consistent with what Ruml's friend Leon Marshall worked on at Chicago, Ruml reported to Fleming that "The Memorial now has under consideration the question of strengthening undergraduate as well as graduate work in the social sciences." Such a possibility of developing improved undergraduate education in social science was to be kept in mind by Vanderbilt, even though "no final decision has been reached as to whether we should enter this field." What Ruml greatly wanted from Fleming was any specific information regarding Vanderbilt's "plan for the development" of social science education, "both from the standpoint of research and undergraduate instruction."<sup>223</sup>

In April 1926, Vanderbilt's revised application asked for five years' support. Vanderbilt now said their potential contribution should be to help "correlate" the social sciences within teaching contexts, both undergraduate and graduate. Vanderbilt listed an expanded number of research projects, and based on this listing of 34 projects, enough substance existed for Ruml to hone in on what he wanted. Ruml asked for more information as to what was planned in two particular areas: (1) "problems and methods in the study and teaching of the social sciences" to undergraduates; (2) efforts to teach graduate students about "the relationship of the social sciences, the unity of the entire field, and to guide the student in working across the field regardless of departmental lines." Vanderbilt concurred by saying these projects were what they wanted as well, and Vanderbilt soon received a grant. What we see in the case of Vanderbilt is a situation in which Ruml encouraged, or perhaps even pressured, a potential grant recipient to establish at the outset how and why proposed projects would relate to other useful projects in the social sciences.<sup>224</sup>

<sup>223</sup> Beardsley Ruml to Walter L. Fleming, January 30, 1926, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 78, Folder 815.

<sup>224</sup> In April 1926, Fleming submitted a five-year funding request, again stating one objective was "to stimulate and aid the progress of the Social Science Departments at Vanderbilt University." Fleming's proposal balanced



The University of Virginia wanted to join with UNC as well. In March 1925, E.A. Alderman, president of the university, contacted Ruml and invited a personal meeting during the planned southern road trip. The April visit would give Alderman a chance to showcase the development of the school's social sciences, which were his "chief concern for some years." About the same time, Alderman contacted Wickliffe Rose, of the Foundation's International Education Board, to reinforce that he was highly impressed by the work underway between the Memorial and UNC. Alderman believed the UNC research center might be built upon at Virginia, and so the approach taken by the University of Virginia was to suggest that a larger, more useful center could be established. Virginia reinforced the familiar opinion that the South was deeply maladjusted, making it a region urgently in need of scientific social research.<sup>225</sup>

Ruml visited Charlottesville in April 1925. Yet following the visit it took him until the following January (for various reasons, including a long trip to Europe) to make a second visit to the school. That month, UNC's Howard Odum wrote Ruml to put in a word for Virginia: "We do not know of any step in the South which would help the whole situation now more than a definite progressive movement at the University of Virginia in the social

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research priorities and program improvements, and it dealt with graduate as well as undergraduate levels. Twelve, wide-ranging plans were described "for the bettering of undergraduate work in the social sciences," in which one emphasis was to better "correlate" such studies. A similar section of nine specific plans was included for graduate students. Vanderbilt also included a list of 34 specific research problems "which may be begun." The range of research problems was broad, as before, but the overriding rationale was more in tune with what Ruml looked for; Walter L. Fleming to Beardsley Ruml, April 10, 1926. Ruml provided his guidance in Beardsley Ruml to Walter L. Fleming, April 12, 1926. Fleming elaborated that the plan was to do research oriented "in order that the several departments may be able to cooperate with one another in arranging progressive work for undergraduates," and so that graduate students would get "a history of the development of each of the various social sciences with discussion of its relationship to the others, the controversies in the field, and present tendencies"; Walter L. Fleming to Beardsley Ruml, April 19, 1926. All this was good enough for Ruml, who responded: "Thank you for your letter..., which seems to cover the information which I asked for." An award was soon granted; Beardsley Ruml to Walter L. Fleming, May 3, 1926, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 78, Folder 815.

<sup>225</sup> E.A. Alderman to Beardsley Ruml, March 24, 1925; E.A. Alderman to Wickliffe Rose, April 3, 1925, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 78, Folders 813-814.

sciences.” Alderman contributed more of his own thoughts a couple weeks later, when he wrote Ruml to say, “The greatest need of the State of Virginia at the present time is for scientifically determined information regarding the vital problems in the life of its people and their institutions through which this life seeks to find its highest expression.” Alderman hoped that a sizeable, five-year grant could be used to redress “many defects in the path of southern development.” Virginia, which was well into the planning stages for its improved social sciences program, had a goal to organize six social sciences into an Institute for Research in the Social Science, which would be “modeled somewhat after Columbia and Carolina.”<sup>226</sup>

It turned out that more interactions were needed between the Memorial and the University of Virginia, beginning with Ruml’s visit to Charlottesville in March 1926 to meet again with President Alderman as well as others, including agricultural economist Wilson Gee. Ruml recommended that Alderman visit with Virginia faculty members to learn what social problems they believed they were best-suited to study. By such means Alderman was then able to respond that Virginia could give Ruml “a more concrete idea of just what I wish, with your help, to get under way at this institution.” Alderman also submitted a “Suggested Program” identifying nine specific research problems, nearly all of which combined economic research and political studies in some way or another. Virginia emphasized its goal to study “very concrete situations” in the state, and the school said there was no question that numerous valid research problems existed. Virginia was fully willing to focus on the most relevant and urgent of these, yet above all what was needed was money. Alderman opined

<sup>226</sup> The six sciences (which had 17 faculty members) were: psychology; economics; history; government; jurisprudence; philosophy. Howard W. Odum to Beardsley Ruml, January 28, 1926; E.A. Alderman to Beardsley Ruml, February 8, 1926, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 78, Folders 813-814.

that “the curse of intellectual undertakings in the south and southern institutions has been in attempting to do big things with small means, to make bricks without straws.”<sup>227</sup>

Virginia received a grant in June 1926. Somewhat unusually, the Memorial then contacted Professor Gee, who Alderman (in communication with Ruml) had appointed director of the institute. The purpose of the contact was to allow Gee to personally emphasize that Virginia’s program, with its focus on economic research, had no aim to merely imitate research at UNC or elsewhere, in that Virginia was building a program uniquely suited to circumstances in Virginia, which had its own “very concrete situation” to deal with.<sup>228</sup>

#### 6.4 Social and economic conditions in the American West–1925-28

Also wanting to join in some great big southern research center was a southwestern institution of some repute, the University of Texas. In January 1926, Texas officials contacted the Memorial through a letter from university president W.M.W. Splawn, asking if Texas could work in conjunction with projects underway at UNC. Texas, perhaps having learned from the Memorial’s responses to Vanderbilt and Virginia, advertised at the outset certain societal conditions unique to the southwestern region. Ruml answered back that no direct extension of the UNC program was planned. However, even though the program

<sup>227</sup> Wilson Gee to Beardsley Ruml, March 23, 1926; E.A. Alderman to Beardsley Ruml, March 30, 1926. Alderman’s “Suggested Program” in the March 30<sup>th</sup> letter identified these nine problems: (1) literature of Southern political and economic history since Reconstruction; (2) government at the county level in Virginia; (3) the public welfare system of Virginia; (4) Virginia’s revenue system and tax laws; (5) Southern labor; (6) banking in Virginia since Reconstruction; (7) comprehensively gather all statistical sources of information on Virginia; (8) the mountain population in the Blue Ridge area (including their social, physical and psychological characteristics); (9) crime in Virginia. Alderman’s added comment about the “the curse of intellectual undertakings in the south” is in E.A. Alderman to Beardsley Ruml, April 22, 1926. RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 78, Folders 813-814. Wilson Gee, in addition to being a respected agricultural economist, was a respected social scientist; see Wilson Gee, ed., *Research in the Social Sciences: Its Fundamental Methods and Objectives* (New York: Macmillan, 1929).

<sup>228</sup> The grant award was made in a letter dated June 4, 1926; see also “Memorandum of Interview” with Wilson Gee, n.d., RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 78, Folders 813-814

begun at UNC stood as a unique research center with projects “on a purely experimental basis,” Splawn could do well to think about research problems uniquely “concerning the Texas situation.”<sup>229</sup>

Ruml was willing to help get Texas’s application process focused. He appreciated rich potential for research in the American southwest, and he advised Texas to focus on projects suited to their region. Texas quickly produced an application that came to agree with Ruml’s emphasis that Texas could contribute toward “coordinating the work in the social sciences.” Splawn considered some relations between the six social sciences at Texas – namely, anthropology, economics, sociology, government, history, and psychology – and he emphasized a goal: “To promote closer and more stimulating relationships between the faculties of the several departments of the social sciences,” the separation of which had been “in large part artificial” and was clearly “disadvantageous” to the continued advancement of useful social science. The ideal situation would be that researchers in different social science departments “should work in cooperation with one another on a common problem or problems.” Researchers would, in this way, come to “realize more clearly the importance of each of the social sciences as an approach to the study of man and his environment.” In the official grant proposal, Splawn emphasized diversity of peoples and unique conditions in the vast Texas region, “truly constitut[ing] an empire.” Splawn and others at Texas wanted to focus on developing “studies relating to the conditions and the problems of the Southwest, such as the study of the Mexican population in this section of the country.” Texas reasoned

<sup>229</sup> W.M.W. Splawn to Beardsley Ruml, January 18, 1926; Beardsley Ruml to W.M.W. Splawn, January 26, 1926, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 77, Folder 805.

that they could best merit a grant if they studied problems and social relations unique to the southwest, and also if they declared they would do so with all the social sciences at once.<sup>230</sup>

Texas received a generous grant. President Splawn then resigned his university presidency so he could serve as Director of research projects under the grant. The application effort that turned out successful for the University of Texas was the case made for southern uniqueness. Texas did not quite become a major research center, but they did at least receive substantial Memorial funds. Texas was not even the first southwestern or western school to make a case for regional uniqueness.<sup>231</sup>

Two other schools playing to Ruml's strategy to maximize the Memorial's coverage of research fields were the University of Denver and Stanford University. Both schools rated highly among major universities in the Rocky Mountain and West Coast regions.

In April 1925, the University of Denver presented to Ruml its case for 'unique' western conditions. Denver claimed that economic problems and social welfare issues were unique enough in the Rocky Mountain Region to merit detailed study. Denver social scientists recognized that an attempt for "organization of the economic facts pertaining to the great area west of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers presents one of the important social problems of today. The future of this area," Denver's faculty added, "depends upon the enlistment of outside capital." A specific need was for financial resources to support "some agency of a scientific nature that can take the problem of organizing the economic

<sup>230</sup> Splawn and others at Texas got into a quick flurry of communications with Ruml. For example, Mary Gearing, chair of Texas's Department of Home Economics, drew attention to the possibility of research in child care and parent training; Mary Gearing to Lawrence K. Frank, February 3, 1926. Splawn and Ruml then met, in New York, and agreed the Southwest was an important place to get Memorial-sponsored research underway. Splawn accepted Ruml's "suggestion" that Texas prepare a proposal emphasizing ways that Texas could contribute to "coordinating the work in the social sciences"; W.M.W. Splawn to Beardsley Ruml, May 13, 1926. The proposal itself is W.M.W. Splawn, "Grant Proposal," January 25, 1927, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 77, Folder 805, pp. 18-9, 25.

<sup>231</sup> See C.D. Simmons to Beardsley Ruml, August 26, 1927, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 77, Folder 805.

information of the Rocky Mountain and Prairie States and work it out.” Upon Ruml’s encouragement, the University of Denver put together a preliminary proposal. Social scientists at the school were developing a research program, Denver reported, that “has been directed toward the collection of fundamental statistical data dealing with the physical, economic, industrial, business, social, political and legal aspects of this region.” Denver had in mind a unified social science program, including studies of the “growth and character of population,” “consumption of products,” and needs and activities of industries in the west. After some interaction with the Memorial, Denver received a three-year grant in November.<sup>232</sup>

Denver’s proposal, even prior to its approval, was one that the Memorial’s Arthur Woods believed was an important one. Woods worried, however, that a grant to Denver might set a precedent that other schools would try to follow, thus producing an “avalanche of appeals” based on unique geographical circumstances. Such a danger could be gotten around by including mining conditions and engineer training specifically within the fold of why consideration was given to Denver. Ruml accepted Woods’s argument and got some additional outside feedback as well – and only then did Ruml recommend the grant.<sup>233</sup>

Stanford University also claimed regional uniqueness. Stanford already had a program with the Memorial to study Russia’s national economy as a unique economic system (as will be discussed below). In May 1926, Stanford’s School of Social Sciences suggested California was unique enough as a state economy to represent a distinct case to be studied.

<sup>232</sup> “Letter of inquiry” from M.M. Jones to Arthur Woods, April 15, 1925, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 73, Folder 768. Denver stated its broad research proposal in “Research Program,” April 1925, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 73, Folder 768, pp. 1-2.

<sup>233</sup> Woods’s thoughts are shared in Arthur Woods to Beardsley Ruml, April 16, 1925, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 73, Folder 768.

Stanford wanted to develop research in such areas as regional water conservation, Pacific Coast public finance, and cooperative marketing practices in the West. They wanted to expand a program of inter-racial studies in California, and they also requested additional funds for research on Russian Revolution studies. After slightly adjusting how all their proposed regional projects were defined – and with Stanford President Ray Lyman Wilber emphasizing that the university’s School of Social Sciences needed “general social science development” – Stanford received a five-year grant in March 1927.<sup>234</sup>

In a way, Texas, Denver and Stanford combined to represent a field of social research supported on a geographical basis: a field in southwestern and western studies.<sup>235</sup>

#### 6.5 Studies of non-capitalist economies–1923-28

Leaders at the Memorial believed an important research field would involve a pair of overseas problem areas: the need to learn what works and what doesn’t work in the ways non-capitalist nations do things; the need to help other nations get prepared for eventual participation in Western-style capitalism. The latter goal really was to prepare peoples of certain nations to be ready for such participation if and when their nation’s leaders decided to allow such participation. During the early to middle 1920s, the Memorial applied funds for such purposes in the Far East, the Middle East, the Communist world, and even in Europe.

<sup>234</sup> President Ray Lyman Wilber to Beardsley Ruml, May 6, 1926; Beardsley Ruml to President Wilber, May 11, 1926; President Wilber to Beardsley Ruml, January 21, 1927. President Wilber’s January letter to Ruml divided proposed projects into five, slightly differently stated categories: Russian Revolution studies; racial problems in the Pacific; social, political and economic developments in Europe; governmental, economic and historical studies in the American west; social aspects of human development. RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 69, Folder 724.

<sup>235</sup> See Thomas C. McCormick, “Development of Social Research in Leading Northern Universities, and Its Status in Colleges and Universities in the Southwest,” *The Southwestern Social Sciences Quarterly* 13 (March 1933): 368-71.

When Ruml joined the Memorial, he inherited programs to support a couple of schools in China. As early as 1908 Rockefeller Sr., motivated by religious belief, joined with his chief advisor Frederick Gates to work with the Rockefeller-supported Oriental Education Commission (OEC) to establish a new university in China. The new university, to be modeled in ways on the University of Chicago, was to produce home-grown leaders to go into Chinese society and help “civilize” the nation. The idea, according to an OEC report, was that “rationality, in particular the scientific rationality embodied in Western universities, was the solution to the riddle of China’s successful modernization.”<sup>236</sup>

Although the 1908 effort came to nothing in the immediate term, a similar idea was enacted seven years later when the Rockefeller Foundation established the China Medical Board, which in turn founded the Peking Union Medical College. Though the school took six more years to be built and dedicated (in 1921), the Peking (Beijing) school had a mission to contribute, perhaps above all else in the estimation of Rockefeller Jr., to the “mental development and spiritual culture” of China. The model put in place for medical training and practice at the school was one promoted by Abraham Flexner at the Rockefeller Institute of Medicine, and which is sometimes also called the “Johns Hopkins model.” The plan was that scientific laboratory research and clinical practice must tightly combine in a dynamic, back-and-forth process in which new knowledge gets tested and tests of new knowledge are used to help identify more gaps in knowledge that need to be addressed with science.<sup>237</sup>

<sup>236</sup> Quoted in Frank Ninkovich, “The Rockefeller Foundation, China, and Cultural Change,” *Journal of American History* 70 (March 1984): 799-820, esp. 801.

<sup>237</sup> Ninkovich, “The Rockefeller Foundation,” 803-4. See also Mary Brown Bullock, *An American Transplant: The Rockefeller Foundation and Peking Union Medical College* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980); Laurence A. Schneider, “The Rockefeller Foundation, the China Foundation, and the Development of Modern Science in China,” *Social Science & Medicine* 16, 12 (1982): 1217-21; Socrates Litsios, “Selskar Gunn and China: The Rockefeller Foundation’s ‘Other’ Approach to Public Health,” *Bulletin*



Another interest of the Rockefeller Foundation by the early 1920s was to support the North China Union Language School, an academic program in Beijing designed for Chinese students and visiting westerners who wanted to focus on “the teaching of things Chinese and missionary methods.” Ruml provided some limited support to the school when he took over the Memorial.<sup>238</sup>

Ruml was also able to find opportunities to support programs aimed at teaching people of China about economic, cultural and political matters of the West. A specific proposal for social research projects eventually came to the Memorial in 1928, from another university in China, also in Beijing. A kind of natural experiment was described somewhat by Yenching University faculty, as an experiment resembling what had happened in the American South during three centuries of slavery. The idea introduced by Yenching was that entire regions of the world may have lagged behind the industrially advanced regions of the world in certain ways. Yenching University, originally created as the Christian Peking University in 1916, had begun a program of economics education in 1917, introduced at the school by British-trained economist John Bernard Taylor. Taylor approached economics in ways akin to the so-called American “institutional economics” with which the Memorial’s Lawrence Frank was familiar. Taylor’s goal was to make economic research relevant to Chinese culture and social institutions, and his efforts at Yenching were joined by three additional economists (one European and two Chinese) between 1922 and 1928. The group had an overriding objective, which according to one economic historian was “to develop

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*of the History of Medicine* 79 (2005): 295-318. Flexner Report (1910) was put into effect at the Rockefeller Institute by Simon Flexner, the brother of Abraham Flexner.

<sup>238</sup> The idea to focus on “the teaching of things Chinese and missionary methods” is expressed in W.B. Pettus to W.S. Richardson, September 21, 1921. Money was donated to the school, named the North China Union Language School, somewhat informally by Rockefeller Jr. as “a private matter” as early as 1920; see Frank B. Stubbs to Russell Carter, April 2, 1924. RAC-LSRM, Series III, Subseries 8, Box 106, Folder 1070.

innovative institutional forms to enhance China's economic performance." The goal, in short, was to get China active in capitalism.<sup>239</sup>

By 1928, the last year of the Memorial, Ruml's interest in China turned into an interest to assess the social and economic consequences of unique historical circumstances. Social science professors at Yenching University stated their belief that the rate of social development in China had been particularly retarded compared to most of the rest of the world. Not only could China be assisted by outside funds, but all nations of the capitalist world would stand to benefit by helping China catch up. An argument in Yenching's proposal was that "China will in the future become a very important part of the family of nations," and that "earnest effort is being made to improve human conditions in the country and to evolve, through education, a system that will elevate the Chinese and command the respect of Western nations." Different fields of social science would also benefit by learning "the facts and conditions" that caused such "a slow evolution" of an entire region of the world. The Yenching faculty wanted financial assistance "to knit closely together all departments of study, instruction, and research constituting the social sciences." Their hope was that research based on objective methods would allow social scientists "to investigate with unbiased clarity of observation" the true facts about China's slow evolution. Social researchers were not to judge but to "discover where the economic factor is dominant and

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<sup>239</sup> Paul B. Trescott, "Institutional Economics in China: Yenching University, 1917-1941," *Journal of Economic Issues* 26, 4 (December 1992), 1221-55; Trescott, "American Philanthropy and the Development of Academic Economics in China before 1949," in Soma Hewa and Philo Hove, eds., *Philanthropy and Cultural Context: Western Philanthropy in South, East, and Southeast Asia in the Twentieth Century* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1997): 157-81.

where the social factor” is dominant in accounting for how China got so far behind so much of the rest of the world.<sup>240</sup>

The nation of China was not the only non-European foreign nation to be of some interest to the Memorial. During the early 1920s, the Memorial had interest in supporting education programs for Russians. In 1923 the Memorial helped create a program to support Russian students who were dislocated in Europe and the United States. According to an outside advisor of Ruml, displaced Russian students were persons who should be prepared for when “the time comes and Russia does straighten out” – which was to say, for the time when Russia rejoins the free and capitalist nations of the world. Ruml evaluated the idea to support displaced Russian students by first obtaining some proof that the “Russian Student Fund” was legally established, including that it was incorporated under U.S. law. This was important given that communist Russia was establishing a practice of refusing to meet their financial debts owed to parties in the capitalist West. Ruml got trustee approval of a grant to support education of Russian students pursuing schooling in other nations.<sup>241</sup>

Another example of spreading ideas about capitalism to people in non-capitalist nations arose in connection with a school in Beirut, Lebanon. In this region of the world known as the Middle East, an objective for Ruml was to promote better research and teaching in business and social science. The American University of Beirut was a considered the right place to pursue this, and in 1925 the Memorial trustees approved six year’s support for two

<sup>240</sup> The proposal added that as “the economic and social system of the Occident is the result of a slow evolution and that an evolutionary process must occur in China also, ... the main emphasis should be on the facts and conditions actually prevailing.” It would be important “to investigate with unbiased clarity of observation” different regions of China; Olin D. Wannamaker, “Grant Proposal,” March 1, 1928, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 80, Folders 834-837, pp. 1-2.

<sup>241</sup> Quotation from Thomas N. Perkins to Arthur Woods, January 26, 1923. See also Beardsley Ruml to Norman H. Davis, April 9, 1923; Norman H. Davis to Beardsley Ruml, April 21, 1923; Frank B. Stubbs to Frank L. Polk, September 14, 1923, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Subseries 8, Box 106, Folder 1081.

new professors at the school, each of which was to be a person “native” to the region. The chief objective was to prepare Middle Eastern students to participate in world business.<sup>242</sup>

Another approach to using Memorial funds for projects dealing with non-capitalist nations was to support research aimed at discovering what happens when non-capitalist economies operate on their own terms. The main idea here was that because non-capitalist systems already exist, they might as well be studied.

In 1925, the Memorial got interested in Russia along such a line. The interest came about when it seemed likely that post-revolutionary Russia might sustain its government-controlled, planned economy for a long time to come. The Memorial decided they might as well consider Russia to be a large-scale “experiment on society.” A research group at Stanford University proposed gathering data on Russia’s economy, with the importance of the project being carefully qualified: “In making a study of the revolution the purpose should be to ascertain what the leaders of the movement hoped to bring about, how far they succeeded and failed, and the actions and reactions of their experiments on society. It should not be the object of the study to prove anything in particular but merely to gather such social, economic, and psychological data as can be had at the present time.” The recent Russian Revolution, as F.A. Golder of Stanford concluded, “should be studied as a social experiment in the making.” Persons at the Memorial, while strongly disapproving of Russia’s move to communism, reasoned that since an unprecedented experiment of partitioning an industrializing country “into economic units according to resources and industries” had happened, scientists might as well study whether the division into economic units might rest on any kind of fundamental economic truths about an industrializing economy. Because

<sup>242</sup> RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 49, Folders 512-513.

financial support for such studies was unlikely to be made available from endowments at particular universities, Stanford and the Memorial agreed that the Memorial should fill the gap, which the Memorial did with a two-year grant.<sup>243</sup>

The idea to interpret situations in non-capitalist countries as laboratory-like situations came up with regard to Sweden and Great Britain as well. These two nations featured two different degrees of so-called ‘mixed’ economies.

A large-scale economic experiment catching the Memorial’s attention was in Sweden during 1924 and 1925. Swedish economists contacted the Memorial to say they saw their nation as “an almost ideal ‘laboratory’ for social research.” Because experiments in a new kind of “welfare state” were already in action across Sweden, persons at the University of Stockholm recommended the Memorial should support research to learn from the experiments. The University of Stockholm had a cadre of social scientists and social workers in the wings, and the school asked for a five-year grant. One objective, agreeable to the Memorial’s perspective, was to see an award used to promote tighter connection between the social sciences and the schools of social technology at the university. The University of Stockholm wisely included such a potential benefit in their proposal.<sup>244</sup>

In the case of studying Sweden’s national experiment, an informative matter is how the grant proposal got presented and received. In September 1924, University of Sweden economist Gösta Bagge made a personal visit to Ruml. Bagge, once a student of renowned

<sup>243</sup> The initial proposal to study Russian “experiments on society” is in F.A. Golder to Guy Stanton Ford, March 17, 1925. Other quoted words are from a supplementing memorandum; F.A. Golder, “A Plan for the Study of the Russian Revolution,” 1925. See also F.A. Golder to G.S. Ford, March 16 1925, which further discusses the proposed study of the “Economic Basis for the Territorial Division of European Russia,” RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 69, Folder 723.

<sup>244</sup> In 1924 the University of Stockholm applied for a grant supporting five years’ work by its Social Science Institute. The primary initial focus was to train persons specializing in social work and municipal work; see John M. Glenn to Beardsley Ruml, September 16, 1924. The substantial grant (\$75,000 awarded in November 1925) would end up serving a broader purpose. RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 77, Folder 804.

Swedish economist Gustav Cassel, came to New York equipped with a letter of introduction from Sage Foundation Director John M. Glenn. Bagge aimed to persuade Ruml that a lack of funds prevented fulfillment of an aim “to initiate and carry on scientific research in the social and municipal field.” “There is in fact no institution in Scandinavia today where scientific social research is being carried out on a systematic plan.” This lack of such research was “unfortunate not only from a Scandinavian point of view, but also it seems from an international viewpoint.” The rest of the world, after all, could benefit if a research group were supported to “analyze properly from a scientific point of view” the results and consequences of such institutional innovations as Sweden’s eight-hour workday law (in force already for five years) and the Swedish Trade Union. In the latter case, a goal should be to make “scientific investigation of the results of this kind of regulation of wages.”<sup>245</sup>

In response to Bagge’s inquiry, Ruml sought advice from such economists as Cassel in Sweden and William Beveridge in London. Cassel, for example, though uncertain whether the University of Stockholm was “concentrat[ing] itself upon forming the habit of scientific thinking,” believed the school could potentially serve “to fill up the former lack of economic education of those who take care, in the democratic society of ours, of local government and of social work generally.” Bagge, when asked for further details, wrote in June 1925 (in what became the successful grant application) an added emphasis that, “from a scientific point of view,” Sweden is “in many respects an almost ideal ‘laboratory’ for social research”; especially to be emphasized was that many variables could be held constant. “Sweden is a

<sup>245</sup> Gösta Bagge to Beardsley Ruml, September 20, 1924, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 77, Folder 804. Earlene Craver has produced a study of Bagge’s contacts with the Memorial in the context of a longer-running development of a so-called “Stockholm School” of economics; Earlene Craver, “Gösta Bagge, the Rockefeller Foundation, and Empirical Social Science Research in Sweden, 1924-1940,” in Lars Jonung, ed., *The Stockholm School of Economics Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991): 79-97.

small, well administered country with a homogeneous population, which makes it so much easier to get the necessary statistical and other material to isolate social phenomena, to make observations without all the bewildering tendencies in different directions, which characterizes the large countries and their mixed populations.”<sup>246</sup>

The Memorial’s willingness to study Sweden’s economic experiment connected to an idea that while social science in Europe appeared to lag behind even the inadequate condition of social science in the United States, applications of social knowledge – or what was again called “social technology” – appeared to be running ahead in Europe, compared to the United States. The idea to support research projects in non-capitalist nations may have been part of a broader idea to study national economies as somehow involved in a kind of competitive, selection process between them. If such a process was what was happening, then it was a process with an as-yet-undetermined outcome as to what kind of national economy works best.

A particular creation of a new economic form got underway in the English city of Liverpool. Here was an experiment not at the level of regional cultural-geography such as in China, nor at the Sweden-like level of a national boundary, but at an urban level. In March 1927, faculty at the University of Liverpool contacted the Memorial with an idea to use their city as a field laboratory to better understand interactions between economic opportunity, family quality, and various urban social problems. “[U]nderstanding that the L.S.R.M. is interested in new schemes of social research and experiment,” the Liverpool faculty offered a letter of inquiry “taking the liberty of bringing to the notice of the Memorial certain projects

<sup>246</sup> Gustav Cassel to William Beveridge, November 14, 1924; Gösta Bagge to Memorial Trustees, June 30, 1925, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 77, Folder 804.

which are in contemplation in Liverpool.” The University of Liverpool, with an established program in social work, had in mind a range of “experiments in child guidance, health education, employment and after-care of boys, social centres, and adult education among casual labourers.” Liverpool faculty believed they might even discover new approaches to “research into problems associated with the experimental work” on poverty alleviation throughout the city of Liverpool. One goal was to establish a “settlement research” center aimed at improving studies of child development, ethnic integration, and general social welfare from an experimental point of view. The grand goal, as one leader at the Memorial even interpreted it, was nothing less than “to discover the causes of poverty and its effects upon the population.” To be included for examination would be “physical geography” as well as “the economic, political, and social factors of present Liverpool organization.” As was emphasized in a number of exchanges between persons at the University of Liverpool and the Memorial, an urgent need was to get better research coordination between different British research programs doing poverty studies.<sup>247</sup>

Ruml responded positively to possibilities for the Liverpool study. His thinking included support of an idea to connect the Liverpool study to an ongoing study in London,

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<sup>247</sup> The initial letter is from Secretary-Treasurer of University of Liverpool to W.S. Richardson, March 23, 1927. Prior to any grant award, the Memorial’s chief contact, Sydnor H. Walker, visited Liverpool and learned that “No other school of social science in Great Britain, nor school of social study, exists which comprises a degree course for undergraduates” in the areas of social work. Much work was being done at the school to coordinate different fields of social science; “Memorandum of Interview,” Sydnor H. Walker, May 23, 1928. Walker, in a supplemental letter, summarized what the project was turning into: “The chief project is an all-around study of the Liverpool area...to discover the causes of poverty and its effects upon the population. The physical geography, the economic, political, and social factors of present Liverpool organization would be examined.” The plan for this integrated study in social science was to make house-to-house visits to collect data on at least 10,000 households; Sydnor Walker to Beardsley Ruml, May 22, 1928, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 73, Folders 772-3.



overseen by the LSE as the “New Survey of London Life and Labour.” And, indeed, both the Liverpool and London projects eventually produced useful results.<sup>248</sup>

The research field created to study alternative forms of regional or national economies was not the last of the new research fields the Memorial aimed to help develop. In addition to the idea that Russia, the Middle East and China all suffered from some kind of evolutionary lag, and in addition to the idea that such places as Sweden and Liverpool might perhaps be attempting evolutionary institutional correction, and in addition to the idea that another region of the world where the idea of retarded evolution might even apply was the race-relations mess in the American South, still another possibility was that an entire sector of the American economy might perhaps be lagging behind: namely, the agricultural sector. This subject – one of a number of research fields yet to be studied – is where the next chapter picks up.

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<sup>248</sup> Liverpool researchers saw their study as a companion to the seventeen-volume study, Charles Booth, *The Life and Labour of the People of London* (1885-1902). See D. Caradog Jones and Colin G. Clark, “Housing in Liverpool: A Survey by Sample of Present Conditions,” Read before the Royal Statistical Society, May 20, 1930, and published in *Journal of Royal Statistical Society* 93, Pt. IV (1930): 489-537; Caradog et al., *The Social Survey of Merseyside* (Liverpool: University Press of Liverpool, 1934).

## CHAPTER 7. RESEARCH “FIELDS,” PART TWO–1922-28

### 7.1 Introduction

In the last chapter we identified and studied four research fields receiving serious attention from Beardsley Ruml and the Memorial. In this chapter we consider developments that Ruml and the Memorial helped to accomplish in five more research fields: land use, population and agriculture; human biology; home economics and child welfare; international relations; coordination projects for gathering social statistics. Three more research fields will be included in Chapter 8 as well.

### 7.2 Land use and population studies–1922-28

A major field of social research pursued by the Memorial between 1923 and 1928 was research on land use and population trends. By the 1920s, a recognized interest in many industrialized nations was to study manifestations of regional under-population or over-population, including causes of migration patterns linking the two. This area of study also related in certain ways to problems of race relations, in that there was an extraordinary amount of black migration in the United States immediately following the world war. For African Americans, in addition to the factor of wanting to get away from the harshest social and political conditions in the American South, entire families wanted to find the most favorable economic circumstances in which to live and work. The issue of bringing white

families and black families into peaceful and productive coexistence was seen by some social researchers as an issue relating to the picture of maladjusted land uses around the nation.<sup>249</sup>

By January 1923, a broad proposed study of population and land usage arrived at Ruml's desk, as sent by Richard T. Ely, a well-established economist specializing in land economics. Based at the Institute for Research in Land Economics and Public Utilities in Madison, Wisconsin, Ely submitted a preliminary proposal for a project to make land-use studies that would be "vital to the national welfare and survival."<sup>250</sup>

Ely's preliminary proposal had its supporters. Albert Shaw, editor of *The American Review of Reviews*, sent a recommendation letter saying he was convinced "not only of the scientific value but of the intensely practical character of the work in land economics" to be guided by Ely. The project would involve wide-ranging problems "relating to the public domain and the natural resources" of the nation. Shaw thought highly of "the methods of Dr. Ely's institute [which] seem to me particularly adapted to the supplying of trustworthy information" in areas presently lacking it.<sup>251</sup>

Following a personal meeting between Ely and Ruml in Washington, Ely wrote to express high appreciation for Ruml's "interest in the scientific aspects of our work." Ely expressed personal appreciation for rigorous science, believing "that economists have not

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<sup>249</sup> Anon., "Human Migration as a Field of Research," *Social Service Review* 1 (June 1927): 258-60. For a variety of historical perspectives on population and land-use thought during the 1920s and into the 1930s, see Richard S. Kirkendall, *Social Scientists and Farm Politics in the Age of Roosevelt* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1966); Lester R. Kurtz, *Evaluating Chicago Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984): 67-70; Dennis Hodgson, "The Ideological Origins of the Population Association of America," *Population and Development Review* 17 (1991): 1-34; Susan Greenhalgh, "The Social Construction of Population Science: An Intellectual, Institutional, and Political History of 20th-Century Demography," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 38 (1996): 26-66.

<sup>250</sup> In December 1922, Ely's Institute applied for \$100,000 annually for at least three years to operate their new program; "Institute for Research in Land Economics and Public Utilities, Remarks on a tentative budget," December 1922, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 60, Folders 648-53.

<sup>251</sup> Albert Shaw to Beardsley Ruml, January 31, 1923, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 60, Folders 648-53.

attained as high scientific standards as have other scientists, although I believe great improvements have been made in recent years.” Newly accessible statistical data was one reason for the improving situation. Ely recognized the next need was for greater coordination between social scientists, and he expressed that the problem of land-use analysis “has become too great for isolated workers. We require close contact in our group and that is the reason for our Institute.” Ely used a familiar analogy by comparing research in economics to research in medicine, saying he saw it as a “fact that the best scientific work in economics as well as medicine is the result of efforts by scientific men, following scientific methods, to solve actual problems.” Ely identified a trio of substantial social problems that could be addressed with granted funds: “prevention of human misery involved in unwise land settlements”; “problems of starvation in India and China”; “the problem of world peace to which we could make a contribution if we work out plans for the distribution of the food and raw materials among the nations of the earth.”<sup>252</sup>

Ely and Ruml got into extensive discussion through much of 1923, with Ruml asking Ely for specifics, and Ely trying to oblige. Ely recommended adding a study of the consequences of large land holdings on the U.S. economy, as well as studies of problems associated with utilizing low-grade land and problems connected to extreme fluctuation in land values. Ely also emphasized the solid reputation of his institute, and he noted his keen concern to “take up practical problems of human welfare and attempt to solve them by scientific methods.” In the end, Ely’s proposal got denied. Were his proposed projects too general? Probably they were. Were they potentially too controversial? Perhaps they were this as well. One problem surely was Ely’s failure to make his proposal specific enough. In

<sup>252</sup> Richard Ely to Beardsley Ruml, February 6, 1923, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 60, Folders 648-53.

addition to that, the Memorial may have feared the nature of any policy implications that might come from Ely's studies; the Memorial may have believed, in other words, that some kind of policy advocacy might be present in Ely's conclusions, and that whatever the advocacy was, it would likely be too radical for the Memorial to be associated with. At Ruml's friendly tip, Ely withdrew the proposal just prior to its expected denial by the trustees.<sup>253</sup>

Another proposal for a land-use study also denied by the Memorial came from Stanford University's Food Research Institute. Stanford's study clearly encountered the problem that the Memorial interpreted it as too large and impractical, and as too loosely defined. As to the Stanford project, which was proposed in May 1922 by Institute Director Carl Alsberg, the goal was to develop better harvest predictions by "dealing with the technique and methods of crop estimating." Crop estimation, after all, "lies at the base of all rational agricultural production and marketing." To the best of Alsberg's knowledge, "no complete and thorough study of all the methods in use in the past and present for crop estimating and no critical study of their respective values have ever been made public." Interesting was Alsberg's idea that accurate crop estimation even "involves psychological factors" which "loom particularly large" in any estimation errors; and so in addition to the problem of its undefined nature, Ruml may also have hesitated to support a project that

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<sup>253</sup> Ely made his more specific proposal in Richard Ely to Beardsley Ruml, June 2, 1923. In the end Ruml advised Ely not to submit a formal grant proposal, believing it "doubtful" the trustees would award the grant; Beardsley Ruml to Richard Ely, November 12, 1923; Richard Ely to Beardsley Ruml, November 13, 1923, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 60, Folders 648-53. Whether correctly or not, radical economic opinion was something that was at times associated with Ely; for example, kept in the Memorial's files are articles titled "Prof. Richard T. Ely Exposed!" (published by the Manufacturers and Merchants Federal Tax League) and "A Shameless Attack" (published by the *Chicago Journal of Commerce*), both of which were critical of Ely.

seemed a bit grand and far-reaching in how it would try to connect estimates of seasonal crop levels to human psychological factors. As stated, Stanford's proposal was denied.<sup>254</sup>

Stanford's Food Research Institute was, without question, a reputable institution. In the years following the world war, a number of new research institutes were established in the physical sciences, and in 1921 the Carnegie Corporation took a leadership role in helping establish the Food Research Institute. From the perspective of the Memorial, the institute surely was a trustworthy organization, and so denial of the proposed project must have been on its own terms.<sup>255</sup>

A pattern in the two project denials may be the grand scale of what was being proposed, especially given that Ely never quite got his projects described specifically enough for Ruml's liking. Also possible was that Ruml, who was not yet firmly established at the Memorial during 1922 and 1923, did not want to risk losing any 'good will' in his new position by presenting underdefined projects to the trustees during his first few year or so as director.

Another proposed project was denied six years later however. At a time when Ruml was now well established, Stanford's Food Research Institute again proposed a project, this time to compile a comprehensive study of world agricultural conditions. Again it was Alsberg who contacted Ruml, to propose an atlas-oriented project that would be a new work to replace an older survey of world agriculture published during the mid-1910s by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The new version of such an atlas should be a world study on a

<sup>254</sup> Carl L. Alsberg to Beardsley Ruml, May 27, 1922; Beardsley Ruml to Carl L. Alsberg, June 6, 1922, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 69, Folder 722.

<sup>255</sup> "A Preliminary Conference on University Research," *Science* 63 (1923): 518; Ray L. Wilber, "The Advantages of Distribution of Research Funds to Universities Rather Than to Independent Research Institutes," *Journal of the Proceedings of the Association of American Universities* 25 (1923): 60-70.

scale which “it was not deemed by those in authority possible for the [U.S.] Bureau of Agricultural Economics to undertake.” The new project should be “a complete and authorized work of the highest scientific value,” and to attain such status would require “a vast amount of pure research, statistical and otherwise.” Alsberg clarified that the planned project aimed to identify “the relationship of the increasing population of the world to the supply of food, fibre, and forest products, and sketch the economic structure of production and distribution of these commodities.” In the end this project was seen by the Memorial as too big to attempt.<sup>256</sup>

In both of Stanford’s project proposals, researchers drew attention to a problem of some importance: maladjustment between technologies and institutions. There was a sense, especially in the case of Stanford’s 1928 proposal, that the economic structure of production technology and the economic structure of distribution practices were in discord.

A number of grant proposals came along, however, that were approved for dealing with issues of land usage, population, and agriculture.

In June 1922, the Memorial decided to support a study in population and migration patterns to be done through the National Research Council. A goal was to support better communication between different researchers and their variety of methods. It seems likely the Memorial may have hesitated to commit large sums of money to support any one particular method in a new research field, and so the NRC’s proposal made sense. The Memorial was willing to provide funds to support NRC-guided research in certain areas so long as these areas were relevant to Memorial interests. The nature of a research coordination

<sup>256</sup> Carl L. Alsberg to Beardsley Ruml, March 31, 1928; Edmund E. Day to Carl L. Alsberg, April 18, 1928; Carl Alsberg, “Research Project of the Food Research Institute of Stanford University,” April 1928, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 69, Folder 722.

problem involved a need to identify uniform measurement categories and common standards of data collection. The Memorial's support of the NRC project got started when Vernon Kellogg, NRC Secretary, wrote in response to Ruml's request for any prospective research ideas relating to the social sciences. Kellogg believed funds could be directed towards the "promotion of scientific projects sponsored by the Council," and that it would be best for funds to be awarded in a general endowment, "rather than to give the money for the support of a specific list of projects made up in advance." NRC chairman George Ellery Hale, who was one of the nation's leading physicists and astronomers, also submitted an opinion, expressing a view that any grant from the Memorial would best be awarded as a general award. As the NRC already was significantly supported by Rockefeller Foundation funds in various fields in the physical sciences, Hale recommended adding some kind of broad work, supported by the Memorial, to "briefly survey the wide field of science and discern its true place in any intelligent scheme of national development." Here was a truly grand idea! Hale's recommended project was, in effect, a study to find the best societal applications for every scientific discovery in the physical sciences. Though the Memorial had no difficulties awarding money to the NRC for certain specific areas of research, a line had to be drawn and Hale's proposed project did not receive a grant.<sup>257</sup>

The Memorial interpreted its projects activated through the NRC as successful ones.

Following a period of positive support of the NRC, leaders at the Memorial got into

<sup>257</sup> Vernon Kellogg to Beardsley Ruml, June 28, 1922; George Ellery Hale to Beardsley Ruml, July 3, 1922; George Ellery Hale, "A National Focus of Science and Research," June 1922, p. 1. The NRC considered other possible projects for Memorial support, and a couple candidate directions were the NRC's Committee for Research on Sex Problems and its Committee on Scientific Problems of Human Migration. In addition to problems associated with population and migration, another example of research done through the NRC was research on industrial working conditions, where an important goal was better data sharing. RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 57, Folders 617-623. See also Robert M. Yerkes, "The Work of [the] Committee on Scientific Problems of Human Migration, National Research Council," *Journal of Personnel Research* 3 (1924/25): 189-96.



discussion about possibly developing a new organization for the social sciences, which would be a “Social Science Research Council.” In certain ways the SSRC (which will be studied in the next chapter) would follow the NRC’s committee-based model, doing for the social sciences what the NRC did for the physical sciences. Especially there might be some benefits to be attained by running a fellowships program through an umbrella organization with a structure akin to the NRC’s. Writing in July 1923, Ruml discussed the formation of the SSRC, summarizing his understanding of what Charles E. Merriam, the Chicago political science professor, reported as a decision reached by leading persons in the social sciences: that it would (in Ruml’s words) be desirable “to form a council similar to the National Research Council that should operate in the fields of Economics, Sociology and Political Science.” Ruml, while standing mostly on the sideline of the actual organizational effort, expressed his agreement with Merriam’s now-famous idea: “There is no question in my mind but that there must be brought into existence sooner or later an organization that will function in the field of the social sciences in the same way as the National Research Council functions in the field of the physical and biological sciences.” Various kinds of land-use studies would eventually be overseen by the SSRC by the end of the 1920s.<sup>258</sup>

Another potential land-use study came along in 1924. A major part of any complete research program in land-use studies would need to include scientific development of agricultural economics. A relevant proposal came from economists at the New School for Social Research, in New York City. This was a school with which the Memorial had some ties, most notably through Lawrence Frank and Wesley Mitchell, each of whom had taught

<sup>258</sup> Quotation from Beardsley Ruml to Raymond Fosdick, July 16, 1923, RAC-LSRM, Series II, Box 3, Folder 39. In 1924 the Memorial would add clarity to its individual fellowships program by deciding that working through the SSRC was the best way to help directly provide funds to students in the social sciences; RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 63, Folder 677.

there. The New School's proposal was to study human migration patterns from a kind of evolutionary, or human "selection," point of view. New School social scientists displayed nuanced understanding of connections between agricultural problems and excess migration, and their grant proposal opened by declaring: "The agricultural problem in the United States stands in dire need of reformation at this time."<sup>259</sup>

The New School's proposed project was quite economic in its approach. A recent national recession had left agricultural prices out of balance with other prices in the economy, and had also left farmers facing problems of inadequate credit. The "deeper cause" underlying both situations, which was perhaps familiar only to the "hard-boiled economist," was "that the problem is one of decreasing costs by improving the technical methods of agriculture." Social and economic institutions were not easily catching up to technological advances. Part of the problem dated from the 1890s, when the last of 'virgin land' was brought under cultivation. "Sooner or later the food supply of our nation must begin to lag behind the growth of population," the New School faculty declared. The proposed research would help connect understanding of technological, economic, and cultural dimensions of human migration.<sup>260</sup>

Because the New School was located in New York City, faculty at the school believed they ought to say why they should be the ones to undertake the project. They explained that migration most often has as its destination the city, and that "the city-ward move of population which has been going on in this country for half a century is

<sup>259</sup> The New School for Social Research contacted the Memorial in 1924; see "Proposed Project for Research in the Agricultural Problem," RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 59, Folder 642, p. 1. See also Anon., "Human Migration as a Field of Research," *Social Service Review* 1 (June 1927): 258-60.

<sup>260</sup> "Proposed Project for Research in the Agricultural Problem," RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 59, Folder 642, p. 1.

undesirable.” This undesirability was partly because “the city is a poorer place in which to grow up than in the country.” Additionally: “As the process of migration from the farm to the city continues, a selection of persons who go as against those who stay is continually taking place. Is the city draining from the rural districts the most intelligent and energetic part of the population?” The New School, in wanting to research all possible causes of rural-to-urban migration, believed “the most difficult part of the problem is the formulation of an adequate culture for the rural community.” The idea was to find research applications that might keep more people from migrating to cities without being prepared for unexpected difficulties of urban life. In a second, somewhat more refined proposal, the New School faculty added that wide-ranging projects were ready to go. Many proposed projects aimed to apply scientific knowledge to strengthening the economic and cultural foundations of rural communities. The New School attempted to list separable and fairly specific projects: a study of federal taxation and finance; the “Agrarian problem”; organized labor in the public service; religious life of a typical American community; general work on race problems; social-psychological studies of races and cultures; crime and delinquency; personality development. Though such problem categories were still a bit general and motley in nature, a five-year grant was awarded.<sup>261</sup>

By 1925 Ruml decided it was time to develop a stronger focus on agricultural economics within the land-use and population research field. He requested a report from Edwin G. Nourse, head of the agricultural section at the Institute of Economics. Ruml asked Nourse to provide information on the quality of research in the nation’s leading university departments of agricultural economics. Ruml and Nourse shared an idea that agricultural

<sup>261</sup> “Proposed Project for Research in the Agricultural Problem,” RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 59, Folder 642, pp. 1-3, 9. The follow-up proposal is titled “Research Program of the New School,” RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 59, Folder 642.

problems and other rural land-use problems needed to be made part of an increasingly interconnected web of all the social sciences, which should in turn address an interconnected web of national issues. Nourse provided detailed information, reporting on all major agricultural economics programs in the country. He expressed opinions ranging from a low point of “No good men” at Penn State and “no one at Cornell who is regarding American farm policy from a national point of view,” to high praise especially for the University of Wisconsin (led by Richard Ely), the University of Minnesota (led by J.D. Black), and Iowa State College (led by C.L. Holmes).<sup>262</sup>

Nourse’s views carried weight. As a University of Chicago-trained economist under Ruml’s friend Leon Marshall, Nourse was known for his advocacy of agricultural cooperatives. In a series of important papers between 1919 and 1922, Nourse argued that cooperative enterprise among farmers can improve the overall competitive performance of the national economy – and that the degree of cooperative enterprise can even be used as a yardstick to measure performance of the capitalist system as a whole. Nourse developed his “competitive yardstick” model as a democratic, grass-roots approach, based on a belief that the method of slow, bottom-up accumulation of a cooperative mindset is ultimately far superior to any rapidly imposed structure from the top down.<sup>263</sup>

<sup>262</sup> Ruml got the report by interviewing Edwin Nourse on January 20, 1925 on the subject of departments of agricultural economics around the country; RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 63, Folder 676.

<sup>263</sup> Nourse got graduate-school preparation specializing in money and banking. The Chicago economics department offered a reasonably broad education at the time, and an agricultural economics and rural sociology department at the University of Arkansas recruited Nourse to serve as Department Head for his first post-graduate position. During his three years in Arkansas, Nourse began developing a new model for the relationship between the agricultural economy and the rest of the national economy. In a breakthrough article he pointed out that the only two textbooks in agricultural economics each failed to present the field in a broad economic framework; he argued that “agricultural economics is not a science distinct from other economic science, nor, on the other hand, is it merely an art devoid of scientific implications and responsibilities.” Agricultural economics needed to get less descriptive and more rigorous as a science; see Edwin G. Nourse, “What is Agricultural Economics?,” *Journal of Political Economy* 24, 4 (April 1916): 363-81. Nourse moved to

Following discussions between Ruml and Nourse, Ruml decided to explore agricultural economics as a possible addition to the land-use research program. In 1926, a report by Ruml recognized agricultural economics as standing equal in importance to criminology research on a short list of areas representing the next fields of urgent concern. Stated in the report was also that a third problem area, race and race relations, stood in dire need of attention. But while the level of demand for social science research was something Ruml saw as increasing in many fields, the demand pressure was especially strong for research in agricultural economics.<sup>264</sup>

Ruml asked for a planning report in 1927 emphasizing rural social problems, especially those agricultural-economic in nature. A companion report was also produced on the subject of social technology. The latter report suggested the Memorial trustees were extending their sense of the unity of social science to allow that discovery of knowledge and application of knowledge could mesh quite closely. Discovery and application were out of balance, however, and so a short-term focus needed to go towards getting more scientific

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Iowa State University in 1918, where he spent five years finishing his construction of the agricultural economy-national economy connection; see Joseph G. Knapp, *Edwin G. Nourse: Economist for the People* (Danville, IL: The Interstate Printers & Publishers, Inc., 1979), esp. 47-84. Some information about Nourse's ideas in connection to California agricultural cooperatives are in Steven Stoll, *The Fruits of Natural Advantage: Making the Industrial Countryside in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>264</sup> Criminology studies, it should be noted, seem to have been pursued through the Memorial's established research programs at research centers, especially at Chicago and UNC. Ruml optimistically opened his November 1926 report by emphasizing that the Memorial continues "to believe that great good is to be accomplished through advancement of social science." The ultimate goal was not to advance social science on its own terms, but to achieve the societal benefits to come from such advancement. Ruml saw that the level of demand for scientific analysis of social questions was increasing, and was doing so to the point that financial resource pressures were increasing; he cited in particular the fields of criminology and agricultural economics. Beardsley Ruml, "Director's Report – Social Sciences," November 23, 1926, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 63, Folder 676, p. 1.

discoveries, which would help counterbalance the crash program that it seemed was attending more to social technology than to social science.<sup>265</sup>

Ruml got more studies supported for research in land, population, and agriculture. Such research was central to a 1927 proposal from the National Bureau of Economic Research, the quite specific aim of which was to study international migration patterns. A grant was awarded.<sup>266</sup>

The following year, in June 1928, Ruml decided to pursue an agricultural economics study of his own on the problem of “Agrarian Reform.” The study – designed as an analytical exercise – was overseen by J.D. Black, now at Harvard, and by Theodore W. Schultz, a Wisconsin doctoral student respected by Black. The project was to explore an agricultural relief plan of Ruml’s devising for a trial experiment to study alternative approaches to tariffs on agricultural products. Black and Schultz assembled a research team to pursue research emphasized by Black as rigorously “scientific.” The project to explore the effect of tariffs on various farm products lasted until 1930 and became called the “surplus” study.<sup>267</sup>

The 1928 “Agrarian Reform” (or “surplus”) study was not Ruml’s first self-initiated agricultural-economic study. It may even be that agricultural economics was the research field in which Ruml allowed himself to be personally most initiative. In 1923 and 1924,

<sup>265</sup> This report dealt broadly with different areas of research that could connect discovery and application, with rural social problems being the newest area to be emphasized. “Report...1926-27,” RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 63, Folder 677.

<sup>266</sup> RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 56, Folder 607.

<sup>267</sup> Edmund E. Day, writing for Ruml in June 1928, expressed to Black: “I write to ask if you might possibly be available “for a study of an agricultural relief plan which Dr. Ruml has been turning over in his mind during the past few months.” Day believed the plan “an ingenious one.” Edmund E. Day to John D. Black, June 21, 1928. Black, who was trusted from his work for the SSRC, hesitated initially but came on board, bringing others, including Theodore W. Schultz, with him. John D. Black to Beardsley Ruml, October 17, 1928. RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 48, Folder 495. See also a series of ten studies published under John D. Black’s editorship between 1930 and 1938; John D. Black, ed., *Scope and Method* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1930-8); see also Timothy DeJager, “Pure Science and Practical Interests: The Origins of the Agricultural Research Council,” *Minerva* 31 (Summer 1993): 129-50.

Ruml helped build a study from an idea of leading agricultural economists Henry C. Taylor and Richard Ely. The study, taking place in Helena, Montana, became the “Fairway Farms” experiment. On land purchased by the Rockefeller Foundation, the “Fair Way Plan” was, in the words of one contemporary report, to test “the theory that farming in the northwest, when undertaken on a proper economic foundation and carried on in a scientific manner, will pay.” One main objective was to study landlord-tenant relations – specifically to identify those particular kinds of relations that best lead to eventual farm ownership by the largest number of farmers. Ruml and persons at both the Memorial and the Rockefeller Foundation (including John D. Rockefeller Jr.) got a Bozeman company, the Fairway Farms Corporation, to oversee the project on nine purchased farms for starters, and to build from scratch an entire farming community.<sup>268</sup>

In June 1928, the University of Vermont got another sort of population-and-migration study approved for a grant. This study was an especially large one, designed to evaluate various causes of rural-to-urban migration. Vermont researchers had certain ideas somewhat similar to an idea underlying the study made by the New School economists. Like researchers at the New School, Vermont researchers wanted to make a study from a selectionist point of view. Such an approach they saw as an underappreciated method for understanding causes and consequences of declining rural population. In March of that year, director of the three-year-old “Eugenics Survey of Vermont,” Henry F. Perkins, contacted

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<sup>268</sup> The quotation is from *The Helena Independent* (December 31, 1924), 6. Among the leading agricultural economists who shared ideas with Ruml on this particular study were Edwin Nourse, Richard Ely, Henry C. Wallace (Secretary of Agriculture), and Henry C. Taylor (Chief of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics); see H.C. Wallace to Beardsley Ruml, November 17, 1923, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 56, Folder 605; Beardsley Ruml to Richard T. Ely, February 14, 1924; Richard T. Ely to Beardsley Ruml, April 2, 1924, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 60, Folder 649. See also M.L. Wilson, “The Fairway Farms Project,” *The Journal of Land and Public Utility Economics* 2, 2 (April 1926): 156-171; Dwight Sanderson, “Scientific Research in Rural Sociology,” *American Journal of Sociology* 33, 2 (September 1927): 177-93.

Edmund Day at the Memorial to present an idea to add to their research plan a comprehensive survey of economic and social factors in rural Vermont. The Memorial asked for a detailed application, which became Vermont's successful June submission. Director Perkins's main concern, as stated in the original March proposal, was "the declining population of the rural areas of the state," which "seem[ed] to be no local problem, but one of widespread significance throughout the country." The reasons for this decline were not yet known, and in trying to discover them, "there are almost as many answers to the question as there are individuals who have investigated the matter." The proposed study, as it was refined by June, focused on ten dimensions of social and economic analysis to try and explain rural population decline. The study's overall goal was to learn how to better meet the needs of Vermont's rural communities.<sup>269</sup>

Henry C. Taylor, a leading agricultural economist, strongly supported the Vermont study. He wrote the Memorial to express admiration of the way "the human factor and the life of the people is receiving unusual emphasis" in the study. The Vermont study was different from somewhat similar studies done by rural commissions in Maine and New York, in that whereas these other studies tended to take as their "starting point" the issue of land utilization, the Vermont study began with community-level social and economic conditions. Taylor, in advocating for the Vermont study, believed the Vermont project could perhaps be the methodological basis for developing a national-level research program. He interpreted the

<sup>269</sup> Henry F. Perkins, "Plan for a Comprehensive Survey of Rural Areas in Vermont," March 1928, pp. 34, 37. See also H.F. Perkins to E.E. Day, March 21, 1928; H.F. Perkins to E.E. Day, May 2, 1928. The proposal, which was described as having ten dimensions of analysis, was approved in June 1928, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 77, Folder 810. See also Nancy L. Gallagher, *Breeding Better Vermonters: The Eugenics Project in the Green Mountains* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999).



Vermont researchers as believing that government policies would likely be needed to guide more progressive land utilization. The grant proposal, as noted, was approved.<sup>270</sup>

Agricultural and rural social problems in Europe were also of interest to the Memorial. One supported project was based out of Rome. The goal expressed in 1925 by those doing research at the International Institute of Agriculture in Rome, was to distinguish between rural problems specific to Europe and rural problems likely common to many industrialized nations. The Rome researchers wanted to stimulate better research as well as show how to translate current research results into an improved teaching program. The main question they asked was this: Were problems on the path to “rural life improvements” rooted in the same basic causes in all countries?<sup>271</sup>

At the University of Copenhagen, in Denmark, a project in cooperative social science research was supported by the Memorial during 1926 and 1927. The goal for increased cooperation between social scientists in this case involved some focus on rural and agricultural problems. Copenhagen researchers shared with the Memorial their interest in working toward a “cooperative” structure in social science, as faculty at the school’s Institute of Economics and History aimed to study rural and agricultural problems while also “mak[ing] an organized study of political and social-economic history of the past few decades.” Copenhagen economics professor Aage Friis contacted the Memorial, in September 1926, asking about the possibility of applying for a grant. Friis’s rationale hit upon the kind of natural sciences comparison suited to Memorial interests. He explained that

<sup>270</sup> Henry C. Taylor, “The Vermont Commission on Country Life,” October 11, 1929, p.2, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 77, Folder 810. See also Luther L. Bernard, “Research in the Psychology of Rural Life,” *Journal of Social Forces* 3 (March 1925): 446-53.

<sup>271</sup> The International Institute of Agriculture’s quite detailed grant application received a three-year award; RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 39, Folder 407.

“the subjects and the materials forming the history of the past generation are so comprehensive in extent that one investigator would be unable to work through all this material by his own unaided efforts.” Friis’s memo continued: “In the natural sciences the work of research is now carried on in great institutions,” where it seems every piece of research is “properly planned and organized.” However “in the historical and economic sciences, each investigator as yet works on his own particular subject, ... without considering the possibility of cooperating with others.” Friis believed the isolated researcher could no longer succeed in the social sciences. Copenhagen received a grant.<sup>272</sup>

At Heidelberg University, in Germany, certain real-world problems were of pressing concern. As expressed in a February 1928 grant application, the problems recognized by the Heidelberg faculty related to agricultural conditions in southern Germany, to economic and cultural questions of various sorts relating to western Germany and rural eastern France, and to problems in the sociology of government administration in many European nations. Heidelberg professors wondered if by beginning with such research areas perhaps a larger research program could be built over time. When Ruml asked for a more specific proposal, the Heidelberg faculty readjusted their statement of research interests just slightly as follows: “The population problem of Europe”; “The place of European Production in World Economics”; “The movement of Capital and the Economic Future of Europe”; “The Rationalization Problem of German Administration.” Agricultural problems in Germany were now included within multiple categories, which was important in order to see that

<sup>272</sup> The Institute of Economics and History was established at the University of Copenhagen in 1926; see Aage Friis to James Shotwell, September 18, 1926. Friis’s attached memo is titled “Memorandum, Institute of Economic History,” September 1926, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 52, Folder 581. Following the initial contact, the University of Copenhagen established, for Ruml, that various lines of research in business and economics were already showing success. A grant was awarded early in 1927.

agricultural problems connected closely to larger social problems. Although the described project was still fairly general (as was also the case for the University of Copenhagen), the Memorial wanted Heidelberg on board and were willing to allow Heidelberg a grant, which would last until 1936.<sup>273</sup>

### 7.3 Human biology and social evolution–1923-28

Part of the land-use problem that connected closely to ideas about population change was essentially the idea that too many people lived in some areas while too few lived in others. Furthermore, there was also an idea that changes in rural and urban population quantities involved change in population qualities as well. Population problems were a research priority as early as about 1923, at both the Memorial and the Rockefeller Foundation. An idea was even tried, primarily out of the Foundation, to make population quality an entire research field. However the idea was eventually rejected.<sup>274</sup>

In 1925 Rockefeller Foundation Secretary Edwin Embree, in communication with the Memorial as well as with Foundation president George Vincent, set up a “Human Biology Program,” with one of its objectives to advance eugenic knowledge. The program was to be at an intersection between the Foundation’s work in medicine and the Memorial’s work in

<sup>273</sup> In February 1928 the Institute for Social and Political Science at Heidelberg University contacted the Memorial to ask whether support might be available to study economic and cultural questions of France, agricultural situations in South Germany, and the sociology of administrative practice; August Wilhelm Fehling to Beardsley Ruml, February 9, 1928. Ruml invited a full proposal; see Beardsley Ruml to A.W. Fehling, February 25, 1928. Fehling provided a 13-page proposal, which slightly adjusted the focus so that there were four main dimensions of a research program; RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 54, Folder 580.

<sup>274</sup> A couple recent historical studies of the subject that include activities by Rockefeller philanthropy are Merriley Borell, “Biologists and the Promotion of Birth Control Research, 1918-1938,” *Journal of the History of Biology* 20 (1987): 51-87; Jennifer Gunn, “A Few Good Men: The Rockefeller Approach to Population, 1911-1936,” in Theresa Richardson and Donald Fisher, eds., *The Development of the Social Sciences in the United States and Canada: The Role of Philanthropy* (Stamford, Conn.: Ablex Publishing Corp., 1999): 97-115. See also Gerald Jonas, *The Circuit Riders: Rockefeller Money and the Rise of Modern Science* (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989): 130-1.

social research. The idea was to develop a greater focus on the biological sciences that underlie human behavior. Perhaps research in biology would even be able to cast new light on all social institutions. The main idea was that human behavior and even social institutions were somehow deterministically based in biology, which was an idea fashionably called “human biology.” In Embree’s mind, as he wrote to Raymond Fosdick, greater knowledge of eugenics was needed because it was even “harder to give [children] a good inheritance than good surgery.” Embree fully recognized the sensitive nature of any Rockefeller philanthropic support of such a program, as did others. Abraham Flexner, for example, cautioned Embree to say that the Rockefeller Foundation “should not itself undertake studies, particularly in such controversial topics as population and eugenics. The fact that it is not proposing to enter directly into such fields should be made clear from the outset.”<sup>275</sup>

Although support of research projects relating to human biology, sex research and eugenics was carefully spread across as many as six separate grant-awarding bodies affiliated with the Rockefeller philanthropies (i.e., the Foundation’s Medical Sciences Division, the Foundation’s Natural Sciences Division, Rockefeller Jr.’s Bureau of Social Hygiene, the Memorial, the SSRC, and the NRC), one of the largest projects was one attempted at the London School of Economics during the early 1930s, under the school’s continuing block-grant.<sup>276</sup>

<sup>275</sup> Edwin R. Embree to Raymond Fosdick, August 26, 1925, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 915 P&P Human Biology, Box 4, Folder 33. “Conversation with Flexner,” RAC–RF, R.G.12.1, Series Diaries (Embree), Box 14, Volume 1925. The history of Embree’s program in human biology is yet to be studied in detail. In addition to some consideration in the papers by Borell and Gunn, Robert E. Kohler offers a bit of introduction to Embree’s ideas in Kohler, “Science, Foundations, and American Universities in the 1920s,” *OSIRIS* n.s. 3 (1987): 135-64, esp. 158-160.

<sup>276</sup> The most complete study of the LSE’s program in human biology is in a dissertation chapter, “The Rise and Fall of the Department of Social Biology,” in Salma Ahmad, “Institutions and the Growth of Knowledge: The Rockefeller Foundation’s Influence on the Social Sciences Between the Wars,” Ph.D. dissertation, Manchester University, 1987.

Embree's program in human biology was short-lived, however, coming to an end for the most part by 1927 – and to an end entirely by 1933. Such an outcome was partly due to caution at the Foundation about getting involved in anything hinting of “eugenics.” But although support of the research field was stopped because it was potentially too controversial, Embree's short-lived project to build a human biology program was a project that made at least some sense to consider as part of the broad program pursued by the Memorial during the 1920s.

In connection with many research fields which we have been seeing the Memorial explore during the early to middle 1920s, ideas of social evolution were a recurring theme of sorts. Social evolution was an issue of some interest to Ruml personally, who was willing to take a personal stance on the large controversy of the middle 1920s: whether evolution instruction should take place in public schools. The Scopes trial, in particular, was a current event in 1925 when Ruml worked with the University of North Carolina to establish a research center there. Ruml got to wondering about the cultural climate surrounding the teaching of evolution in southern schools, and he asked UNC's Howard Odum about this. From Odum, Ruml learned that UNC President Harry W. Chase had, in February of that year, spoken before a state legislative committee to take a stand in defense of teaching evolution. Odum noted for Ruml at least one newspaper that commented editorially that Chase's move was possibly “the most notable example of courage and faith in a high ideal which North Carolina has witnessed in recent years.”<sup>277</sup>

<sup>277</sup> Howard Odum to Beardsley Ruml, February 25, 1925; see also Howard Odum to Guy Stanton Ford, February 27, 1925. The local newspaper was *The Greensboro Daily News*. RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 74, Folder 776.

Ruml was also personally interested in questions of human evolution. We can figure out some about these views through other correspondences carried on by Ruml concerning research at UNC. Ruml shared his belief in the importance of a proposed anthropology project at the school, noting that he admired the project for its methodological design “to assist in the study of Australian aborigines.” Writing to Arthur Woods on the matter, Ruml communicated his hope concerning the study, “that a very definite step had been taken toward the opening up of the general field of anthropology, ethnology and biology as it bears on human evolution.”<sup>278</sup>

A possible way to interpret a number of projects supported by the Memorial is that in part they were an attempt to help social evolution along. Frederick Gates, at the Foundation, contemplated social evolution in a 1926 Foundation memorandum in which he connected his idea of “scientific philanthropy” to the latest ideas in social Darwinism, expressing that grants ought to be awarded to try to “reach the sources of the evil they seek to correct;” this idea was now expressed in terms of getting money to where it could do the most good over the long term, as more than ever charity gifts that were not carefully targeted were merely “temporary opiates” working against the “stern logic of evolution.” Raymond Fosdick was another leader at the Foundation who contemplated the importance of a selection process of social Darwinism, specifically discussing evolution of human societies in *The Old Savage in the New Civilization* (1928).<sup>279</sup>

<sup>278</sup> Beardsley Ruml to Arthur Woods, May 12, 1924, RAC–LSRM, Series II, Box 63, Folder 39.

<sup>279</sup> Gates, like many social Darwinists, opposed government regulation and labor unions. He also believed in the superiority of Anglo-Saxon peoples; Frederick T. Gates, “Thoughts on The Rockefeller Public and Private Benefactions,” December 31, 1926, RAC–Gates Collection, Box 2, File 47, p. 1. Raymond B. Fosdick, *The Old Savage in the New Civilization* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Doran, 1928).

One relevant area of social science comfortably supported by Rockefeller philanthropy having to do with the question whether all human groups are basically the same was case-study research on primitive peoples. With the exception of some Memorial funds that went to anthropology at such research centers as Columbia University and the University of Chicago, most funding for anthropology research actually came directly from the Rockefeller Foundation, beginning in 1924. In November of that year, \$100,000 was awarded for anthropological studies in Australia over a five-year period; and more money would be added before the period was done. The premier name among anthropologists benefiting from this money was A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, a highly-regarded Cambridge-trained researcher interested in studying his version of the “functionalist” method. In the hands of Radcliffe-Brown, the method was used to help explain how the aggregate of behavioral rules and guidelines in a society become “social structure.” Also through the joint efforts of the Foundation and Radcliffe-Brown, a new quarterly journal, *Oceania*, was created for anthropology research in Australia and the Pacific islands. Foundation support of anthropologists researching aboriginal Australians and Pacific Islanders continued well into the 1930s, as the program would be included as a “special field of interest” in the Rockefeller Foundation’s Division of Social Sciences, established when the Foundation absorbed the Memorial’s programs in January 1929.<sup>280</sup>

When taken altogether, it seems likely that Embree, Ruml, Woods, Gates and Fosdick were not alone in having beliefs about social Darwinian – whether ultimately pro or con – by the middle 1920s. Yet significantly more historical research and analysis would be needed to

<sup>280</sup> See Jonas, *The Circuit Riders*, 143-4, 157-9, 176-7. See also Frank Bashkov, “‘The Stakes for Which we Play are Too High to Allow Experiment’: Colonial Administrators of Papau on their Anthropological Training by Radcliffe-Brown,” *History of Anthropology Newsletter* 22, 2 (1995): 3-14.

fully determine if, and how, these ideas may have contributed to directing certain grant awards during the 1920s and beyond.

#### 7.4 Home economics, parent training, and child welfare–1923-28

Beginning in 1924, Lawrence Frank almost single-handedly planned the Memorial's improved program in child development. One important part of the program involved the establishment of laboratory nursery schools at a number of universities in the United States and Canada. These schools made use of the 'world-as-laboratory' model that came into play during the time of the Ruml-led Memorial. Among more notable child development programs with lab schools focusing on nursery education were the University of Toronto, Cornell University, and Iowa State College.<sup>281</sup>

In February 1924, the Memorial trustees stated four activities they considered important in their continuing effort to extend from the Memorial's original focus on the welfare of mothers and children. Appreciating what Ruml, Frank and others were sculpting, the trustees agreed on an idea to make the attack on social problems at a fundamental level.

<sup>281</sup> For information on Frank and child development, see Lawrence K. Frank, "The Beginnings of Child Development and Family Life Education in the Twentieth Century," *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly* 8 (1962): 207-27; see also Dennis Bryson, "Lawrence K. Frank, Knowledge, and the Production of the 'Social,'" *Poetics Today* 19, 3 (Fall 1998): 401-21. For some discussion of the child studies program supported at the University of Toronto, see Hans Pols, "The World as Laboratory: Strategies of Field Research Developed by Mental Hygiene Psychologists in Toronto, 1920-1940," in *The Development of the Social Sciences in the United States and Canada: The Role of Philanthropy*, eds. Theresa Richardson and Donald Fisher (Stamford, Conn.: Ablex Publishing Corp., 1999): 115-42; Pols, "Between the Laboratory and Life: Child Development Research in Toronto, 1919-1956," *History of Psychology* 5 (2002): 135-62; Julia Grant, "Caught between Common Sense and Science: The Cornell Child Study Clubs, 1925-45," *History of Education Quarterly* 34 (1994): 433-52. Other research on child development was supported by the NRC; see Alice Boardman Smuts, "The National Research Council Committee on Child Development and the Founding of the Society for Research in Child Development, 1925-1933," in Alice Boardman Smuts and John W. Hagen, eds., *History and Research in Child Development*, vol. 50 in Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986). After the Memorial ended in 1928, support of research in child development would continue under the Rockefeller Foundation's General Education Board until 1936, the year of Frank's resignation from the Foundation; see Raymond B. Fosdick, *Adventure in Giving: The Story of the General Education Board* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962): 259-65.



The question was, how far from the Memorial's original focus should such an attack extend?<sup>282</sup>

Frank directed the building of a scientifically-based child development program by expressing a belief that addressing symptoms of social problems was not good enough. In a series of reports between 1923 and 1925, Frank said that funding efforts at the Memorial needed to focus on underlying causes of social problems. As Frank reviewed the child welfare programs in his reports, he consistently concluded that a fundamental problem was faulty parental behavior. Parents were simply not getting the appropriate training to raise healthy children. Society needed to help parents attain the knowledge needed to raise healthy children, and support especially needed to go to organizations concerned with providing educational materials on child care. The ultimate goal, as Frank expressed it in 1925, was that the "home as a child welfare agency will tend increasingly to reduce the need for specialized remedial services."<sup>283</sup>

Frank recognized the possibility of tapping into the utilization of federal funds connected with so-called "extension work" in home economics. Extensive service programs – created by the federal government during the 1910s – were used at a number of colleges and universities to put academic experts in contact with the public. Frank had an idea to use

<sup>282</sup> "Board of Trustees Meeting, February 26, 1924," p.15, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 63, Folder 677. There would be two issues really. Julia Grant notes the contrast between rapid progress in establishing child welfare and parent *education programs*, and a much slower rate of advance in accumulating knowledge about child development through *scientific programs*. During the 1920s, Rockefeller philanthropies played an important role in creating a profession focusing on scientific studies of child development; see Julia Grant, "Constructing the Normal Child: The Rockefeller Philanthropies and the Science of Child Development, 1918-1940," in Ellen Condliffe Lagemann, ed., *Philanthropic Foundations: New Scholarship, New Possibilities* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999): 131-50, esp. 132. See also Steven L. Schlossman, "Philanthropy and the Gospel of Child Development," *History of Education Quarterly* 21 (Fall 1981): 273-99.

<sup>283</sup> "Child Welfare," 17 September 1925, RAC-LSRM, Series 3.5, Box 30, Folder 315. See also "Parent Training," March 26, 1924, RAC-LSRM, Series 3.5, Box 30, Folder 315; "Parent Training," September 3, 1924, RAC-LSRM, Series 3.5, Box 30, Folder 315; "Child Study and Parent Education," n.d., RAC-LSRM, Series 3.5, Box 30, Folder 316.

established extension networks at land-grant schools in a dual role as parent education networks. A question, as Frank stated it in 1926, was: “How can college Home Economics Departments best make their contribution to pre-parental education?” Particular schools with extension networks and child welfare institutes that would receive Memorial support included Cornell University, the University of California, the University of Minnesota, and Iowa State College. The strongest use of an extension network for the purpose of parent education may have been the program affiliated with Iowa State, where in 1925 Frank worked with the school’s Home Economics Dean Anna E. Richardson (also president of the American Home Economics Association) to establish parent education lessons as part of the school’s extension service.<sup>284</sup>

As the Memorial decided Iowa State had research projects that were worthy of support, what seems to have helped in this decision was the presence of unique campus “laboratories” at Iowa State as well as a reputable program of extension service. An idea was to use established community contact (traditionally used to put farmers in touch with new discoveries in agricultural science) by spreading guidance about progressive home management. Richardson wanted to develop studies of child rearing and socialization in campus laboratories as well, and she proposed combining lab and extension work. Frank recommended a three-year grant.<sup>285</sup>

<sup>284</sup> RAC-LSRM, Lawrence K. Frank, memo of interview with Anna Richardson, Dean of School of Home Economics, Iowa State College, March 2, 1925, RAC-LSRM, Series 3, Box 32, Folder 341; Lawrence K. Frank to Anna E. Richardson, March 26, 1927, RAC-LSRM, Series 3, Box 26, Folder 274; see also Lawrence K. Frank, “Child Training,” 1926, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 26, Folder 270.

<sup>285</sup> The program at Iowa State began in 1925 as a three-year grant; see Lawrence K. Frank to Anne Richardson, March 31, 1925, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 32, Folders 341-42. Anna Richardson, professor of home economics at Iowa State College, communicated in 1925 with Lawrence Frank; see Lawrence Frank to Anna Richardson, March 31, 1925, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 32, Folders 341-342. See also Anna Richardson to Lawrence K. Frank, January 18, 1929, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 26, Folder 270.

One project at Iowa State began in 1925 when Richardson set up a house on the campus where undergraduate home economics students could live with and help raise an infant (specifically a 16-month-old baby boy). The project succeeded, and continuing to the mid-1950s, baby wards of the state lived in campus homes where women students learned responsibilities of progressive rural home management. A related part of Iowa State's "home management house" program during the latter 1920s was to study uses of the newest "household equipment" in homes where children were to be raised. In the tradition of "scientific management" (i.e., "Taylorism"), Memorial funds enabled research projects to study such matters as the placement and design of stoves, home freezers, steam flatirons, and various other appliances. The ultimate basis for Richardson's holistic research program was a belief that women should receive rigorous, scientific understanding of "household scientific management," including technology applications and childrearing practices blended together. Success of the program would result in significant grant extensions into the 1930s.<sup>286</sup>

Another important example of an increased emphasis on scientific child development also took place in Iowa, at the opposite side of the state. This area of emphasis was research to better understand the development of child intelligence over time. Whereas Iowa State's research focused on mothers and their skills at creating a modern home environment, research at the University of Iowa was more along the line of scientific experiments on children. The best-known project was to study long-term stability of a developing young

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<sup>286</sup> See Megan Birk, "Playing House: Training Modern Mothers at Iowa State College Home Management Houses, 1925-1958," *The Annals of Iowa* 64, 1 (Winter 2005): 37-66; for more on Anna Richardson and home economics at Iowa State, see Ercel S. Eppright, *A Century of Home Economics at Iowa State University* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1971); Amy Sue Bix, "Equipped for Life: Gendered Technical Training and Consumerism in Home Economics, 1920-1980," *Technology and Culture* 43, 4 (Oct. 2002), pp. 728-754; see also Carolyn M. Goldstein, "From Service to Sales: Home Economics in Light and Power, 1920-1940," *Technology and Culture* 38 (January 1997): 121-52.

person's "intelligence quotient," or "IQ." University of Iowa researchers, with financial assistance from the Memorial, developed what became widely recognized as "one of the child welfare centers of the country." Drawing on the resources of a strong psychology department at the school, the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station (actually predating the Memorial by being created in April 1917) was the first research center of its kind in North America. At the "Iowa Station," University of Iowa researchers established a preschool primarily for the purpose of bringing together groups of normal children between the ages of two and five years, to be observed under controlled conditions. Emphasizing that research was the central rationale for a university-based nursery school, researchers at the Iowa Station's nursery school emphasized that only children of "normal development" are accepted, and that a goal was to offer a favorable environment for maximum development of the child.<sup>287</sup>

Another possibility for increased scientific attention to ways of helping women and children was to focus on developing better social workers. This was done at Tulane University, in New Orleans. Tulane contacted the Memorial in 1928 with an idea to better connect together its social science programs so that these programs could better contribute to the school's flagship program, its School of Social Work. Tulane already was moving to bring together its social science program into a unified cluster, and the university was even placing all these in one new building. Following some exchange of correspondence between Tulane and the Memorial aimed at testing whether the Memorial might want to help Tulane

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<sup>287</sup> The University of Iowa's research station in child psychology was, according to one expert at the time, considered "one of the child welfare centers of the country," RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 41, Folders 416-431, esp. 430. See also an article in *Time* (November 7, 1938); Hamilton Cravens, "Child Saving in the Age of Professionalism, 1915-1930," in Joseph M. Hawes and N. Ray Hiner, eds., *American Childhood* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985): 415-88; Cravens, *Before Head Start: America's Children and the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station* (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

add a program in psychiatric research, Tulane focused on a belief “that we should consider first the establishment of a comprehensive plan of child research and parental guidance in the University, which would furnish the proper background and facilities for all studies of the child and parent.” Tulane received its grant.<sup>288</sup>

Also capable of being scientifically strengthened was research on urban social welfare. Already included in Memorial-supported projects by 1922 were donations to the American playground movement, immigrant settlement programs, and the Big Brother-Big Sister organization. These and other urban-oriented efforts continued receiving Memorial grants through the 1920s. What was added during Ruml’s directorship was an idea to better train urban social workers to contribute to the success of these programs.<sup>289</sup>

Smith College, in Amherst, Massachusetts, had a social work program willing to help better mesh “social technology” and “social science.” Smith applied for and received a three-year Memorial grant in 1924 to help produce better-trained social workers, especially suited with knowledge about conditions in Boston and northeastern cities.<sup>290</sup>

In St. Louis the Memorial determined a beneficial use of Washington University would be to strengthen its programs in social work. These programs prepared social workers to contribute to problem solving, especially in Midwestern cities. The Memorial provided a grant in 1927 in response to an application for funds to help reorganize all the social sciences

<sup>288</sup> A.P. Dinwiddie to Beardsley Ruml, February 10, 1928, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 70, Folder 740. After a little delay, the grant was eventually awarded in 1929 through the Rockefeller Foundation. Another school where the Memorial supported research on child development in the context of a program to train social workers was Western Reserve University; see RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 62, Folder 666.

<sup>289</sup> RAC–LSRM, Series III, Subseries 7, numerous boxes.

<sup>290</sup> RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 63, Folder 675.

at the school. The goal, then, was for social workers to benefit from a program having discovery of knowledge better support application of knowledge.<sup>291</sup>

A central theme common to all the child development and social work grants seems to have been a confidence that young people, immigrant persons, and other people trying to assimilate by learning new things truly could be helped to learn things more efficiently. Confidence existed that people are not permanently stuck with set beliefs and habits, but can learn many new ideas and behaviors. Worthy of note in connection with this idea is that a shift took place in Americans' perception of the intelligence-morality relationship. During the 1910s, something important about new mental tests such as IQ tests, U.S. Army mental tests, and even a proposed national intelligence test for all "races" is the way such tests crystallized a shift taking place with the rise of scientific "expertise." Up to and during the 1910s, a reason why social scientists were called upon to identify people of different abilities and intelligence levels was a belief that abilities and intelligence of a person tended strongly to determine the person's life-long character and morality. But by and during the 1920s, such an idea started to give way, with such research as that at the Iowa Station playing no small part in the shift.

Something else that happened with increased emphasis on scientific research dealing with parenting skills, was a tightening of the connection between social science and social technology. Although "social technology" was discussed by Memorial officers and trustees a number of times, an especially clear statement is in a 1924 memorandum where Memorial trustees made a focused effort to distinguish between "social science" and "social

<sup>291</sup> RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 78, Folder 819. For more information about ideas at the time concerning scientific approach to social work see Arthur James Todd, *The Scientific Spirit and Social Work* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1919); J.L. Gillin, "The Tufts Report on Education and Training for Social Work," *Journal of Social Forces* 1 (May 1923): 383-90.

technology.” “The Memorial’s interest in social science,” the memorandum declared, “leads naturally to a consideration of schools of ‘social technology,’ – to use a term to suggest the analogy between medical science and the professional medical schools.” This familiar analogy was used to emphasize the idea that basic knowledge that could be discovered at such places as the child development lab at Iowa State and the child intelligence lab at the University of Iowa could not really be separated from the uses of this knowledge in these laboratories; i.e., that the discovered knowledge almost could not exist apart from its applications. There were now understood to be three kinds of academic programs responsible for applying social knowledge: law schools; schools of business and commerce; schools of social work and public welfare. Although we have yet to consider the first group of social technology schools, there were indeed a few cases of law schools interested in using methods of social science – which we will make note of in the next chapter.<sup>292</sup>

### 7.5 International relations–1923-28

Another field of interest at the Memorial through the 1920s was international relations. The research center at Harvard in the United States was one place where the Memorial supported research in international affairs. In 1926, research in international affairs was also strongly emphasized in a memorandum stating specific missions for the European social sciences program; an urgent need for all of Europe was identified as “prevention of war,” and fitting with this need, the Memorial recognized the urgency to promote various projects in Europe seen as capable of increasing knowledge about international relations. To establish new centers for such studies would be especially desirable, and particularly useful

<sup>292</sup> “Professional and Technical Schools,” RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 63, Folder 677.

would be to use fellowships to move social scientists between nations, thereby promoting the sharing of ideas – and with this, the promotion of peace.<sup>293</sup>

One of the first programs sponsored to do research in international relations was at Radcliffe College in the United States. The identified need was to help persons in government make sound policy “on an understanding of facts.” It actually took quite a bit of effort to get the Radcliffe program started. In November 1923, the Radcliffe faculty submitted their proposed program, aimed primarily at instruction in international affairs. Their goal, “requir[ing] no emphasis” for persons at the Memorial, was to help “spread authentic information regarding international affairs and relationships.” Persons at the Memorial had their doubts, but they guided Radcliffe to develop a more detailed proposal. Radcliffe did just this. In February 1924, they expressed their objective was to establish a Bureau of International Research, based on a belief that “sound policy in international affairs can be based only on an understanding of facts, and that such facts may be discovered and made known.” Radcliffe proposed a research program to be a scientific project to discover whatever facts were there for discovering. The Memorial responded again with an expression of doubt as they asked persons at Harvard if Radcliffe’s researchers were up to the task. Harvard’s head librarian believed the library resources at Radcliffe were adequate. However Harvard’s Economics Department Chair, Allyn A. Young, hesitated, saying “I find it difficult to formulate a definite proposal for the conduct of research in the field of international economic problems.” Harvard’s law school and president’s office were also consulted, with the president’s office supporting a grant by citing no fewer than thirteen Radcliffe faculty

<sup>293</sup> During 1926 and 1927 Memorial trustees put together a Committee on Reorganization to evaluate their strategy in Europe. One of the Committee’s memoranda, “Memorandum for the Committee on Reorganization by the Memorial’s Representative for Great Britain and Ireland,” was written in December 1926 by J.R.M. Butler of Columbia University; RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 50, Folders 529-531.



members whose research related mostly or entirely to international affairs. And so, just as Harvard's studies in international affairs were getting underway, Radcliffe received its grant.<sup>294</sup>

The University of Geneva expressed interest in promoting cooperative social science, centering on studies in political science and international relations. During 1925 and 1926, the Memorial decided to help establish a European program to study international relations at Geneva. What seems to have been important to the Memorial was that Geneva's studies were connected to a focus on cooperative social science. Initial contact between the school and the Memorial took place in March 1925, when Memorial advisor Huntington Gilchrist, representing the University of Geneva, wrote Ruml to follow up on an earlier personal meeting in New York City – at which time Ruml shared guiding thoughts as to what Geneva's institute might try to emphasize in the way of international research. Gilchrist now expressed interest in “establishing a special school or institute, for work in political science and in international problems.” He suggested the institute could get started on at least some research areas that Ruml asked for. In September 1925, on further encouragement from Ruml, the university submitted its formal proposal, emphasizing the rigor of what they planned: “a permanent center of scientific studies with special reference to [studying] problems coming up for discussion in various sections of the League of Nations.” Although it

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<sup>294</sup> Radcliffe College submitted its initial inquiry on November 10, 1923. Their refined application was “Radcliffe College. A Proposal for a Bureau of International Research,” submitted by Ada Comstock President of Radcliffe,” February 1, 1924, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 54, Folder 573. Responses to the Memorial's questions for Harvard faculty included: Harvard librarian, Archibald Cary Coolidge to A. Lawrence Lowell, May 3, 1924; Allyn A. Young to A. Lawrence Lowell, April 30, 1924; President A. Lawrence Lowell to Beardsley Ruml, May 5, 1924. A substantial grant was awarded in November, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 54, Folder 573.

took some additional months, a grant was awarded to the University of Geneva in June 1926.<sup>295</sup>

Undoubtedly of great importance in the years following the First World War was a need to understand European political situations. In late 1925, the Memorial awarded a grant to the Hamburg Institute of International Affairs for “work of scientific research” on six projects in European political affairs. The projects ranged from studies of specific conditions in Germany to studies of treaty-making between all European nations. The award to the Hamburg Institute came “at a time when such help is of the highest moral and material value...for the rebuilding and stabilizing of Europe.” To persons at the Memorial, political stability was seen as prerequisite for anything else happening that might be good for Europe.<sup>296</sup>

#### 7.6 Filling coordinative funds gaps–1923-28

Another guiding idea at the Memorial was a goal to fill funding gaps between research groups at different institutions. This was an idea connected to many fields of social science. The basic notion was that certain research needs tended to fall entirely through the cracks by going unconsidered for university support. An idea of a funds gap came up in connection with data collection at the municipal level. There was a need for funds to

<sup>295</sup> Huntington Gilchrist to Beardsley Ruml, March 18, 1925. The proposal was submitted by Dr. A. Oltramare; see A. Oltramare to Beardsley Ruml, September 21, 1925. A five-year grant was awarded in June 1926. RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 105, Folder 1061.

<sup>296</sup> See Beardsley Ruml to A. Mendelsohn-Bartholdy, November 16, 1925; A. Mendelsohn-Bartholdy to Beardsley Ruml, December 15, 1925. The six projects were a bibliography of foreign policy for the years 1919 to 1925, a treatise on the constitutional position of Germany under the League of Nations, an analysis of the Arbitral Tribunal of Interpretation of the Dawes Plan, a study of societal impacts of the Mandate System, a study of the technique of treaty-making in pre-war diplomacy, and annotation of state documents on foreign affairs from 1871 to 1914. Support of the institute was maintained until 1930. LSRM, Series III, Box 52, Folder 561.

coordinate research to standardize categories of data collection by local research bureaus, and in 1926 the Memorial awarded money to the National Municipal League for the purpose of achieving better coordination between research by “local bureaus of municipal research and other civic agencies.” Such coordination was needed to “make the most” of all discovered facts.<sup>297</sup>

Another funds gap associated with the coordination of research came up at the state level as public welfare statistics were in serious need of standardization across states. A grant to the American Statistical Association in 1928 helped serve this purpose. The goal for the grant was to draft a “model law...for the development of uniform statistical procedures in all states,” and the hope was that meaningful national-level welfare statistics could be assembled.<sup>298</sup>

The truly noteworthy success of Memorial efforts at promoting uniform statistical procedures was the completion (by the end of 1929) of a “Uniform Crime Reporting System” across the United States. Agreed upon by all states, the system marked one of the most important events in the history of crime research and crime fighting. Historians recognize the beginning of uniform crime reporting as taking place when the Memorial worked with the International Association of the Chiefs of Police during 1927 to provide administrative responsibility for the project. The Memorial also worked with the Bureau of Social Hygiene to oversee fieldwork and research analysis, as well as with the SSRC which had concurrently identified crime as a research area needing support. The SSRC sponsored a few criminal

<sup>297</sup> Frank L. Polk to Beardsley Ruml, 9 April 1926, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 56, Folder 613. See also Charles A. Beard, *The Advancement of Municipal Science* (New York: National Institute of Public Administration, 1910); Charles E. Merriam, “The Next Step in the Organization of Municipal Research,” *National Municipal Review* 11 (September 1922): 274-81; Merriam, “Human Nature and Science in City Government,” *Journal of Social Forces* 1, 4 (May 1923): 459-62.

<sup>298</sup> Horatio M. Pollack to Beardsley Ruml, January 24, 1928, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 49, Folder 511.

justice surveys in major cities, most notably in Cleveland, and the Memorial trustees received a 1926 report from the SSRC on possible improvements in crime research. The report strongly argued for the need for a uniform “crime accounting system” – which was a project typifying what could be accomplished by bringing together the Memorial, the SSRC, urban social workers, and academic scholars.<sup>299</sup>

Another funds gap existed in connection with the publication of social research findings. By the middle 1920s, the Memorial recognized that increased publication of social research could help improve communications between scientists. During 1923 and 1924, the Memorial decided to help support college presses at the University of Chicago and the University of North Carolina. The basic idea, as stated by Arthur Woods, was that the Memorial “had been looking up the question as to whether or not worthy books are not being published because they are commercially unprofitable, and whether or not, perhaps, worthy books are not being written because the men who would naturally write them appreciate the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of having them published – and therefore is not scholarship being retarded”?<sup>300</sup>

Another example of support of publications came in 1926 and 1927, when an idea was hatched to develop a multi-volume encyclopedia covering all the social sciences. This project, overseen by Columbia University economist E.R.A. Seligman, related closely to the idea to clarify a structure for the unity of social science by attempting to draw together “the interrelations of all these sciences” and to “make an attempt to take stock of our present

<sup>299</sup> Lawrence Rosen, “The Creation of the Uniform Crime Report,” *Social Science History* 19, 2 (1995): 215-38.

<sup>300</sup> Arthur Woods to Kenneth Chorley, October 25, 1924, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 109, Folders 1102-1103. The Memorial supported the University of Chicago Press from 1924 to 1931 and the University of North Carolina Press from 1924 to 1928. RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 109, Folders 1106-1107; Box 110, Folders 1108-1110.

knowledge.” The encyclopedia was to be made widely available “so that the fundamental ideas would gradually percolate down to the wider public.” So, while the unification idea was under exploration by persons such as those at Chicago, Columbia and the LSE, a new idea grown from the idea to synthesize all social knowledge was an *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. Funded nearly entirely by the Memorial, the encyclopedia was produced in many volumes during the early 1930s. The Memorial supplied nearly half a million dollars for the project by 1928, and would provide nearly \$300,000 after that. When completed, the project truly helped create structure for and diffusion of social knowledge. The instrumental exercise in creating clearer understanding of the structure of social science was the very act of arranging content during encyclopedia planning sessions.<sup>301</sup>

The work by the Memorial to fill funding gaps in data collection and information distribution was, in fact, the development of a research field – though applying not to a specific social problem, albeit. The field of data collection and information distribution was one of perhaps a dozen identifiable fields of attention by the Memorial between 1923 and 1928. We have studied nine of these fields to this point. Three more will be studied in the wide-ranging Chapter 8.

<sup>301</sup> See “Memorandum on the Projected ‘Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences’,” 26 pp., Feb. 21, 1927, esp. pp. 8-9, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 51, Folder 540.

## CHAPTER 8. RESEARCH INSTITUTES AND EXPANDED BOUNDARIES OF SOCIAL SCIENCE–1922-28

### 8.1 Introduction

Development of research centers and the nine research fields already studied were not all the Memorial focused on. This chapter first studies how the Memorial got involved in supporting research in the field of business cycle studies. This chapter then studies how the Memorial worked to create new ways to direct funds toward promoting coordinated social research. Also in this chapter we return to an ongoing question concerning boundary points between social science and non-social science; we do such boundary study as we explore two other new research fields, in humane studies and in legal research.

### 8.2 A fellowships program at the Memorial–1923-28

One way to accomplish increased coordination of social research was by awarding fellowships. A program of foreign fellowships, for example, could be used to achieve a variety of benefits, including the movement of ideas and knowledge. The Memorial created a fellowships program in basic form in 1923 as a ‘direct fellowships’ program for non-U.S. researchers. The aim was to assist foreign researchers and scholars with a wide variety of interests. By 1924, when Ruml had available money to award foreign fellowships in earnest, he determined the time was also right to start a fellowships program to support younger U.S. scholars. Exploring ways to make the two kinds of fellowship programs work together, Ruml came up with a pair of basic needs: to use advisors in other nations; to establish an

overseeing council in the United States to help direct research fellowship awards within the U.S.<sup>302</sup>

The program established by the Memorial as a “direct” foreign fellowships program initially was for European social scientists exclusively. An initial round of awards went to well-established names, with leading French economic historian Charles Rist as one such recipient. While recipient scholars could go to a variety of different places to pursue their research and continuing education, an overriding goal was to encourage European scholars to come to the United States.<sup>303</sup>

The foreign fellowships program worked by having fellowship candidates get nominated by Memorial-appointed representatives in European nations. By 1924, representatives were in place in Austria, Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, and Great Britain. Nominations were then evaluated by persons as the Memorial, as well as by a close circle of Ruml’s outside advisors. Edwin Nourse, of the agricultural division of the Institute of Economics, was one such American scientist who helped evaluate fellowship candidates. By 1927, a structure was well in place with five European representatives conducting interviews for a fellowships program extending beyond the original five European nations, and by 1928, at least 165 European scholars were awarded fellowships to travel to other

<sup>302</sup> See Frank Aydelote, “Educational Foundations with Special Reference to International Fellowships,” *School and Society* 22 (December 26, 1925): 799-803; Alexi Assmus, “The Creation of Postdoctoral Fellowships and the Siting of American Scientific Research,” *Minerva* 31 (June 1993): 151-83.

<sup>303</sup> Ruml noted the fellowships awarded to Charles Rist and others in Beardsley Ruml to Arthur Woods, May 12, 1924, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 3, Folder 39. For additional information on the fellowships programs in 1924, see a memorandum which records that one goal was to bring to the United States “unusually able, mature students in the Social Sciences.” The Memorial stated “the method of discovering students... would be to work quietly and without publicity; to place the responsibility for nomination in the hands of one man in a country”; “Memorandum: Fellowship in the Social Sciences, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1924,” RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 63, Folder 678, p. 2. Additional evidence about the nature of the interview process with prospective individual recipients of fellowships is in the file on the European fellowships program between 1925 and 1927. Prospective recipients were contacted in Europe during these years by William Lingelbach and four others; RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 51, Folders 541-542.

nations, most often to the United States. A small number of other social scientists from America and Australia were also supported under the foreign fellowships program to travel to other nations, with Americans nearly always going to Europe for a period of a few months to up to a year or so.<sup>304</sup>

The Memorial's foreign fellowships program favored applicants with interest in economics. By the end of 1930, when the last remaining traces of Memorial-based decision-making ended for the program, nearly half of all fellowships awarded by the Memorial to persons outside the United States went to persons listing either a field of education or a primary research area as something involving economics. Because these fellowship candidates were recruited by the Memorial's European representatives, what seems clear is that persons with interest and skill in economics were actively sought. Even though the Memorial's overall program included much more than economics, such an emphasis of the foreign fellowships program hints that economic research was a growing interest for the Memorial.<sup>305</sup>

The Memorial's foreign fellowships program was highly regarded by leaders in social science. Commenting positively on the program, for example, was Julius Rosenwald, a Chicago industrialist and philanthropist. Rosenwald recognized the value of scholar exchange as a useful instrument for coordinating international research. Promotion of

<sup>304</sup> Some details about Nourse's work for the fellowships program are in correspondences between Edmund E. Day and E.G. Nourse, May 15, 1929; June 5, 1929, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 52, Folder 549. A list of representatives in five nations during one particular year is in Beardsley Ruml to Arthur Woods, April 22, 1924, RAC-LSRM, Series II, Box 3, Folder 39. Donald Fisher describes the process somewhat in Donald Fisher, "American Philanthropy and the Social Sciences in Britain, 1919-39," *The Sociological Review* 28, 2 (May 1980): 277-315; see also Stanley Coben, "Foundation Officials and Fellowships: Innovation in the Patronage of Science," *Minerva* 14, 2 (1976): 225-40.

<sup>305</sup> From information in the main files for this program it appears that 81 out of 168 persons had either research preparation or a stated interest in economics; see "Foreign Fellowships—Yellow Sheets," RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 51, Folder 547.



international travel by social scientists particularly helped eliminate isolation of alternative viewpoints. In various communications between Ruml and Rosenwald, the fellowships program was consistently seen as an important aid to the development of social science in different countries, as well as to international cooperation between scientific institutions.<sup>306</sup>

In addition to the foreign fellowships program directly operated by the Memorial, the other big idea was to begin operating some kind of a domestic fellowships program through a centralized council outside of the Memorial. Ruml made contact with leading social scientists during 1922 and 1923 to discuss the possibility that such a council could be instrumental in helping establish a U.S. fellowships program. To operate such a program would require more than the Memorial's still-developing approach of establishing a trust that block grants would be properly used by a particular school. Instead what was needed was greater evaluation of specific research goals of individual persons, which was something the Memorial wanted to avoid any direct involvement in. The idea for a U.S. fellowships program, as Ruml discussed it in November 1923, was that it should be a main part of what a new organization such as an SSRC would be all about. Ruml suggested such an organization would be consistent "under the Memorial's policies" as a means to help direct funds to projects of "almost a bewildering fertility": "And yet the projects, in spite of far-reaching implications, are concrete and practical; and they associate themselves together with reasonable coherency." The question was: How to get many individually-pursued projects associated in such a way?<sup>307</sup>

<sup>306</sup> Beardsley Ruml to Julius Rosenwald, January 28, 1925; Ruml described for Rosenwald the way in which particular scientists are brought into the fellowship program, which is by the method of "hav[ing] a representative in each country who is ordinarily a professor in that country, and [who] nominates to us candidates who he feels are suitable." See this letter and additional Ruml-Rosenwald correspondence in RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 52, Folder 549.

<sup>307</sup> Beardsley Ruml, "Memorandum," November 14, 1923, RAC – LSRM, Series III, Box 60, Folder 647, p. 26. In addition to the \$800,000 by the end of 1924, by 1931 the graduate school received an additional two million

The Memorial also started a third grant program, aimed at making some direct grants to U.S. scholars, beginning in the middle 1920s. This program included travel grants which were seen as useful for diffusing and coordinating knowledge. A group of persons receiving such grants were recent doctorates who could benefit from spending a year or two visiting different academic institutions. Recipients could share what they learned at their home institution, and they could consider alternative points of view at other institutions. It could be of little or no concern to the Memorial what the different points of view were, and so this was a kind of program the Memorial could get involved in. A number of such traveling grants were awarded, with the majority going to persons trained in economics, particularly in labor economics.<sup>308</sup>

Responding to the different Memorial fellowships programs in a unique way was Robert S. Brookings, a scholar with a well-established name in economic research. Brookings had the idea to establish a graduate school in Washington, DC, to serve as a kind of home base for travel-grant recipients as well as foreign fellowship recipients. The school, begun as a satellite campus of Washington University of St. Louis, was named the Washington University Graduate School of Economics and Government, in Washington, DC. In short time the school would be known as the Robert Brookings Graduate School, and in 1927 the school would join with the Institute for Government Research and the Institute of Economics to form the Brookings Institution. Ruml and others at the Memorial saw the

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dollars from the Memorial and the Rockefeller Foundation. There were also times when the Memorial also supported specific projects at the graduate school. An example was in December 1926, when a grant was given directly to resident economics instructor Robinson Newcomb to do a year's research on what was described as "the problems arising from the economic penetration of the so-called backward countries by other countries having surplus capital to export, in other words, the so-called question of imperialism"; see C.E. McGuire to Beardsley Ruml, 16 Dec. 1926, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 60, Folder 647.

<sup>308</sup> Ruml initiated the idea to sponsor new Ph.D.-holders in the social sciences to travel for a year or two (most often within the United States) to supplement their course studies at their home institution. A field of interest for a number of fellowship recipients was labor problems. RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 49, Folders 517-518.

Washington University Graduate School as playing an important role in the coordination and unification of scientific knowledge, in particular by bringing young scholars and researchers together in an interactive, educational forum. By the end of 1924, the Memorial awarded nearly \$800,000 to get the school underway, and between 1924 and 1928 the Brookings Graduate School would receive \$2.8 million in Memorial support, ranking them second only to the University of Chicago in Memorial funds received.<sup>309</sup>

### 8.3 The NBER and business cycle research as a field—1923-24

In the winter of 1919-20, Wesley C. Mitchell of Columbia University led the creation of the National Bureau of Economic Research. Mitchell was motivated by an idea that business cycles were complex phenomena resulting from the interdependence of supply levels and price levels of many goods in the economy. This new idea about business cycles, which was not really present in academic writings prior to the 1910s (which typically focused on the consequences of market “panics”), was the notion that a business cycle is a complex and extremely difficult-to-predict outcome of the aggregate of normal human behavior – including rational calculations as well as irrational habits and fears. What happened to form the NBER is that from the earlier debate of 1913-14 at the Rockefeller Foundation about an “Institute of Economics Research” finally came that institute that was seen as urgently

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<sup>309</sup> For the beginnings of the discussion see Robert Brookings to Wickliffe Rose, November 13, 1923. See also the 1923 correspondences between Robert Brookings and Walton H. Hamilton, in RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 49, Folders 517-518. See also Anon., “A University Center for Research in Washington, DC,” *The Educational Record* 3 (January 1922): 50-8; Malcolm Rutherford, “On the Economic Frontier: Walton Hamilton, Institutional Economics, and Education,” *History of Economic Thought* 27 (June 2005): 119-39.

needed; the NBER indeed was formally incorporated during a severe crisis of inflation and recession.<sup>310</sup>

The first major research attempted by the NBER was to measure the national income in the United States and its distribution between social classes. The NBER completed this project, and economists and policymakers viewed the research results as important because of the ability to rigorously document what had only been anecdotally spoken of before. The NBER found that the top one percent of wealthy owners received 14 percent of all income. The NBER's study still used an "owner" vs. "laborer" distinction to find that labor's share of the national income was approximately 70 percent. Another early research concern at the NBER of course was business cycles. Through the 1920s, the vast majority of research by the NBER would be to gather raw data and develop arguments based on that data to advocate counter-cyclical public works to relieve high levels of unemployment. Some potential was soon identified for using raw data to construct what became known as a "national accounts system" (which later proved valuable as a planning tool during World War II).<sup>311</sup>

A question at the Memorial throughout the early and middle 1920s was whether to get involved in helping create any new research institutes similar to the NBER. Ruml and the trustees considered the question, especially during 1922 and 1923, and they decided the

<sup>310</sup> See Hamilton Cravens, "The Social Sciences," in Mary Kupiec Cayton and Peter W. Williams, eds., *Encyclopedia of American Cultural & Intellectual History*, volume three (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2001): 163-172; Cravens, "The Social Sciences," in Sally G. Kohlstedt and Margaret W. Rossiter, eds., *Historical Writing on American Science: Perspectives and Prospects* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986): 183-207.

<sup>311</sup> See Wesley C. Mitchell et al., *Income in the United States, its Amount and Distribution*, NBER Publication nos. 1 and 2 (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1921-22). The first major NBER report on business cycles was *Business Cycles and Unemployment: Report and Recommendation of a Committee of the President's Conference on Unemployment*, 1921, NBER Publication no. 4 (New York: McGraw Hill, 1923). For a self-reflective record of the first years of the NBER see *For Social Disarmament: The Story of the NBER* (New York: NBER, 1927); also Wesley Clair Mitchell, "The National Bureau's First Quarter Century," in *Twenty-Fifth Annual Report* (New York: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1945).

answer should be a qualified “yes.” One of Ruml’s first major decisions at the Memorial, in fact, was to decide the time was right to help establish a research foundation where professional economists could work on problems of their own choosing. So, working primarily with Mitchell, by the end of 1922 the Memorial was ready to establish an organization that could work in coordination with the NBER so that Memorial funds could help support NBER research. The goal for the Memorial was not the specific research itself, but was to find a workable way to help financially support the NBER without getting in any way involved in selecting or agreeing with specific research. In January 1923, the Memorial officially awarded funds to establish an “Economic Foundation” (EF) to be connected to the NBER. Legal establishment of the EF came with an express purpose “to encourage and support such public educational, charitable or benevolent uses and purposes as will in the judgment of the trustees and without resort to propaganda most effectively further the economic, social and industrial welfare of humanity.” In addition to not getting involved in any “propaganda” concerns, the EF was established by the Memorial “To conduct or assist in the making of exact and impartial investigations in the fields of economic, social and industrial science for the advancement of human knowledge.”<sup>312</sup>

Fairly little work was needed by the Memorial and the NBER to get the grant created for the Economic Foundation. Mitchell, as leader of the NBER, had a well-established reputation. Mitchell helped oversee creation and operation of the EF. The first research agenda, which was agreeable to Ruml and the Memorial, was to support studies of “Unemployment and the Business Cycle.” Such research was an established field and was urgent enough and uncontroversial enough to make sense for the Memorial to support.

<sup>312</sup> “The Economic Foundation, Deed of Trust, February 2, 1923,” RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 51, Folder 538.

Mitchell also added personal assurance that the organizational structure of the EF would be kept sufficiently separate from all other structures at the NBER, as well as from Columbia University as a whole. The matter of the actual request for a Memorial endowment for the EF was easily handled through letters that converged upon specific requirements for a grant award safely separated from potential controversial research. One requirement was a need for an up-front statement of rationale for the EF, which M.C. Rorty (formerly of AT&T and now Chairman of the NBER) summarized clearly in October 1922. Rorty wrote that what was accomplished in framing the desired proposal for an EF was to “very cleverly overcome all the difficulties that exist in creating an endowment specifically for the National Bureau of Economic Research.” The NBER’s request for Memorial funds was made proper by having formal words explain that the money would first go through the ‘independent’ EF, so that all money making its way from the Memorial through the EF to the NBER “involves the support of scientific work of very general significance,” and seems “to lie clearly in the field which foundations can properly cultivate.” The door was open for the Memorial to begin supporting the NBER through the EF, and this was what mattered.<sup>313</sup>

<sup>313</sup> See “Memorandum,” October 22, 1922. The Economic Foundation was even willing to provide Ruml with an explicit statement of its relationship to any research objectives by the NBER. An additional stipulation, agreed upon between the Memorial and the NBER, was to have the trustees overseeing the Economic Foundation appointed from private sector positions as well as from universities. The NBER was now newly structured, as the Economic Foundation was run by trustees drawn from university economics departments and was overseen by a board of directors who came from a variety of research associations. The Economic Foundation was permanently created as a separate body; see M.C. Rorty to Beardsley Ruml, November 4, 1922, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 51, Folder 538. All financial support would be arranged through the Economic Foundation, and the Memorial also decided to make this support conditional on other funds being raised by the NBER. Between 1923 and 1928, the level of NBER funds coming from the Memorial (as channeled through the Economic Foundation) averaged about 20 percent per year, with a low of 14% and a high of 26%. This data is compiled in tabular form in Martin Bulmer and Jean Bulmer, “Philanthropy and Social Science in the 1920s: Beardsley Ruml and the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, 1922-29,” *Minerva* 19, 3 (Autumn 1981): 347-407, esp. 393.

During 1924, Ruml considered supporting more economic research through the policy research center at the school created by Robert Brookings, which was now called the Robert Brookings Graduate School of Economics and Government. It was in this context that Ruml put on paper a formalized statement of guiding principles for all Memorial grants. He developed twelve principles in this particular version of principles, which he divided into six principles serving as criteria representing an organization “inadvisable” to support with a grant and six others concerning the kinds of approaches that would be desirable to support. The six principles aiming at problem avoidance dealt with such concerns as these: not getting involved with social welfare projects potentially seen as too politically aggressive; avoiding political controversy in general; avoiding direct involvement in research; refraining from making any attempt to influence research done by grant recipients; not favoring specific universities or research organizations; to not attempt to influence any research findings or conclusions. The six positive principles were to focus on: finding responsible and competent persons to study whatever problems they selected to study; strengthening social science in general; increasing the quantity of scientific publications; encouraging communication between social scientists; supporting occasional real-world experimental applications; supporting fellowships. All twelve principles were useful ones, especially when it came to situations in which new institutions and research fields might be designed by the Memorial, largely from scratch. Ruml presented his principles in July 1924.<sup>314</sup>

<sup>314</sup> To formulate his principles Ruml shared ideas with George Vincent, Wickliffe Rose, Arthur Woods, and Abraham Flexner; see for example Beardsley Ruml to Arthur Woods, August 13, 1924, RAC-LSRM, Series II, Box 2, Folder 31. The principles themselves are stated in “Conditions Affecting the Memorial’s Participation in Projects in Social Science,” July 3, 1924, RAC-LSRM, Series I, Box 1, Folder 9; also a copy in RAC-LSRM, Series II, Box 2, Folder 31. Ruml presented to the principles to the trustees on July 10, 1924.

The trustees approved Ruml's principles, and in so doing they added certification to Ruml's move to focus on fundamental scientific discoveries. These principles had a permanent place at the Memorial, and indeed, what we've been seeing through the last few chapters is these principles in action.

#### 8.4 The Social Sciences Research Council–1923-28

In 1921, Charles E. Merriam, professor of political science at the University of Chicago, and a friend of Ruml, expressed interest in possibly designing a new organization for social scientists. The organization was, of course, the "Social Science Research Council." Merriam began by declaring the need for an organization to help coordinate all social science research. "Science is a great cooperative enterprise in which many intelligences must labor together," he wrote. "There must always be wide scope for the spontaneous and unregimented activity of the individual, but the success of the expedition is conditioned upon some general plan of organization." Here, in Merriam's words, was a sentiment akin to Ruml's beliefs (as expressed the following year).<sup>315</sup>

Believing in the "communal nature of social research," Merriam was a rigorous scientific thinker who called for hypothesis-and-data driven research. Merriam formally proposed the Social Science Research Council in 1922, in a committee report for the American Political Science Association. As chair of the committee, Merriam said what was needed was more interaction between social scientists. Planning meetings for the SSRC got

<sup>315</sup> Charles E. Merriam, "The Present State of the Study of Politics," *American Political Science Review* 16 (August 1922): 315-21.



underway and Merriam contacted Ruml, who recognized the idea for a national organization made sense.<sup>316</sup>

Merriam was the right person to spearhead movement in a new direction for social science. A consistent theme for Merriam was the need to integrate the social sciences, and yet the question was: By what principles and organizational design should this take place? As Merriam emphasized the communal nature of social research in 1925, in his address as president of the political science profession, he said: “The problem of social behavior is essentially one problem, and while the angles of approach may and should be different, the scientific result will be imperfect unless these points of view are at times brought together in some effective way, so that the full benefit of the multiple analysis may be realized.” Here was a guiding idea for the new organization: that unity of social science would not require all social scientists to agree upon common research problems or methods, but that scientists with different problems and methods should meet to exchange ideas and opinions.<sup>317</sup>

Of great importance to Merriam and others was that there should be no return to older, “softer” research methods. Merriam was critical of earlier methods, seeing as particularly inadequate the descriptive style that was still too much a part of the “social survey” approach. What “political scientists have too often done,” Merriam said, is “to meditate and then elaborate in literary form an idea, without verification or with very inadequate verification.” While Merriam might allow some minor role for the “guess of

<sup>316</sup> Cited in Barry Karl, *Charles E. Merriam and the Study of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 145; see also Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991): 401; Elbridge Sibley, *Social Science Research Council: The First Fifty Years* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1974), chapter two. “Memorandum from Director to Trustees,” February 26, 1924, RAC–LSRM, Series I, Box 1, Folder 5, pp. 16, 18.

<sup>317</sup> Charles E. Merriam, “Progress in Political Research,” *American Political Science Review* 20 (February 1926): 1-13.

hunch” in guiding the direction of “measurement and the analysis” of a particular problem, he firmly believed the world had fundamentally changed and that an increased complexity and scale of social problems necessitated greater research coordination.<sup>318</sup>

The inaugural meeting of the SSRC was held in May 1923. The organization received Memorial funding the following year, and legal incorporation came in December 1924. The “social problems” approach of the SSRC was new, although such an orientation had been foreshadowed by the American Social Science Association, created in 1865. Since the time of the ASSA, the social sciences had branched into many disciplines, and so an idea for the SSRC was to work to bring these disciplines back together, creating a new and unified science of society. Following legal incorporation of the SSRC, an appropriation of \$425,000 was made by the Memorial in 1925 for fellowship awards over five years.<sup>319</sup>

The main objective of the SSRC was to improve the quality of social research by developing an improved research infrastructure. By the spring of 1925, seven disciplinary associations were officially joined in sponsoring the SSRC. The organizations were: the American Political Science Association; the American Sociological Association; the American Economic Association; the American Statistical Association; the American Psychological Association; the American Anthropological Association; the American Historical Association. A permanent headquarters was also established in New York City

<sup>318</sup> Charles E. Merriam, “Politics and Numbers,” in Charles E. Merriam, *New Aspects of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925): 184-219, esp. 189.

<sup>319</sup> See Donald Fisher, *Fundamental Development of the Social Sciences: Rockefeller Philanthropy and the United States Social Science Research Council* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993).

that year, and also that same year the SSRC began offering post-doctoral research fellowships.<sup>320</sup>

Generous Memorial support played multiple important roles in the formation of the SSRC. Between 1923 and 1928, the SSRC was the third leading recipient of Memorial funds. Following the University of Chicago (receiving \$3.4 million between 1923 and 1928) and the Brookings Graduate School (receiving \$2.8 million over that time), the SSRC received \$2.7 million in Memorial grants by 1928. In fact, out of \$4.2 million spent by the SSRC during its first ten years, \$3.9 million came from the Memorial. Clarified early on between the Memorial and the SSRC was that the purpose of the SSRC was to strictly complement existing social science organizations, including universities and independent research institutes. The founding group of social scientists at the SSRC shared a confidence that such an organization could succeed without rivaling other established research groups, and so the SSRC received warm reception from social scientists.<sup>321</sup>

<sup>320</sup> The seven associations all joined the SSRC between 1923 and 1925. The legal incorporation, in 1924, was in Merriam's home state of Illinois. The SSRC adopted a sponsorship pattern similar to that of the NRC, including individual fellowships, aid to group conferences, and assistance for cooperative research projects; see Wesley Clair Mitchell, "The Research Fellowships of the Social Science Research Council," *Political Science Quarterly* 41, 4 (December 1926): 605-6. Also on the early years of the SSRC see Robert Lynd, *Knowledge for What? The Place of Social Science in American Culture* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1967 [1939]). Information about the location decision between Chicago and New York City is in RAC-Accession 2, Series 1, Subseries 1, Box 2, Folder 16. Other relevant historical accounts in the Rockefeller Archives include: Robert Crane, unpublished recollections dated 1953, RAC-SSRC, Accession 2, Series 1, Subseries 39, Box 187, Folder 2141; A.F. Kuhlman, "The Social Science Research Council," RAC-SSRC, Accession 2, Series 4, Subseries 1, Box 704, Folder 8473. See also David L. Featherman, "SSRC, Now and Then: A Commentary on a Recent Historical Analysis," *Items* 48, 1 (March 1994); Barry Karl, *Charles E. Merriam and the Study of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974): 136-137; Kenton W. Worcester, *Social Science Research Council, 1923-1998* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2001): 15; Elbridge Sibley, *Social Science Research Council: The First Fifty Years* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1974); Social Science Research Council, *Decennial Report, 1923-1933* (New York: SSRC, 1934): 104-5. As noted in the *Decennial Report*, the remaining \$300,000 awarded to the SSRC between 1923 and 1933 came from seven other foundations.

<sup>321</sup> The Memorial awarded a major grant of \$750,000 to the SSRC in 1927, as a block grant for undesignated support; some of the money got used to support individual research projects.

Psychology and economics were probably the two leading social sciences at the time. These two sciences were seen as somewhat more empirical than other social sciences. Each science could be useful for correcting maladjusted relations between people and society. Psychologists could show people how to adjust to the changed economic conditions, while economists could discover how to adjust the changed economic conditions. Both sciences could also play roles in helping people adjust to a changed workplace. Also receiving some attention was an idea that remedial work might be done to repair damage to everyday communities that was already inflicted by maladjustment, and so other social sciences – such as sociology, political science, anthropology, and history – were needed for such purposes.<sup>322</sup>

Merriam led with a belief that the structure of truly “scientific” social research should begin with a foundation in social psychology. Psychology research would show how to establish all social science upon demonstrable conclusions, and this empirical boost would help move social science in the direction of idealized physical sciences. Yet Merriam also recognized that social scientists needed to keep their use of empirical tools in proper perspective.<sup>323</sup>

Some historians find the SSRC indeed got underway strongly on a foundation of behavioral science, and that such a focus on observable, measurable behaviors was a centerpiece to Merriam’s “new synthesis of knowledge.” Yet also worthy of some note is that Merriam really encouraged plurality of research methods. A number of social scientists at the

<sup>322</sup> On psychology in comparison to other social sciences see Hamilton Cravens, *The Triumph of Evolution: American Scientists and the Heredity-Environment Controversy, 1900-1941* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978). On economics in comparison to other social sciences see Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>323</sup> Merriam, “The Present State of the Study of Politics,” 74. “[T]he constant recourse to the statistical basis of argument,” Merriam declared, “has a restraining effect upon literary or logical exuberance, and tends distinctly toward scientific treatment of demonstrable conclusions. The practice of measurement, comparison, standardization of material – even though sometimes overdone – has the effect of sobering the discussion.”

time – including Wesley Mitchell – agreed with the idea to create the SSRC as an organization to coordinate multiple “angles” from which to study any particular social problem. Mitchell, who was a friend of Merriam, was instrumental in encouraging respect for the SSRC within the economics community. The SSRC, in turn, supplied generous financial support to economists, including a number of projects in the NBER.<sup>324</sup>

Much of the groundwork for the SSRC, including its statements of goals and objectives, was created during summer meetings taking place annually between 1925 and 1930. These meetings, lasting about two weeks during August and September, were an entry point for the Memorial to attain some degree of influence through the SSRC. One kind of influence was the Memorial’s financial support of the conferences themselves. Planning efforts for the first conference (initially called the “Dartmouth Convivium”) are informative, as Memorial leaders arranged the conference by inviting social scientists according to a division between psychology as one group and six other fields of social science as another large group.<sup>325</sup>

Ruml began organizing the section of the conference for psychologists in February 1925. The psychology section was to be separate from the section dealing with other fields of social science. Ruml sent letters to leading persons in psychology, bringing numerous

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<sup>324</sup> A couple of the many relevant sources are Guy Alchon, *The Invisible Hand of Planning: Capitalism, Social Science, and the State in the 1920s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985): 167; Mark C. Smith, *Social Science in the Crucible: The American Debate Over Objectivity and Purpose, 1918-1941* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994): esp. chap. two. An important economic study – and a specific example of a non-behaviorist work in economics – was the 1932 book, *The Modern Corporation and Private Property* (Chicago: Commerce Clearing House) by Adolf A. Berle, Jr., and Gardiner C. Means – a book featuring economic as well as sociological dimensions of analysis, with no real emphasis on developing or testing a behavioral framework.

<sup>325</sup> “Tentative Agenda. Dartmouth Conference, Informal Summer Conference of Social Scientists and Allied Groups, August 24<sup>th</sup> to September 5<sup>th</sup>,” 1925, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 52, Folder 563. Some historians have misunderstood the role of the Memorial in helping create the SSRC; see for example the discussion in Peter Collier and David Horowitz, *The Rockefellers: An American Dynasty* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1976).

positive responses to produce a list of 42 names. The Memorial's Executive Committee approved plans for the psychology conference, and a round of discussion concerning the conference stated two main points of concern: that it seemed the psychologists were working too much in isolation; and that particularly inadequate was the condition of clinical facilities for the study of infancy, early-childhood development, and abnormal conditions of development. Much communication got underway to arrange the conference, and when it happened, at least 35 psychologists were able to attend, producing two reports: one a 66-page compilation of comments; the other a 780-page final report. The main goal of the psychology conference, it seems, was to better understand the purpose of psychology research with respect to other fields of social science.<sup>326</sup>

A second purpose emergent at the 1925 conference – more in connection with the portion of the conference dealing the other social sciences – was to compile a list of important projects on which to get started across the social sciences. The general section of the conference came about when at least ten social scientists from fields other than psychology were initially invited to the conference for psychologists. Charles Merriam, who was in that initial group, helped the non-psychologists expand in number by suggesting other names ought to be recommended for inclusion. Merriam, in particular, suggested sociologist Robert Lynd and economist Clarence Ayres. The overall conference became known as the “Hanover Conference.”<sup>327</sup>

<sup>326</sup> Ruml sent initial letters to psychologists on February 26, 1925. The Memorial maintained a file, categorizing such information for each invitee as date invited, date accepted, dates attending, subsection invited to, and subsection invited to lead. RAC-LSRM, Series III, Boxes 53 & 53a, Folders 564-565.

<sup>327</sup> Donald Fisher's work on the SSRC is the standout study; see Fisher, *Fundamental Development of the Social Sciences*.

It seems clear that all social scientists invited to the Hanover Conference believed the meeting was an important gathering. Wesley Mitchell declared “how large a service it seems to me that the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial is rendering to the social sciences” by arranging such a gathering. Other invitees expressed similar words of appreciation. The broader Hanover Conference of 1925 was a clear success. The total group invited was a bit heavy with psychologists as well as economists, but it seems all major fields of social science were represented. Whereas the psychologists represented a fairly well developed field of science capable of producing focused reports, participants in the general conference, with its six sections, produced their own style of reports. One, a 127-page statement by the “Committee on Problems and Policy,” listed 268 different social problems under a “Source List of Research Problems.” Included were such issues as a scientific study of child labor in the South, an analysis of the relationship between shopping centers and economic progress, and even a “study of thwarted ambitions” (i.e., a study of the psychology of frustration). A second report, a 192-page record of all presentations at the general conference, concluded with a 7-page list of recommendations for future SSRC projects. The overriding recommendation was for the SSRC to increase its efforts to promote interaction between social sciences. Specific recommendations were to compile a list of research agencies, to gather information on university endowments, to learn about the financial status of other agencies doing social science, and to recommend that SSRC members pursue “the gathering of data on specific interests and projects of those of its members engaged in research and that this data be at the disposal of the Council as well as of the individual societies.”<sup>328</sup>

<sup>328</sup> See Wesley Mitchell to Guy Stanton Ford, June 3, 1925; another noteworthy example of appreciative words is Charles Merriam to Guy Stanton Ford, June 5, 1925, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 52, Folder 562. Once it was set, there were six “divisions of inquiry” in the program for the general conference in 1925: (1) Questions

The initial Hanover conference was followed by many months of group meetings of various sorts. The SSRC also returned to Hanover each of the next five summers. In agreement with the SSRC's goal to continually identify important projects, the Memorial generously supported all these meetings. Sometimes the meetings included discussion about the changing boundaries and structure of social science. In 1926, for example, Charles Beard emphasized a need to increase the research focus on "economic motives in politics." "Some people," he declared, "think that the economic motive has been overworked in the study of history and sociology and current politics, but I am inclined to think that it not only is not overworked but has never been systematically and thoroughly and intelligently applied as it might be." Beard's idea, shared by others, was to strengthen the economics component in the social sciences as a whole.<sup>329</sup>

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of Policy, Organization, Procedures; (2) Methods, Promotion, Cooperative Study; (3) Problems and Projects for Research; (4) Five Years of Ph.D. Research Subjects; (5) Two Hundred Suggested Topics and Problems; (6) Separate Illustrative Outlines of Problems and Projects. These divisions focused, respectively, on: (1) strategies of cooperation between social sciences, aimed at avoiding research duplication and waste; (2) ideas about how to "bridge the distance between scholar and people"; (3) whether the SSRC should select certain large problems for long-term study; (4) whether the SSRC should make a survey of ongoing social science research; (5) whether either the SSRC or the group meeting at Hanover should "consider the compilation of a comprehensive list of problems, projects and topics for research"; (6) the question of "what is the balance between larger problems and programs and concrete and isolated problems which may be carried out by individuals and institutions." See "Tentative Agenda. Dartmouth Conference, Informal Summer Conference of Social Scientists and Allied Groups, August 24<sup>th</sup> to September 5<sup>th</sup>," RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 52, Folder 563. Produced at the first meeting were: "Report of the 'Committee on Problems and Policy, Social Science Research Council,'" 127 pages; "Report of Joint Conference of the Committee on Problems and Policy of the Social Sciences Research Council Meeting with Other Representatives of the Social Sciences in Attendance upon the Dartmouth Conference of Social Scientists and Allied Groups," 192 pages, quotation from p.186; RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 52, Folder 569.

<sup>329</sup> The first "Hanover Conference" (alternatively the "Dartmouth Convivium") was held August 24 to September 5, 1925; RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 52, Folder 562. See also Hanover Conference Minutes, August 9-20, 1926, RAC-SSRC, Accession 1, Series 6, Subseries 9, Box 329, Folder 1892, p. 492. In subsequent correspondence with Robert Crane, Executive Director of the SSRC, Beard added his belief that social science, at least as it was being practiced in the early 1930s, failed to recognize "its limitations and presuppositions"; Charles Beard to Robert Crane, September 25, 1934, RAC-SSRC, Accession 2, Series 4, Subseries 1, Box 704, Folder 8465. Leonard Outhwaite shared his recollections of the Hanover meetings in Leonard Outhwaite, "The Life and Times of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial," RAC-LSRM, Series I, Box 5, Folder 49, pp. 134-8.



A leading speaker at the 1927 Hanover Conference may well have been Ruml, who described some workings of the Memorial. Ruml shared the fact that each of his assistants at the Memorial had flexibility in his or her areas of specialization. One result of such an allowance was that the Memorial was an outfit rich in open discussion. Ruml also indicated his impression that the Memorial recognized the fundamental importance of economic research to any successful program of social reform.<sup>330</sup>

Economists got their own major subsection within the 1928 Hanover Conference. Participants discussed many economic problems, as well as the overall structure of social science. They expressed interest in exploring contact points between economics and other social sciences, and they produced a 418-page report suggesting where economic science “ought to be headed.” Discussion participants included Frank Taussig, Jacob Viner, Frank Knight, Wesley Mitchell, William Beveridge, and E.R.A. Seligman, among others. The economists decided a goal should be to identify all economic problems to be studied. “In general, our idea is that the discussions ought to indicate where we are in economic science, briefly whence we came, where we seem to be going, and possibly the direction in which we ought to be headed.” The economists explored all the following: relations between economics and other disciplines; ways in which economic science may be affected by increased government activity in the economy; interrelations between economic studies and management studies; organization of economic research; and identification of promising lines of economic research. Much discussion focused on strengths and weaknesses in various research methods, and particularly discussed were ways that economists might better use

<sup>330</sup> Beardsley Ruml, “Introductory Remarks,” Hanover Conference 1927 Proceedings, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 52, Folder 569.

ideas and methods in anthropology, including Thorstein Veblen's famous adoption of a stages scheme of overall progress as well as the newly developed functionalist method.<sup>331</sup>

All Hanover meetings were useful for organizing a committee structure for the SSRC. From early on, the committee structure included a stated general purpose: "The objectives [of a committee] are a coherent conception of the area in terms of its central or major problems, the subordination of its minor problems, and a decision as to the most promising point or points of attack... The Council's aim is simply to attain the best picture it can through the agency of the most competent group judgment it can secure." The SSRC also explicitly recognized "that continuous reworking of any plan of a field is necessary from the very moment of its formation." The chief goal for any SSRC committee was to foster the highest level of "competent group judgment."<sup>332</sup>

Different committees oversaw different problem areas. At the first Hanover Conference, committees were established for the areas of eighteenth amendment studies, crime research, and agricultural problems. These committees lasted, respectively, until 1928, 1932, and 1942. Two other committees established between 1923 and 1925 – both prior to the first Hanover meeting – focused on scientific aspects of human migration (lasting until 1927) and the mechanization of industry (lasting only briefly). In 1926, a sixth committee was established to focus on industrial relations (lasting until 1930) and a seventh to study international relations (lasting until 1941). Noteworthy research problems also identified and approved by the SSRC in 1926 in connection with the committee on crime research were crime accounting, problems of juvenile delinquency, and the social causes of crime.

<sup>331</sup> "Hanover Economic Conference, September 3-8, 1928. Dartmouth College," RAC-LSRM, Series, Box 67, Folders 702-4.

<sup>332</sup> Social Science Research Council, *Decennial Report, 1923-1933* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1933): 13.

Conference participants in 1926 specifically proposed to the Memorial their need for financial support for a study of the “general problem of crime,” with special attention to developing uniform methods of crime accounting. This latter focus related to the uniform crime report, which was produced by 1930, through the work of many.<sup>333</sup>

The Hanover meetings were important for building comradeship as well. Sometimes whole families even attended the conference. Conference participants tended to blend intensive work activity with much socializing, and indeed the Hanover meetings seem to have been great fun. A letter from anthropologist Robert Redfield, to his wife at the time of the 1930 conference, reported how plush the situation was for the attendees. “The Social Science Research Council pays their fares, and boards them, and feeds them and washes their clothes, and gives them carts to go to the golf club, and then expects them to produce ‘significant results.’” Redfield added that “The place is overrun with pedants and potentates. The potentates are the executive secretaries of the big foundations – collectively they represent huge (staggering) amounts of money that has been set aside for research. The pedants have invited the potentates so that the potentates may see how the pedants do their most effective thinking, and how they arrange to spend that money.”<sup>334</sup>

<sup>333</sup> Other noteworthy committees formed by the SSRC included committees covering business research (1928-1931), pressure groups and propaganda (1931-34), government statistics and information services (1933-37), and social security (1935-43). For more information on SSRC committees in place at different times see Social Science Research Council’s series of *Annual Reports* as well as Social Science Research Council, *Decennial Report, 1923-1933* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1933). See also Augustus Frederick Kuhlman, “Social Science Research Council: Its Origin and Objectives,” *Journal of Social Forces* 6 (June 1928): 583-8.

<sup>334</sup> Quoted in David Sills, “50th Anniversary of the 1930 Hanover Conference: The Letters of Robert Redfield to his Wife,” *Items* 34, 2 (June 1980): 36.

Although the last of six Hanover Conferences was in 1930, annual SSRC summer meetings continued for some years thereafter. What is important, for us, is the effect the Hanover Conferences had over the quality and direction of social science.<sup>335</sup>

#### 8.5 Questions about the 'boundaries' of social science—1926-29

SSRC committee reports of course were not the only instruments available to identify what projects social scientists ought to be doing. Another approach was tried in a 1926, with a 72-page report prepared for Arthur Woods at the Memorial. The report surveyed advances made by a handful of independent organizations supported by the Memorial. Three of the organizations were research organizations: the SSRC; the Institute of Economics; the Brookings Graduate School. Each of these programs was created from scratch during the early 1920s, and between them the report found a relative lack of project duplication.<sup>336</sup>

The report for Woods found particularly many successes in the support of the SSRC and the Brookings Graduate School. Only positive things were reported about the SSRC. The conclusion about the Brookings school was that the school's faculty was doing delicate work to clarify the 'true' line for separation between social science and social technology. For example, the practice of social science needed to separate from practices of political action.

<sup>335</sup> David L. Sills, "A Requiem for P&P: Notes on the Council's Late Committee on Problems and Policy," *Items* 50, 4 (December 1996). As Sills recalls, these post-1930 meetings were held in "such splendid resort communities as Nantucket Island, Franconia, New Hampshire, and Lake George, New York. The entire New York staff of the Council attended, so in effect the Council itself moved out of town for this period. Eventually, Sky Top in the Pocono Mountains was judged the ideal spot, and the annual meetings were held there for three decades" (p. 94). Barry Karl also briefly considers the importance of the Hanover meetings; see Karl, *Charles E. Merriam and the Study of Politics*, 135.

<sup>336</sup> "Confidential Report to Colonial Woods on Activities of Seven Organizations Assisted by the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial," 1926, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 63, Folder 678. The seven areas of supported activities were: Playground and Recreation Association of America; National Urban League; Alta Social Settlement; Monmouth County Organization for Social Service; Child Study Association of America; Social Science Research Council; Robert Brookings Graduate School of Business and Government.

The Brookings program had a project to analyze what social science is and how it differs from political action. The task included distinguishing between social science and its close neighbors such as human biology and the like. All this was important, in that evidently the Brookings school needed to be defended against a charge that it had somehow become a politically-aligned institution. As to the other independent research organization, the Institute of Economics, a question was getting asked whether it too had become a “propaganda institute.” The report stated: “The work of the Institute of Economics deals with international commercial policies, post-war international reconstruction, agricultural economics and industry and labor. There seems to be some question as to the actual purpose of the Institute – whether for unbiased research or propaganda to influence public opinion and legislation.” Also noted were Ruml’s own words in considering the institute, that while “Originally conceived as a propaganda organization, it has never, as a matter of fact, performed its intended function since, with the selection of its Director, Dr. Moulton, formerly Professor of Economics in the University of Chicago, the Institute became essentially one of research and not of propaganda.” The report also cited Abraham Flexner’s contrasting opinion, however, “that research and propaganda are inextricably mingled in the conception which was presented” by Dr. Moulton and others at the institute, at least as they had gotten it going in practice.<sup>337</sup>

In addition to the report for Woods, there would be other times that people would raise the idea that the Memorial was in a position to evaluate and define what social science is. A possible role for the SSRC to contribute to the formation of public policy came up in

<sup>337</sup> “Confidential Report to Colonial Woods on Activities of Seven Organizations Assisted by the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial,” 1926, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 63, Folder 678.

1928 when the SSRC recommended to the Memorial a potentially controversial area of research. Would the Memorial grant funds earmarked for family and sex research? A goal of the SSRC was to help scientists discover fundamental causes of social and economic problems, and the SSRC made it clear that by undertaking a research program involving fairly intimate family studies some progress might be made in this. The scientists advocating such research were careful to point out, as Columbia sociologist William F. Ogburn did in corresponding with Lawrence Frank, that they were pursuing “research in problems of family and sex from the social angle.” In line with the social angle, the planned research was to be a “systematic investigation of those social problems which pertain to the relationship of the sexes, such as marriage, sex education, and the family.” By advancing along relatively non-invasive lines, certain kinds of research into family structure and behavior might be allowed. A “Committee on Sex and Family Relationships” indeed was established at the SSRC, fully a couple of decades prior to any kind of ‘Age of Kinsey.’ As a committee designed to cooperate with the “Committee on Sex Research” at the NRC, the SSRC’s committee hoped to soon complete a report “on the possibilities of research in the family and in the field of sex.” At a November 1928 organizational meeting of the combined NRC-SSRC sex committee, SSRC representatives identified potential lines of research to include: history of the family; family conflicts; home economics and home management; problems of consumption in the home; problems of family housing.<sup>338</sup>

<sup>338</sup> William F. Ogburn to Lawrence Frank, September 4, 1928; see also Lawrence K. Frank to Clark E. Wissler, August 20, 1928, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 64, Folder 682-690. The “Committee on Sex and Family Relationships” was also called the “Special Committee on Familial Relations of the Social Science Research Committee.” Publications produced by the program included: Ernest R. Groves and William Fielding Ogburn, *American Marriage and Family Relationships* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1928); William F. Ogburn, “The Changing Family,” *American Sociological Society* 23 (May 1929): 124-32; Ogburn, “Social Change as Shown by Occupation Statistics,” *American Journal of Sociology* 34 (May 1929): 1169-80. For more

The following year, U.S. President Herbert Hoover got interested in the SSRC. Hoover asked that a new committee be assembled, which was done by October 1929, prior to the stock market collapse. Hoover's interest was to create a committee to report on social problems. The committee's goal was to put together "a complete, impartial examination of the facts" that "should serve to help all of us to see where social stresses are occurring and where major efforts should be undertaken to deal with them constructively." The so-called "President's Research Committee on Social Trends" did its work under the co-chairmanship of Merriam and Mitchell. Ogburn served as the committee's director of research. The goal was to make order out of many facts in wide-ranging fields, while also keeping any direct policy recommendations to a minimum – since policy decisions were for persons in the legislative and executive branches, not for social scientists. To the SSRC, this was a boundary to be protected. The president's committee envisioned long-term continuation of data collection and analysis, which in fact happened (being directed after 1933 by a coordinated national advisory council of social scientists, business leaders, and government personnel). Hoover's committee indeed put together the two-volume report, *Recent Trends in the United States*, completed right near the end of Hoover's presidency. The report aimed to be strictly empirical in covering such topics as population, race and ethnic groups, women,

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information of Ogburn's family research see Barbara Laslett, "Gender and the Rhetoric of Social Science: William Fielding Ogburn and Early 20th-Century Sociology in the United States," in Jeffrey Cox and Shelton Stromquist, eds., *Contesting the Master Narrative: Essays in Social History*, 19-49 (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1998). For information about sex research in the United States during this time, see Wade Pickren, "Robert Yerkes, Calvin Stone, and the Beginning of Programmatic Sex Research by Psychologists, 1921-1930," *American Journal of Psychology* 110 (1997): 603-19; Vern L. Bullough, "The Rockefellers and Sex Research," *Journal of Sex Research* 21,2 (May 1985): 113-25. For information about sex research in Britain during this time, see Lesley A. Hall, "'Disinterested Enthusiasm for Sexual Misconduct': The British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology, 1913-47," *Journal of Contemporary History* 30 (1995): 665-86. See also Ron Roizen, "Norman Jolliffe, The Rockefeller Foundation, and the Origins of the Modern Alcoholism Movement," *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 55, 4 (July 1994): 391-400.

family, labor, consumption, leisure, crime, health, education, public welfare, economic organization, public administration, and government.<sup>339</sup>

Another U.S. president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, was friendly with the SSRC as well. As early as 1928, Roosevelt served as a member of an SSRC Advisory Committee on Business Research, a committee that aimed to encourage research problems of specific industries. A version of that committee, with its aim to do sustained research on issues in business and industry, would exist for some time – even with some explicit support from Rockefeller Jr. – in the form of a National Resources Planning Board, put together in 1933 during Roosevelt’s first year in office.<sup>340</sup>

In addition to high respect given to SSRC-supported social science by federal government leaders, another source of respect for the SSRC stemmed from the organization’s statements of guiding principles. Similar to what was done at the Memorial, the SSRC put in place a clear record of operating guidelines and objectives. In a document from about 1928, identified as “Definition of Council Objectives,” seven tasks are stated: improve research organization; develop personnel; improve research methods; preserve materials; disseminate

<sup>339</sup> See Herbert Hoover, “Foreword,” in *Recent Social Trends in the United States: Report of the President’s Research Committee on Social Trends* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1933): 111. The committee’s ideas for the future are noted in Charles Merriam and William Ogburn, “A Review of the Findings by the President’s Research Committee on Social Trends,” in *Recent Social Trends in the United States: Report of the President’s Research Committee on Social Trends*, pp. lxx-lxxv. See also Neil J. Smelser and Dean R. Gerstein, eds., *Behavioral and Social Sciences: Fifty Years of Discovery, in Commemoration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the ‘Ogburn Report,’ Recent Social Trends in the United States* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1986); William J. Barber, *From New Era to New Deal: Herbert Hoover, the Economists, and American Economic Policy, 1921-1933* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Smith, *Social Science in the Crucible*.

<sup>340</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt also appreciated *Recent Social Trends in the United States*. No detailed study yet exists of the SSRC’s relationship to Roosevelt and the New Deal. Worcester, *Social Science Research Council*, 23, cites a few sources doing work in this direction. Rockefeller Jr.’s views were shared in an August 1933 radio broadcast praising the President’s National Recovery Act; see Charles E. Harvey, “John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and the Social Sciences: An Introduction,” *Journal of the History of Sociology* 4, 3 (Fall 1981): 1-31, esp. 14; see also Marion Clawson, *New Deal Planning: The National Resources Planning Board* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981).



materials; facilitate research projects; and boost “the public appreciation of the significance of the social sciences.” In these seven tasks, the organization’s guiding goals were concisely summarized. Another SSRC policy statement introduced five “interlocking principles” to serve as additional guidelines. Chief among these principles was that social science is held to be a collective enterprise, requiring “interdisciplinary” interaction. The SSRC’s flexible committee design, aimed at flexibly discussing and reevaluating research plans, was an important foundation for the promotion of objective social research. Perhaps more striking than anything else concerning the SSRC’s approach to the structure of the social sciences was the “interdisciplinary” point of view they held. The very term “interdisciplinary,” according to historians, even began at the SSRC during the middle 1920s. One historian recalls that the term “seems to have begun life in the corridors and meeting rooms of the Social Science Research Council as a kind of bureaucratic shorthand for what the Council saw as its chief function, the promotion of research that involved two or more of its seven constituent societies.” The term “interdisciplinary” of course could be a tricky word when it came to dealing with contacts between research areas perhaps well-established within the social sciences and research matters outside the malleable boundary around the seven established social sciences participating in the SSRC.<sup>341</sup>

## 8.6 Boundaries between social science and humane studies—1923-28

<sup>341</sup> “Definition of Council Objectives,” about 1930, RAC–SSRC, Accession 2, Series 4, Subseries 1, Box 704, Folder 8465, p. 1. “Development of Present Council Policy,” RAC–SSRC, Accession 2, Series 4, Subseries 1, Box 704, Folder 8465, p. 1. Quotation is from Roberta Frank, “‘Interdisciplinary’: The First Half Century,” *Items* 42, 3 (September 1988): 73. See also David L. Sills, “A Note on the Origin of ‘Interdisciplinary,’” *Items* 40, 1 (March 1986). More information may be found in “A Decade of Council History,” in Social Science Research Council: *Decennial Report, 1923-1933*, 10.

In various ways during the latter years of the Memorial, questions were dealt with concerning logical and functional boundaries between social science and other fields at or near the boundaries of social science. One field of research already noted was human biology, which the Memorial and the Foundation consistently recognized as too controversial to get deeply involved in. Another field possibly beyond the usual boundary of social science was so-called “humane studies.”

As early as 1923, Ruml got in contact with French economic historian Charles Rist, asking for a survey of the conditions of social science in Europe. Rist produced a memorandum emphasizing the need to better connect economics, political science and sociology in France. This proposed tightened grouping of three social sciences would have “as its aim to direct and encourage scientific work in this field.” The grouping could be arranged as an “organized teaching system” comparable to what was already accomplished in France for history, psychology and anthropology – each field of which is “already provided with laboratories and libraries, scientific meetings and regular publications.” Important was Rist’s emphasis that the interconnected social sciences in Europe might be different breeds of social science than in the United States, and that social science in Europe might well include various facets of research in the humanities. Ruml recognized Rist as an instrumental figure in “the development of economic science in France,” and he shared an understanding that Rist’s survey “involves the bringing together on an extremely informal basis several men who have an interest in the scientific aspects of this subject, for the purpose of examining

what is desirable in the development of this field and for the carrying on of various investigations which will be determined upon from time to time.”<sup>342</sup>

In 1925 and 1926, Ruml got into two exchanges of ideas with Abraham Flexner, as the two thought seriously about the nature of “good” social science. Ruml used the first exchange, during 1925, to explore how social science might be defined with a ‘we-know-it-when-we-see-it’ approach. A person should not attempt *a priori* definition of all specific research that should appropriately belong in any particular field of social science, as the only way to identify such research was through a kind of laissez-faire process. Any “definition of the field in the abstract” would be dissatisfying, as “in concrete cases the limitation is easier.” Ruml explained to Flexner: “The field which the Memorial is exploring under the term social science is intelligible only in terms of our purposes. We are interested in the problems that arise in connection with the tendency of human beings to associate (or dissociate).” The Memorial relied on grant recipients to identify such problems. “In many cases the question hinges primarily on the interest and approach of the individual investigator or group of investigators.” The nature of “social science” will likely remain “extremely broad” in the future. Partly this was because the Memorial’s grant-awarding strategy was to provide awards to outstanding applicants whenever these came up. Also Ruml could not know specifics about the future structure of social science, as “It is difficult to predict whether the

<sup>342</sup> Charles Rist, “The Present State of Teaching and Research in Economics and Social Sciences in France, Proposals for Its Improvement,” 1923, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 63, Folder 680. Beardsley Ruml to Charles Rist, July 20, 1926, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 63, Folder 680. Another letter supporting the value of Rist’s survey came from E.R.A. Seligman, as Ruml cited it in his July 20 letter to Rist.

development of the work will lead to a narrowing or a widening of our present range of activities.”<sup>343</sup>

In 1926 Flexner and Ruml exchanged ideas again, this time focusing on research objectives for dealing with urgent international problems, especially those dealing with Europe. Flexner was optimistic about the prospect for continued progress of social science, believing it might be possible for a small team of science advisors to identify every important social problem in specific enough fashion that identified problems might be fruitfully attacked. The Memorial, he suggested, “must try to ascertain in every possible way what the specific problems are which could be studied, and a knowledge of which, if authoritatively disseminated, would give statesmen and officials who want to do right the light they do not now possess, or might influence public opinion.” Ruml, in responding to Flexner, emphasized a belief “that in our approach to the social sciences we should conceive the matter on the broad basis of a fundamental search for truth, without too much reference to the immediate possibilities of application.” Ruml, in other words, still favored a primary focus on social science over social technology. A useful illustration, he believed, was the international experiment of creating a League of Nations, which “present[ed] certain new educational and scientific opportunities and responsibilities.” The Memorial needed to focus on increasing awareness of “problems of an international character in the field of the social sciences,” which are problems which “may be political, economic, sociological,

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<sup>343</sup> Beardsley Ruml to Abraham Flexner, January 9, 1925, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 63, Folder 676. Another person with whom Ruml also discussed the question of what social science really is with John Candler Cobb; see John Candler Cobb, “The Social Sciences,” September 1925, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 63, Folder 676. Cobb emphasized the “appreciation” many persons are coming to have of the social sciences for “their existence as important factors in the ordering of our lives.” Cobb sees “The principle obstacle to their development is the entire lack of agreement as to what they are and the existing confusion and indefiniteness as to their province.” See also John Candler Cobb, “Quantitative Restating of Sociological and Economic Problems,” *American Journal of Sociology* 32, 6 (May 1927): 921-30.

ethnological.” Indeed, there were some university research groups beginning to work on such problems.<sup>344</sup>

Another approach to exploring boundaries of social science came up as a direct question for the Memorial. The question, explored during 1925, was what boundaries to set for social science in Europe? Of importance was a belief that European social science could impact on future peaceful conditions in Europe; indeed, Ruml and others at the Memorial were quite concerned about “disorganization and depression in the social sciences in Europe.” An impression was that the boundaries between social science and non-social science in Europe were somewhat different from those in the United States. In 1925 Ruml assigned to the American Historical Society the task to attain historical perspective on the condition of the social sciences in Europe. He assigned the American Council of Learned Societies a project to comparatively study the state of “humanistic studies and the social sciences” in Europe and the United States. Work by the ACLS produced an extremely detailed report in 1928. Ruml also had Rist’s survey to draw upon for additional information about Europe.<sup>345</sup>

Still another group interested in surveying the condition of the social sciences in Europe was at Cambridge University. This group had another approach to working on the boundary question. Cambridge submitted a grant application in 1925, emphasizing ideas about the value of what was called “humane studies.” Cambridge attempted to introduce

<sup>344</sup> Abraham Flexner to Raymond Fosdick and Beardsley Ruml, January 13, 1926; Beardsley Ruml to Abraham Flexner, March 9, 1926; Ruml to Flexner, December 9, 1925, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 52, Folder 551.

<sup>345</sup> “Memorandum on the Needs of the International Committee of Historical Sciences,” March 26, 1925, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 48, Folder 498, p. 1. Materials dealing with the work by the American Council of Learned Societies are in RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 48, Folders 496-96. For the ACLS’s report, see Frederick Austin Ogg, *Research in the Humanistic and Social Sciences: Report of a Survey Conducted for the American Council of Learned Societies* (New York & London: Century Co., 1928).

ideas in such ways that concrete studies might be defined. Because concrete studies were what Ruml wanted, he had to consider Cambridge's proposal. In contrast to any focus on a broad research program such as that operated at the LSE, the Cambridge faculty played to their interests and strengths by asking for assistance to support one or two professors to do new styles of humanities research. Geoffrey Winthrop Young, the lead professor on one project, wanted to use concrete historical examples specifically to learn what makes great leaders. Knowledge of such attributes, Young argued, could be applied to assist future leaders to do more good for society. Memorial trustees approved Young's proposal and granted funds for a survey of the condition of humanities research in Europe.<sup>346</sup>

Young began work on his survey in September 1925. In October of the following year, at the continuing encouragement of Ruml as well as Abraham Flexner among others, Young submitted a 143-page report. Young's report explored ways the Memorial's social science program might better connect to the humanities, especially in Europe. He tried looking for ways to develop a scientific approach to gathering concrete facts from humanities research, and described for the Memorial a "scope of inquiry" to identify ways "of discovering the type of individual interested by nature to exercise an influence upon his own or succeeding generations." Young's goal was that "of developing – in the case of the still immature [leaders] – these natural characteristics, so that they should be used beneficially and in the interests of a better humanity." The goal, in other words, was to develop beneficent leaders in politics and other realms of society. Young ended up compiling a kind of history of leadership, constructed from archival sources as well as interviews with living

<sup>346</sup> For information about the beginnings of Geoffrey Winthrop Young's survey, see Memorandum to Colonial Woods, September 16, 1926; also Beardsley Ruml to Geoffrey Winthrop Young, October 3, 1925, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 105, Folders 1064-1065.

persons. He fully recognized an aim was to knock down a boundary wall: “A little thought, and a good deal of conversation, soon made it clear that the distinction between ‘Humanities’ and ‘Science,’ in so far as the terms are popularly used in education or to define departments of learning, could not effectively be maintained. For hardly any single subject could a line of demarcation between the two be definitely traced....Any classification, therefore, into ‘scientific’ or ‘humane’ must be of individuals, not by subjects.”<sup>347</sup>

While Young’s report was still in the works, Cambridge University further committed to its decision to extend into the humanities as a field relevant to social science. Cambridge faculty made a proposal fitting with a recognized “project of extending the activities of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Fund into the field of the humanities.” Cambridge’s Robert Eisler, who wrote these words to Abraham Flexner in April 1926, saw the importance of Cambridge extending into the humanities as a matter involving more than a ‘great person’ theory of history. The kinds of humanities research being proposed could be seen as social science, so long as a goal was to rigorously explore how and why people did things. Of related importance was a goal to help rebuild and strengthen European culture. Furthermore, studies of art and literature could also be used to learn about the condition of the United States. “Nothing could be more helpful for a student or professor of social sciences than the opportunity to see and study the rich, complicated social and industrial life of America” through studying art, music, literature, and the like. Such an opportunity was something the Memorial’s fellowships program for European scholars was helping make possible. “On the other hand, most of the material for study and research work in the field of the humanities is

<sup>347</sup> Geoffrey Winthrop Young, “A Summary of Impressions Received during an Inquiry Made on Behalf of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial with a Recommendation,” October 1926, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 105, Folders 1064-1065, pp. 1-3.

concentrated in European libraries, museums, and excavation fields. Around these treasures European scholars have developed peculiar methods of dealing with such subjects and have put in motion a very efficient machinery of collective research in order to make those documents and monuments of its common part available to whole civilized worlds.” U.S. scholars therefore also needed to be going to Europe.<sup>348</sup>

The idea for a Memorial program dealing with rigorous research standards for the humanities was supported by other persons as well. Arthur Woods wrote Ruml in 1925 to explore the subject of “the best methods of procedure with reference to securing men for looking up” facts pertaining to “Humane Studies.” Woods, who strongly supported the idea of a Memorial program to include the humanities as a kind of social science, stated goals for the program: “The plan that had gradually formed itself is for a survey of the field in Europe, to find out in general, what is the state of the Humane Studies, and in particular, who are the very great men in these subjects, under what conditions are they working, what, if anything, need be done to help them produce their best work, whether of aid of some kind at home, or the possibility of international intercourse.” Yet another Memorial memorandum, written about the same time, suggested that the achievable benefit for assisting progressive social change was “that the Humanities have had the tradition of putting a premium on originality, which has exercised a very marked influence on the development of culture.” Indeed “the role of the arts in encouraging originality and the breaking of tradition will be seen to be considerable.”<sup>349</sup>

<sup>348</sup> Robert Eisler to Abraham Flexner, April 28, 1926, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 105, Folder 1064.

<sup>349</sup> Arthur Woods to Beardsley Ruml, August 2, 1925, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 105, Folder 1064; “Study of the Humanities,” n.d., RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 105, Folder 1064.



Ruml took ample time to evaluate whether to support humanities-oriented research at Cambridge. Even though Cambridge was not much interested in trying to become a major recipient of Memorial funds, additional discussion took place during 1925 and 1926 to arrange an endowed chair in political science, with a second endowed chair, in sociology, likely to follow. Cambridge accepted the first chaired professorship in May 1926 (worth \$150,000), but ended up declining the sociology chair.<sup>350</sup>

Historians ask questions about how best to interpret the Memorial's interaction with Cambridge between 1924 and 1926. Despite ample evidence that the program at Cambridge was part of a general increased emphasis on supporting humanities as a kind of furthest reach for an outer boundary of social science, historians tend to critically evaluate the Memorial-Cambridge interaction as a stand-alone matter. When evaluated in isolation, the potential problem shapes up as follows: the Memorial possibly had a goal to use one grant for a political science professorship in order to encourage a specific direction for further research at Cambridge; that if Cambridge would do right with the first grant, they could receive more grants. So, Cambridge was tentatively offered the two endowed chairs in 1925, seemingly as part of a single package in Ruml's mind. Cambridge, through its Vice Chancellor, communicated with Ruml to accept only the chair in political science, which was the only endowed chair officially offered at the time. Historians argue that the prospect of a Memorial-supported chair in sociology was not yet officially offered because Cambridge authorities opposed sociological research of the kind that would meet Ruml's scientific

<sup>350</sup> A.C. Seward to Beardsley Ruml, May 28, 1926, RAC-LSRM, Series II, Box 50, Folder 521. See also Donald Fisher, "American Philanthropy and the Social Sciences in Britain, 1919-1939: The Reproduction of a Conservative Ideology," *The Sociology Review* 28, 2 (1980): 277-315, esp. 291; Martin Bulmer, "Sociology and Political Science at Cambridge in the 1920s: An Opportunity Missed and an Opportunity Taken," *The Cambridge Review* 102, 2262 (April 29, 1981): 156-9.

standards. Ruml kept an open door to persuade Cambridge to consider future acceptance of financial assistance in the field of sociology. Historians debate whether Ruml decided to withhold support for the sociology chair until Cambridge stated its sociology research plan in some way that he could agree with it. This, then, is a line of explanation as introduced by historians. Such an interpretation about the Cambridge case does not seem to hold up under scrutiny.<sup>351</sup>

Historians, particularly Donald Fisher and Martin Bulmer, incompletely interpret the Cambridge situation. Ruml's interaction with Cambridge began in the context that, when supporting research at European schools, his method was to commission trusted academic acquaintances to travel to Europe to personally assess the fitness of potential grant recipients. A factor involved in the Cambridge case was a report Ruml received in February 1924 from advisor J.J. Coss, who explicitly recommended that Ruml "not do anything at Cambridge," based on the school's evident contentment as an "isolated" institution "not at all anxious to grow." Leading Cambridge economists such as John Maynard Keynes and Joan Robinson were, Coss added, "little interested in social side, but only in financial analysis."<sup>352</sup>

In addition to the value of Coss's 1924 recommendation (which Ruml ignored), it seems Fisher and Bulmer each fail to quote pertinent language in a letter that each cites for other reasons. In August 1926, Ruml wrote to a friend, E.M. Hopkins, saying he maintained

<sup>351</sup> Fisher, "American Philanthropy and the Social Sciences in Britain"; Bulmer, "Sociology and Political Science at Cambridge in the 1920s"; Fisher, "Philanthropic Foundations and the Social Sciences: A Response to Martin Bulmer," *Sociology* 18, 4 (November 1984): 580-7, esp. 480; Bulmer, "Philanthropic Foundations and the Development of the Social Sciences in the Early Twentieth Century: A Reply to Donald Fisher," *Sociology* 18, 4 (1984): 572-9.

<sup>352</sup> The words of Coss to Ruml are quoted in Earlene Craver, "Patronage and the Directions of Research in Economics: The Rockefeller Foundation in Europe, 1924-1938," *Minerva* 24, 2-3 (Summer-Autumn 1986): 204-22, esp. 206; see J.J. Coss to Beardsley Ruml, February 28, 1924, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 51. See also Martin Bulmer, "Sociology and Political Science at Cambridge in the 1920s: An Opportunity Missed and an Opportunity Taken," *Cambridge Review* 102 (April 21, 1981): 156-9.

hope that the Memorial was making progress in “getting an edge into one of the most conservative of universities,” which was Cambridge. Based on all else that was underway at the time in the way of encouraging rigorous methods of humanities research, the direction forward was to allow that certain historical and descriptive approaches might possibly be made more scientific. In the case of sociology at Cambridge, the real matter that concerned Ruml was simply that Cambridge’s statement of intent in the field of sociology was not yet stated in concrete-enough terms – regardless of the methods to be used. In correspondence between Ruml and Cambridge, the Cambridge faculty even said: “the outline of what was proposed in Sociology did not seem sufficiently detailed to justify recommending that Chair at this time.” Ruml’s hope was to encourage people at Cambridge “to re-examine their position in Social Science a bit.” His goal was not to try and persuade Cambridge to adopt any specific theory or method, but was a goal “of meeting the Cambridge people on their own ground and not trying to inject too many of our own notions into a foreign soil.”<sup>353</sup>

The best way to understand the Memorial’s interaction with Cambridge is in light of the Memorial’s goal to encourage specific projects along the line of scientifically-inclined humanities research in Europe. Doors had to be opened to allow this to happen, and one such door was Cambridge University. By April 1927, Lawrence Frank came to believe the overall Memorial strategy was made stronger by including (along with economical, political and

<sup>353</sup> Beardsley Ruml to E.M. Hopkins, August 10, 1926, RAC–LSRM, Series II, Box 4, File 45. Salma Ahmad quotes from this letter at length; see Salma Ahmad, “American Foundations and the Development of the Social Sciences between the Wars: Comment on the Debate between Martin Bulmer and Donald Fisher,” *Sociology* 25, 3 (August 1991): 511-20, esp. 515. There was an idea at the time that people in Europe who talked about “sociology” had something different in mind than what Americans thought of when they talked about “sociology.”

psychological aspects of social science) “that branch of philosophy which deals with the history of ideas.”<sup>354</sup>

The question remained open as to how exactly the humanities might also serve as a contact point between social science and social technology. Worthy of note was a 1927 Memorial statement on “social technology,” where the Memorial provided words concerning the definition of such a thing. Expansion in the “social technology” program had been accomplished in recent years, and the Memorial wondered if it was best to hold off on further effort to promote social technology, with the reason being that “the social sciences have as yet contributed few tested facts upon which a social technology may be constructed.”<sup>355</sup>

In light of a perception that more scientifically tested facts were needed, one idea was to reconsider the nature of contacts between social science and legal research. Perhaps research work in the law schools, previously identified as social technology schools, might be placed more in touch with social science than had been thought possible.

### 8.7 Legal studies as a boundary question—1927-28

<sup>354</sup> Lawrence K. Frank to Beardsley Ruml, April 6, 1927, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 105, Folder 1064.

<sup>355</sup> Between 1925 and 1927, Memorial personnel exchanged ideas through various in-house memoranda, including progress reports and program statements. One report discussed making greater use of international fellowships to move researchers around. Also emphasis was a need for more research on race relations. Increasingly the Memorial emphasized the need to connect research to teaching. Memorial personnel also drew attention to the need to apply knowledge through “social technology.” In 1926, in a yearly summary, Memorial trustees recognized increasing emphasis being made along several lines, chief among which seems to have been an increased emphasis on social technology. Also cited were increased attention to the field of the humanities in Europe, work on race relations, and traveling fellowships in social science as well as social technology; “Report...1925-26,” RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 63, Folder 677. A 1927 report on “social technology” refers to grants that were awarded during 1926 to researchers in social work at the University of Chicago, New York School of Social Work, Western Reserve University School of Applied Social Sciences, and Tulane University; “Social Technology,” RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 63, Folder 677. Another report, later in 1927, re-emphasized the knowledge-applications distinction, noting an increasing need to understand boundaries of the latter; “The Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial. Appropriations for Social Science and Social Technology up to December 1, 1927,” RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 63, Folder 676.

A boundary question that came up in 1927 involved the matter of where legal studies should fit into the Memorial's work. Somewhat resembling the pliable abutment between "social science" and "humane studies," for which the Memorial focused on Cambridge University as a kind of test case, another question was how legal analysis and social science might interconnect. Was legal analysis ready for closer connection to social science? Was legal analysis perhaps just as much social science as it was social technology? Was legal analysis, like other social sciences, lagging behind a changing society? Such questions were attended to especially at Columbia University and Yale University.

The Columbia University law school contacted the Memorial in January 1927, introducing an idea that legal analysis needed tighter connection to social science. Such a movement in the young field of 'law and economics' had been in the works already for about a decade, and what was now needed, according to Columbia, was to develop an entire body of law based on realistic facts. Columbia cited the work of economist Leon Marshall, who was visiting the law school to help organize a study of law along economic lines. The idea for a 'law and economics' project at Columbia was to pool together the several branches of law applicable to business and industry, and to "assemble the rules which apply to the different processes and stages in the economic activities." Columbia experienced difficulty maintaining funds to support Marshall's work, and could use financial assistance. Funds were also lacking for another law school project to link criminal law to branches of social science bearing upon it.<sup>356</sup>

<sup>356</sup> "Memorandum of Interview," Dean Huger W. Jervey interviewed by L.K. Frank, January 29, 1927, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 50, Folder 525. For some information on the beginnings of "law and economics" as a research field during the 1910s and 1920s, see Warren J. Samuels, "Law and Economics: Some Early Journal Contributions," in *Economic Thought and Discourse in the 20th Century*, eds. Warren J. Samuels, Jeff Biddle, and Thomas W. Patchak-Schuster (Great Britain: Edward Elgar, 1993): 217-86.

Dean of the Columbia Law School, Huger W. Jervey, in a February letter, said the main issue was that “the development of thought in the law” in recent years had come “to the point where we see clearly the necessity of having definite studies made towards programming the establishment of two lines of work in those fields where law and economics and sociology overlap.” The hope, particularly for Marshall’s work, was that “the fence” between abstract law and real-world problems “can be broken down.” The goal, as Jervey described it, was “to project the so-called logical system of legal doctrine against a realistic background of contemporary social and economic thought and fact.” Such a connection would be the beginning of “a sustained effort [that] must be made by the lawyers and the economists working together.” Prospective new projects in social research would try to “tackle the fundamental problems scientifically.” The Columbia law faculty’s overall argument was that only by making contact with real facts provided by modern social sciences would legal researchers be able to do truly scientific work on society’s problems. The grant was awarded in May 1927.<sup>357</sup>

The Yale law school, also in early 1927, argued the time was right to place their legal research more in contact with empirically founded knowledge based on “the facts of life.” Under the leadership of Yale President James R. Angell, Yale knew what was important to Ruml, which was to inject the influence of social science into all possible fields. Yale’s law faculty drew up a prospectus, declaring administration of the law is a “chaotic and maladjusted field, chiefly because of inadequate knowledge of the rules of procedure, their operation and their relation to the social sciences, psychology, criminology and penology,

<sup>357</sup> Huger W. Jervey to Lawrence K. Frank, February 3, 1927. The grant was awarded May 5, 1927; RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 50, Folder 525.

which is consistently exhibited by bench and bar.” The law faculty believed “that this lack of knowledge can be removed only by a definite and concrete program of research, directed to the collection of facts.” The proposed program was “imperatively necessary,” yet “definitely an experiment.” The program must be undertaken, as “eventually the entire field of law administration must be subjected to rigorous investigation.” Because law schools were classified as programs in social technology, Yale’s law faculty emphasized that the separation between scientific objectivity and reform activity should be maintained. “[W]hile ultimately various reforms should be suggested by the program, the Faculty believe it unwise to set as their goal the achieving of particular reform. The objective is therefore to supply accurate information soundly analyzed, which may be available to those active in the field of legislation, rather than to devise legislative programs.”<sup>358</sup>

Yale’s application was more general than Columbia’s, and it was denied. In the words of Lawrence Frank, written to Yale Law School Acting Dean Robert M. Hutchins in March 1927, the Memorial hesitated because it felt “hedged in by matters of policy and precedent which make it difficult to move unless conditions and prerequisites are present.” After the negative decision with respect to Yale’s application, the better part of a year went by with only minor discussion between Ruml, Frank, Angell, and Hutchins.<sup>359</sup>

In December 1927, President Angell contacted Ruml again, believing the time was right to get the ball rolling. Angell was ready to convince Ruml that Yale’s law faculty had established the kind of program the Memorial could support. Yale’s law school had, over the year, shown initiative by “carry[ing] forward much further” the planned program “by new

<sup>358</sup> Yale Law School, “Program of Research in the Administration of the Law,” 1927, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 78, Folder 830, pp. 1-2, 7.

<sup>359</sup> Lawrence K. Frank to Robert M. Hutchins, March 2, 1927, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 78, Folder 830.

appointments and change of procedure, whereby the various social sciences have been brought into much more intimate contact with our legal teaching and study.” Examples included connections forged between criminal law, evidentiary procedure, and psychology. Strong links were also made between public utility economics, labor research, tax studies, and corporate finance. Even some connections were being tried between law and sociology. Angell reported that Yale had contacted the University of North Carolina to learn how legal research was included in decisions made by UNC with respect to applying its block-grant funds. Yale had UNC’s support in recommending a pair of connected studies of law administration be established, one in a northern state, the other in the South.<sup>360</sup>

Hutchins wrote a letter at the same time to Edmund E. Day, reporting the law school had in fact already begun a five-year program to connect law and social science. Hutchins presented a case that Yale’s law school “has gone further than any other in the attempt to place the law among the social sciences.” Hutchins reported he and Angell were each about to publish articles to lead the project to connect law to social science. Yale was also bringing in Walton Hamilton, a Memorial-supported professor in the field of law & economics, who was well established at the Brookings Graduate School. Hutchins reported on future plans, doing so in words typical of what Ruml liked to hear: “The general drift of the School is toward the social sciences and toward the facts of life rather than the library alone as the material for research. These two aims are in fact one.”<sup>361</sup>

<sup>360</sup> James Angell to Beardsley Ruml, December 8, 1927, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 78, Folder 830.

<sup>361</sup> Robert M. Hutchins to Edmund E. Day, December 9, 1927, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 78, Folder 830. Angell’s article was James R. Angell, “The University and the School of Law,” *American Bar Association* (April 1928), 1. The articles by Hutchins were a six-part series of articles he coauthored with Donald Slesinger between 1927 and 1929 under the title “Some Observations on the Law of Evidence.” Different installments of Hutchins’s article addressed “Competency of Witnesses,” “State of Mind,” “Memory,” “Family Relations,” “Spontaneous Exclamations,” and “Consciousness of Guilt.”



Ruml replied to President Angell in December 1927, saying it was likely the Memorial could soon approve financial support of such “an experimental project” as Yale was undertaking. Day responded, at the same time, to Hutchins, reporting that the Memorial would soon submit Yale’s proposal to the trustees, and the hope was for a grant that “would carry the Memorial into a field in which it has as yet developed no definite program.” A five-year grant was soon awarded.<sup>362</sup>

In December 1927 Howard University’s law school contacted the Memorial. Howard expressed a goal to strengthen the presence of social science in its law school, particularly by bolstering social science library holdings. As a traditionally black school located in Washington, DC, Howard’s background and location were of some interest to the Memorial, possibly as a kind of lever point for better addressing problems associated with race relations and the quality of black life in the South. Of course there were already some substantial Memorial programs underway in the South, notably at North Carolina, Virginia, Tulane and Vanderbilt, but still a fairly specific award to another school could be considered. Ruml and the Memorial trustees agreed that in order for Howard to best contribute to lifting the prospect of southern African Americans, social science improvements at the law school were needed, and a grant was soon awarded.<sup>363</sup>

Development of closer contact between law and social science likely benefited from discussions between 1923 and 1927 to attain tighter contact between humane studies and

<sup>362</sup> Beardsley Ruml to James R. Angell, December 16, 1927, E.E. Day to Robert Hutchins, December 22, 1927, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 78, Folder 830.

<sup>363</sup> In December 1927, Howard submitted a request for \$33,000 to help bring the journal and book holdings of their law library “up to the minimum requirements of the American Association of Law Schools” and to bolster their regular library holdings in the range of social sciences; see Mordecai W. Johnson to Leonard Outhwaite, February 3, 1928. Howard also faced a problem of uncompetitive salaries; see “Memorandum of Interview,” 1928, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 54, Folder 576.

social science; possibly this was even a line of discussion that enabled the Memorial's financial support of law schools at Columbia, Yale, and Howard to take place when it did – which was right before the end of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial. The end of the Memorial is taken up as the next chapter begins.

## CHAPTER 9. ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE IN THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION–1928-33

### 9.1 Introduction

This chapter studies different facets of the Rockefeller Foundation's absorption of the Memorial's social sciences program in January 1929. First, we observe actions by persons at the Memorial who were aware of the coming end of the Memorial. Through 1928 they prepared for the change by initiating a critical self-evaluation process. The goal at the Memorial through 1928 was to do what they could to help the Rockefeller Foundation's new Division of Social Sciences get off to the best start it could. Second, we study the condition of a few fields of social science during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Third, we recognize that by about 1934 the Division of Social Sciences decided to focus mostly on supporting economic research.

### 9.2 The Memorial's self-review–1927-28

By November 1927, Beardsley Ruml had guiding principles well hashed out for philanthropic support of social research. He got a refined batch of principles, eleven in number, adopted by the Memorial trustees that month. These eleven principles were substantially the same as Ruml's twelve earlier principles, only a bit more consolidated. The 1927 principles were: to increase the stock of knowledge and appreciation of scientific methods; to promote diffusion of knowledge; to pursue broad subject matter; to include pure and applied scientific projects; to have a program that would be international in extent; to not allow the Memorial to directly influence any research findings; to find workable ways to

study controversial subjects; to support a variety of institutional types (including “coordinating agencies”); to recognize that tests through practical applications are necessary for scientific progress; to offer fellowships; to recognize that “The general aim of the program is better understanding of modern society.” Throughout our study we have been seeing Ruml’s principles in action.<sup>364</sup>

At the time the Memorial trustees officially adopted these principles, a phase in the relationship between Rockefeller philanthropy and social science was about to end. As begun in 1922, Ruml’s crash program had done well. Yet the program was also nearing a potential ending point, as a plan was in place for the Rockefeller Foundation to absorb the Memorial’s social science program at the end of 1928. Memorial leaders decided the time was right to begin a self-review of the Memorial’s goals and accomplishments. One objective for the review was to analyze methods and structure of social science. The Memorial also wanted to better understand ideas for the future.

Memorial officials and trustees established a “Committee on Review” in November 1927, the purpose of which was to make a self-evaluation of different areas of social science

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<sup>364</sup> The main points to the eleven governing principles were as follows: (1) “Increase the body of knowledge in the hands of competent technicians,” “enlarge the general stock of ideas which should be in the common possession of all intelligent members of civilized society,” and “spread the appreciation of the appropriateness and value of scientific methods in the simplification and solution of modern social problems”; (2) avoid a narrow focus by continually recognizing there is a broad list of subject matter of the program; (3) recognize that “the program is not to be restricted to the so-called pure, or unapplied, branches of social science”; (4) emphasize that “The general aim of the program is a better understanding of modern society”; (5) the program is to be international in extent; (6) it is inadvisable to carry on investigations and research directly under the Memorial, or to attempt to influence findings, conclusions, specific problems to be attacked, methods of inquiry, or to concentrate too narrowly on particular institutions; (7) “Subjects of a controversial nature cannot be avoided if the program is to concern itself with the more important aspects of modern social life”; (8) In addition to the development of major university centers of research, “the support of other institutional types is to be undertaken when conditions are favorable,” and particularly important are “coordinating agencies” like the SSRC; (9) “The hypotheses of social sciences can only rarely, if ever, be proved or disproved by laboratory methods; the tests of practical applications in the field are ordinarily indispensable”; thus “social experimentation” and “practical demonstration” are valued; (10) promote diffusion of existing knowledge; (11) use fellowships and existing professorships to help develop outstanding personnel. “Principles Governing the Memorial’s Program in the Social Sciences,” November 22, 1927, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 63, Folder 678.

and social technology supported by the Memorial. Fields of scientific research were classified into “economics, sociology, political science, and the related subjects of psychology, anthropology and history.” Boundaries around the fields of scientific application were open for critical evaluation as well. The Memorial got many responses, which taken together, suggested a range of matters to be considered. Was the Memorial spreading its financial support widely enough, or perhaps doing so too widely? Were too many applicants simply opportunists, taking advantage of Memorial generosity? Should the Memorial increase or diminish its attention to fundamental science? Was it even clear what “social science” was? What about “social technology”? And, how did the two relate to each other?<sup>365</sup>

More than any other field they were asked about, respondents to the self-evaluation focused on economics. One respondent was Henry S. Pritchett, Director of the Carnegie Foundation. Pritchett wondered if application of physical science methods to social phenomena was misguided at some fundamental level. Is it possible “we are seeking to apply the methods of physical science to phenomena that are not amenable to such treatment?” The fundamental social science, Pritchett believed, was economics, “which affects profoundly the conditions that make for true happiness or unhappiness of society, [and] is on a somewhat different basis” than other social sciences. While economics potentially could be genuinely scientific, the difficulty in attaining this “does not arise from the fact that the methods of exact science cannot be applied, but from the fact that the phenomena to be observed are

<sup>365</sup> Possibly as an expansion of its review of the European program, the Memorial’s Board of Trustees decided to review their operations across all fields. By November 1927 they put together a “Committee of Review” to evaluate “the field of social science and social technology.” The Memorial distributed a notification letter regarding the project, with at least eighteen persons at ten different universities receiving these. Submitted input from in-house commentators would also be accepted; comments were invited specifically from all trustees and officers at the Memorial, from six persons in leadership at the Rockefeller Foundation, from five persons at the General Education Board, and from a number of persons in the office of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Six fields of social science were to be evaluated. RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 50, Folders 529-531.

often times so complicated that it is not always possible to disentangle separate factors.” Pritchett yet held to an optimistic ideal that “Economics as applied to human conditions can be completely scientific when the facts are ascertainable.”<sup>366</sup>

A number of respondents were economists. Wesley Mitchell potentially provided more feedback than any one else. He contemplated relationships between discovery of knowledge and application of knowledge, and he noted the importance of remembering that any social problem will require study with all social sciences – that is, that all the social sciences share one aim, which is better understanding of causes and consequences of social behavior. Problems in the social sciences “are not purely economic, purely psychological, purely political, or the like, but problems which have economic, psychological, political, sociological and other aspects.” Already a number of scholars were beginning to deal with the social sciences as “a family” of sciences “having common interests.” Mitchell supported this and advocated a far-reaching project based on the idea that social scientists could somehow agree upon which problems required immediate attack. “What seems to be needed,” he declared, “is a reformulation of the problems which engage the attention of psychologists, economists, political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists, historians, jurists and educators – a reformulation which will present a series of fundamental questions concerning human behavior, each of which has aspects of special interest to the several disciplines listed, and doubtless others as well.” Mitchell concluded with his belief that “the time may be ripe for attempting such a reformulation in an experimental spirit,” particularly

<sup>366</sup> Henry S. Pritchett to Raymond B. Fosdick, January 5, 1928, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 50, Folder 530.

to help connect progress in the discovery of knowledge to progress in the application of knowledge. Yet he also conceded: “How such an effort can best be made is not clear.”<sup>367</sup>

Other responding economists included Walter F. Willcox, H. C. Taylor, and Leon C. Marshall. As Cornell University statistical economist known for his research on the economics of race discrimination, Willcox recommended that better development of statistical analysis, whether ultimately “a science or a method,” ought to “be more adequately recognized in the Memorial’s program.” To Taylor, a leading agricultural economist, more attention needed to be paid to agricultural economics and rural sociology, particularly in their relationship to the welfare of rural people; there was serious need to support more scientists in these fields. As to Marshall, he summarized what he understood to be the Memorial’s position: “Let us foster social science research, hoping thus to find generalizations from which may be derived rules of action in social technology. Research comes first; its technological applications come second.” Marshall agreed with the Memorial’s guiding principles, yet struggled with a question of whether “the Memorial is going about its chosen task as wisely as it should.” Marshall had questions: Is there too much emphasis on “pure” science? Is there not enough attention to disseminating knowledge? Is there enough encouragement of experimentation?<sup>368</sup>

<sup>367</sup> Among leading social scientists responding were: Wesley C. Mitchell (Columbia); Herman Oliphant (Columbia); Joseph P. Chamberlain (Columbia); Walter F. Willcox (Cornell); Manley O. Hudson (Harvard); Henry C. Taylor (Northwestern); Leon C. Marshall (Chicago); Charles E. Merriam (Chicago); Clark Wissler (Yale); William Beveridge (LSE). One memorandum dealing with the Committee on Review lists twenty-five such letters from so-called “outsiders.” Wesley Mitchell to Raymond Fosdick, January 20, 1928, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 50, Folder 530.

<sup>368</sup> Walter F. Willcox to Raymond Fosdick, January 8, 1928; H.C. Taylor to Raymond Fosdick, January 17, 1928; L.C. Marshall to Raymond Fosdick, January 30, 1928, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 50, Folder 530. For additional information on Willcox, see Mark Aldrich, “Progressive Economists and Scientific Racism: Walter Willcox and Black Americans, 1895-1910,” *Phylon* 40, 1 (Spring 1979): 1-14.

Other responses to the self-review came from various officers and trustees at the Rockefeller philanthropies. Frank P. Bachman, of the General Education Board, observed how “wide-flung” the “field of social science and social technology” had become. Perhaps the Memorial’s project had gotten too wide-spread. “Is not the Memorial undertaking to cooperate with so many different agencies that nothing impressive or permanent will be accomplished?” Maybe part of the problem of excess breadth was that the Memorial insufficiently distinguished between functions of universities and functions of other organizations. Bachman, who was particularly concerned about an explosion of research projects recently underway at Columbia, wondered if “social science research is not being overstimulated – whether problems are being studied, not because they are pressing and have far-reaching significance, but because money is now available for such work.” Another respondent from the General Education Board, H.J. Thorkelson, believed that the Memorial “is correct in its policy of contributing toward research in these fields [of social science], for the accumulation of human knowledge regarding any aspect of social welfare is of fundamental importance.” Thorkelson recognized continuing value in maintaining the distinction between research done by scientists and applications by technicians. He asked: “...does not the first field represent the more important one for a board to consider?”

Bachman and Thorkelson’s views we can expect would have been seriously considered at the Rockefeller Foundation, as a focus primarily on science might be considered best for the near future.<sup>369</sup>

<sup>369</sup> Frank P. Bachman to Raymond B. Fosdick, December 21, 1927; H.J. Thorkelson to Raymond B. Fosdick, December 30, 1927, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 50, Folder 529.



Also looking at the science-applications distinction was Selskar M. Gunn, of the Rockefeller Foundation. Gunn interpreted inclusion of “social technology” as indicating a recognition that “much that has to do with social science is incapable at the present time of true scientific analysis.” Indeed such a broad heading as “social science” seemed to include areas that “probably will never be capable of complete scientific evaluation.” Gunn recommended encouraging more applied experiments.<sup>370</sup>

Cleveland E. Dodge, chair of the Memorial’s special committee overseeing the review, even responded. Like Gunn, Dodge favored more work not on fundamental science especially, but on applications of scientific findings. The question Dodge asked was “whether we should give more study to the helping out of practical demonstrations along social lines rather than giving so much to developing theoretical work in the universities.” Dodge recommended more active pursuit of experiments.<sup>371</sup>

George Vincent, President of the Rockefeller Foundation, expressed his agreement with Ruml’s original guiding principles. Vincent considered there was something to the widespread idea to do more experiments, as he believed the Memorial had created a sound structure to help keep financial support of science separate from any research implications. “The delegating to universities or other agencies of the actual work in administration of investigation has vindicated itself...,” he said. “The Memorial has done well to limit its support of individual projects and to work towards institutional responsibility.” Also to be noted (at least for precautionary attention) was the fair degree of success being achieved when it came to meeting the principle of “independence of responsible agencies,” as it

<sup>370</sup> Selskar M. Gunn to Raymond B. Fosdick, December 20, 1927, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 50, Folder 529.

<sup>371</sup> Cleveland E. Dodge to Raymond B. Fosdick, January 5, 1928, RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 50, Folder 530.

remained “important to detach agencies of investigation so far as possible from sources of funds.” The precaution to be taken was what might happen to this separation if Rockefeller philanthropy got more involved in supporting real-world experiments. “[I]s there danger of too close contact which might be interpreted as supervision and is possibly unconscious but nevertheless a real influence being brought to bear upon institutions with respect to their policies and programs?” Vincent offered additional criticism as well. Even though the Memorial was “wise” to select only a few strong institutions, “The danger of restricting aid to so small a number of centers as to preclude a variety of working hypotheses and social attitudes should be kept in mind.” On the whole what Vincent did was add focused questions. Is “science” in “social science” really “science”? Shouldn’t financial supporters of social science be aware of potential conflicts with “the pressure of ‘interests’”? Should there be tighter connection between Memorial-supported social research and sponsorship of work in medicine and public health work by the Rockefeller Foundation?<sup>372</sup>

As to this last question, Vincent was not alone in asking it – as we shall see. There were some shared points of concern in the feedback letters, and all points made in the letters were compiled by the committee into a digest, of which there were one hundred and sixty main points, divided into “General Objectives”; “Scope of Program”; “Agencies or Means of Making the Program Effective”; and “Internal Organization or Machinery of Operation.” Along with the complete digest, a summary report was prepared, boiling all responses down to two overriding objectives: the need to advance science; the need to achieve social control. In the summary report, the Memorial declared: “[T]he purpose of the program in social science and social technology is so to increase the knowledge and understanding of social

<sup>372</sup> George E. Vincent to Raymond B. Fosdick, January 5, 1928, RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 50, Folder 530.

phenomena as to assure a more purposeful, satisfying, and beneficent development of human society.” Many respondents had asked questions about “The necessity of a more careful definition of the field of social sciences,” and most respondents were agreed it was proper that the Memorial “does not make reform its immediate objective.” Reform could, however, be made a more active objective; that is, if social conditions warranted. For the present time, however, the main objective remained “to increase the body of knowledge which in the hands of competent technicians may be expected in time to result in substantial social control.” What was essential remained “the advancement of human knowledge.”<sup>373</sup>

And thus it was that the nature of social and economic reform would continue to depend upon what facts were scientifically discovered. The conclusion of the Memorial’s self-review was that it was not yet time to use accumulated scientific knowledge to begin any earnest pursuit of reform.

### 9.3 The last days of the Memorial–1928

As 1928 came to a close, stock could be taken of Memorial successes in various terms. One measure could be monetary. During the time of the Ruml-led Memorial, large-scale appropriations began in 1924 and reached over 20 million dollars distributed for social science and social technology by the end of 1928. The peak year for appropriations was 1927, when nearly 8.5 million dollars went to a mix of projects in social science and social

<sup>373</sup> Points made in the compilation summaries came together as four bodies of recommendations. The section on “General Objectives of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial” contained 56 points gathered from the letters. “Scope of Program of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial” consisted of 48 points, “Agencies or Means of Making the Program Effective” consisted of 48 points, and “Internal Organization or Machinery of Operation” consisted of 8 points. RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 50, Folder 530. “Report of Trustees Committee on Review,” RAC–LSRM, Series III, Box 50, Folder 530, pp. 1-2.

technology. Of course there were considerations other than simply the amount of money allocated.<sup>374</sup>

Ruml's personal opinion could be considered an important measure. In his "Final Report," Ruml reflected on the Memorial's many accomplishments. Ruml was of the opinion that the money infusion since 1922 was beginning finally to take hold in promoting accelerated development of fundamental social science. He also expressed a belief about the future, "that through the social sciences might come more intelligent measures of social control that would reduce such irrationalities as are represented by poverty, class conflict, and war between nations." Ruml's forward-looking hope, in other words, was that more experimental applications would soon be tried.<sup>375</sup>

Ruml's idea for the Rockefeller Foundation was to recommend that the Foundation should maintain the Memorial's long-term perspective in forging connections between science and applications. In words he would express in 1933, Ruml believed it was urgent time for the Rockefeller Foundation to aid "in the advancement of social understanding of control." This was noteworthy wording, as to Ruml the Foundation's goal ought not be the direct pursuit of social control, but should be to work in the present time to advance "understanding of control." In other words, something intermediary was needed. One who agreed with this was E.E. Day. Writing on the subject of Ruml's view, Day said that "the activities of the Rockefeller Foundation must be increasingly concerned with the means by which social understanding and social control in the public interest are to be achieved." To

<sup>374</sup> See *Annual Reports* of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial. Principal appropriations for social science for the years 1923 through 1928 are summarized, in table form, in Bulmer and Bulmer, "Philanthropy and Social Science," 386-387.

<sup>375</sup> Ruml, "Final Report," 10-11.

Day, the lofty goal still remained: preservation of the democratic tradition, which “is of paramount importance and to be sought by all possible means.”<sup>376</sup>

Another measure of Memorial success could be the fact the Ruml’s guiding principles worked and were soon adopted by the Rockefeller Foundation’s Division of Social Sciences. In particular the chief rule remained for all that the Memorial had done: to stay clear of controversies. The importance of this rule cannot be understated. Attention to guiding principles was reinforced a number of times in the history of the Memorial, particularly in 1927 when the “Principles Governing the Memorial’s Program in the Social Science” were formally approved by the trustees. At the final meeting of the Memorial, in December 1928, Memorial trustees transmitted to the Foundation’s new Division of Social Sciences their statement of guiding principles. Two overriding objectives adopted were to promote appreciation of scientific methods and to increase knowledge. Foundation leaders stated their view that social technology had an important role to play: “The hypotheses of social science can only rarely, if ever, be proved or disproved by laboratory methods; the tests of practical applications in the field are ordinarily indispensable. Consequently, the possibilities of social experimentation are to be kept constantly in mind; and opportunities for practical

<sup>376</sup> In December 1933 Ruml introduced his ideas to the Trustees. He emphasized a tradition of experience at the Memorial showing that “it is desirable to look some years ahead in the determination of objectives.” Though the widespread economic crisis was a difficult one for such a strategy, Ruml nevertheless believed significant benefit could come from discussing four objectives that “may be thought of together as a general enterprise in the advancement of social understanding of control.” The objectives were: “establishment of several well rounded centers of social science research and teaching”; “improvement of public administration”; “establishment of endowed press”; “improvement of the political parties.” The first of these objectives related “primarily to social understanding, the other three to the principle mechanisms of control, the governmental administrative organization, public opinion, and politics”; Beardlsey Ruml, “Memorandum,” December 1933, pp. 1-2. Day shared his opinion of Ruml’s view in E.E. Day to Raymond Fosdick, December 12, 1933, RAC-RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folder 13.

demonstrations may be utilized whenever they promise to throw light upon the validity of tentative social findings.”<sup>377</sup>

#### 9.4 Establishing the “Division of Social Science”–1929

Through 1928, the Rockefeller Foundation refined a plan to absorb the social sciences program that had been independently operated for ten years by the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial. Foundation leaders committed to the plan in May 1928, and the date of execution was to be at year’s end. One important goal for the move was to strengthen the Foundation’s ability to promote better social control based on valid science. Foundation trustees expressed their desire that programs in the social sciences should continue to “concern themselves with the rationalization of social control,” and that whatever kinds of reform were going to be needed, these kinds should be achieved through applying scientifically based knowledge.<sup>378</sup>

Not all persons at the Foundation in every way favored absorption of the social sciences program. Contrasting views are worth considering. Selskar M. Gunn, Vice President of the Foundation’s program in Europe, wrote to George E. Vincent, President of the Foundation. Gunn summarized some concerns: “Of course, I have known for a long time that

<sup>377</sup> A statement of eleven principles confirmed by Memorial trustees to be transmitted to the Rockefeller Foundation’s Division of Social Sciences is in “Principles Governing the Memorial’s Program in the Social Sciences,” presented at the Rockefeller Foundation meeting, December 31, 1928, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folder 11. The bequeathed statement also emphasized that “The general purposes of the program are to (a) increase the body of knowledge which in the hands of competent technicians may be expected in time to result in substantial social control; (b) enlarge the general stock of ideas which should be in the common possession of all intelligent members of civilized society; and (c) spread the appreciation of the appropriateness and value of scientific methods in the simplification and solution of modern social problems.”

<sup>378</sup> On May 23, 1928, an Rockefeller Foundation Committee on Reorganization officially resolved “that the Trustees approve in principle a plan for extending the scope of the work of the Foundation to include the advancement of knowledge in the fields of the Natural Sciences, the Humanities and Arts, and Agriculture and Forestry”; “Report,” May 23, 1928, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 1.

some of the important officers of the Memorial are antagonistic to adoption in the RF as they have considered the RF as a rather hidebound organization and have felt that the strength of the Memorial resided largely in its elasticity.” Yet Gunn also added, “I do feel that whatever happens in connection with the reorganization, the work in social sciences should be in closer relation with the other RF activities than exists at the present time.” Here was the main point, even as recognized by a critic: that there were valid reasons why the social sciences program should be in closer connection with other Foundation programs. Gunn recorded, for example, an idea that others – including Vincent – believed about how the Foundation’s work in health and medicine could benefit: “...that if aid from the Division of Social Sciences were available, a really complete picture could be obtained of the conditions under which people live in the areas which are about to be surveyed – this would probably be much more significant than a mere survey of health conditions.” Gunn’s main points were really the essence of the matter: that whereas a benefit of flexibility had existed under the Memorial, by 1928 there was a recognized cost of continued maintenance of the separation between social sciences and other sciences. The social sciences had grown up, and the cost of continued separation was beginning to be a failure to develop various Foundation programs as effectively as they could be. Foundation leaders also concluded that some established divisions at the Foundation already had a bit of a social science dimension to them. The International Health Division, for example, was in the business of doing projects along the line of social surveys, and this was work which could benefit from an inclusion of the best available social science methods.<sup>379</sup>

<sup>379</sup> Selskar M. Gunn to George E. Vincent, March 6, 1928; Interview by Selskar M. Gunn of R.M. Taylor, September 29, 1928, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 1.

The official beginning of the Rockefeller Foundation's Division of Social Sciences came on January 3, 1929. The statement of guiding principles was ratified. Edmund E. Day was appointed Director. The immediate focus for the new division was to maintain the social sciences program as already structured. Existing financial commitments were maintained, and evaluation of grant proposals was continued. One substantial open commitment was an obligation to the University of Chicago to support construction of a Social Science Research Building on the campus. The occasion of the grand opening turned out to be a suitable time to take stock of the past, as well as raise ideas about possible futures for Rockefeller-supported social science.<sup>380</sup>

The dedication ceremony for the new building took place in December 1929. A number of social science leaders presented papers at the event, with Wesley C. Mitchell, Howard Odum and William Beveridge among them. Beardsley Ruml presented a paper exploring "Recent Trends in the Social Sciences." The paper was Ruml's first detailed exploration of the overall state of social science since his 1922 policy memorandum. Ruml spoke in detail about the structure and direction that the Memorial had helped create for social science.<sup>381</sup>

The question was outdated whether social science was true science, Ruml believed. Genuine scientific status had been solidified by new quantitative methods, by raised empirical standards, and by opportunities to apply knowledge. Further adding to the

<sup>380</sup> On January 3, 1929, the Rockefeller Foundation's Executive Committee adopted an eleven-point "Program and Policies in Social Science," RAC-RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 1.

<sup>381</sup> RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 70, Folder 760. Formal opening of the Social Science Research Building took place on December 16 and 17, 1929. Persons speaking at the two-day event included Robert M. Hutchins, Wesley C. Mitchell, Howard Odum, John C. Merriam (President of the Carnegie Institution), Milton C. Winternitz, William Beveridge, Harold G. Moulton, Célestin Bouglé, Franz Boas, C. Judson Herrick, Edwin B. Wilson (President of the Social Science Research Council), and Beardsley Ruml.



attainment of scientific status was actually a more holistic and descriptive method in the works. This latter development stemmed partly from the need to use multiple social sciences to study any particular problem. Rummler explained this unity of scientific study was the only way to obtain complete understanding, i.e., that the only way to bring multiple scientific reports together as one competent explanatory package was with a holistic, descriptive method. This method was required, in part, because more attention needed to focus on “the importance of irrational factors” in society. The new mix of quantitative and descriptive social science, based on principles of rationality as well as irrationality, Rummler believed was going to complete the journey to objective social science that was now ready for its time of earnest application. “The value of descriptive analysis at the present stage of social inquiry seems to be much more generally accepted by those who have seen clearly and who have emphasized the value of quantitative methods when properly applied.” Evidence for this acceptance included recognition of “the tremendous importance of irrational factors in shaping the conduct of an individual.”<sup>382</sup>

A potential drag on progress, however, was that too many social scientists still held onto provincial territory. It was time to end artificial divisions between social sciences. It was time for an end to “the anachronistic categories of history, economics, sociology, psychology and so forth.” Social scientists now recognized there were “no fundamental segregations in the world of experience.” The holistic nature of real-world social problems meant that all social problems were ultimately intertwined with all others. And so all the social sciences were necessary. Rummler was optimistic on the whole, believing that social scientists were, at

<sup>382</sup> Beardsley Rummler, “Recent Trends in the Social Sciences,” RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 70, Folder 760, pp. 1-3, 5; copy also in RAC-RF, R.G.3, 910, Box 2, Folder 12. Reprinted as Beardsley Rummler, “Recent Trends in Social Science,” in Leonard D. White, ed., *The New Social Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930): 99-111.

long last, pushing past the “vested academic interests” that were so “very strong” in trying to privilege one social science in competition against others. Although increased pursuit of quantitative methods had stemmed partly from “a desire to acquire academic prestige,” the “passing of interest in status” was having “a wholesome effect” on research.<sup>383</sup>

Ruml spoke as a person “who has had much to do with social scientists and very little indeed to do with social science.” Yet his experience allowed him to speak about relations between “the internal situation in social science” and “the external situation as it affects and is likely to be affected by the development of social science.” This distinction was close to the familiar one between discovery of knowledge and application of knowledge. Ruml believed social science can be completely separated from advocacy. Idealizing the motives of social scientists, he admired their “increasing emphasis on a point of view in social research that seeks to eliminate the motive of social reform and betterment, and that views social phenomena as complex behavior of a naturalistic world.” “The interest of the investigator,” Ruml added, “is centered simply on an understanding of social events, and he attempts to eliminate judgments of value and as far as possible the presence of any ethical bias. This tendency toward an emphasis on objectivity is no doubt on the whole one of the more hopeful signs in social research today.” The separation between scientific discovery and political activity was, it seemed to Ruml, finally achieved.<sup>384</sup>

<sup>383</sup> Beardsley Ruml, “Recent Trends in the Social Sciences,” 1-3, 5.

<sup>384</sup> Beardsley Ruml, “Recent Trends in the Social Sciences,” 1-3, 6-7. Ruml added: “It is a sound instinct which causes the social scientist to avoid the humanistic approach in the statement and study of problems requiring scientific analysis, and to deplore the presence of the humanistic bias when it creeps in to vitiate what purports to be objective analysis of social behavior.” (p.7) Note might be made of a paper presented by Selskar M. Gunn at Princeton University in 1930, also on the subject of the Foundation’s new policy in the social sciences; RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 2.

Also speaking at the grand opening was Robert M. Hutchins, the Yale law school friend of Ruml, who was now Chancellor of the University of Chicago. Hutchins highly admired Ruml and his Memorial leadership. In his speech at the building's dedication, Hutchins nearly credited the creation of modern social science to the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, which "in its brief but brilliant career did more than any other agency to promote the social sciences in the United States."<sup>385</sup>

### 9.5 A shift in psychology projects by the early 1930s

By the 1930s, support of various important research projects still progressed under Rockefeller Foundation support. One field of serious attention continued to be psychology, or as it was now more often called, "behavioral science." The rapid rise of the "new" psychology is typified by the famous case of the Hawthorne Study, which has been noted. By 1930, the latest discovery by researchers at the Hawthorne factory was that the creation of work clusters, often times with teams of six employees, produced conditions in which certain worker decisions were no longer being made by individuals, but by the work groups as a whole.<sup>386</sup>

In November 1931, Harvard University's G. Elton Mayo, who had moved to Harvard from the University of Pennsylvania, was invited by Western Electric to study how the new work groups reached group decisions about how productive to be. Mayo reevaluated essentially all that had been done in the Hawthorne Study since 1924. The outcome of

<sup>385</sup> Robert M. Hutchins, "Address in Dedication," in Leonard D. White, ed., *The New Social Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930): 1.

<sup>386</sup> In addition to the few psychology projects cited through this short section, some psychiatry research was also supported by the Rockefeller Foundation; see Katherine Angel and Edgar Jones, *European Psychiatry on the Eve of the War: Aubrey Lewis, the Maudsley Hospital and the Rockefeller Foundation in the 1930s* (London: Wellcome Trust Center for the History of Medicine, 2003).

Mayo's half-year reevaluation fit with his long-running approach by bridging psychology to economics. In one particular study Mayo looked at a group of fourteen male bank-wiring operators and found a phenomenon of peer pressure helped explain how group-level values actually determine each individual's performance. Because ultimately a worker in any work group wants job security, all workers in a group reach a subtle understanding to "belong" to the group by having each one not work so productively as to show up the others in the group. Based on worker interviews, Mayo's research team concluded that the prevailing factor was not individual compensation for individual output (which of course still played some role), but was a need for group "belongingness." The situation of group behavior was shown to be dynamic and complex, possibly even beyond what any reasonable social science could hope to fully explain. Each person in a group was part of the whole, yet each part was not separate from every other part. The group was the combination of its parts, and above all, it was the relationship between the parts that really mattered. A new kind of social science argument – a complexity argument – was being born.<sup>387</sup>

Another Memorial-supported research development in psychology that continued into the 1930s was at Yale University. As a result of what was accomplished in Yale's psychology research between 1924 and 1929, Angell proposed the time was right to create a more formalized structure for Yale's psychology research. In 1929, Yale took its Rockefeller-supported projects and grouped them into two institutes, an Institute of Psychology and an Institute of Human Relations. One noteworthy accomplishment by the Institute of Psychology during the 1930s was a line of research that by decade's end came

<sup>387</sup> See Richard C. S. Trahair, *The Humanist Temper: The Life and Work of Elton Mayo* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1984). See also Richard P. Gillespie, *Manufacturing Knowledge: A History of the Hawthorne Experiments* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Stephen R.G. Jones, "Was there a Hawthorne Effect?," *American Journal of Sociology* 98 (1992): 451-68.

together in *Frustration and Aggression* (1939). Written by a team of Yale social scientists, the book argued that social science was on the cusp of consolidating enough knowledge of human behavior to end all wars. The work, however, was still a deterministic kind of holdover at a time when a new view of social reality – and therefore of the abilities and limitations of social scientists – had already come to the fore. The book, to its credit, was interdisciplinary, which was a strength. Another strong-point to the book was that the argument did at least purport to be environmentalist – which was another important shift in social science between the early 1920s and late 1930s. However the environmentalism in the book was so overshadowed by the simplified, complexity-ignoring argument that the book likely did more damage than good for the environmentalist argument. The goal of Yale’s social researchers in the book was “to place within a common discourse such diverse phenomena as strikes and suicides, race prejudice and reformism, sibling jealousy and lynching, satirical humor and criminality, street fights and the reading of detective stories, wife-beating and war.” At the center of such an eclectic and awkward grouping was to be one core principle: that “Aggression is always a consequence of frustration.” Entirely missing was any other kind of reason for aggression between people, groups, and nations.<sup>388</sup>

<sup>388</sup> Angell proposed the change in James R. Angell, “A Program for an Institute of Human Relations at Yale University,” May 20, 1928, RAC–LSRM, Series 3, Box 79, Folder 826. The study by Yale University is John Dollard et al., *Frustration and Aggression* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939): 26-7. On the subject of research by Yale’s Institute of Human Relations during the 1930s, see Jill G. Morawski, “Organizing Knowledge and Behavior at Yale’s Institute of Human Relations,” *Isis* 77, 287 (1986): 219-42; James Capshew, “The Yale Connection in American Psychology: Philanthropy, War, and the Emergence of an Academic Elite,” in Theresa Richardson and Donald Fisher, eds., *The Development of the Social Sciences in the United States and Canada: The Role of Philanthropy* (Stamford, Conn.: Ablex Publishing Corp., 1999): 143-54; see also Gregg Mitman and Richard W. Burkhardt, Jr., “Struggling for Identity: The Study of Animal Behavior in America, 1930-1945,” in Keith R. Benson, Jane Maienschein and Ronald Rainger, eds., *Expansion of American Biology* (New Brunswick & London: Rutgers University Press, 1991): 164-94. For a history of the aggression theory of war, see Paul Crook, *Darwinism, War, and History: The Debate over the Biology of War from the Origin of Species to the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

At the University of Pennsylvania, social researchers of the early 1930s saw the Great Depression as a natural experiment to be studied. Penn already had an interest in studying impacts of factory conditions and industrial environments on individual well-being. The suddenly extreme impact of catastrophic levels of unemployment was a pressing research concern. A provocative programmatic piece, assisted by financial support of the Rockefeller Foundation (as well as by the SSRC), asked: “Is Industrial Psychology Making the Most of the Depression?” Penn’s Rex B. Hersey articulated a central idea to identify “those research opportunities which the present depression offers.” “What unique opportunities does this depression present for gaining new light on the feelings, attitudes and efficiency of workers as affected by their experiences?” Hersey believed he found that the widespread principle of psychological “irrationality” might be better studied by understanding the relationship between “economic cycles” in the industrial economy and “emotional cycles” in man. This idea, again, typified the beginnings of a shift: a shift to a world of complexity.<sup>389</sup>

Also in the field of psychology by the 1930s, two decade’s worth of fine research at the Iowa Station resulted in an informed opinion that adherents to the Stanford-Binet “IQ” test (most notably Lewis M. Terman of Stanford University and Florence L. Goodenough of the University of Minnesota) were mistaken to believe a child’s intelligence could not be markedly affected by environmental stimulation; the nature-nurture relationship was much more complex than that. At the end of the decade of the 1930s, Iowa Station researchers would publish the important article, “Intelligence: Its Nature and Nurture,” elevating the argument that nature and nurture are interdependent variables, and that the development of a

<sup>389</sup> Rex B. Hersey, “Is Industrial Psychology Making the Most of the Depression?,” *The Personnel Journal* 10, 3 (October 1931): 157-166, esp. 157. Also Rex B. Hersey, “Emotional Cycles in Man,” *Journal of Mental Science* 27 (January 1931):151-69; Hersey, “The Subjective Side of Factors in Industry,” *Journal of Industrial Hygiene*, 13, 6 (June 1931): 185-203. RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 75, Folders 794-795.

person's intelligence can be strongly influenced by positive nurturing experiences. This argument, although not immediately and warmly accepted by every psychologist, led to calls by Iowa Station Director George D. Stoddard to develop a national system of nursery schools. Stoddard's calls began by 1930 and gained momentum on the confidence that a child's intelligence was a product mostly of nurture.<sup>390</sup>

#### 9.6 Ideas about the overall structure of social science by the early 1930s

During the first couple years of the Foundation's Division of Social Sciences, various efforts were made by Foundation officers to understand the overall structure of supported social science. One continuing conceptual division remained the guiding distinction between studies in child welfare and studies in broader social science. Another long-standing division, also reaffirmed by the Foundation, was between support of social science through academic institutions, support through fellowship programs, and support through independent "central bodies" such as the NRC, the SSRC, the NBER, and the Brookings Institution. Something new was added after the January 1929 transition, which was a method of financial support known as the "fluid-funds" approach. This approach was a new twist on the older idea of block-grants to research centers, only that fluid-funds grants were for shorter periods of time, and had their renewal decisions more critically attended to by the Foundation. The fluid-funds program was a way to continue awarding general funds, both to established centers as

<sup>390</sup> Two balanced treatments of intelligence research at the University of Iowa between 1917 and 1940 are Henry L. Minton, "The Iowa Child Welfare Research Station and the 1940 Debate on Intelligence: Carrying on the Legacy of a Concern Mother," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 20 (April 1984): 160-76; Hamilton Cravens, *Before Head Start: The Iowa Station and America's Children* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993): esp. 135-9 for the beginnings of a national nursery school system during 1933 and 1934. The article "Intelligence: Its Nature and Nurture" is published in Guy Montrose Whipple, ed., *The Thirty-Ninth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education—Intelligence: Its Nature and Nurture*, parts 1 and 2 (Bloomington, IL: Public School Publishing, 1940).

well as to schools that were not centers. Numerous schools thereby had some opportunity to do with their grant money somewhat as they pleased. As it turned out, the fluid-funds approach also provided an incentive that recipient centers recognized they would eventually need to satisfy persons at the Foundation with the quality of their research accomplishments.<sup>391</sup>

Foundation trustees held a series of Staff Conferences through 1929 and 1930. In connection with these meetings, the trustees added a regular self-evaluation process through yearly reviews. At a January 1930 Staff Conference, for example, Director Day pointed out that Foundation-supported programs at universities were now being developed on the basis of three basic means: (1) continuing work “to establish high grade social science research at a number of centers scattered geographically”; (2) development of particular projects in “relation more to general schema [i.e., fields] in which effort in the S[ocial] S[cience] program is founded”; (3) the “fluid research funds” approach. The four U.S. centers were identified as Harvard, Chicago, Columbia and Brookings, while the LSE remained the premier research center in Europe. After these five major centers came UNC and Virginia, really “constitut[ing] one center” in the South. Also there were secondary centers such as Yale, Stanford, Vanderbilt, Tulane, and Texas. Day expressed encouragement of future officer reports on potential research fitting with the three basic means of supporting social

<sup>391</sup> A move made early in the period of transition was to focus on institutional centers with “fluid research funds.” Eleven schools were under the category of schools already assisted, with seven others listed as “possible additions” under a regional plan for granting fluid research funds. Twenty more schools were listed as also “entitled to consideration”; see “fluid funds” files, RAC–RF.



science. Day especially wanted to think more about subject areas fitting with the fields, or “general schema,” approach.<sup>392</sup>

Ruml, who was no longer active in Rockefeller philanthropy by this time, was willing to contribute some ideas as well. In October 1930, speaking to Foundation trustees and officers, Ruml addressed the subject of involvement in controversial research. The research centers and fluid-funds approaches worked well by allowing controversies to get hashed out by persons at academic institutions. Work done through the SSRC also succeeded at avoiding controversies, at least once the Memorial had figured out how best to interact with the SSRC’s work. Ruml even recalled that his list of guiding principles was originally created partly in response to early discussion about how to support the SSRC, as “there was a tendency at one time on the part of Memorial trustees to select from the projects which they [the SSRC] submitted a group which interested us mostly.” This latter point of Ruml’s recollection is important, revealing as it does that at certain points in its relatively short life the Memorial actually considered whether to try pursuing specific directions of social science research that it preferred. Clearly the Memorial had been conscious of this possibility, and had tried to protect against it. Ruml re-emphasized his hope that social scientists would increase their contact with real-world problems, saying that social science is useless when not in “intimate contact...with concrete social phenomena.”<sup>393</sup>

<sup>392</sup> Edmund E. Day made his presentation about major centers and regional centers in “Staff Conference,” January 14, 1930. Other staff conferences during 1930 were held on October 3rd and October 8th, RAC-RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 2.

<sup>393</sup> Beardsley Ruml, Report-Princeton Conference of Trustees and Officers, October 29, 1930, RAC-RF, R63, Series 900, Box 22, Folder 167, pp. 156-7. Ruml expressed additional words to the SSRC in September 1930, explaining he believed “the introductory courses in the various departments of social science are highly intellectualized, bookish and abstract.” Ruml again recommended that more first-hand experience be included as part of any graduate-education program in the social sciences; Ruml, “Each According to the Nature of His Own Experience,” September 30, 1930, Beardsley Ruml Papers, Special Collections Department, University of Chicago Libraries, Series II, Box 1, Folder 11. Another relevant document is a final Memorial report written by

### 9.7 The boundary question again–1931-34

In the beginning of the ‘age of complexity’ a matter again coming to the fore was the boundary question. In December 1931, in connection with the European program, Selskar M. Gunn asked, for example, whether to support research in public administration and community organization; such research would be more reform-oriented than anything previously tried in Europe. A clearer example of interest in the boundaries of social science came up with respect to the question whether urgent projects should include language research. According to Gunn’s line of reasoning, such research even had some potential to assist peaceful international relations in Europe.<sup>394</sup>

Another idea with respect to the question of the structure and boundaries of social science was to evaluate uses freely made of fluid-funds awards. The specific idea was to identify categories of social science based on self-initiated projects as they were pursued by fluid-fund grant recipients. Columbia University, for example, came up with sixty projects towards which they applied fluid funds. In 1933, Sydnor Walker (who Day had retained from

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Ruml, and submitted in 1931; Ruml, Final Report, Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, 1918-29, RAC-LSRM, Series II, Box 1, Folder 52; also in Ruml Papers, University of Chicago, Series I, Box 5, Folder 3. After he left the Memorial, Ruml went on to do much economic policy analysis during the 1930s. In particular, while working as director of the New York Federal Reserve Bank in 1937 and 1938, Ruml helped convince President Roosevelt that Keynesian deficit spending policies were legitimate and needed. Ruml served as advisor to President Roosevelt. He also served as dean of Chicago’s Division of the Social Sciences. Ruml was appointed chairman of the Board of Directors of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. Historian Amity Shlaes describes Ruml as the “father of the modern American state,” largely based on Ruml’s ideas about income taxation during the Depression and World War Two; see Amity Shlaes, *The Greedy Hand: How Taxes Drive Honest Americans Crazy and What to Do About It* (New York: Random House, 1999); also Robert M. Collins, “Positive Business Responses to the New Deal: The Roots of the Committee for Economic Development, 1933-42,” *Business History Review* 52 (Autumn 1978): esp. 382-3.

<sup>394</sup> Discussion about the European program in terms of how much effort to put into the fields of community organization and planning and public administration is in Selskar M. Gunn to Edmund E. Day, December 31, 1931, RAC-RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 2. The example of the language-research boundary question between humanities and social sciences was raised by Gunn in a 3 May 1932 discussion memorandum, RAC-RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 2.

Ruml's staff) and Raymond Fosdick also discussed an idea to study all uses of fluid funds. Yet another new evaluative approach came up in 1933 in the form of in-house analysis, as Day offered an opinion that the Foundation's efforts could be usefully analyzed by exploring the division of grants between the "General" and "Specific" programs, which it seemed were being allocated approximately equally.<sup>395</sup>

In 1934, in a memorandum considering "grants-in-aid" over a five-year period, an added idea was to identify every kind of research covered by such grants, of which there were ninety-two projects, classifiable into four broad categories. In early 1934 Sydnor Walker and John Van Sickle asked about the possibility of studying all supported psychology projects to see what distinguishable subfields may have emerged over time in these grant applications, and during the next couple years Day would also recommend perhaps trying to learn more along similar lines by evaluating all fellowship applications. An especially clear proposal to study fellowship applications was to analyze how the applicants described their own projects.<sup>396</sup>

<sup>395</sup> R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 3. Florn M. Rhind, writing to Edmund E. Day, had an idea to make "a study of the use of fluid S[ocial] S[cience] research funds in the various universities." Rhind cited Columbia University where sixty projects were undertaken between 1928 and 1932. Rhind's main point was to suggest much might be learned by studying all grant recipients to see what fields were emphasized at different schools; Rhind to Day, March 13, 1933. Day the same wrote a memorandum recommending that over the next three to five years the amount of two million dollars ought to be awarded roughly equally between the "General" program (including institutional centers, fellowships, and small projects & grants-in-aid) and the "Specific" program (including research on economic stabilization, international relations, and community organization & planning). Day saw this division as consistent with the way the social science program "falls into two main parts: (1) a general program designed to promote certain interests over the entire range of the social sciences; and (2) a program of specific concentration in fields of special interest," "Proposed Social Science Program of the Rockefeller Foundation," March 13, 1933, RAC-RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 3, pp. 1-2.

<sup>396</sup> More discussion about classifying the uses of fluid funds is in Sydnor H. Walker to R.B. Fosdick, November 16, 1934. In a December 1934 memorandum, four main categories of grants-in-aid to social science were: development of potential social science centers; development of work in economic planning and control; development of work in international problems; aid to former fellows. This four-category division evidently had held since 1931; see "Analysis of Foundation Grants-In-Aid in the Social Sciences," December 10, 1934, RAC-RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 3. Sydnor H. Walker, Associate Director of the Division of the Social Sciences, shared with John Van Sickle the idea that attention to psychology ought to be drawn along "several

Perhaps the idea somewhat widespread during the 1920s to unify social science would not pan out after all. The trustees admitted in December 1934 that the social sciences division covered “a most difficult field” in which to identify which fields and subfields are which. The field titled “social science” was made so difficult partly because of “a generic title which includes many areas of thought and discipline.” A question to be asked was, What kinds of projects did people around the world put under such a broad title? By enacting an idea to peruse fellowships awarded by the Division of Social Sciences in the year 1933, the trustees came up with 26 fields of social science that were covered that year. The field of economics (with 43 awards) and the field of sociology (with 24) received well over forty percent of the total 163 awards. Yet there was also quite a range of classifications, as only half the number of total fields (13 out of 26) received more than two grant awards.<sup>397</sup>

The extensive discussion during the early 1930s on the subject of classifying subfields of social science is evidence of ongoing change and uncertainty about what lines might exist between social science and non-social science.

### 9.8 The Great Depression and the idea of economic experiments

In addition to the psychologists mentioned already in this chapter, there were other social scientists beginning to understand that evidence rapidly gathered by social scientists through the 1920s revealed few if any single-factor causes existed for behavioral or social

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divisions for psychological projects”: group behavior; experiments bearing upon individual behavior; projects in psychiatric clinics; psychological laboratories; Sydnor H. Walker to John Van Sickle, February 15, 1934, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 3. Day, on 6 December 1933, wrote a memo saying that since January 1929 there had been no program specifically aimed at providing special fellowships and visiting professorships for Americans interested in doing research abroad. Perhaps a new such program could be started that would need to be limited “strictly to cases involving work in which the Foundation has a particular interest;” Edmund E. Day, “Memorandum,” December 6, 1933, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 3.

<sup>397</sup> “The Social Sciences,” December 11, 1934, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folder 13.

phenomena. By the 1930s, psychologists at Penn were not the only social scientists seeing the Great Depression as a situation worth studying. Depression-era social problems needed answers more than ever, as the condition of the 1930s represented such an extreme national laboratory that reform experiments really seemed called for. One group of social scientists taking a lead in this mission were economists, such as Wesley Mitchell, who began to understand that the world of factors to be studied and explained is a complex, interactive, and interdependent world.<sup>398</sup>

Effects of the Great Depression took hold at the Rockefeller Foundation by 1931. Realization set in that funds were limited, and that summer, Director Edmund E. Day presented a series of memoranda. Day, a Harvard-trained statistician and economist, came to the Foundation at Ruml's invitation in the mid-1920s. Just prior to that Day was dean of the school of business at the University of Michigan. In one memorandum in 1931, Day dealt with his personal view of the relationship between social science and social technology. Day's discussion of social technology was, in effect, a policy statement. His words reveal the Foundation's continuing awareness of duties to aid economic and social reform. The increased urgency of economic and social reform was evidence that it was again time to evaluate the relationship between social science and social technology. What seemed needed, to Day, was more focus on points of contact between the two, such that social technology could be used to help social science establish validity of scientific discoveries. Schools of social technology could be used to "bridge the gap between research and practice," thereby seeing to it that results of research are given "practical effectiveness." "The social scientist is

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<sup>398</sup> Wesley C. Mitchell, *Business Cycles: The Problem and Its Setting* (New York: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1927); Mitchell, "Research in the Social Sciences," in Leonard D. White, ed., *The New Social Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930): 4-15.

almost helpless in testing his hypotheses and conclusions unless he secures the collaboration of those in direct contact with social situations.” It was time, Day believed, to get in such direct contact. It was time to take an experimental approach to testing scientific ideas. It was time to start doing real reform. “If the Foundation is interested in the practical consequences of research in the social field, it cannot safely ignore the fundamental forces brought to bear through the major lines of social technology.”<sup>399</sup>

A second of Day’s memoranda in 1931 concerned the value of studying the success of Soviet Russia’s planned economy. In his report on Russia’s planned economy, Day stated “that unless the problem [of economic recession] can be solved or at least measurably reduced, the present social order [in the United States] is in serious jeopardy...This prognosis is given added force by recent developments in Russia.” Russian activities seemed to be showing that a radically different kind of economic order could eliminate cycles of booms and recessions. Day emphasized the value in seeing the Soviet economy as an experiment meriting careful study. “The Five-Year Plan of the Soviet Government is manifestly an experiment of uncertain outcome. It may end in complete collapse. On the other hand, it threatens to succeed at least to the extent of establishing an economic order in which,

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<sup>399</sup> The “general thesis” of Day’s statement is that “Schools of social technology in bridging the gap between research and practice and in training future leaders in the major branches of social administration play a most important role in the fruitful advance of knowledge in the social fields.”(p.2) Day argued for “limited” continued support of social technology on the premise: “The social scientist is almost helpless in testing his hypothesis and conclusions unless he secures the collaboration of those in direct contact with social situations.” Day added at-length: “Since in the last analysis, the Foundation is interested in the advancement of knowledge, not as an end in itself, but as a means to the ‘well-being of mankind throughout the world,’ attention has to be paid to the processes by which the results of research are given practical effectiveness. This proposition, so far as the social studies are concerned, leads at once in the direction of social technology – or social engineering – with its well-recognized divisions of business, law, public administration and social work. It is largely through the operations of these branches of social technology that changes in our social institutions and social practices take place. If the Foundation is interested in the practical consequences of research in the social field, it cannot safely ignore the fundamental forces brought to bear through the major lines of social technology.” Edmund E. Day. “Continuation of Limited Program in Support of Schools of Social Technology,” July 1931, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folder 12.

however low the standards of living achieved, instability will be largely eliminated. The Russian system is in principle in unparalleled degree a planned system.”<sup>400</sup>

As to the factor of Depression-era spending limits at the Foundation, by August 1931 the Foundation trustees knew they were dealing with significantly curtailed available resources. They responded with new measures of success. One idea was to begin evaluating return on the dollar, that is, to learn more about the status of different fields of social science by applying a kind of cost-benefit analysis. Citing the “statement of governing principles” prepared for the Foundation by the Memorial in 1928, the Foundation trustees said: “The time now seems ripe for a restatement of specific objectives so that the activities of the Foundation in this field may be planned more pointedly and the results gauged more accurately. In this connection estimates of the financial implications of the program should be carefully weighed.” With supported programs being evaluated partly in terms of return on the dollar, results of reform programs could be evaluated by objective standards.<sup>401</sup>

Reform results were especially wanted from the Division of Social Sciences’ program in “economic stabilization.” The overall economic situation of western nations, especially the United States, was severely “destabilized” by 1931. In a September report, Day opined that instability of the U.S. economy threatened the entire social order, and that the urgent need was to respond to the economic crisis. “The present crisis has developed to a point such that little of immediate importance can be done except by political, financial and industrial bodies that can act directly.” Because of the economic crisis, direct reform action seemed required,

<sup>400</sup> Edmund E. Day, “Memorandum,” September 21, 1931, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 2, pp. 1-3. For further information on the idea of control and its limits, see A.L. Kroeber, et al., *How Far Are Social Forces Controllable?* (San Francisco: Social Science Research Council, 1933).

<sup>401</sup> “Proposed Social Science Program of the Rockefeller Foundation,” August 10, 1931, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folder 12.

and Day started narrowing down a preferred research direction: “It seems likely that the major problems affecting the well-being of mankind will be, for some little time to come, economic, social and political problems. We do not foresee shortages of basic materials such as copper, oil or iron; nor limitations on sources of power or of food; nor catastrophic climate or geological changes; nor pestilence.” Thus, there were certain facets of economic research that Day ruled out for any need to attend to, and these were matters concerning technological capacities. “If it is plausible,” he added, “that the major problems of this and the next generation are and will be economic, social and political in character, it follows that attention should be directed toward those activities which may provide the means of their solution.” It might even be necessary to consider areas “in which work not conforming to conventional conceptions of research might be undertaken.” Some specific areas of research could even be advocated, including basic statistical series (“a major necessity for the advancement of all scientific efforts in the social field”) and “A comprehensive project for the study of American national political policy should be supported.” Day also pointed out that there were now five special areas in which the severity of problems justified “an intensive program of study, experiment, demonstration and operation”: economic stabilization; public administration; international relations; education; and urban life. The Foundation’s Division of the Social Sciences had its stated opinion, then, that the most urgent problems now revolved largely around economic matters.<sup>402</sup>

Also in the September 1931 report, Day stated for the Foundation’s board of trustees why a program of study was needed for business cycles: “The costs imposed by serious

<sup>402</sup> Edmund E. Day, “Proposed Foundation Program in Economic Stabilization,” September 14, 1931, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folder 12.



business depression – of demoralization, broken health, disorganized families, neglected children, lowered living standards, permanent insecurity, impaired morale, as well as financial distress – are so appalling when viewed socially as well as individually that no problem of this generation calls more clearly for solution than this of economic stabilization.” Day added that the ability of “the present social order” to measurably reduce acute economic and social ills was highly in question – that the need “for more constructive experiment is all too obvious.” In fact it was past time for the Foundation to get involved in “the wise development of that social planning and control which seems ultimately so necessary and inevitable if contemporary civilization is to survive.”<sup>403</sup>

The next chapter picks up the story of an increased focus on economic research where this chapter leaves off. Day remains the guiding figure, while the new factor on the scene is increased uncertainty about financial and political conditions.

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<sup>403</sup> Day, “Proposed Foundation Program in Economic Stabilization.”

## CHAPTER 10. ECONOMIC RESEARCH AND THE END OF THE “GENERAL” PROGRAM–1932-38

### 10.1 Introduction

This chapter studies how the Rockefeller Foundation increasingly turned to emphasizing economic research during the 1930s. Many developments in social science through the 1920s and into the early 1930s reached a point that social scientists recognized limitations existed when it came to explaining causes and consequences of human behavior in a complex world. The “unity of science” movement came to an end with the discovered fact that social situations are made from many complex and interacting variables. In this chapter we find economists facing the extreme complexity of the Great Depression and its causes and consequences.

### 10.2 Outside opinion about the value of an economics focus–1932

In late 1932, roughly a year following Director Edmund Day’s programmatic memorandum for a research field in economic security, the Rockefeller Foundation’s Division of Social Sciences began seeking outside input concerning possible goals for an economics program. Day contacted Rexford G. Tugwell, an economic advisor to Franklin Roosevelt during the 1932 presidential campaign, and asked Tugwell for thoughts about where the Foundation’s social science program should go. Tugwell responded with an idea that the nation’s economy desperately needed experimental reconstruction. Tugwell questioned whether there could ever be clean separation between social science and social technology. Economists weren’t going to find clear, distinct and predictable economic truths

about all economic conditions, and they needed to begin active debate of alternative reform applications of scientific knowledge. For decades economists had believed “that laissez-faire and rugged individualism assured the maximum production of goods, and that the unguided prolific productivity of the machine for purposes of business success would disperse comfort and leisure throughout society.” But it now seemed clear, “the machine has broke down.” Prolonged depression conditions showed Tugwell “that we have almost no social mechanism to cope with the situation.” A specific barrier to change, Tugwell reasoned, is that “we have not become habituated to processes of thought which might enable us to commence an experimental reconstruction of our present milieu.” The social sciences must become “implements of progress.”<sup>404</sup>

Tugwell suggested that major weaknesses of modern economic research could be seen when “illustrated by surveying three major aspects of economics today: (1) the rigid and unrevised theoretical basis of economics, (2) the non-ethical character of economic science, (3) the unguided and prolific character of economic research.” He addressed what he meant by “non-ethical character,” saying a question to be asked in any economic research, as in all social research, was this: “[W]hether they should be purely factual and descriptive [sciences] or whether they should deal with values in the form of social *desiderata*”? “[S]hould the general direction of research follow social needs, these needs being constantly redefined in the light of new findings, or should research be ‘pure research’?” Tugwell presented his criticism of any supposed separation between detached science and reform applications, saying that “The limiting of the social sciences to examination and description is justified [by

<sup>404</sup> Rexford G. Tugwell, “Proposal,” October 1932, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 2, pp. 1-2; also Sydnor H. Walker to R.G. Tugwell, October 25, 1932, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 2.

some] on the ground that it is 'scientific.' Only quantitative measures are employed, and an attempt is made to banish all ethical concepts and all ideas arrived at philosophically. Of course, it is impossible to do this." The truth is that any economist imposes values simply by the act of selecting which problems to study; "the pursuit of facts is accompanied always by a moral purpose." "In research, definite areas must be designated for exploration. By making more articulate the basis for the selection, the trend of economics would become clearer and the opportunities for an economics of social welfare would increase."<sup>405</sup>

Tugwell explored what economic science should become. The social sciences as a whole "deal largely with [institutional] organisms that exist only because men established them." In dealing with entities willfully built, any social scientist studying such entities deals with "questions of ought." Should a particular institutional form have been established? Should it be adjusted or dismantled? Tugwell suggested what was needed was "new theoretical formulations." What was needed was research "directed along socially needed lines." Economics, in particular, must become "a science of social welfare rather than of wealth." The time was right, Tugwell declared, to create a new kind of economics institute. "Facilities must be created for the synthesis, interpretation, evaluation, animation [i.e., application] and use of particularistic studies in the light of general welfare theory." Tugwell understood why the great foundations did things cautiously in the past when it came to creating new economic research institutes; "insofar as they aid research, [foundations] must guard against two dangers: first being charged with favoritism, and secondly, being accused of using their influence to advance pet projects. In steering clear of these evils, the

<sup>405</sup> Tugwell, "Proposal," 3. The "trend of economics" was something Tugwell worked to understand at the time; see Rexford Guy Tugwell, ed., *The Trend of Economics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1924).

foundations have developed a policy of wise eclecticism in selecting research organizations deserving of aid. Beyond this, the foundations are not policy forming institutions.” But it was time for this to change.<sup>406</sup>

Tugwell proposed an “Institute for the Study of Social Administration.” The institute “would be a research and cooperative group rather than a teaching institution or an organ for directing outside research projects.” The institute would be “a compact well-coordinated body” with as many as fourteen research divisions corresponding to an explosion in fields of modern economics as they had been distinguished in recent years. Each division “ought to draw to it an average of five or more of the world’s greatest scholars.” The institute would be quite large and would be overseen by perhaps three committees, held “separate from the departments but coordinate with them.” One committee would be a central statistical body; one would be responsible for “develop[ing] tentative five-year plans”; one overseeing committee would need to work to promote “democratic procedure everywhere in society.”<sup>407</sup>

Director Day appreciated Tugwell’s proposal, even recommending in-house discussion of the “useful material” in his outline of an organizational structure for a new institute for scientific study of social administration.<sup>408</sup>

Day’s invitation for ideas also brought a response from Florn M. Rhind, one of Day’s outside advisors, who joined others in believing it was time for the Foundation to start identifying specific projects to pursue. The unique financial position of the Foundation during the depression meant the Foundation had unique responsibilities with its discretionary funds. Specifically the Foundation had a duty to support applied experiments. However the

<sup>406</sup> Tugwell, “Proposal,” 6-7, 12-13, 15-16.

<sup>407</sup> Tugwell, “Proposal,” 33-35.

<sup>408</sup> Edmund E. Day, notes on board S.S. Manhattan, December 31, 1932, RAC-RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 2.

Foundation's social sciences program was still overly broad, according to Rhind, and even though such breadth may have been fine as a starting point, "there is much to be said for a gradual concentration of effort, for the selection of certain outstanding social problems upon which we can bend every effort." Rhind, like others at the Foundation, was interested in measuring progress. "How," he asked, "can we measure where we are going if we dabble here with a phase of one problem and there with a phase of another?" The Foundation's work in social science could benefit from "a careful reformulation of the more important contemporary social problems and a further examination of the means in our hands for contributing toward the solution of some of them." The Foundation needed to get away from working with the whole meshing of the social sciences and begin channeling all efforts to a few specific problems. The Foundation needed to identify specific problems in specific enough ways that possible solutions could be focused on.<sup>409</sup>

Rhind believed social science works best when using social technology as a means to test scientific propositions. To establish any scientific truths, "the tests of practical applications in the field are ordinarily indispensable." However this could be precarious stuff. "Embarking upon an aggressive campaign is delicate and dangerous work, but the Foundation is in position to take a bird's-eye view of the situation and can better determine the steps in a long-range program than a man or group whose vision is of necessity limited to certain fields in which he must work."<sup>410</sup>

<sup>409</sup> Florn M. Rhind to Edmund E. Day, October 31, 1932, RAC-RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 2.

<sup>410</sup> Rhind concluded "it would seem that we are devoting too large a share of our funds to the accumulation of data, and paying too little attention to efforts which seek a realization in society of current advances in social science." He also affirmed that "The hypotheses of social science can only rarely, if ever be proved or disproved by laboratory methods; the tests of practical applications in the field are ordinarily indispensable. Consequently, the possibilities of social experimentation are to be kept constantly in mind; and opportunities for practical

A third response to Day's request came from the Brookings Institution. Brookings social scientists argued the time was right to create an "Institute of Social Engineering." Similar to the letters from Tugwell and Rhind, the Brookings report focused on the need to toss the false dichotomy between pure and applied social science. Discovery of knowledge and application of knowledge must interconnect. "While many social agencies have been concerned with particular phases of the [nation's economic] problem and special studies have here and there been made, there has been no comprehensive attack upon the problem as a whole." The Brookings Institution added that "the inadequate and unstable program of relief efforts call attention anew to one of the greatest problems with which modern society is confronted," making "the present time particularly appropriate for improving the administration of private and public relief agencies of the sources of poverty and distress." The Brookings Institution strongly proposed a new research institute that should attempt "to conduct a series of studies into the sources of poverty designed to lay the foundation for constructive relief policies." The new institute would, "as far as possible, work with and through existing agencies concerned with the broad field of social relief."<sup>411</sup>

Between 1933 and 1937 much indeed would be done by the Foundation to promote economic research, including creation of a system of new research institutes. Through a mix of ideas received from outsiders as well as officer's reports, the Foundation began its work to get urgently needed economic research underway.

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demonstrations are to be utilized whenever they promise to throw light upon the validity of tentative social findings"; Florn M. Rhind to E.E. Day, October 31, 1932, RAC-RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 2.

<sup>411</sup> "A Proposal for an Institute of Social Engineering in the Brookings Institution," November 1932, RAC-RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 5, Folder 44. Some examples of Brookings Institution publications at the time were Harold G. Moulton, ed., *America's Capacity to Consume* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1934); Edwin G. Nourse, ed., *America's Capacity to Produce* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1934); Harold G. Moulton, ed., *Income and Economic Progress* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1935).

### 10.3 The need for economic research–1933-35

In April 1933, after taking into account many recommendations, the Foundation trustees began their move to increase support of economic research. An active stance for the Foundation was newly recognized as needed in order to fully address “the existing emergency” of the national economic recession with “realistic” research. But what exactly would it mean to take a more active stance? In a period of reflection of Memorial activities during the 1920s, Foundation trustees recalled what Ruml’s program was all about: “Scientific research in the social field was recognized as a major interest not as an end in itself but because of its possible usefulness for the advancement of human welfare. The social sciences were felt to be important for the shaping of measures of effective control to reduce such social ills as poverty, class and race conflict, and international warfare.” Though it was now a few years since Ruml’s period of directorship ended, it was now time to get busy identifying specific projects. The all-important rule was to be maintained, of course, that the Foundation should not directly do research.<sup>412</sup>

A variety of ideas were introduced and weighed during 1933. Lawrence Frank, in April, emphasized doing broad research on economic planning. He even cited as an example the increased role of chain stores as a new institutional form capable of helping achieve economic stability and social control. Chain stores were agents perhaps “mak[ing] the greatest single contribution toward a solution,” Frank even believed. Also in 1933, President Roosevelt appointed a few Foundation trustees to leadership positions in his federal emergency relief program – a matter which historian Donald Fisher interprets as a specific

<sup>412</sup> “Special trustees meeting,” April 1933, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folder 12, p. 38.



case in which the Foundation attained some direct influence on matters of economic policy. A particular idea encouraged by the Social Sciences Research Council in 1933 again somewhat resembled proposals by Tugwell, Rhind and the Brookings Institution the previous year. The SSRC's idea was for a new commission to study public policy.<sup>413</sup>

Foundation trustees considered the SSRC's proposal in particular, taking note of the SSRC opinion that "Prevailing economic and social conditions suggest the high desirability of [a] Foundation program directed specifically towards the existing emergency in so far as appropriate opportunities can be found." The trustees also noted the specific possibility under exploration: "The plans under consideration by the [Social Science Research] Council contemplate the creation of 'Commissions of Inquiry' to deal specifically with broad issues of public policy... Each Commission would consist of three to five social scientists of outstanding reputation, a publicist or man of affairs perhaps being sometimes included." The SSRC also stated a task for the commission, which would be "to canvass influential opinion on the issue under investigation, to assemble available dependable information on the issue, to sharpen and redefine the issue as far as possible, to expose its more significant implications, and finally to publish a report bringing all these matters effectively to the attention of governmental authorities and the public." In response to the SSRC's idea for a "Commission of Inquiry," the Foundation requested an outside report from Edgar S. Furniss, an economics professor at Yale University. The report was to help identify research problems

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<sup>413</sup> Lawrence Frank addressed a Foundation proposal for "studies of economic planning." He recommended including a study of retail distribution, the idea being that the chain store industry perhaps had "made the greatest single contribution toward a solution" of the problem of planning to meet consumer needs; L.K. Frank to Edmund E. Day, April 16, 1933, RAC-RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 3. See also RAC-RF, 1933, RG.1.1, Box 393, Folder 4657; RAC-RF, RG.3, Series 904, Box 4, Folder 25, 13 November 1933. See also Donald Fisher, *Fundamental Development of the Social Sciences: Rockefeller Philanthropy and the United States Social Science Research Council* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993).

on which the Foundation-supported SSRC could do well to get more active. The Foundation's interest to work more through the SSRC indeed produced the "Furniss Report," aiming to identify problems for which the SSRC was best suited to help, particular if a "Commissions of Inquiry" were to be established.<sup>414</sup>

#### 10.4 Planning to end the "general" program—1935-38

In December 1934, a major announcement was made at the Rockefeller Foundation: it was time to try an altered strategy at the Division of Social Sciences. Foundation trustees asked division officers to get busy submitting "concrete" program proposals. Emphasis was on the need for applied, real-world projects, and the Foundation trustees indicated they were tired of waiting. The trustees were even willing to act directly to identify what these applied projects should be. "In the Social Sciences, we recommend a frank shift of emphasis to concrete fields of application," the Foundation trustees declared. Division officers indicated to the Foundation trustees their readiness to respond by "develop[ing] carefully matured programs" as "officers' proposals."<sup>415</sup>

The idea to have social science division officers submit proposals focusing on applications was determined to be the beginning of a bigger transition at the Rockefeller Foundation's Division of Social Sciences. At the same meeting, Foundation trustees and division officers settled on a plan that the six-year-old Division of Social Sciences ought to

<sup>414</sup> "Special trustees meeting," April 1933, RAC-RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folder 12, pp. 103-4. In 1934, at the request of the Rockefeller Foundation Trustee Committee on Appraisal and Plan, Dean Edgar S. Furniss of the Graduate School of Yale University produced a "Report on the Council's General Purpose and Policy." The main objective of the so-called "Furniss report" was to describe SSRC activities for the purpose of helping the Trustees determine future financial support of the SSRC; Edgar S. Furniss, Report, RAC-RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 3, Folder 16.

<sup>415</sup> "Minutes of the Rockefeller Foundation," December 21, 1934, RAC-RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 1. See also "New Social Science Program," April 10, 1935, RAC-RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folder 13.

be terminated as a supporter of any kind of “general” research program. The social sciences had been put into better contact with other Foundation concerns since January 1929, and clear benefits had come from this. But now it was time to redefine, once again, the role of the social sciences at the Rockefeller Foundation. Probably it would be best to begin finding ways to end the general program by 1940.<sup>416</sup>

Of all the facets of the Foundation’s program in the social sciences, one of the most up-in-the-air in the immediate term was the program in Europe. The new director of the European program, Tracy B. Kittredge, was understandably concerned about the December 1934 resolution. Director Day wrote Kittredge to admit the December resolution could make it “appear that there is no S[ocial] S[ciences] program” for the future. Day got directly to the point: “The Appraisal Committee recommended that the general SS program which we have been conducting be discontinued. In discussion it was stated that the termination of this part of the program should be effected ‘as soon as practicable.’” Day wanted Kittredge to recognize, however, that “The Appraisal Committee also recommended that the officers be instructed to bring to the Board as soon as feasible recommendations with regard to [a] new program in the S[social] S[ciences] in fields of special interest.” Day recognized that personnel in the Division of Social Sciences might feel in limbo, as “even the old programs of concentration are essentially in abeyance” until a specific future plan is formally approved. Day, who was a strong supporter of the European program, wanted Kittredge to begin getting ready for the transition. “Will you not canvass the present status of items in this program on the European side to which we are giving current support and send... such recommendations as you may have.” Day hoped Kittredge could focus on economic research, and he explained

<sup>416</sup> “Minutes of the Rockefeller Foundation,” December 21, 1934, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 1.

that Kittredge's report would join with other reports already requested from divisional officers – reports covering the fields of international relations, economic stabilization, and public administration.<sup>417</sup>

Kittredge provided feedback expressing a belief that European work on the applications front remained ahead of that in the United States. “[T]he general development of factual study” was comparatively farther ahead in the United States, Kittredge allowed, whereas applied projects aimed “at providing a minimum security and economic stability to the masses by social legislation” were comparatively further ahead in Europe. During the 1920s, the Memorial, “in initiating a program in Europe, had in mind primarily the introduction of more realistic types of social study [which] has necessarily influenced the programs of the institutions aided.” While Kittredge was not going to attempt “to work out in any detail suggestions as to a specific new program” in Europe, he was glad to help identify unique strengths offered by the European situation.<sup>418</sup>

Kittredge's report, submitted in February 1935, discussed three kinds of economic research projects already receiving Foundation support in Europe: economic projects pursued at schools receiving institutional grants; research supported at specific institutes willing to take on economic projects requested by the Foundation; general support for institutes known to be concerned specifically with economic questions.<sup>419</sup>

<sup>417</sup> Edmund E. Day to Tracy Kittredge, January 1935, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 3.

<sup>418</sup> Kittredge added: “The grants that have been made by the Foundation in the last five years have to a great extent had in view the same objective as had determined the foundations of the Memorial.” This objective held true at European “institutional centers” at Stockholm, Copenhagen, Oslo, Paris, and the LSE. Kittredge also identified possible new fields for research in Europe: national government services; administration of economic activities and of social services; problems of local government and city planning; government of colonial dependencies; “General Policy Affecting Future Social Science Programs in Europe,” Tracy Kittredge to Sydnor Walker, January 23, 1935, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 3.

<sup>419</sup> Kittredge, “Project Program in the General Field of Economic Stability and Security,” February 11, 1935, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 4, Folder 29. Examples of the group receiving institutional grants included

Since Day's proposal memorandum, in September 1931, the division's program in "economic stabilization" was one of three main research programs for the division. Two years prior to that memorandum Day appointed Harvard-trained economist John Van Sickle as director of the social science division office in Paris. Tracy B. Kittredge was brought on board about the same time to assist Van Sickle. Van Sickle and Kittredge set to work gathering proposals from leading European economists, such as Friedrich Hayek in Vienna. Between 1931 and 1937, the Division of Social Sciences awarded grants to economics institutes in Berlin, Bonn, Bucharest, Budapest, Heidelberg, Kiel, Krakow, Louvain, Oslo, Paris, Rotterdam, Sophia, Stockholm, and Vienna. Several agencies of the League of Nations also received support, which among other studies, produced a series of business cycle papers by Gottfried Haberler. Research at the five institutes in Germany was especially impressive, as Kittredge reported to the trustees in late 1932.<sup>420</sup>

Day moved Van Sickle to the New York office in 1934, to take charge of the entire "economic stabilization and social security" program, and Kittredge assumed directorship of

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the LSE and the Institute of Social Sciences at Stockholm. "Fluid Research Funds" were used to support the University of Paris and the University of Oxford. Examples of institutes willing to take on economic projects were an Economic Research Department at the University of Manchester, a Vienna Business Cycle Research Institute, and other institutes at Kiel, Bonn, and Heidelberg. Examples of the third category were the Institute of Economic and Social Research at Paris, the Institute of Economics and History at Copenhagen, the Institute of Economics at Oslo, the Netherlands Economic Institute at Rotterdam, and the Economic Research Institute at Louvain. For some information about economics in Germany during the 1920s and early 1930s, see David Meskill, "Characterological Psychology and the German Political Economy in the Weimar Period (1919-1933)," *History of Psychology* 7 (2003): 3-19.

<sup>420</sup> Kittredge noted the German accomplishments in Tracy B. Kittredge, "The Social Sciences in Germany," August 9, 1932, RAC-RF, R.G.1.1, Series 717. Kittredge later surveyed the entirety of economic research in Europe in Tracy B. Kittredge, "European Institutes of Economic Research," February 7, 1938, RAC-RF, R.G.1.1, Series 700. In the latter report, Kittredge took time to evaluate differing degrees of success in different European nations. While impressed by research results in Great Britain and the Scandinavian countries, Kittredge was little impressed by the program in France. Especially worrisome by 1938 was the situation in Germany. See also Earlene Craver, "Patronage and the Directions of Research in Economics: The Rockefeller Foundation in Europe, 1924-1938," *Minerva* 24, 2-3 (Summer-Autumn 1986): 204-22, esp. 213-5; Neil DeMarchi and Peter Dohlman, "League of Nation's Economists and the Ideal of Peaceful Change in the Decade of the Thirties," *History of Political Economy* 23 (Spring 1991): 141-78.

the Paris office. Also in 1934, Day hired Stacy May as the fourth member of his administrative staff. (Day's assistant director was Sydnor Walker, who was retained from the Memorial days.) The Kittredge-led Paris office, which continued overseeing identification of European scholars for fellowship awards, began studying European research institutes to see if larger financial awards could be made. Probably the most noteworthy recipients were the University of Oslo, the University of Kiel, the University of Heidelberg, the Dutch Economic Institute in Rotterdam, and the Romanian Institute of Social Science in Bucharest.<sup>421</sup>

#### 10.5 Outside views of possible explanations for the shutdown process

Kittredge was by no means the only concerned respondent in 1935. Also responding to the Foundation's December 1934 decision to terminate the general program were concerned social scientists. In preparation for a March 1935 staff conference, for example, not only were six officers' reports to be prepared, but also some feedback was put on record from such persons as Columbia University economist Wesley Mitchell and University of California anthropologist A.L. Kroeber. Kroeber, in particular, worried that the decision to end the social sciences program might be interpreted as expert opinion that fundamental work in social science had failed. Citing the "reported recent intent to diminish or perhaps discontinue support of pure research in social science in favor of increased practical efforts in the contemporary social scene," Kroeber said he believed such a plan "raises certain fundamental questions." Any complete curtailment of general support of social science "will almost inescapably be construed as a verdict that social science has been tried and found

<sup>421</sup> See the Rockefeller Foundation's *Annual Reports* for the years 1930 through 1936 (New York: Rockefeller Foundation, 1930-36). See also the unpublished work diary of John Van Sickle in the Rockefeller Foundation Archives.

wanting.” One problem seemed to be a “premature and unfortunate use of the term “social science,”” which by its imitation of “natural science” brings expectations impossible to realize. Kroeber identified “good” social science by emphasizing that such science was a compound of historical studies, logical-deductive techniques, efforts to make a “genuine scientific approach to the determination of processes,” and some strategy to implement real-world experiments. The scheme of social science described by Kroeber ought to be clear, he believed, given that a dozen years’ attention has been paid to supporting economics, which clearly “contains all four strands.”<sup>422</sup>

New president of the Rockefeller Foundation Max Mason (formerly president of the University of Chicago) took time to consider Kroeber’s point of view. Mason identified workable points and responded that the overall argument was “interesting.” However it seemed Kroeber believed a more radical curtailment was coming than what was truly planned. In actuality a number of specific projects were going to be continued. Mason agreed with Kroeber’s point that – in Mason’s words – “no more difficult question can be put before the Trustees of an institution like the Foundation than the determination of the direction of effort ‘for the well-being of mankind.’” After recalling the Foundation’s charting motto, Mason conceded that the goal to increase emphasis on concrete experimental applications was difficult to execute in an objective and impartial manner. In contrast to 1929, when the goal for the social sciences program was still to work for “the advancement of knowledge,” by the mid-1930s a fundamental change at the Division of Social Sciences was seen as needed, that “With diminished income there was an added urge for concentration, and the

<sup>422</sup> The research field producing no report was economic stability, which was the central program of the six. The letters from Wesley Mitchell and A.R. Kroeber (a respected University of California anthropologist) are noted for the trustees in an inter-office correspondence by Foundation President Max Mason. The letter itself is A.L. Kroeber to Max Mason, April 1, 1935, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 3.

Trustees were obliged to make decisions on the basis of relative values.” But, Mason explained, the question was “what was more important for the well-being of mankind today”? The question should never be what is of “no value,” but is always “a question of relative values under altered conditions.” Mason explained to Kroeber that he preferred not “to believe [this] is an abandonment of interest in the fundamental aspects of the social science fields.” There would still be an interest in fundamental knowledge! The move to be made by the Foundation’s Division of Social Sciences was “towards adopting the same type of concentration that had been adopted in the natural sciences and medical science field.”<sup>423</sup>

In April 1935, officers’ reports began serving the shut-down purpose, as well as began trying to serve something new. The official record of that month’s trustee meeting declared what was now to be built was a “New Social Science Program.” As trustees got to the business of evaluating when and how to phase out different facets of the “general” program, they received five of the six requested field reports. The trustees decided more work was wanted on all these reports, with specific program proposals requested for submission by year’s end. The plan was also formally stated, at that time, that the “liquidation of Foundation obligations” to the general program in social science must be completed by June 30, 1940.<sup>424</sup>

<sup>423</sup> Max Mason to A.L. Kroeber, April 9, 1935, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 3.

<sup>424</sup> New proposals were to deal with research still to be pursued in international relations, economic security, public administration, public finance and taxation, housing, and criminology. The trustees also invited advice from leading social scientists. The Executive Committee, in exploring ways to execute “termination of general support of university research in the social sciences,” resolved to find every possible means to terminate obligations with “no injustice to the institutions hitherto aided and no irreparable damage to the programs in which Foundation funds have been invested.” “Support of certain institutional centers has been fundamental in the Foundations’ general program in the Social Sciences.” But the plan was now to end the “general program: in the social sciences. The Foundation respected the long-established strategy of building major centers at Columbia, Harvard, Chicago, Brookings and the London School of Economics. UNC and Virginia were now also considered as representing a kind of special southern center in the United States; see “Minutes of the Rockefeller Foundation,” April 10, 1935, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 1, pp. 99-100. The “New



While affirmation of the plan to terminate the general program no doubt came primarily for reasons that were openly offered (such as limited funds, urgent economic and social conditions, and the question of what successes the general program could have anyhow), there were other possible factors. One possible factor contributing to apparent retrenchment might have been the ever-present question of public perception. Some criticism got crystallized in 1934, for example, with publication of Matthew Josephson's classic book, *The Robber Barons*. In October 1935, Jerome Greene also suggested in a memorandum that the true locus of power in the Rockefeller Foundations remained with a small number of people, that all outside persons "having dealings with the Foundations" deal ultimately "with the authority of Mr. Rockefeller or of the somewhat mystical center of influence associated with his office." In some subsequent self-evaluative work, Raymond Fosdick also took time to ask whether there was bias within the Foundation. Fosdick made a survey that revealed the trustees indeed were drawn from the upper social classes, being persons primarily trained in the professions of attorney, banker, and businessman (and almost invariably working and residing in the New York City area).<sup>425</sup>

The question, of course, remained: Did the Rockefeller Foundation had adequate mechanisms in place to ensure that increased selection of specific projects under the "New Social Science Program" would be executed in an unbiased, disinterested manner. During the shutdown phase between 1935 and 1940, the one particular social science that especially

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Social Science Program" was adopted, and some examples of fairly concrete programs over the next couple years would include a project (beginning March 1935) by Eveline Burns to research economic security, and another (beginning May 1936) by Winfield Riefler to study social security and low cost housing; see "New Social Science Program," April 10, 1935, RAC-RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folder 13.

<sup>425</sup> Matthew Josephson, *The Robber Barons: The Great Capitalists, 1861-1901* (New York: Harcourt-Brace, 1934). Jerome D. Greene, "Memorandum on the Relation of the Trustees to the Policy and Control of the Rockefeller Foundation," October 20, 1935, RAC-RF, RG.3, Series 900, Box 19, File 141, p. 13. Raymond B. Fosdick to J.D. Rockefeller 3<sup>rd</sup>, October 20, 1936, RAC-RF, RG.3, Series 900, Box 1, Folder 2; see also Raymond B. Fosdick, "Memorandum," June 21, 1939, RAC-RF, RG.3, Series 900, Box 1, Folder 9.

continued receiving substantial financial support was economics. And there is definite evidence that support of economic research made reasonable effort to be balanced and objective.

#### 10.6 Economic research–1933-36

Events in Germany were turning worrisome. From as early as January 1931, in fact, Van Sickle recognized the importance of knowing who at the German economic institutes was Jewish. He admired Kiel institute director Bernhard Harms for appointing researchers without respect to religion or race. Among younger investigators appointed by Harms were Adolf Lowe and Hans Neisser, both German Jews. In charge of research on international trade at Kiel was Gerhard Colm, “an able, attractive young Jew.” In April 1933, just over two months after Hitler came to power, Colm and Neisser were forcibly removed from research duties at the institute. Lowe also departed the institute. Government interference with scientific research shortly led to Harms’s own resignation, by July. These removals and resignations were just a few of many across the sciences at German universities during 1933 and 1934.<sup>426</sup>

Van Sickle responded to the situation in Germany by withholding payment to the Kiel institute. However after reevaluating the situation, Van Sickle determined the withheld money should be paid. Because of Van Sickle’s perception in 1933 that “the only competent

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<sup>426</sup> Various letters and materials concerning these events are in RAC–RF, R.G.1.1, Series 717, Box 20, Folder 181. John Van Sickle’s words are in his “official” Foundation dairy, dated 10 January 1931, as located and quoted by Craver, “Patronage and the Directions of Research in Economics,” 216-7. Useful discussions of the state of social science in Germany around the year 1933 are Jack Jacobs, “‘A Most Remarkable Jewish Sect’? Jewish Identity and the Institute of Social Research in the Years of the Weimar Republic,” *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 37 (1997): 73-92; Hans Derks, “Social Sciences in Germany, 1933-1945,” *German History* 17 (1999): 177-219.

scholars there [at the German economic institutes] were the Jews who had now been expelled,” the money needed to be restored since “abrupt termination at this time would appear to mean that in the past the only scholars enjoying the confidence of the Foundation were Jews.” The Rockefeller Foundation also responded by implementing a special “grants-in-aid” fund to assist permanent relocation of exiled scholars. Over the next dozen years the Rockefeller Foundation would spend nearly \$1,500,000 for this purpose, which included 113 social scientists who were assisted by the program.<sup>427</sup>

By January and February 1935, John Van Sickle was busy at work on the specific economics research project for the future; this would begin with an “Economic Security Conference.” Fitting in ways with the kinds of ideas provided by Tugwell, Rhind, the Brookings Institution, the SSRC and the Furniss Report, Van Sickle’s underlying idea for the conference, as he emphasized in a letter to Columbia economist Evelyn Burns, was the problem “of economic security for the broad masses of the population.” Van Sickle teamed with Joseph Willits of the University of Pennsylvania to plan the conference, and Van Sickle

<sup>427</sup> Quotations located by Earlene Craver. The count of 113 refugee social scientists assisted by the Rockefeller Foundation is in Craver, “Patronage and the Directions of Research in Economics,” 218-9. Also cited by Craver is “Memorandum by John Van Sickle, of conversation with Jacob Marschak in Paris,” May 3, 1933, RAC-RF, R.G. 1.1, Series 717. See also Raymond B. Fosdick, *The Story of the Rockefeller Foundation* (New York: Harper, 1952): 276. I have found a variety of materials filed under “Deposed German Scholars,” dated February 16, 1935. These files include persons in every field covered by the Rockefeller Foundation. A count through this file finds 117 aid recipients. Out of this group, 34 were social scientists. The other groups were 34 scholars in the medical sciences, 28 in the natural sciences, and 21 in the humanities; RAC-LSRM, Series III, Box 51, Folder 547. For more information on Rockefeller-assisted refugee scholars in other fields see: Nathan Reingold, “Refugee Mathematicians in the United States of American, 1933-1941: Reception and Reaction,” *Annals of Science* 38 (1981): 314-38; Claus-Dieter Krohn, *Intellectuals in Exile: Refugee Scholars and the New School for Social Research*, translated by Rita Kimber and Robert Kimber (Amherst, MA.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994); Darwin H. Stapleton, “The Rockefeller Foundation, Refugee Scientists and Atomic Technology,” in George Marx, ed., *The Martians: Hungarian Émigré Scientists and the Technology of War and Peace, 1918-1989* (Budapest: Eotvos University, 1997): 51-8; Giuliana Gemelli, ed., *The “Unacceptables”: American Foundations and Refugee Scholars between the Two Wars and After* (Brussels: P.I.E.-Peter Lang, 2000); Paul Weindling, “An Overloaded Ark? The Rockefeller Foundation and Refugee Medical Scientists, 1933-45,” *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biology and Biomedical Sciences* 31C, 3 (2000): 477-89. See also RAC-RF, R.G. 1, Series 200, Boxes 46-56.

stated what the conference would be about: “We envisage the term ‘economic security’ in the broad sense of covering all the social insurances against unemployment, old age, accident, sickness, as well as public works, work relief and direct relief.” The goal for the conference was to explore the possibilities for comprehensive economic reform. Van Sickle, while optimistic, had to recognize that with respect to helping initiate any truly radical overhaul, “the difficulties of effective action on the part of the Foundation are obvious.” To some degree the United States government even already had a “definite program,” supported by “enormous sums of money” as well as by “the best councils in the country.” Where, then, might Foundation efforts fit in? This was an important question. “Certainly a program is not desirable unless it gives definite promise of important contributions to a more effective shaping of the long run program of economic security. If Foundation action is desirable, the question of ways and means needs to be thoroughly canvassed. Due consideration should be given to the question of possible delimitation of the field.” The conference where such questions would be discussed was set for that spring.<sup>428</sup>

The Economic Security Conference took place in Atlantic City, New Jersey, in March. Much discussion at the conference focused on the specific agenda point of gathering opinion “regarding the desirability of the Foundation adopting the program” for a new, more specific research field in “economic security.” In fitting with the kinds of ideas presented over recent years, participants in the conference recorded that “The most important contribution that the Foundation could make to the field would be the setting up of a central planning board and service agency comparable to the Committee on Government Statistics and Information Service.” Such a call for Foundation action was a dramatic departure from

<sup>428</sup> John Van Sickle to Evelyn Burns, February 14, 1935, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 5, Folder 47.

any prior precedent at the Foundation, although the call fit well with what many persons had recommended.<sup>429</sup>

A variety of reports on economic problems were quickly produced by divisional officers. Included were reports with such titles as “Economic Security Program,” “Possible Foundation Program in Fields of International Relations and Economic Security,” and “Proposals for New Program: Public Finance with Special Reference to Taxation.” The latter report posed a specific scientific question, “which touches vitally upon other problems of Foundation interest. The question is this: How shall the timing of expenditures and revenue collections be related to the phenomena of the business cycle and to a program of economic security?” Such a question concerning the problem of business cycles clearly was a fairly specific research question for the Foundation to ask. The same report continued by noting what President Roosevelt’s administration was already doing, which amounted to a social experiment in action:

This country is embarking on a new experiment in an uncharted field. It is going to try to guarantee continuous income at some minimum level to the broad mass of the population regardless of whether they are employed or unemployed. This involves the building up of surpluses in good times for dispersal in bad times. Taxes are one means of building up the surpluses. How large should the surpluses be? How much relief from taxation should be granted in periods of prosperity and budgetary surpluses?

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<sup>429</sup> “Agenda for Conference in Economic Security, 22-23 March 1935,” RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 5, Folders 47-8, esp. p. 38.

All these questions were scientific questions, and they were questions the Foundation wanted to begin directing economists toward answering.<sup>430</sup>

Foundation personnel also introduced some specific objectives and explored components to be made part of a comprehensive “Economic Security Program.” One 1935 report, titled “The Social Insurances and Relief,” declared the program in the field of economic security has “two main objectives: a) economic research into problems of structural and cyclical change directed at better understanding and effective moderation of the costly ups and downs of business activity; b) development of more adequate protection against the major hazards of life – such as sickness, accident, old age dependency and unemployment – through improved provision for social insurance and organized relief.” Cleanly stated, there were to be two research objectives, which were research on business cycles and research on the social consequences of business cycles. The goals were to learn how the economy works and how to help people when they are harmed by an economy that works badly.<sup>431</sup>

Increased attention focused on the world-wide economic depression by the end of 1935. A hope remained at the Rockefeller Foundation that grant awards to support specific economic research might be managed in an unbiased, truly scientific manner. At the directors’ meeting in December of that year, the Foundation recorded where nearly all their focus was now turning: “The general field of the work of the Social Sciences is social structure and functioning. Support is given to realistic studies of importance pursued in an objective manner, and by the aid of those specially training in the appropriate techniques.”

<sup>430</sup> Quotation from page 5 of “Proposals for New Program: Public Finance with Special Reference to Taxation,” RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 5, Folder 44.

<sup>431</sup> Quotation from page 1 of “The Social Insurances and Relief,” RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 5, Folder 44.

The two chief goals in the increasingly urgent research program (namely, the needs for research on the economy and on its effects on people) must be in light of the two goals “of obtaining tangible results and immediate social effects,” even though in many cases the difficulty of simultaneous obtainment would be great.<sup>432</sup>

Coming up increasingly often for discussion was the familiar problem of how to get involved in controversial areas. One tried-and-tested idea was to rely on the SSRC as much as possible. A 1935 memo for the Economic Security Program, titled “Should Health Insurance be Included in the Foundation’s Social Security Program?,” raised the question: “Shall the Foundation enter the field in view of the certain criticisms that will result?” The answer, at least as offered in the same memo, was in the affirmative: the Rockefeller Foundation should include work on health insurance, especially if the Foundation could work through the SSRC. Quoting recent Foundation words, the memo noted the Foundation was looking to “the development and maintenance of minimum standards of security and decency in the living conditions of the mass of people.” Foundation trustees produced another policy memorandum on social security in 1936. What seemed important in this memo was to assess whether Foundation actions could be determined to be unbiased by identifying whether any politically controversial topics were directly supported. This memorandum addressed questions of social security and said: “Since these questions involve legislation and government policy of a controversial nature, the Foundation is working almost entirely through the Social Security Committee of the SSRC.”<sup>433</sup>

<sup>432</sup> “Minutes,” p. 35458; The conference for a Program in Economic Scarcity is noted in “Minutes,” p. 36064, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 1.

<sup>433</sup> “Should Health Insurance be Included in the Foundation’s Social Security Program?,” 1935, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 5, Folder 44.

The more scientific question being raised by Foundation personnel was whether supported research in the economic security program could begin discovering how such an atrocious business cycle had happened. Indeed by 1936 a second economic security conference was in the planning as a “Business Cycle Conference” to be held in Geneva, in July 1936. Van Sickle proactively stated two goals for any Foundation support of business-cycle research. Evidently a number of persons at the Foundation had introduced ideas regarding how a business-cycle research program might work, and Van Sickle considered these ideas and focused on dividing the focus on business cycle analysis into two sub-projects. “[A]s the officers now conceive the problem,” Van Sickle wrote in September 1935, “...the Foundation’s efforts in encouraging business cycle research should take two principal directions.” One direction would be to promote improvement in “the adequacy and accuracy of the data now continuously issued from public and private agencies. The purpose here is to aid in the provision of a better day to day picture of significant fluctuations and trends and thus a more reliable indication of our momentary location in the business cycle.” The other direction would be to better understand “the dominant forces making for economic fluctuations.”<sup>434</sup>

The latter few months of 1935 and first months of 1936 included much discussion concerning the upcoming business cycle conference. In October, Swedish economist Oskar Anderson outlined four needs for research institutes to run the business-cycle research program: one coordinating center; various “Business Cycle Institutes” overseen by the coordinating center; regional associations of other institutes “located in countries possessing

<sup>434</sup> John Van Sickle, “Nature of Foundation Program in Business Cycle Research,” RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 5, Folder 44, pp. 1-2.



a similar type of economic structure”; aid to isolated scholars. Anderson also emphasized the need to improve the quality of “scientific performance” at all institutes. Van Sickle, for his part, further described the project in another letter to Anderson, saying that the goal was not yet to create an entirely new major research center, but was to convene a dozen or more leading economists “to advise” the Foundation “regarding the desirability and feasibility of a Foundation program aimed at encouraging economic research at the international level.”<sup>435</sup>

In the continued planning process for the Geneva conference, Van Sickle communicated with Tracy Kittredge as well as Edmund Day. To Kittredge, who was still in charge of the Paris office, Van Sickle suggested that on the basis of many conversations he is now led to believe “the next logical step in the development of the business cycle program is the creation of a central coordinating agency.” Van Sickle reported he was at work on a memorandum to present proposals for the business cycle program. When he got the program outlined, Van Sickle described it for Kittredge. Van Sickle also recorded for Day his belief that one particular institute, the Institute at Geneva, “is the logical agency to undertake this task” of becoming the coordinating center. In these and other correspondences, many potential invitees were also discussed by Van Sickle. The biggest name in the field of business cycle research, all were agreed, was Gottfried Haberler, who was soon to publish his fine study, *Prosperity and Depression* (1937). Haberler was widely recognized by economists of the day for having a specific theory about business cycles that possibly should be adopted by all economists. This notion that the Foundation perhaps should encourage

<sup>435</sup> Oskar Anderson to John Van Sickle, October 30, 1935, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 5, Folder 44. Quotation from Van Sickle to Oskar Anderson, February 18, 1936, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 4, Folder 29.

adoption of one specific scientific theory of business cycles, as an *a priori* position, is another example of increased initiative by the Rockefeller Foundation.<sup>436</sup>

In addition to the European economists, the idea to focus efforts on a business cycle program was also appreciated by U.S. economists. Harvard University professor E.B. Wilson, for example, wrote to Foundation President Max Mason about the program. The planned research seemed genuinely scientific to Wilson, who outlined his idealistic view that the basic explanation of business cycles was already largely agreed upon, and that all that really differed between economists in different nations was different sets of available facts. Wilson also believed that objectivity in social science could never get separated from advocacy, which could be a problem. “[P]ersonnel in social science is self-selected of persons who do not wish to think carefully and who do not wish to separate their emotional reactions from their scientific thinking or even are so much more interested in their emotional reactions that they refuse to try to think scientifically.” Social scientists as a group, Wilson brutally stated, too often are just “rambling in our emotions.” He continued: “I fear that if the Foundation is ever to get anywhere with such matters as social security, the regulation of industry, and the various things in which I understand them to be primarily interested from now on in the social field as contrasted with such things as personality and culture it may be

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<sup>436</sup> John Van Sickle to Tracy Kittredge, January 3, 1936; Tracy Kittredge to John Van Sickle, January 21, 1936, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 5, Folder 44. For Haberler’s study, see Gottfried Haberler, *Prosperity and Depression* (New York: League of Nations, 1937). Van Sickle also proposed a kind of joint meeting at the Institute of Geneva between Foundation representatives, League of Nations people, and a “selected group of business cycle workers.” Much communication transpired, including a recommendation future discussion ought to involve Ludwig von Mises. Day approved the idea of the joint meeting; Van Sickle to Day, November 11, 1935. Also considered worthy of invitation were Lionel Robbins (LSE), Joan Robinson (Cambridge), Bertil Ohlin (Scandinavia), Jan Tinbergen (Holland), Charles Rist (France), Oscar Morgenstern (Austria), J.M. Clark (U.S.), and Alvin Hansen (U.S.), among others; see John Van Sickle to Loveday, December 13, 1935. The main objective for the conference, from the Foundation’s perspective, was to gather economists capable of advising the Foundation on a program of research; see Memorandum by John v. Van Sickle, February 1936, cited in Craver, “Patronage and the Directions of Research in Economics,” 216.

necessary somehow for the Foundation to grow a personnel which will apply the scientific method in the social field.”<sup>437</sup>

The Business Cycle Conference indeed took place, in Geneva in July 1936. As a project which was part of the Foundation’s Program in Economic Stability and Security, the conference produced many pages of “Discussions” and “Proceedings.” Van Sickle’s view is recorded: “the Conference had been very useful to the Foundation, but he [Van Sickle] thought it might be preferable in the future to build such a Conference onto meetings called to evaluate a complete or nearly completed piece of research, assuming that Haberler’s methods were to be adopted.” Recorded again, then, was Van Sickle’s guiding hope that by adopting one specific scientific approach a continuity of fairly specific projects could be promoted. The idea to begin by adopting one theory at the outset was an instrumental goal, aimed at getting concrete studies underway. Such continuity would provide added reason for regularly bringing a team of business-cycle economists together.<sup>438</sup>

#### 10.7 Deciding what to do–1935-39

During the latter half of 1935 and into 1936 the Foundation trustees considered ways to begin ending the “general program” of social science research. The plan was to end only the general program, which “had as its purpose the advancement of the social sciences as a whole.” The future program – what the Foundation was calling its “New Social Science

<sup>437</sup> RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 5, Folder 44. E.B. Wilson to Max Mason, October 24, 1935. Wilson wrote about unity of theory and method in language that declared “there was only one system of logic, and that the difference between scientists of different sorts was merely that different individuals applied what mind they had and the universal logic as well as they could to that group of facts with which they happened to be familiar, and in which they happened to be interested.”

<sup>438</sup> The conference, during July 3-5, 1936, produced many pages of “Record of Discussions” and “Summary of Proceedings.” The summary of Van Sickle’s personal view is in “Summary of Proceedings,” RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 4, Folders 29 and 31, p. 58.

Program” – would need to focus on “concrete proposals” for initiating “concrete projects.” In April 1935, program officers were assigned the task to identify specific problems and make proposals for six fields: international relations; economic security; public administration; public finance & taxation; housing; and criminology. These reports began being presented in December 1935, and indeed, we’ve been seeing the kinds of reports produced in the field of economic security (which included business-cycle research).<sup>439</sup>

Day put the transitional matter in direct words in November 1935: “[T]he former general program was to be liquidated as soon as practicable; the former specific programs involving certain designated areas of concentration were suspended; and the officers were instructed to bring in recommendations for new programs in fields within which there appeared to be exceptional opportunities for realistic work of more ready and significant applicability.”<sup>440</sup>

In January 1936, Edmund Day and Jerome Greene got back to debating what an “urgent” economic problem might be. Greene suggested that nearly any economic problem could bear upon the national economic prospect, which surely would be one way to define “urgency.” Day countered that it seemed possible to hold a narrower definition of what kinds of economic problems truly have an “urgent” bearing. Day believed in trying to pick specific problems to be attacked first, because not everything could be done at once. So, while Greene still favored more of a general program, Day held confidence that there were ways to

<sup>439</sup> “Minutes” of April 1935 meeting, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 1, p. 23.

<sup>440</sup> “Memorandum on SS Statement Regarding Budget for 1936,” November 1935, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 1, p. 1. What especially concerned Day was the high likelihood that persons in the social science division would lose their spirit with everything seeming to be shut down around them.

determine which economic problems bear more or less upon the national economic prospect.<sup>441</sup>

Commitment to the liquidation process for the “general program” developed through 1936. More officers’ reports were requested to explore possible concrete projects. At the December trustees’ meeting, the first phase in liquidating the Division of Social Sciences’ institutional centers was observed to be proceeding in an orderly fashion. Divisional officers were identifying valuable new undertakings in particular areas, and specific programs were getting reported on – although housing and criminology were not yet reported on, and the trustees definitely wanted such reports.<sup>442</sup>

But things changed. By 1936, a major shift was in the works. On July 1st of that year Raymond B. Fosdick succeeded Max Mason as president of the Rockefeller Foundation. Fosdick, a bit surprisingly, held a lower opinion of the Division of Social Sciences than did Mason. Fosdick thought little of John Van Sickle’s work on the economic security and business cycles program, and he wondered whether Tracy Kittredge and the Paris office were worth keeping at all. Fosdick requested Van Sickle’s resignation from his charge over the economic security program based out of the New York office in April 1937, and Edmund Day resigned as Director of the Division of Social Sciences two months later. The business cycle research program ceased to exist by the end of 1937. As to the Paris office, one factor of serious concern was the changing political climate in Europe. By September 1936, Fosdick expressed he no longer could not share the “apparent belief” of Kittredge that

<sup>441</sup> With respect to the specific program in economic scarcity, Jerome D. Greene (recently moved to Harvard) wrote Edmund Day; see Jerome Green to Edmund E. Day, January 8, 1936; Day to Green, January 22, 1936, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 3.

<sup>442</sup> The trustees’ memo from their December 1936 meeting noted their desire for reports on possible future programs in the fields of housing and criminology, requested for their meeting in April 1937; RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 4.

research at the German institutes was “sufficiently free of political control to make it possible to do objective work there.” Fosdick added: “Unless we are grievously misinformed in this country in regard to the German situation we would be merely throwing away our money in trying to promote any kind of scientific research in the social sciences.”<sup>443</sup>

Yet another phase in the relationship between Rockefeller philanthropy and social science finally came to an end in May 1938, when Fosdick declared for Kittredge that it was time to cease “carrying on any work in the social sciences in the totalitarian states.” Fosdick had come to a conclusion: “We are not obliged to work there, and I see nothing to be gained for the world in general by supporting the cribbed and cramped type of research which present totalitarian ideology imposes. In the long run, I believe more will be accomplished by concentrating in those countries where tolerance is the intellectual rule than by trying to spread our activities in countries where real freedom of research is grudgingly acknowledged or sharply curtailed.”<sup>444</sup>

With the departure of Edmund Day in June 1937, the end of business cycle research by December 1937, and the May 1938 decision to withdraw from supporting social research in European “totalitarian states,” a period in the relationship between Rockefeller philanthropy and social science was certainly over with.

<sup>443</sup> Raymond B. Fosdick to Sydnor H. Walker, September 25, 1936, RAC–RF, R.G.1.1, Series 717, Box 20; quotation in Craver, “Patronage and the Directions of Research in Economics,” 220.

<sup>444</sup> Raymond B. Fosdick to Tracy B. Kittredge, May 1938, RAC–RF, R.G.1.1, Series 717, Box 20; quotation in Craver, “Patronage and the Directions of Research in Economics,” 221.

## CHAPTER 11. THE “NEW PROGRAM”–1938-46

### 11.1 Introduction

Every few years, Rockefeller philanthropists took time to explore the nature of social science and its uses. The period from 1938 to 1941 – spanning Edmund Day’s resignation as director to Joseph Willits’s assumption of directorial duties – was just such a period. Upon his arrival, Willits initiated projects to build a new program oriented around specific social and economic studies. Willits’s first phase of projects ended about 1946, when increased government support of social research began a new episode in the history of social science and its patrons.

### 11.2 New officers’ reports and the search for unifying ideas–1938

Rockefeller Foundation officers prepared a number of reports during 1938 dealing with Depression-era social problems, especially economic ones. An important question was how the Great Depression might impact research needs in the fields of economic and social security, international relations, and public administration. John Van Sickle, though no longer in charge of the economic security research program, wrote a memorandum that focused on what research needs might still exist: “What are the gaps in social statistics?,” he asked. Particularly important to fill would be any remaining gaps in knowledge pertaining to economic research. Van Sickle recognized that many volumes of data would be required to fully answer his memo’s lead question; better information specifically was needed on all sorts of economic problems, including trade cycles, banking, international investment, modern corporations, wages, worker health records, and education levels in different

occupations. Van Sickle produced an additional report for the Foundation trustees, this one specifically on economic research. Research on economic welfare, he argued, was doing the best it could given limited funds and the severity of current problems.<sup>445</sup>

Another person who shared ideas was new Foundation President Raymond Fosdick. Fosdick emphasized studying totalitarian societies, particularly their economic systems. However Fosdick also stridently recommended the Foundation must watch its step while doing this, particularly because any financial involvement in a human rights-violating regime could result in both financial loss and moral compromise for the Foundation. Other studies also made during 1938 were to learn about political upheavals in Latin America and to develop projects to try and help reverse an “obvious and ominous deterioration of international relationships” in Europe. The latter situation was something the Foundation, in the May 1938 words of social science division officer Stacy May, conceded showed an “appallingly gloomy outlook” that could make it seem that “everything in the field is retrogressive.” The onset of grave concern about conditions in Europe meant that lessened support for European social science perhaps should be called for. And, indeed, that same month President Fosdick called for just this.<sup>446</sup>

<sup>445</sup> At least three reports were prepared for a March 1938 trustees meeting by the officers’ team of Stacy May, John V. Van Sickle, and Sydnor H. Walker. Included were John Van Sickle, “Gaps in Social Statistics,” RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 4; Van Sickle, “Social Security—A Report on Program,” March 1938, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 5, Folder 46. See also RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 2, Folder 14.

<sup>446</sup> See also memo from Raymond B. Fosdick, April 14, 1938; memo from Raymond B. Fosdick, May 13, 1938, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 4. Latin American projects in the social sciences were an area receiving much support without being an official Foundation program. Examples of schools receiving grants for research on Latin America were Tulane University (a three-year grant in 1931) and American University (a two-year grant in 1938). Also receiving a grant was the Foreign Policy Association (a two-year grant in 1934); see yearly summaries of the work of the Division of Social Sciences in the Rockefeller Foundation *Annual Reports*; see also Stacy May, “Latin American Projects in the Social Sciences,” June 16, 1938. Shortness of funds through the 1930s is well established in the Foundation records; in an October 1938 memorandum, Sydnor Walker put it directly, saying “we are definitely limited in what we can do in the remainder of this year by a very small balance in our allocation for the social sciences.” Sydnor Walker, “Proposed Actions under SS Program in 1938,” October 27, 1938. The factor of increasing political uncertainty in Europe was something



Much of the problem associated with the shift away from the “general” social science program by 1940 involved a need for workable and reasonable evaluative standards for selecting projects. What seemed needed was some kind of a new overriding methodology. While the social science division’s economics programs were getting useful officers’ reports produced, a lack of any unifying method might have been a reason why officers’ reports in other fields such as the housing program and the criminology program, were lagging. It was time to explore whether a new theoretical foundation – and perhaps also a new organizational structure – might help.

An example of the effort to identify new evaluative standards is the way that an article on “Organization of Social Research” in the British journal *Nature* evidently helped crystallize new ideas. Divisional officers reignited debate at the Rockefeller philanthropies about the nature and structure of social science. Officers discussed two ideas as presented in the article. One idea was a reductionist notion that social scientists should base all “actual investigation on higher biological lines.” A second idea was that coordination of all social research should be accomplished by a single, national body. What was needed to help solve the economic calamity through most of Europe and North America was “to establish a new scientific body, with adequate endowment from the State, which will do for human social research” what national-level organizations were already doing for medical, agricultural, and chemical research.<sup>447</sup>

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Stacy May described as the “obvious and ominous deterioration of international relationships in the theatre of the world”; Stacy May, Interoffice Correspondence, December 30, 1938, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 4.

<sup>447</sup> See “Organization of Social Research,” *Nature* 140, 3543 (October 22, 1937): 521-3. The idea that a centralized plan for social control was needed was widespread at the time.

Division officers Stacy May and Sydnor Walker commented on the article, as did Foundation President Fosdick. May doubted the feasibility of basing useful, real-world investigation on “higher biological lines,” and he worried about placing too much confidence in “controlled observation” and “guidance” by any new centralized institute. A version of the ‘new institute’ idea which May was willing to consider was the article’s suggestion that “there should be some government body that takes a continuous over-all view of important social problems.” Worth considering, in particular, was whether “‘some centrally constituted scientific body’ should survey the field of social research and draw up a program of what needs doing.” Noting that the SSRC was already considering such a possible survey in the United States, May declared his “strong conviction that there is a kind of general survey job that the Council should be attempting and it may be in line with what the author of this *Nature* article has in mind.” May also pointed out that the SSRC had been formed originally “upon the conviction that numbers of important problems did not conform to established academic fields and persisted in escaping over the borderlines of economics, sociology, political science, psychology, and so forth.” Perhaps SSRC efforts were already all that was needed in the way of a centralized guiding organization.<sup>448</sup>

Walker responded to the question, What is the next step for the SSRC? In addressing some thoughts in a letter to Fosdick, Walker believed the SSRC was coming to face the fact that social science had gotten lost from “the main road” it once was on. Such a road, to Walker’s idealized past, was one that seemed to have been “more definitely charted.” As to Fosdick, his thoughts went to the core of the matter: “It seems to me that the question can be

<sup>448</sup> The SSRC, May believed, “could best capitalize its strength and its limitations not by getting combined groups to criticize each academic field but by selecting a number of genuinely important current problems and calling upon selected committees from the several academic fields in social science to focus their attention upon them”; Stacy May to Raymond B. Fosdick, October 22, 1937, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 4.

simply put: In a chaotic world like this, have the social sciences a contribution to make to the problem of human control? If so, what is it, and how do the social sciences propose to go about it?" This question of social control was a central question concerning whether some new fundamental idea – e.g., that perhaps all social phenomena could ultimately be explained by biological facts – could tie together all things in a new relationship between Rockefeller philanthropy and social science: Are the social sciences to be used for social control? And if so, then how?<sup>449</sup>

Edwin B. Wilson, the Harvard professor of economics and vital statistics, got into the discussion as well. Wilson believed the Foundation needed to better distinguish between fields of social science the Foundation was willing to support and specific projects it wanted to directly sponsor. Wilson recognized an increased need for the second category of action. He also believed the SSRC could play a helpful role in identifying specific projects to pursue. In Wilson's recollection, the SSRC was originally "started out to find out what ought to be done to make social science research more scientific." Since the early 1920s the SSRC had done well, and particularly beneficial was the SSRC's committee structure designed to determine grant-worthy projects. The SSRC had also succeeded in adopting methods to "broaden out and tune up the projects submitted to them before they voted appropriations, and thus did indirectly contribute in a practical way to the improvement of social science

<sup>449</sup> Sydnor Walker recalled the SSRC's discussion at a recent meeting on the subject of future policy. In her view, the SSRC had shown a genuine interest "to find the way back to the main road, which was formerly more definitely charted than recent critics have inferred"; Sydnor Walker to Raymond Fosdick, November 10, 1937, RAC-RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 4. Raymond Fosdick, "Memo," November 9, 1937, RAC-RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 4. See also Raymond Fosdick to Sydnor Walker, October 14, 1937, RAC-RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 4.

research.” Wilson recommended the Foundation “put your problem of what you ought to do in the social science field directly up to them.”<sup>450</sup>

The SSRC was quite willing to share its ideas. In October 1938, SSRC Executive Director Robert T. Crane focused on the division between discovery and application of knowledge, saying he supported a more interactive relationship between the two. Crane argued that a Foundation program designed to apply knowledge to aid in the solution of social problems “should embrace two distinct lines of activity.” “One of these is improvement of the social sciences as instrumentalities for attainment and diffusion of knowledge. The other is utilization of these instrumentalities for attack on current and continuing questions of public importance.” The first line of activities “calls for consideration of research organization, personnel, dissemination of results, and above all of methods and ways of working.” As to the latter line of action, “The utilization of the social sciences for the study of current problems affords an opportunity almost as in a laboratory to make new contributions to science, new syntheses.” Crane concluded the SSRC “believes that it is of the utmost importance that practical studies originating in the present state of social science should follow through to the development of new science just as it believes that purely scientific studies in the social field should carry forward to a collation with the facts of the social world.”<sup>451</sup>

<sup>450</sup> Wilson added his hope that the Foundation staff would be able to “keep up their morale” during a difficult time of the transition. He worried that morale would suffer without having “the freedom [in upcoming years] to support projects which they wish to try.” Simply sitting and waiting had the prospect to be miserable stuff. “There are very many important problems in the social field the solution of which if it could be obtained would add greatly to human welfare.” Wilson thought it especially advisable that, as the Foundation continues to pursue specific projects, care be taken to “clear[ly] distinguish between the Foundation projects and the outside projects the Foundation was willing to finance”; Edwin B. Wilson to Raymond Fosdick, November 20, 1937, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 4.

<sup>451</sup> Robert T. Crane, “Memorandum,” October 27, 1938, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 3, Folder 16, pp. 1, 6. Part of what Crane had in mind stemmed from a distinction he introduced between so-called “central” and

The SSRC also produced a November report, “The Social Scientists Appraise Their Science,” the main objectives of which were to figure out the nature of cutting-edge social research and identify ways to determine which research projects ought to receive funding. It was time to develop a better “appraisal scheme” for “attain[ing] a workable technique for identifying values” that might help distinguish between good and bad social science. But what would such a scheme do? “It takes a product of social science research which the authorities recognize as good. But why is it good? What are the qualities that make it good? How are these qualities attained? To be successful and useful, the appraisal scheme must answer questions such as these.” The SSRC’s report humbly concluded that any evaluator hoping to separate examples of good social science from bad social science would likely need to proceed by identifying positive value on a case-by-case basis.<sup>452</sup>

Input from the SSRC and other parties ultimately focused on ways that Rockefeller philanthropy could make continued progress while shutting down the general social science program. One way we might begin studying specific examples of the shift would be to consider how the Foundation interacted with two schools in particular. One relevant school noted by historians is the University of Oxford, where some interaction with the Rockefeller Foundation took place during 1937. The interaction happened in a way that it might seem the Foundation attempted to overly influence Oxford’s research priorities. According to John Van Sickle in a letter written at the time to Tracy B. Kittredge in Europe, economists at

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“peripheral” social sciences. In the first group belonged economics, politics and sociology; in the second group Crane placed anthropology and psychology. Statistics and history were best thought of, actually, as “methodologies rather than social science fields.” The new project to weave together knowledge and applications entailed work to see how these three groups would work together in new ways; Robert T. Crane’s words in 1940, as quoted in Fisher 1999, p. 82.

<sup>452</sup> “The Social Scientists Appraise Their Science,” November 1938, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 4.

Oxford were on the cusp of making the desired change from old-style “abstract theoretical work to careful inductive analysis.” Oxford’s progress through this shift from general development to specific projects should be assisted, Van Sickle believed, as it represented a shift “so desirable that it seemed wise to encourage this line of attack (with a grant).”<sup>453</sup>

What specifically happened in the social sciences at Oxford was that Foundation funds were allocated to three main research fields: experimental psychology, physical and cultural anthropology, and agricultural economics. In psychology, an infusion of Foundation money as a “Social Studies Research Fund” in 1935 helped produce an “Institute of Experimental Psychology” the following year. It took four more years, however, for teaching in experimental psychology to be formally incorporated in the program. As to anthropology, the established accomplishment at the school by the 1930s was Arthur Thomson success at amassing one of the largest collections of skulls the academic world has ever seen. What was needed was to save cultural anthropology from marginalized status at the school. Though this proved a difficult undertaking, a major step was taken with the permanent hiring of Yale-trained primatologist Solly Zuckerman, in 1935. Improvements to the university’s Agricultural Economics Institute were made possible at the same time, as was the initiation of research projects in econometrics.<sup>454</sup>

The Rockefeller-Oxford relationship during 1937 can be used to address the fact that historians of social science critical of Rockefeller philanthropy sometimes ask whether there was too much selection between different universities based solely on their conservative or

<sup>453</sup> John Van Sickle to Tracy B. Kittredge, January 19, 1937, RAC–RF, RG.1.1, Series 401, Box 71, Folder 944.

<sup>454</sup> Jack Morrell, *Science at Oxford: Transforming an Arts University* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997): 85-92, 200-3, 139-40. See also Warren Young and Frederic S. Lee, *Oxford Economics & Oxford Economists* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1993); Daniele Besomi, “Roy Harrod and the Oxford Economists’ Research Group’s Inquiry on Prices and Interest, 1936-1939,” *Oxford Economics Papers* 50 (October 1998): 534-62.

liberal research methods and goals, i.e., that selection between universities might have been a strategy adopted by the Foundation to gain increased control over the direction of social research. The period of the late 1930s was, after all, a time when persons at the Foundation were obviously willing to discuss how much more active the Foundation needed to be in picking specific projects. And as seen earlier, the late 1930s was also a time when performance of one specific theory of business cycles was possibly to be preferred. Perhaps the situation concerning Oxford may have been merely that the Foundation preferred specific projects over the more abstract style of social inquiry already established at Oxford.<sup>455</sup>

Another possibility is that universities might have tailored grant proposals to fit research interests known to be favored by the Rockefeller Foundation. Such an example might be found at the London School of Economics during the 1930s, where William Beveridge used a sizeable amount of money from a Foundation grant to establish a “Department of Social Biology” to do fundamental research to discover basic causes of human behavior. For a variety of reasons – including any possible association with eugenics – persons at both the LSE and the Foundation came to disapprove of this use of funds. The Foundation informed Beveridge of its displeasure that funds were used to establish such a department and even made a payment to the head of the department to leave the department (so that the department could then be shut down). Yet even this was not enough, as the Foundation also informed LSE directors that all future grants were in jeopardy if the school failed to cease operating its social biology department on Foundation funds.<sup>456</sup>

<sup>455</sup> See Salma Ahmad, “American Foundations and the Development of the Social Sciences between the Wars: Comment on the Debate between Martin Bulmer and Donald Fisher,” *Sociology* 25, 3 (August 1991): 511-20): 511-20, esp. 514.

<sup>456</sup> See Ahmad, “American Foundations,” 514.

What happened at Oxford and LSE, I would say, was that particular approaches to social science were either wanted or were too close to controversial terrain for the Rockefeller Foundation to mess with. An interpretation of what happened at Oxford and at the LSE that fits the overall picture developed herein is not a simple “yes” or “no” to the question whether the Foundation tried to attain undue control over the direction of social science. The best interpretation is that there was a playing out of multiple forces, which included the interplay between a Foundation ideal of neutrality and some increased interest in guiding specific projects; the best explanation is a combined ‘yes-and-no’ answer about the relationship between philanthropy and social science: that philanthropic work was itself experimental, and that choices in favor of preferred projects were based on identifying research methods that seemed to have greatest promise in terms of near term application.

### 11.3 Evaluative reports and a new director–1939

By late 1938, the Foundation trustees decided to hire a new director for the Division of Social Sciences, Joseph H. Willits, a University of Pennsylvania economist with long-running contact with Rockefeller philanthropy. As the Foundation prepared for Willits’s arrival, they began evaluation of the social science program’s accomplishments and possible future directions. Foundation trustees asked for two reports to assess the social sciences as supported by the Foundation. Any actual program changes possibly suggested by these reports were to wait until after Willits’s arrival, in February 1939.<sup>457</sup>

<sup>457</sup> A December 1938 report notes the plan for Joseph H. Willits to assume responsibility on February 1, 1939. “In view of this development the committee feels that a precise statement at this time as to the future program of the Social Sciences Division would be premature. We would expect to be guided in our conclusions by the ideas and judgments which Dr. Willits will bring to his task.” “Report of the Trustees Committee on the Social Science,” December 7, 1938, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 3, Folder 16.



One report for the new director was written by Janet Paine, secretary to the director. Paine's overview covered ten years of social science projects defined as having "four definite and distinct objectives" through the period: projects in fundamental social science; projects in applied social science; research on particular problems of "social disturbance"; research on maladjusted social groups. Projects focusing on fundamental social science included seven knowledge fields (i.e., economics, political science, sociology, cultural anthropology, social psychology, human geography, and certain approaches to history), while projects in applied social science included the applied fields of business law, public administration, and social service. The Foundation's focus on problems of social disturbance included studies in international relations, industrial relations, and interracial relations. Finally there was "promotion of research on problems of groups described as socially maladjusted," which included research on Latin America, crime studies, and analysis of totalitarian regimes. However over the last five years, "the social science program of the Rockefeller Foundation has operated almost exclusively" in the fields of economic stabilization, international relations, and community organization & planning. (The latter field, which has not been much explored herein, was defined to include such research areas as interracial relations, crime studies, and public administration.)<sup>458</sup>

Paine identified a turning point in April 1933 when the Foundation created a special fund to aid research on the most urgent problems of the worldwide depression. At that time, the Foundation recognized the need to face "peculiarly challenging opportunities for useful work, many of which could not be seized under earlier formulations of the Foundation

<sup>458</sup> Janet M. Paine, "Development of the Social Science Program: Summary Statement," January 1939, RAC-RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 3, Folder 16, pp. 1-2, 5.

program.” The new “formulation,” of course, was the decision to focus only on specific subjects. Over a million dollars of emergency grants were allocated between April 1933 and December 1935, focusing on economic projects to help government recovery as well as assist government in its effort to better collaborate with private agencies.<sup>459</sup>

In addition to Paine’s report, a second report was prepared by Sydnor H. Walker focusing on the question, “What objectives will be set?” Foundation leaders had spent a decade reacting against a perception that the 1920’s Memorial program was too broad and diffuse – and even perhaps a bit irresponsible. So by about 1934, Foundation leaders began trying to selectively identify the most urgent problems and applications, so as to begin pursuing projects that would “give promise of direct aid in the promotion of human welfare.” Yet as the Foundation got active in selecting specific projects, worry cropped up that any projects directly selected by the Foundation might “seem to support or oppose public policies.”<sup>460</sup>

Walker recommended increasing the Foundation’s reliance on universities to select their own projects. “The real question is how will funds be given, what objectives will be set?” Walker recalled there were reasons why the Foundation decided to end the general program. One reason was an idea that universities “should be pushed in the direction of absorbing the expenses” of fundamental social research. The immense infusion of Memorial money had been intended as a jump start only. Second, “The results of Foundation investment [since 1929] were in general disappointing in that 1) no satisfactory development of strategy and competence in the administration of research funds had taken place; and 2)

<sup>459</sup> Paine, “Development of the Social Science Program: Summary Statement,” 4-5.

<sup>460</sup> Sydnor H. Walker, “Future Support of the Social Sciences in the Universities,” July 1939, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 4.

the research projects were diffused over so wide an area as to preclude integration and were seldom focused effectively upon practical problems.” The Foundation’s new way forward was “to define areas of special interest, to identify them with situations of immediate social significance, and to concentrate effort upon work giving promise of direct aid in the promotion of human welfare.”<sup>461</sup>

The Foundation emphasized three special fields since 1935: economic stabilization and social security; international relations; public administration. Yet even these fields showed disappointing results. Even though Foundation funds were still being given to universities, such funds “were more explicitly for avowed interests of the Foundation than earlier when the responsibility of allocating for particular work rested with the university authorities or with a committee.” Perhaps the move away from broad, fundamental work to a specific program emphasizing applied work was a shift that might fail to “provide for the general development of areas which are of fundamental importance in advancing the social sciences in the opinion of the academic world.” But would such possible failure imply that the move away from the general program was too extreme?<sup>462</sup>

Walker recommended the Foundation should survey all universities to obtain descriptions of their perceived strengths. Such a survey would help incoming director Willits identify specific projects. Walker introduced a possible approach in detail: “[I]n contrast with the procedure of the past four years, the Foundation would not select certain areas of interest and then invite the submission of projects and programs of that type. Nor would the procedure be like that of the preceding ten years when we handed over Foundation funds in

<sup>461</sup> Walker, “Future Support of the Social Sciences in the Universities,” 1-3.

<sup>462</sup> Walker, “Future Support of the Social Sciences in the Universities,” 3-4.

accordance with our judgment of the general importance that the institution had, or should have, in developing work over the entire field of the social sciences.” Walker emphasized that the Foundation should hold an open mind as to the “best areas of special interest that should be cultivated.”<sup>463</sup>

#### 11.4 Willits’s arrival–1939-41

When Willits arrived at the Rockefeller Foundation in early 1939 he received the two reports, and especially appreciated Walker’s recommendation of a period of university self-evaluation. Perhaps a kind of balance might be found so that although the Foundation might give away some “liberty of action” if Walker’s approach were tried, a benefit would be a return of greater responsibility to the universities. A worry was that by following this new idea, such a huge batch of proposals would come as certified by the universities that many more researchers than just the “best researchers” would be included. “I wish, therefore, to go slow & see whether we can not work out Syd[nor]’s desirable objectives in a little different way.”<sup>464</sup>

Another report, prepared at Willits’s request, introduced the condition of things in Europe. Communications between the Foundation and its European advisors were beginning

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<sup>463</sup> Walker’s recommendation noted how things will likely remain with the universities: “We shall be asked every few years what contribution can be made here and now to concrete social situations, what can be drawn off from the academic world for practical application.” She opined: “That point of view could be developed in extension and must be given due weight when our future program is considered as a whole.” Willits might begin with “a thorough survey of present work in the social sciences in leading universities.” One objective should be to learn what each institution “thinks itself best able to promote.” Sydnor H. Walker, “Future Support of the Social Sciences in the Universities,” 1, 3-4.

<sup>464</sup> Willits agreed with Walker’s idea that universities should “begin the process of self-examination & appraisal.” Yet he suspected the Foundation “would have to be prepared to finance a goodly share of the proposals that would result.” The Foundation might lose “full liberty of action” if the path forward was that “each of a number of Universities spent six months or so preparing proposals for us, –at our request.” Joseph Willits to Raymond Fosdick, August 25, 1939, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 4.

to revolve around questions of war and peace. Selskar Gunn, in Europe, wondered whether the Foundation should openly take a side in the war, this being the side of Great Britain of course. Gunn also believed it best to try and maintain ongoing research projects in all foreign nations with as much continuity as possible. Tracy Kittredge, still the director of the European program, also contacted the Foundation. In interactions with both Fosdick and Willits, Kittredge introduced the idea that an impending all-European war might affect social science projects beyond any real control of the Foundation. Yet the Foundation ought to try and interpret European events – unfortunate as they were – as real-world experiments to be studied. Kittredge was also willing to evaluate concrete research possibilities according to a new distinction, which Kittredge said owed to Willits: between projects to be continued without appreciable change and projects to be continued with modifications. In a follow-up report in July 1940, Kittredge added that a number of European research projects were underway on war causes and postwar peace arrangements.<sup>465</sup>

Another view available for the Rockefeller Foundation to consider was that of Robert Lynd, Chairman of the SSRC. In 1939, Lynd published *Knowledge for What? The Place of Social Science in American Culture*. Lynd argued a severe point, namely, that the idea to

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<sup>465</sup> In October 1939, Gunn was actually submitting a memorandum in response to Willits's recent short memo, "Social Science Activities in Europe" (September 1939). Gunn, who had recently conducted interviews with British scientists, reported that interviewees were in agreement that the essential research would be aimed at winning the war. Also noted by Gunn was "The absolute necessity for continuity of effort at a sound academic level in the field of both teaching and research during the period of the war"; "Memorandum by Gunn," Selskar Gunn, October 5, 1939. As to Tracy Kittredge, in October 1939 he shared thoughts on projects across Europe fitting in distinct categories: projects to continue without appreciable change; projects to continue with some modifications; projects to terminate. The common thread through projects worth continuing was that they cover governmental and economic aspects of the war period. Projects were also needed to understand possible conditions of post-war settlement; Tracy Kittredge to Joseph Willits, October 10, 1939. In the follow-up letter, Kittredge recognized the number of proposals "bubbling up" across Europe that could soon "be legion." The Foundation must be selective. "The task of the Social Science Division is, first of all, to develop and continue a fundamental program; but also to find the unique opportunities where, through regular program or emergency grants, Foundation support may really count"; Tracy Kittredge to Raymond Fosdick, November 20, 1939, RAC-RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 4.

emulate natural science was on the brink of destroying social science. The lack of engagement with real-world problems that resulted from adoption of natural science ideals and methods (including abstraction and mathematical rigor) had to go. What was needed was greater engagement with real-world problems. Social scientists also needed to return to the early idea that boundaries constructed to defend autonomous disciplines in social science must be shattered. “Social science is not a scholarly Arcanum,” Lynd wrote in presenting his holistic, reconstructive argument, “but an organized part of the culture which exists to help man in continually understanding and rebuilding his culture.”<sup>466</sup>

Soon after his arrival at the division, Willits gathered all these kinds of perspectives and then obtained yet another perspective, from an outside report by a friend. Willits requested advice from economist Simon Kuznets concerning what policies might move the Foundation’s social science program forward. Discussion between Willits and Kuznets brought agreement that the Foundation’s new strategy ought to be a balance between multiple interests. Society’s problems were “so vast,” with “factors so numerous and elusive,” that Kuznets hardly knew where to begin. He stated what modern social science seemed to be: “[T]he function of the social scientist,” he declared, “is to provide such intellectual organization of social phenomena as would serve to indicate the relations and relative importance of distinctive groups of forces over time.” Good social science can help everyday people “to understand the sequence of specific events and problems” that affect their lives. Social science can also help policymakers “to ascertain the probable consequences of any step of policy which they would consider undertaking in an attempt to

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<sup>466</sup> Robert S. Lynd, *Knowledge for What? The Place of Social Science in American Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1939): ix.

make adjustment to changing situations.” Kuznets illustrated with an example he knew well. “To suggest a concrete example, it is the task of economists to indicate the relations and relative importance of various parts of the productive system and their responsiveness to various types of stimulation as shown by their changes in the past. This should make it easier to forecast the effects of certain policies...”<sup>467</sup>

Kuznets tried defining social research in terms of a clean break between discovery and application of knowledge. He intended to establish that any potential problems of biased usage of social knowledge were not even relevant anymore; that the “honest civil servant” can be trusted. Kuznets explored the idea of a separation between persons in scientific roles and persons in the role of “social engineer.” “It is not the function of social scientists as scientists to apply this knowledge to certain specific situations.” Looking at the natural sciences as an example, “there is a whole body of specialists, not scientists, who are engaged in translating the discoveries of the research students so as to make them bear upon practical problems calling for solution.” Yet some people tend to believe an analogy between social science and natural science might not be perfectly constructed: “It may be argued that in the area of social problems such groups of appliers of results of scientific research are absent; and that it is, therefore, the function of the social scientist himself to apply his findings to current specific problems.” Kuznets himself, however, would strongly “deny this argument, because it seems to me that such groups do exist.”<sup>468</sup>

<sup>467</sup> On July 14, 1939, Willits wrote Simon Kuznets; see Joseph Willits to Simon Kuznets, July 14, 1939. Responding with a lengthy letter, Kuznets said he fully “realize[d] the difficulty of the problem that the Foundation faces in trying to apply its funds in such a way as to further progress in the social sciences and their development to a level at which they can render efficient help in the solution of the various social problems”; Simon Kuznets to Joseph Willits, August 1, 1939, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 4, pp. 1-2.

<sup>468</sup> Simon Kuznets to Joseph Willits, August 1, 1939, pp. 2-3.

Clear examples of knowledge-appliers were politicians, statesmen, advertising specialists, and economists doing forecasting. Also there stood the “honest civil servant” who works “within the framework of social welfare as determined by a democratic consensus of opinion.” Kuznets emphasized not only “that there is and should be a clear distinction between the functions of scientists and those of the appliers,” but even more to the point of Willits’s concern, that “there is no need to be worried that significant findings of social scientists will not be given due consideration in the formulation of social policies and the determination of social action.” Kuznets added: “I cannot help feeling that the strategic lacunae are in the development of basic social science disciplines, not in the field of its application and not in the field of making findings available to a larger number of people.”<sup>469</sup>

Kuznets, in other words, favored more work in science before getting involved in more applications of social science. He continued on: “I for one would consider that the major problem of the Foundation in the social sciences is to find the means by which it can best encourage basic work in the scientific disciplines; that the emphasis... would, in the long run, mean a most efficient application of funds from the viewpoint of the ultimate service of social sciences to society.” Kuznets conceded the big question was “how are you going to do it?...how are you going to find the people whose approach and method are profound enough and whose spirit is patient enough so that their work builds toward clarity rather than confusion?” Kuznets answered that as important as finding the right people to do science is finding the best specific projects to put people to work on: these projects were at “those links in the social system where strain appears, where the body social will therefore be willing to provide most data for the solution, and where the basic relations and forces in the body social

<sup>469</sup> Simon Kuznets to Joseph Willits, August 1, 1939, pp. 2-3.



are likely to be reflected most clearly.” There was a place, then, for trying to pick specific problems to study – at least if Willits was willing to try a difficult thing and find the important ‘links in the social system.’<sup>470</sup>

Willits believed Kuznets offered ideas quite worth considering. Particularly Willits agreed with Kuznets’s suggestion that the Foundation should find the desired “concrete proposals by using small groups of hand-picked advisors” – that, perhaps in this way, a new form of connection could be forged between the Foundation and universities.<sup>471</sup>

#### 11.5 Willits’s program in fields of special concern–1940-44

The Foundation was in a period of great caution by 1940. Money restraint remained in place, and additional caution was needed in response to wartime circumstances. When considering European research possibilities for 1941, for example, it was clear that many more projects would be suspended or terminated than would be continued. Aid for refugees from fascist Europe continued, as between 1940 and 1945 twenty-two displaced social scientists received Foundation support. The place for Willits to focus was projects in the United States, some of which were to be part of a “national defense strategy.”<sup>472</sup>

<sup>470</sup> Simon Kuznets to Joseph Willits, August 1, 1939, pp. 2-4. Kuznets added: “The choice of problems by the social scientist is most closely determined by the changing conjuncture of social events. Whether he be a closet theorist, a mere describer, or an empiricist with an analytical bent of mind, the problems that he will choose for emphasis will almost inevitably be suggested by that point in the body social where the shoe pinches most.”

<sup>471</sup> Joseph Willits to Raymond Fosdick, August 25, 1939, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 4. It might be noted that by the late 1930s, Willits is said to have held a skeptical view of the involvement of social scientists in Roosevelt’s New Deal. Willits particularly worried that social scientists were losing their objectivity and independence, and hence were losing their status as experts; see James Allen Smith, *The Idea Brokers: Think Tanks and the Rise of New Policy Elite* (New York: The Free Press, 1991).

<sup>472</sup> For discussion of projects in the United States as well as Latin America, see Joseph H. Willits to Raymond B. Fosdick, September 18, 1940; Sydnor H. Walker to Joseph H. Willits, June 5, 1940, RAC–RF, R.G. 3.1, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 5. For a summary description of aid to European refugee social scientists see RAC–RF, R.G. 1.1, Series 200, Box 47, Folder 545a. For some information on Willits’s plans for 1941, see Willits, “Possible New Actions in 1941: Social Science Program in Europe,” RAC–RF, R.G.3.1, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 5.

Willits likely took into account all reports and their broad range of ideas as he developed his new program. Willits's earlier contact with the Memorial's crash program likely encouraged Willits's information-gathering strategy. Perhaps also influential was Willits's lifelong membership in the Society of Friends, for as a Quaker, he believed in seeking mediated common ground.<sup>473</sup>

Willits maintained that fields of economic research ought to remain the primary focus of the Division of Social Science. Within this focus, he decided on three fields for special attention: research to obtain deeper understanding of people's behavior; research to learn how to direct a complex society; research to understand totalitarian societies. These three fields can be interpreted partly as a product of much discussion since 1938, as well as direct advice Willits received – advice to emphasize economics, to base investigations on fundamental human motives, to use social science for social control, and to search for an appraisal scheme to select specific projects.

In January 1941, Willits wrote a memorandum titled “Foundations of Economic Research.” He explored ideas concerning the Foundation's proper role in society, even announcing what his role should be. “The proper role of a foundation official should be to learn, and not to pontificate.” One thing Willits had learned, and which might “best serve” him in his role as Director, is “the questions which social scientists themselves raise concerning Foundation policy.” The kinds of questions the Foundation was now receiving were often posed in light of available finances of the 1940s (and not in light “of the incomes and appropriation accounts of the twenties”). Willits took time to recall Ruml's jump-start

<sup>473</sup> See Darwin H. Stapleton, “Joseph Willits and the Rockefeller's European Programme in the Social Sciences,” *Minerva* 41, 1 (2003): 101-14, esp. 102-4.

program of the 1920s: “The philosophy that out of all the appropriations then made something will take root and grow was a wise and constructive policy for the twenties when income was abundant and appropriation accounts were large. It has by and large been proved by events.” However in tighter financial times the new question should be: ““What would a wise and provident society direct us to do with the funds now available in the social sciences?” That question is the real deity to which we all have to render accounting – whether we be social scientists or foundation officers.” Willits explained his strategy was to avoid hazarding any specific answers to specific research questions, but simply to help make order from the range of questions. Willits’s duty was to help clarify the overriding questions: “To what objects in the social sciences should a foundation devoted to serving human welfare as intelligently as it can, make its grants?” “Given certain changes in personnel in a foundation, what is the new ‘line’ of the foundation to be?” “What areas of work is it going to stress to the exclusion of other areas?” Willits also returned to one point above all others: “How are foundations going to find this ‘able person working fruitfully and intelligently on significant issues?’” “That,” Willits declared, “is the crux of the problem.”<sup>474</sup>

Willits also clarified some thoughts in a subsequent letter to Fosdick, saying what he believed were the most important ideas to carry the Foundation’s social sciences program forward: that support must continue going to social scientists to pursue “understanding of fact and relationship,” but that also needed would be support of research aimed at social control. The burden now falling upon the social sciences was the extremely challenging one, Willits pronounced, of trying to take “the acts of two billion human beings” and create “order

<sup>474</sup> On the three fields see Donald Fisher, *Fundamental Development of the Social Sciences: Rockefeller Philanthropy and the United States Social Science Research Council* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993): 186. Joseph H. Willits, “Foundations of Economic Research,” January 1941, RAC–RF, R.G.3, Series 910, Box 3, Folder 16, esp. pp. 2-3.

and comprehension.” Willits added that “if wise decisions are to be made on the welter of issues which will confront the post-war world, they must be....The spirit of scientific inquiry needs most of all to be carried over and applied to social problems.”<sup>475</sup>

#### 11.6 Some projects under Willits’s directorship–1939-46

A few arguments and recommendations made during the rich discussion period between 1938 and 1941 are logical to believe would have resonated for Willits. He would have been consistently aware of the need to have policy relevance while not specifically sponsoring any particular policy. Willits decided on his own policy of reasonable redundancy, relying on two or three research groups for each kind of economic problem.

A handful of projects supported by Willits’s new program between about 1939 and 1946 are worth noting – and in a few cases are worth considering in detail. No doubt much stands to be learned by having historians make detailed study of economic research projects during the Willits era, especially for what these projects can tell us about a challenging period of transition at the Foundation’s Division of Social Science. Indeed quite a number of projects supported by the division dealt with economic research. Income tax studies were supported at the University of Wisconsin (1939-42) and at the University of Delaware (1939-45). Studies on conditions of war and peace were supported at the University of Michigan (1940-3), the University of Denver (1941-2), Princeton University (1942-3), Harvard University (1942-5), and the New School for Social Research (1943-6). Foundation-supported price control research took place at Duke University (1939-44), the University of

<sup>475</sup> Joseph H. Willits to Raymond B. Fosdick, February 8, 1942, RAC–RF, R.G. 3.1, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 6.

Buffalo (1942-3), and Iowa State College (1942-4). Fiscal policy research was supported at Harvard University (1940-7), while national income studies were supported at New York University (1943-45).<sup>476</sup>

Also supported was a different kind of economic study produced by a single scholar, namely Gunnar Myrdal's classic study, *An American Dilemma* (1944). In contributing some financial support for Myrdal's project, the Foundation clearly was willing to get involved in a field of research potentially resulting in controversial policy conclusions.<sup>477</sup>

In addition to race relations, another research problem connected to economics at the time was population research. In November 1943, Willits discussed with Fosdick the possibility that the division might pursue such research. Willits believed population research should be a high priority for support. Yet Fosdick responded with a reminder that support of population research had already been tried by the Rockefeller philanthropies from as early as 1911. "We did a lot of thinking in Memorial days on the subject of population," Fosdick recalled in particular, "but we never started it" as a field. Fosdick added that an extensive

<sup>476</sup> Duke University's price control research in RAC-RF, R.G.1.1, Series 200R-200S, Box 329, Folders 3922-3; Harvard University's fiscal policy research in RAC-RF, R.G.1.1, Series 200R-200S, Box 341, Folders 4066-7; Harvard's war-and-peace studies in RAC-RF, R.G.1.1, Series 200R-200S, Box 410, Folders 4851-2; Iowa State College's food price study in RAC-RF, R.G.1.1, Series 218, Folder 39; the New School's war-and-peace studies in RAC-RF, R.G.1.1, Series 200R-200S, Boxes 382-3, multiple folders; Princeton University's war-and-peace studies in RAC-RF, R.G.1.1, Series 200R-200S, Box 350, Folders 4167-8; University of Buffalo's price studies in RAC-RF, R.G.1.1, Series 200R-200S, Box 411, Folders 4865-6; University of Delaware's income tax study in RAC-RF, R.G.1.1, Series 200R-200S, Box 412, Folders 4885-6; University of Denver's war-and-peace studies in RAC-RF, R.G.1.1, Series 200R-200S, Folders 4888-9; University of Michigan's war-and-peace studies in RAC-RF, R.G.1.1, Series 200R-200S, Box 414, Folders 4912-4; University of Wisconsin's income tax studies in RAC-RF, R.G.1.1, Box 414, Folders 4922-6.

<sup>477</sup> See Martin Bulmer, "The Apotheosis of Liberalism? *An American Dilemma* after Fifty Years in the Context of the Lives of Gunnar and Alva Myrdal," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 16 (1993): 345-5; David W. Southern, "An American Dilemma after Fifty Years: Putting the Myrdal Study and Black-White Relations in Perspective," *History Teacher* 28 (1995): 227-53.

quantity of filed materials still existed on the subject. Under Willits's leadership, the division indeed would pursue some support of population studies, covering numerous nations.<sup>478</sup>

Two additional projects worth some interpretation were ones dealing with wartime twists on increasingly prominent Foundation interests: community strengthening and business-cycle research.

A project sponsored by the Foundation between 1944 and 1946 was an experiment known as the "Montana Study." Done in coordination between the Foundation's Division of Social Sciences and Division of Humanities, the study began in April 1944 at a meeting in Chicago arranged by Northwestern University philosophy professor Baker Brownell. The meeting brought together Foundation representatives and Brownell as well as Ernest Melby, chancellor of the University of Montana. Discussions explored a communitarian ideal that local action must be strengthened as a basis for long-term survival of the American democratic culture. Chancellor Melby worked out a proposal for an experimental program in cultural revitalization, to be tried in Montana towns, with Brownell serving as director. The project was to test a new planning doctrine relying on forces of free local discussion to explore what kinds of new leadership and social changes would emerge. A goal was to help Montanans find ways to stabilize and enrich their community life, which in turn would strengthen American democracy by bolstering the small town. An urgent social and economic problem at the time was the decline in rural population numbers, and the question was: Did big cities have too great a pull to allow returning soldiers to return to their home

<sup>478</sup> Raymond Fosdick to Joseph Willits, November 12, 1943, RAC-RF, R.G.3.1, Series 910, Box 3. See also "Rockefeller Foundation Grants in the Field of Population by Years to June 1962," RAC-RF, R.G.3.2, Series 900-P&P, Box 57, Folder 312.

towns? The research problem, then, was to maintain a balanced labor allocation through the period of returning to a post-war economy.<sup>479</sup>

A concern at the Foundation at the time was that the postwar world would be in danger of unraveling, even in the United States. At the Foundation, Humanities Division director David Stevens agreed to take a lead in overseeing financial support for the project. In words capable of recalling Beardsley Ruml's idea for a European program in humanistic studies during the 1920s, the Foundation recorded: "We know what before we had only believed to be true – that a lack of awareness of the cultural situations in the various regions of the continent on the part of...[persons] in the fine arts, is a primary impediment to the cultural growth they might be fostering." The chief idea was to support specific research aimed at finding specific ways to strengthen communities.<sup>480</sup>

The plan for the study was refined by May 1944 as a project based out of the University of Montana which would promote outreach efforts in small Montana towns. In each town, the project would be to develop appropriate mechanisms to stabilize families and communities. Each small community was to form discussion groups to identify what they believed could help their community the most. The great expectation – which was left to each community to fulfill – was that small communities could develop as a kind of front wave of defense against mass society. The primary research instrument was to send applied social scientists to each of the small towns to help the townspeople establish their local study groups. Each group was created to interact democratically in discussing local problems and

<sup>479</sup> See Paul H. Landis, *Loss of Rural Manpower to War Industry through Migration* (Washington, DC: Social Science Research Council, 1943). A recent study is Carla Homstad, "Two Roads Diverged: A Look Back at the Montana Study," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 53, 3 (Autumn 2003): 16-29.

<sup>480</sup> The opinion of the Foundation officers is quoted in Philip J. Nelson, "Community Dreaming in the Rural Northwest: The Montana Study, 1944-7," *Great Plains Quarterly* 19, 4 (Fall 1999): 257-75.

brainstorming for solutions. The fact that many groups were created was a case of strategic redundancy to attempt to produce multiple possible solutions to similar problems. Of course there were also various kinds of unique problems. In one town, for example, the urgent problem was how not to become a “ghost” town. At another town (Libby) a new performing arts center was identified as useful and was built. In a couple other towns the serious social and economic problem was how to control rapacious timber companies.<sup>481</sup>

Particularly disapproved in many towns was the behavior of Montana’s two largest companies, Anaconda Copper and Montana Power, known as “the Montana twins.” Group participants discussed ways that towns might counteract the powerful presence of these two Montana companies. And, of course, the companies didn’t like this. A strong counter-campaign got underway by the end of 1944, which aimed to depict the people in the study groups as advocating un-American ideals. Articles carrying this message appeared in the national press, for example in *Harper’s* and *Reader’s Digest*. Study-group participants soon got labeled as “intellectual communists” and portrayed as supporters of a controversial Missouri Valley Authority under debate in the U.S. Senate. Under the weight of such criticism, the Rockefeller Foundation decided to distance itself from the Montana Study, and the study was pretty much ended by the end of 1946.<sup>482</sup>

A third specific project worthy of mention began in May 1943, when Jacob Marschak, a leading business cycle researcher, contacted Willits. As a Foundation-supported refugee scientist from Norway, Marschak reported he was in New York City working with

<sup>481</sup> Nelson, “Community Dreaming in the Rural Northwest,” 262.

<sup>482</sup> Nelson, “Community Dreaming in the Rural Northwest,” 266. Articles written on the Montana Study at the time include Joseph Kinsey Howard, “The Montana Twins in Trouble?,” *Harper’s* (September 1944): 334-42; Baker Brownell, “The Montana Study,” *School and Society* 60 (December 16, 1944): 397-8; Joseph Kinsey Howard, “Golden River,” *Harper’s* (May 1945): 511-23; Wesley Price, “Battle over the Missouri Valley,” *Reader’s Digest* (April 1, 1946): 69-73.



Trygve Haavelmo (also previously a Foundation-supported economist) to run a “weekend econometrics seminar.” With a variety of university and NBER economists in attendance, seminar discussion turned to whether a new statistical method might replace the NBER’s preferred statistical method known as least-squares analysis. The seminar discussed a three-year-old paper by Haavelmo as well as a newer paper Marschak just published in connection with an institute called the “Cowles Commission,” which was receiving some support from the Foundation. The basic idea for Haavelmo and Marschak’s method was to test all the different business-cycle theories against a single body of real-world data. Statistical analysis was used to test whether the different theories fit the data closely enough (e.g., with “95% fit” or “95% certainty”) to be likely true.<sup>483</sup>

Marschak informed Willits that economists at the Cowles Commission hoped to rigorously compare the new statistical method against the NBER’s established method. Marschak suggested the Cowles Commission was now permanently established at a secure home near the University of Chicago, and should receive greater financial support to explore the new method. Marschak’s goal was to keep Willits and others at the Foundation informed of work on the new approach that was quickly becoming what Marschak would before long describe to Willits as “the Gospel.”<sup>484</sup>

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<sup>483</sup> See Trygve Haavelmo, “The Problem of Testing Econometric Theories by Means of Passive Observations,” in *Report of Sixth Annual Research Conference on Economics and Statistics* (Cowles Commission, 1940); Jacob Marschak, “Economic Interdependence and Statistical Analysis,” in Oskar Lange, F. McIntyre, and Theodore O. Yntema, eds. *Studies in Mathematical Economics and Econometrics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942). For a brief history of the Cowles Commission during the 1930s and 1940s see Mary Morgan, *The History of Econometric Ideas* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990): esp. 55-6, 251-8. Morgan describes the Cowles Commission as “the centre of econometric research in the 1940s.”

<sup>484</sup> Marschak contacted the Foundation at least as early as May and December 1943; see Jacob Marschak, “Report to the Rockefeller Foundation, 20 May 1943”; Jacob Marschak to Joseph Willits, May 21, 1943; Marschak, “Economic Behavior and Business Fluctuations, Memorandum to the Rockefeller Foundation, December 1943” RAC–Cowles Commission Archives, Rockefeller Foundation Notebooks. The quoted words are from a later letter, Marschak to Joseph Willits, June 17, 1946, RAC–Cowles Commission Archives,

Marschak attempted to describe for Willits what he described as “a difference of opinions and sympathies between our approach here and that used by Mitchell and Kuznets at the National Bureau.” Marschak, who recognized a need to overcome Willits’s own admission that “I can’t quite understand what Marschak really has in mind,” provided a research proposal by early 1944, in which he commented that rather than focus on analyzing the consequences of “price controls” as some persons at Cowles were toying with, “it is now planned to revert the facilities of the Cowles Commission to its original and proper field of quantitative economic research.” The Foundation, in other words, was potentially going to be in the position of supporting an economic research institute directly.<sup>485</sup>

The Cowles Commission in fact received its Foundation grant in 1944. Marschak kept Willits informed of progress as tests of the new statistical method proved successful; indeed what is today well-known as “simultaneous equations estimation” was born. By October, Marschak was enthused enough to report to Willits that the method is the “‘rational empirical’ approach: the only possible way of using past experience for current rational action (policy as distinct from passive prediction).”<sup>486</sup>

Foundation-supported business cycle research reached a declared point of policy advocacy. Since at least as early 1942, in fact, an impending urgency of new economic policy

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Rockefeller Foundation Notebooks. Much of this story of the Willits-Marschak interaction on the question of supporting a new research method is compiled from the account presented by Roy J. Epstein, *A History of Econometrics* (Amsterdam: North-Holland/Elsevier Science Publishers, 1987).

<sup>485</sup> Marschak described what he tried to communicate to Willits in Jacob Marschak to Louis Wirth, February 8, 1944. Willits admitted his puzzlement in Joseph Willits to Robert Redfield, January 25, 1944. Both quoted passages are in Epstein, *A History of Econometrics*, 64. Marschak’s January grant proposal is Jacob Marschak, “Research Plans for two years beginning July 1, 1944”; the letter is Jacob Marschak to Joseph Willits, January 12, 1945, RAC–Cowles Commission Archives, Rockefeller Foundation Notebooks. See also Duo Qin, *Formation of Econometrics: A Historical Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>486</sup> Jacob Marschak to Joseph Willits, October 7, 1944, RAC–Cowles Commission Archives, Rockefeller Foundation Notebooks. The new method aimed to describe the real-world with two algebraic equations sharing one or more variables so that the two equations would dynamically interact with each other.

had been recognized. Leading U.S. and British economists recognized that when the shift from war- to peace-time production came, a policy of increased government spending and money infusion might be needed. British social scientist William Beveridge made such claims in 1942 in *Social Insurance and Allied Services* (also known as the “Beveridge Report”), a book making an analytical proposal for “cradle to grave” social welfare legislation. A version of such an argument published in the United States was clearly stated by Alvin Hansen, in *After the War—Full Employment* (1942).<sup>487</sup>

Within about a year, a situation coming at the war’s end was a fear of post-war recession. Concern about severe consequences of post-war economic transition (which had also happened for a brief but severe period following the First World War) led the United States government to pass the Full Employment Act of 1946. Cowles researchers were quickly called upon to provide government policymakers with GNP and related data measures at a monthly rate. To Willits and others at the Foundation it was unclear what would be the consequence for continued Foundation support of the Cowles Commission – which might no longer be considered a neutral research body.<sup>488</sup>

### 11.7 End of an era—1946

The end of the Second World War also ended a thirty-five year period of Rockefeller philanthropic support of social research. With the quick beginning of Cold War efforts, a new approach to financial support of social research would be found to fit well with governmental support of university-based research. In many cases following 1946, U.S. federal support of

<sup>487</sup> Alvin H. Hansen, *After the War—Full Employment* (Washington: Government Printing Office, January 1942); William Beveridge, *Social Insurance and Allied Services* (London: H.M. Stationary Office, 1942).

<sup>488</sup> See Roy J. Epstein, *A History of Econometrics* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1987): 79-80.

social research got directed at military uses. At the Rockefeller Foundation's Division of Social Science, the direction forward was largely made up of projects to try and build autonomous communities of social researchers in reconstructing and otherwise 'underdeveloped' regions – regions ranging from West Germany to Puerto Rico. But the post-1945 period in Rockefeller support of social research is a subject for study at another time. As to Joseph Willits, he remained director of the Rockefeller Foundation's Division of Social Sciences until 1954. During the decade following the war, Willits's leadership practices came to recognize the fact of increased government support of social research. Foundation support of social science during the post-war period under Willits's leadership surely should be looked upon as the beginning of a new period in the history of philanthropic support of social research – a period in which a new rigor of the grant application process was created.<sup>489</sup>

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<sup>489</sup> For information about federal government support of social science beginning in the middle 1940s, see Philip M. Hauser, "Are the Social Sciences Ready? Social Research Possible Under the Aegis of a National Science Foundation," *American Sociological Review* 11 (August 1946): 379-84; L.K. Koontz, "Social Sciences in the National Science Foundation," *Pacific Historical Review* 15 (March 1945): 1-30; Gene Martin Lyons, *The Uneasy Partnership: Social Science and the Federal Government in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1969). On the mid-1940s idea of foreign nations as social research laboratories, see Michael Lapp, "The Rise and Fall of Puerto Rico as a Social Laboratory, 1945-1965," *Social Science History* 19 (1995): 169-99; David J. Staley, "The Rockefeller Foundation and the Patronage of Germany Sociology, 1946-1955," *Minerva* 33, 3 (1995): 251-64; Chris J. Shepherd, "Imperial Science: The Rockefeller Foundation and Agricultural Science in Peru, 1940-1960," *Science as Culture* 14 (2005): 113-37.

## CHAPTER 12. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### 12.1 Introduction

Historians debate whether Rockefeller philanthropy tried to control the uses of social science. Some historians believe such an attempt was made, whereas others find no firm evidence of such effort. I believe Rockefeller philanthropists attempted little or no direct control as such, but that one manner of control actually was sought: by the simple fact that Rockefeller philanthropists aimed to discover how to develop a new institutional force – a “community” of “unified” social scientists – these philanthropists selected certain projects to meet perceived needs in the structure of social science.

### 12.2 Summary

The best way to begin understanding the relationship between Rockefeller philanthropy and social science is to understand the business-government-society model that guided the thoughts of John D. Rockefeller and John D. Rockefeller Jr. Each held deep conviction that a successful industrialist had responsibilities to help society develop the right matrix of institutions for a newly industrialized society. One institutional force seemingly missing was a community of independent social scientists who would discover solutions to problems resulting from the existing institutional forces – i.e., economic, political, and social forces – each doing what they were supposed to do. Business leaders had the responsibility to work within the framework of existing laws to maximize profits. Government officials were to efficiently execute all laws and policies demanded by the American public. Society in

general had the responsibility to work hard and maintain personal discipline. Yet these were just three institutional parts in what needed to be a four-part world.

Rockefeller philanthropists recognized the need for a community of social scientists to discover “real” facts about modern economic, political, and social forces. To discover such facts, what was needed was genuinely “scientific” social research. Rockefeller philanthropy had a responsibility to discover how to develop the missing institutional force outside of any controlling efforts by business, government, and society.

Multiple philanthropies supported some kind of social research during the first decade or so of the twentieth century. Rockefeller philanthropy’s first attempt at such involvement was in 1911 when John D. Rockefeller Jr. evaluated whether conditions were appropriate to support a “Bureau of Social Hygiene.” Rockefeller Jr. paid attention to public opinion, which communicated a message that great care must be taken before getting involved in supporting such research, and he decided not to directly support such research at that time.

In 1913, the Rockefeller family created the Rockefeller Foundation, assigning to Foundation officers the task “to promote the well-being and to advance the civilization” of the United States and its territories, as well as foreign lands. During the first couple years of the Foundation, a series of conferences took place to evaluate whether it was time to directly sponsor a “Division of Economic Research.” One point of debate during these conferences was whether to support economic research purely to obtain factual “information” or primarily to wield existing information for “persuasion” purposes. A second point of debate concerned a model of Rockefeller philanthropy, known as “scientific philanthropy,” which was originated by Frederick T. Gates, a long-time advisor to the Rockefellers. This model was something of an efficiency argument that an overriding goal must be to get the greatest

results from any amount of donated money. A third important question was discussed: To what extent are methods akin to physical science applicable to social research? Rockefeller Jr. believed that ultimately what was needed was a “medium” path through such concerns.

After April 1914, the Rockefellers and Foundation officers had to respond to the “Ludlow Massacre.” One way they did so was with a new model of modern society. Rockefeller Jr. expressed a notion that no single stockholder in any company (such as the Rockefeller’s mining outfit at Ludlow) can be directly responsible for everything the company does. A second response to Ludlow was a renewed attempt to get the Foundation involved in social research, this time by creating a “Division of Industrial Relations.” The Foundation appointed one industrial specialist to discover solutions to the particular problem of industrial violence. The goal was to use “scientific methods” to identify improvements to be made to management-labor relations. The scope of such research was to be unfettered by the Rockefellers, so as to be as comprehensive and accurate as possible.

A complex relationship existed between the Rockefellers, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Division of Industrial Relations. In testimony before the United States Congress, Rockefeller Jr. explained this relationship by emphasizing the scientific freedom granted to the division’s director, W.L.M. King. Rockefeller Jr. also suggested that the Rockefeller family’s main direct responsibility in helping guide society was to use its stockholdings as an instrument of “moral influence.” Rockefeller Jr. also shared additional ideas along similar lines in a personal visit to the Colorado mines.

When King’s project was completed, Foundation officials reacted to it by generally agreeing on the ideal of objective social research, but by expressing deep dissatisfaction over

how King tried to accomplish this. Foundation officials decided against directly sponsoring King's conclusions, and they freed King to publish on his own.

About this time, Foundation Secretary Jerome Greene began gathering new ideas to possibly guide a renewed attempt at involvement in social research. Greene reached two conclusions: the Foundation must avoid simply handing over money, and an ultimate goal should be to build research "communities." Greene led the Foundation to try a new kind of involvement in social research by creating an independent institute, the "Institute for Government Research," founded in 1916. This institute had an expressed mission to evaluate the efficiency of government activities.

Of special interest to many observers in the philanthropic world was creation of the National Research Council, also in 1916. Although the NRC was established independent from any foundation assistance, Rockefeller Foundation officials watched closely to see whether a neutral, politically-detached community of scientists could be successfully supported to help serve the public welfare. Physical scientists at the NRC successfully administered research fellowships, which also interested the Foundation.

A second new research organization, also created without Foundation assistance, was the National Bureau of Economic Research. Established in 1919-20, the self-declared goal for the NBER was to encourage "in the broadest and most liberal manner" the execution of "exact and impartial investigations." NBER director Wesley C. Mitchell (who had participated in the 1913-14 discussion at the Foundation) wanted to show that economic research could be done rigorously and objectively, partly because the NBER needed to establish they could do this if they were to be considered for Foundation funds.



In 1918, persons at Rockefeller philanthropy paid attention to the creation of another new research organization, the “Institute of Economics,” which was directly supported by Andrew Carnegie’s Carnegie Corporation. A second move by the Carnegie Corporation, also watched by the Rockefeller Foundation, was work to build “scientific communities” in the physical sciences. Such persons as Foundation President George Vincent, Foundation Secretary Jerome Greene, and Divisional Director Wickliffe Rose all took an interest in this new idea of direct action to build scientific “communities.” The kinds of communities being paid attention to were, however, communities of physical scientists.

Creation of a new branch of Rockefeller philanthropy, the “Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial,” came in October 1918. Over its first few years, the Memorial focused on supporting programs helping women and children. By the early 1920s, however, persons at both the Memorial and the Foundation decided too little fundamental benefit seemed to be coming from Memorial efforts. Particularly questioned was the method of granting money to other agencies to further allocate. Gathering of ideas took place, with one idea being Rockefeller Jr.’s notion that an imbalance had cropped up between technical advancements from physical science and society’s awareness of the consequences of these advancements. What seemed needed to truly begin solving social problems was to develop “fundamental,” “scientific” social research.

In 1922, the Rockefellers and Foundation trustees named Beardsley Rummler as director of the Memorial. Rummler had done a few studies directly for Rockefeller Jr., and had also assisted at the Carnegie Corporation for one year. The Rockefeller family provided the Memorial with substantially enhanced funding, as well as a loose leash for Rummler to direct a major experiment: to build the social sciences. As Rummler and the Memorial officers began

their work to enact this experiment, one idea (eventually of long-term durability) was a distinction between “social science” and “social technology.” As a kind of maturation of the earlier ‘information-versus-persuasion’ distinction, this new idea was well suited to helping Ruml build a division of labor throughout the social scientific community.

In a “Policy Memorandum” in October 1922, Ruml stated his goal to get social researchers doing true science by studying “concrete” social phenomena. Ruml recognized the complexity of such work and decided the best way to promote genuinely “scientific” research was to build research communities throughout the social sciences. Such communities needed to be based in universities, where a “wide range of professional opinion” existed. Ruml made it clear that Memorial officers had great liberty of action, and that Memorial trustees (with ultimate authority over grant awards) would be insulated from any contact with actual research.

Memorial officer Lawrence K. Frank drew the task of producing a supplementary memorandum, which he completed in March 1923. Frank evaluated social research in the universities, and he identified specific needs. One need was money to expand the ranks of researchers. Also needed was greater focus on concrete research, for which better training in research methods would be instrumental. America’s businesses were beginning to support social researchers, and increased support of university-based social researchers would help counter this force. Especially helpful would be any effect experimental methods might have in helping researchers avoid getting labeled as politically biased.

Grant proposals came quickly to the Memorial. Some proposals were for psychology projects to deal with “concrete,” “real-world” problems. University of Pennsylvania researchers received support in 1923 to enter into industrial workplaces and study workers

attempting to deal with complex workplace environments. Under the leadership of G. Elton Mayo, Penn's researchers had the Memorial's trust that they could interact with businesses without becoming agents of business needs. The same year, Yale University's psychology proposal described some research that could complement what was being done at Penn. Like Penn, Yale espoused an idea of future "social control." Along with Penn and Yale, other projects in industrial psychology were supported as well. Support of Penn's project was transferred to Harvard University in 1926, when Mayo made his move there.

An overriding goal expressed in the reports by Ruml and Frank was to build "scientific communities." Each agreed that such a project could be accomplished by developing "research fields" as well as "research centers," an integrated package of which would help develop an interconnected structure for the social sciences. Industrial psychology was one of perhaps a dozen research fields to which the Memorial attended. The main idea for research centers, of which there would be five, was for specific universities to take leadership roles in developing specific methodologies. One center was developed at Harvard, where the arrival of industrial psychology in 1926 was an instigating presence. The main methodological project at Harvard, it seems to me, was to transform social inquiry from ethical argument to scientific method without losing the ethical awareness entirely.

The London School of Economics became a research center in 1923, largely because the Memorial needed a major program in Europe. LSE researchers expressed an interest to work on a unified conception of social science, with their primary specialization being economics. LSE researchers had some interest to use a blend of historical, theoretical and empirical studies as a means to help interconnect the social sciences.

At the University of Chicago, which became a center in 1923, experimental sociology was the centerpiece science. The Midwest was a good place for a research center, and an important factor in the Chicago-Memorial relationship was a level of trust established between Ruml and Chicago social scientists. Chicagoans had their own ideas for pursuing unified social science, particularly by focusing on a “local community” approach. Applied experiments (i.e., the “city as laboratory”) mattered greatly to Chicago’s researchers.

At the University of North Carolina, a contribution to the overall project was to make race-relations research a central focus for bringing all the social sciences together. The Memorial needed a research center in the American South, and a level of trust already existed between the Memorial and leading UNC researchers. In the course of a bargaining act during 1924 and 1925, UNC sociologist Howard Odum interacted with Memorial officers in such a way that properly “concrete” projects could be stated to make UNC a research center.

Columbia University became the fifth research center. The Memorial likely had a goal to get at least one center located in a northeastern city, perhaps ideally the same city as the Memorial’s home office. Memorial officers also wanted a center to focus on strengths in quantitative methods. An emphasis on international political studies at Columbia also seems to have helped their cause.

Although research centers were highly important, just as important was to develop research fields. One field requiring urgent attention was race relations. While certain kinds of research could be done at existing centers (especially UNC, Chicago, and Columbia), additional research was needed. Memorial officers focused attention on what race-relations research should accomplish, and they determined that a slow rate of change seemed best for race relations in the United States. Such a conclusion was based not on ideas about the right

degree of social change, but on a holistic impression that simultaneous elevation of the entire African-American population was needed.

Memorial-supported researchers at Western Reserve University (in Cleveland) and Fisk University (in Nashville) got race-relations research underway in connection with projects to train urban social workers. At Brown University, a Memorial-supported project studied problems deriving from a mix of many ethnicities in a northern city. The Brown study, in its being directed by a woman, was a situation in which specific information (i.e., the qualities of Bessie Bloom Wessel's personality and research abilities) was requested before the award was made. Yet similar to what happened when Mayo changed schools, Wessel was permitted to transfer Memorial funds when she later changed schools.

Also created was a research field to specialize more generally in social and economic problems in the American South. Among numerous southern schools hoping to follow the research momentum established by UNC were Vanderbilt University and the University of Virginia. Each school contacted the Memorial, and each eventually received a substantial grant. Yet Memorial personnel first needed to work carefully with faculty and administrators at both schools to get their patterns of thinking past any notion of joining directly with UNC's projects. Both schools proved capable of identifying unique contributions as well as finding ways to contribute to an overall constellation of projects desired by the Memorial.

A research field specializing in the American Southwest and West also came into existence. University of Texas officials contacted Ruml, initially with an idea to join with UNC. The Memorial advised Texas to focus on unique regional problems, which Texas did. Another school expressing interest in doing research in a western region was the University of Denver, which in 1925 proposed specializing in problems in the Rocky Mountain region.

Some concern arose at the Memorial with respect to whether proper rationale could be identified to support Denver's proposal as unique, both regionally and methodologically – the fear being that many other schools might flood the Memorial with arguments for their own regional uniqueness. Rationale was eventually found to award Denver a grant. Stanford University applied for and received a Memorial grant to study California's unique geographical, social, and economic problems.

The Memorial developed a research field to study successes and failures of non-capitalist economies. Such economies were seen as large-scale, natural experiments. With respect to the extreme situations of Russia's communist economy and the peasant-based economy in China, Memorial officials believed such economies unlikely to survive. Some portion of any funds directed to Russia and China therefore needed to be directed to preparing their people for eventual participation in capitalism. Also to be prepared for capitalism were people in Beirut, Lebanon. When it came to Liverpool, England, the important fact was that University of Liverpool researchers had a goal to study the consequences of a real-life, urban experiment. With Sweden, the experiment was at the level of a partially-capitalistic, national economy. These five projects ranged widely, obviously, as well as along multiple dimensions; however all were part of a group of projects working on a premise that some version of capitalism was better than non-capitalism.

Land use and population studies represented another important research field. This was a field in which an arrangement of approved projects was accomplished partly by rejecting a small number of projects. One denied project, proposed in 1923 by Richard Ely at the University of Wisconsin, evidently got perceived as too general and undefined in nature – or perhaps it was a project believed to be associated with controversial political views? It

turns out that more can be learned about which answer to select by assessing two other declined projects, both at Stanford University. The first of Stanford's denied projects even came forth prior to Ely's proposal, when Stanford's Carl Alsberg described a broad and undefined project, which the Memorial denied on the project's merit alone. A second Stanford project, also proposed by Alsberg, again was denied for the reason of being too broad and undefined. Such facts surely increase the likelihood that the same, favorable explanation should hold for Ely's project as well.

Among approved projects in land use and population studies was a 1922 study by the NRC to assemble data on human migration patterns in the United States. Another organization receiving Memorial funds for land use and population research was the Social Science Research Council (which the Memorial helped establish in 1923). Additionally Ruml helped with a project of his own. The Memorial communicated with researchers at the New School for Social Research to get a proposal, and while the New School's 1924 project description was somewhat general, one fairly specific methodological principle was likely of some interest to the Memorial – namely, the idea to study rural-to-urban migration as a modern-day “selection” process.

Ruml tried developing a better sense of direction for this research field by securing an outside report on agricultural economics in American universities. Upon completion of this report (by Edwin Nourse, assistant director at the Institute of Economics), the Memorial evidently decided to stick with their reliance on unsolicited proposals. Ruml initiated one additional experimental project of his own. Also the Memorial decided to expand into Europe, where a few studies were approved between 1925 and 1928, all having some regional dimension to them. A substantial project was proposed in 1928, by researchers at the

University of Vermont. Bearing some resemblance to the New School's approach, a "selection" argument concerning rural-to-urban migration appeared within Vermont's holistic, multifaceted methodology aimed at helping rural communities recover as attractive places to live. Enough admiration existed for Vermont's research methods that at least one noted observer recommended considering widespread adoption of these methods.

A question can be asked: Did Memorial support of projects relying on "selection" ideas perhaps indicates some general approval of evolutionary arguments? To be sure, there were times when Memorial officers indicated some interest in evaluating evolutionary ideas, for example in association with "functionalist" anthropology's program to study "primitives" as persons capable of living successfully in any culture into which they might have been born. On the whole, however, it is clear that the Memorial decided not to try any full-blown research field to study changing human biology in relation to societal changes.

Child development represented a research field of great importance. Following early undistinguished work in this area, a clarified goal after 1922 was to strengthen child development research along experimental lines, including an approach to develop the home as "a child welfare agency." A goal at some Memorial-supported schools was to better connect the social sciences to social work (a form of "social technology"), with a goal to better help mothers and children living in urban environments. The Memorial also paid attention to rural conditions, with researchers at Iowa State College focusing on studying interacting facets of a progressive rural home environment with young children included, and University of Iowa researchers focusing on studying mostly rural children with normal levels of intelligence, in order to discover the extent to which a child's intelligence can be improved by a favorable, "nurturing" environment.



Another research field of some emphasis was international relations, which had a concern to gather facts to help prevent war. In addition to international-affairs research at Harvard, Radcliffe College proposed a project to gather accurate facts about real-world relations between nations. Similar to what happened in the case of Brown University's proposed race-relations project, persons at the Memorial decided that other scientists needed to vouch for research abilities at Radcliffe, which the professors at Harvard eventually did. There were other universities that did international relations research in Europe, which was a location clearly making sense for this field.

Another research field dealt with "coordination projects." Such projects were layered in a sense, with Memorial officers trying to pick precise intervention points in the overall structure of social science: data-coordination needs in crime fighting at the community level; data-category consistency at the municipal level; and data-sharing problems between public welfare agencies at the state level. Also identified as an addition to help connect all researchers was support aimed at increasing publication rates by social scientists. At least two universities received grants to help publish more works in social science, and a large grant was awarded to support a path-breaking "Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences."

Another layered project was work to develop fellowships programs in the social sciences. Fairly quickly a successful arrangement of governance mechanisms was created to support such programs to assist researchers, to help in travel assistance, and generally to help in the movement of ideas. Memorial officials directly created a foreign fellowships program, including a system of advisors in Europe with responsibility to select candidates. When it came to creating a domestic fellowships program, the Memorial preferred using an overseeing council entirely separate from the Memorial, which was the Social Science

Research Council. For travel grants for U.S. researchers, the Memorial was comfortable with direct oversight, since no ‘vote’ needed to be cast for or against any particular research project. Also created was a new graduate school that could help by serving as home base for doctoral students and younger scholars receiving Memorial or SSRC support.

The scientific study of business cycles was an important research field during the 1920s. At the NBER, early projects included national income measurement and statistical analysis of the timing and severity of recessions. NBER successes were closely watched by persons at the Foundation and the Memorial. Under Ruml’s leadership, Memorial officers figured out how to financially support the NBER, doing so by creating the buffer structure of an “Economic Foundation,” which received Memorial block funds to distribute to specific projects. Such an allocation system worked in part because NBER directors were highly trusted by the Memorial. Soon after this, Ruml even crafted a statement of guiding principles to generally help separate financial support of research from scientific execution of research.

Another approach to a created buffer was the SSRC. The SSRC developed a committee structure emphasizing interdisciplinary possibilities, and leadership at the organization worked to identify and coordinate useful research projects. The SSRC included seven social sciences, with some initial emphasis on psychology. Economists also became an important voice at the SSRC. Although the Memorial stayed separate from the SSRC, Ruml took a leadership role by arranging summer meetings for all SSRC members.

Two research fields came about partly as a result of work by Memorial officers and SSRC researchers to explore “boundaries” between scientific social research and non-scientific social research. One field involved an idea to develop scientific approaches to “humane studies,” while another aimed to build connections in “law and social science.” The

idea to support humane studies involved a question whether humanities research could be made scientific. Even though such a question was considered as early as 1923 (in Charles Rist's report), it took a couple additional years for Ruml to get to discussing the idea in earnest, which he especially did in a letter exchange with Abraham Flexner. The Memorial decided to support projects by the American Historical Society and the American Council of Learned Societies to learn about the state of 'scientific' humanistic studies in Europe and the United States. An important event in building a research field in humane studies was contact established between the Memorial and the University of Cambridge, in 1925 and 1926. Contrary to other historians, I believe the evidence is clear that this contact was no effort by the Memorial to control specific projects or ideas at Cambridge.

Another boundary crossing which produced a new research field involved the question whether legal studies (thought of as a "social technology") could be tightly connected to social science. In January 1927, Columbia University got Memorial support to study connections between law & criminal research and between law & economics. By March 1927, Yale University's legal scholars described their goal to rigorously study the field of legal administration from the 'scientific point of view.' For a time Yale's proposal was declined, but renewed contact resulted in grant approval by the end of the year, specifically when Yale provided enough information that the Memorial could feel comfortable they would not get embroiled in any unexpected conflicts. In December 1927, Howard University's law school successfully applied for a grant to assist in adding social science publications to the law library.

There were other boundary issues as well. A 1926 report prepared for the Memorial asked whether researchers at the Institute of Economics and the Brookings Graduate School

should get involved in propaganda work, with the conclusion being no. A second question, present and slightly affirmatively answered at the SSRC by about 1928, was whether to get involved in supporting family research that might include inquiry into intimate sexual and moral practices. A third case was the SSRC's involvement in the question whether to do research at the service of government requests, which they decided to cautiously try.

By late 1927, persons at the Memorial knew their time of loose leash was soon to end. Memorial officers decided to do a self-review to gather input concerning Memorial successes and failures. The Memorial was willing to hear critique coming from many persons, both inside and outside the Memorial. Submitted letters enabled production of a digest of main points, with one especially important question raised by many evaluators: Was more contact now needed between "social science" and "social technology"? This question, in essence, was whether to increase the focus on helping policy makers achieve "social control."

In January 1929, the Rockefeller Foundation absorbed the Memorial's social science program as a new "Division of Social Science." The requirement to stay clear of controversies remained as important as ever, with the new division formally adopting Ruml's guiding principles, and with Ruml providing a closing statement to say that social science seemed more prepared than ever to help in social control. The social sciences were more unified than ever, he declared, and social scientists had achieved greater ability to separate objective science from advocacy arguments. An overriding idea at the Rockefeller Foundation was that other Foundation divisions could now benefit from increased contact with the methods and instruments of the newly matured social sciences.

Under Edmund E. Day's directorship, the initial plan at the new division was to continue along the Memorial's path while looking for new projects. Psychology was one area

of continuing interest, as various advances in Foundation-supported psychology research were made throughout the 1930s. Researchers at Harvard, Yale, Penn and Iowa, for example, all seem to have concluded that psychological causes were not as simple as previously believed, which resulted in researchers doing all these projects according to an increasingly complex understanding of influences of human behavior.

Day directed the new division's officers to hold staff conferences, at which time Day typically presented memoranda. Some memos directed attention to the overall structure of social science. One new approach was to try studying university-level decisions for what to do with general (i.e., "fluid") research funds. Another area of projects capable of evaluation was psychology research, with a goal to see what new subfields were emerging. Research fields could also be categorized from self-descriptions on individual fellowship applications, and another new measure was to study uses of grants-in-aid funds over a five-year period (1929-33) in order to identify every kind of research covered under such grants.

Director Day decided early on to emphasize economic research. Similar to what was happening in psychology research, economists now consciously worked to understand and assist an increasingly complex world. In one of Day's guiding memoranda, in 1931, he considered the relationship between social science and social technology, specifically an idea that social technology (i.e., law schools, business schools, and social work schools) could be used to help establish the validity of scientific ideas; Day believed it was high time to get active in social reform. Another memo reveals Day emphasizing the need to study Russia's planned economy, which was a kind of economy also gaining proponents in a Depression-ridden United States. In another memo Day described a new "program in economic stabilization" that would focus not on problems of basic material conditions, but on the real

problem: institutional arrangements. Many of Day's ideas were indicative of a notion that the Foundation should actively identify specific projects, and an especially urgent concern was to study business cycles as a cause of human suffering. The trustees also provided a memorandum of their own, saying that with Foundation money now so limited, it was time for more aggressive restatement of the main objectives in social science.

Day got busy doing more idea gathering by 1932. He contacted Roosevelt-advising economist R.G. Tugwell, who emphasized that Day needed to be aware that applied social science can never be separated from a researchers' own values. It seemed to Tugwell that the time was right to create a more active kind of economic institute that would aim to change the direction of society. Foundation advisor Florn M. Rhind brought to Day's attention a notion that in a financially tattered society the Foundation was in a unique position of responsibility. Rhind believed it was time to reformulate the social science program to focus on specific problems and to use social technology to test scientific ideas. Also contacting Day, with similar ideas, were the Brookings Institute and the SSRC. It seems all parties were agreed: it was time to get busy on more active applications of social science.

Following an additional period of reflection, in December 1934 persons at the Division of Social Science decided it was time to figure out how to begin the new strategy based on "fields of application." They determined that a major part of this strategy would need to involve officers' proposals, some of which should focus on identifying requirements for terminating the "general" social science program based on research centers and research fields, and to replace it, by 1940, with a "new" social science program based on selected projects in a few most urgent areas. Day asked Tracy Kittredge, at the Foundation's Paris office, for input concerning what could be done in Europe, particularly in the field of

economic research. Day asked John Van Sickle, at the New York office, to take charge of what was now called the “economic stabilization and social security program.”

The planned transition toward 1940 was not without its concerned observers. Kittredge expressed a worry that too many projects might be curtailed too quickly in Europe. An outside observer, cultural anthropologist A.L. Kroeber, asked if by ending so many programs so quickly, observers might be led to conclude the Rockefeller Foundation officially declared the failure of fundamental research in the social sciences. Day’s response to Kroeber was to emphasize that the new program was no verdict that fundamental social science had failed. Mason Mason, the new Foundation President, shared this same belief, and added that with limited funds, a problem would always be the need to make choices – which was essentially a question of relative values.

By the middle 1930s, conditions in Europe represented their own worrying circumstance. The situation in Germany turned especially foreboding by summer 1933, and worsened still through 1934 and 1935. The situation was complex, of course, and a proposal quickly under consideration at the Foundation was whether to withdraw all research funds from Germany. More important, it was soon decided, was a goal to refrain from creating any appearance of favoritism of one group (i.e., Jewish researchers) over others, which resulted in a decision not to withdraw all money. An additional move was to begin providing direct support for displaced European scholars, irrespective of their research interests, with the primary objective being that unencumbered research should continue.

Also new by the middle 1930s was a research program designed to help connect business cycle researchers in the United States and in Europe. Instrumental in getting this group together was an “Economic Security Conference,” held in New Jersey in 1935.

Economists and Foundation representatives shared a goal at the conference to develop policies for economic assistance. The worldwide Depression was severe, and conference participants were willing to ask questions about ways in which Foundation-supported economists might help design new policies.

Many of these economists met again the following summer, this time at a July 1936 “Business Cycle Conference” in Geneva. Goals settled upon at this conference were to get better data records for day-to-day changes in a national economy and to obtain better understanding of underlying, longer-term forces that cause economic downturns and upturns. Discussed in some detail was an idea to create a “central” institute to coordinate and dispense economic research. One particular view expressed in these discussions was that of Van Sickle, who decided that a specific research method should be adopted for all economic projects. Such commitment was a practical decision that the next step in scientific progress for economics should involve all economists working together to learn what one particular theory or method could accomplish.

At the Foundation, work progressed toward ending the general program. Day requested officers’ reports through 1935 and 1936, and a specific goal – expressed by Day in November 1935 – was to identify research projects that would be more “realistic” and “applied” than ever before. Attention also heightened concerning the need to debate what an “urgent” social problem truly was.

Also in 1936 came another transition, with the July arrival of a new Foundation president, Raymond Fosdick, who almost immediately declared he wanted a major shift in the economic stabilization and social security program. Fosdick’s idea was to diminish the portion of research focused on analyzing business cycles, while retaining the project to help



alleviate human suffering. Fosdick wanted a second major shift of emphasis as well, which concerned the social science program in Europe. In order to continue insuring objectivity, in May 1938 Fosdick ordered the withdrawal of all support of social research in any “totalitarian” state.

At about the same time, a major personnel turnover took place at the Division of Social Science, with Day’s resignation as director bringing to an end a nine-year phase in the relationship between Rockefeller philanthropy and social science. The division thus entered a period once again of evaluating what social science can really accomplish. Van Sickle, for example, looked for any major gaps that remained in data collection, while Stacy May helped Fosdick evaluate European political situations (agreeing with Fosdick that it was time for a lowered level of general support across Europe). A number of officers wondered whether some kind of clarified standard might be identified for selecting specific research projects meriting support, and in some additional discussion they wondered if enough had been discovered about the biological and psychological bases of behavior to begin placing social research on a firmer, more fundamental level of explanation than ever before. Division officers asked whether it was finally time to create a whole new kind of centralized scientific body, and they inquired as to what kinds of projects the SSRC should be doing. Persons at the SSRC agreed with the need for increased attack on real-world problems.

Two illustrative cases during the middle and late 1930s concerned divisional communications with the University of Oxford and the London School of Economics. A matter of some interest to the division was a notion to help Oxford social scientists move away from their abstract style of analysis. At the LSE, an exertion of some control over the direction of research took place concerning social biology, with a decision made at the

division to withdraw funding. Clearly such controls as were exerted over Oxford and LSE were complex cases, yet the basic concerns were not to select between political views, but to help avoid potentially unempirical – even immoral – research approaches.

In late 1938, the Division of Social Science selected Joseph Willits, an industrial economist at the University of Pennsylvania, as their new director. Any new policy changes were put on hold until Willits's arrival. The division prepared two status reports, one by the director's secretary, Janet Paine, and the other by division officer Sydnor Walker. Paine described the shift to specific projects pursued since 1933, which she indicated was now seen as part of an "emergency" program. She described four main problem areas (defined according to expediency), with the greatest emphasis going to research on economic stabilization and security. Walker focused on identifying future objectives. She described the "new" program with its aim to pursue specific projects, while continuing the concern to avoid any policy bias. Walker revealed there had been some disappointment in the "general" program as having become too "diffused," and that the new program was working on a limited number of fields with the program in economic stabilization and security to be supported most of all. Walker wondered if a move might be made away from having division officers select specific projects, and if greater responsibility might be returned to the universities. She recommended surveying universities to learn what perceived strengths they would self-identify.

Willits arrived in February 1939, and he received the reports. He commented in particular on Walker's recommendation to canvas the universities. Willits appreciated this idea, and he emphasized the need to balance some Foundation loss of "liberty of action" against some potential gain from increasing the number of creative participants in project

selection. Willits asked for further input, and Selskar Gunn and Tracy Kittredge provided some realization that unfortunate social and political events were happening in Europe, whether the division liked it or not – and so the division might as well study these events. Willits received feedback from the SSRC, with SSRC director Robert Lynd even providing an essay arguing that social science had made major errors in trying to emulate natural science, including losing engagement with real-world problems.

Willits received detailed input from Columbia economist, and personal friend, Simon Kuznets, who argued that Willits should use university-based research projects, especially if such research could focus on a limited number of concrete problems. Kuznets explored the familiar question whether any social scientist could separate scientific activities from advocacy of specific applications – with Kuznets tending to see a complete separation between two types of occupations: the scientists and the technicians, both of whom were ‘honest types.’ Overall Kuznets took a view that more work in the social sciences remained needed before an idealized division of labor between social scientists and social technicians could really succeed. Willits shared with Kuznets his agreement on one particular idea: it was time to get more concrete proposals by using groups of hand-picked advisors.

At a time when money restraint remained a factor, Willits decided he needed to begin developing his own guiding policy. Quickly he focused on three kinds of projects in tune with his overall emphasis on economic research: to understand deep bases of economic and social behavior; to study how to direct new institutions in a complex society; to understand totalitarian societies. Following the first few months of the “new” social science program, Willits introduced ideas about a way forward. A main responsibility of a foundation director, as Willits saw things, was to pay close attention to questions that social scientists raise. The

Division of Social Science must always be critically self-reflective, especially by asking: Are we doing what a “wise and provident society” really wants? And, what is the best way for the division to find quality researchers to work on significant issues?

Between 1942 and 1946, Willits got more active. He split his attention between wartime research problems and issues likely to occur in a post-war world. He put something of a stamp on his own approach by exploring what might result from adding a ‘system of redundancy.’ The division began to support different university research groups in ways that could ‘double up’ to study a few specific problems, many of which were economic in nature. Willits approved a few grant proposals to develop fairly large and specialized projects. Through such projects it became possible, once again, to discover that controversies are difficult to avoid. An example was the project at the Cowles Commission, where methods of statistical analysis might supersede the NBER’s approach. A potential conflict of interest arose in 1946, when the United States federal government wanted Cowles researchers to begin applying their efforts to help support a new law known as the “Full Employment Act of 1946.” The question now needed to be asked: Could such a request turn into a violation of the separation between research neutrality and political positioning? Similar questions of possible tampering with research neutrality took place in connection with other projects supported by the Division of Social Science, such as at the University of Montana.

### 12.3 Conclusion

In its support of social science between 1911 and 1946, Rockefeller philanthropy tried time and again to anticipate potential controversies and conflicts of interest, and to create mechanisms to avoid such problems. Occasionally, though, even the best efforts at

anticipation were not good enough; but this was no real fault of the Rockefeller philanthropists. Rockefeller philanthropy also consistently supported capitalism, doing so through a long period of time that actually saw more than one serious wave of debate in the United States concerning whether big business was getting too politically powerful – in particular, too powerful to ever allow lower economic classes to escape from frequent economic hardship. Yet Rockefeller philanthropy never ceased supporting capitalism.

Through many phases of change, Rockefeller philanthropists worked to build an institutionalized system of unbiased social science that would help guide existing institutional forces – economic, political, and social forces – to use the system of free enterprise to improve all of society. A philanthropic foundation and a detached system of social science were not purely compatible, nor were they strictly conflicting – they were a complex relationship. To see this relationship requires detailed case study, which the Rockefeller Foundation and the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial provide.

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