Free-Market Socialists

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Simultaneous with the April 1933 approval of Paul Lazarsfeld’s application for a travelling fellowship to the United States from the Rockefeller Foundation, which he had been awarded partly because anti-Semitism in Austria had frustrated his academic career there, the new Nazi Reich’s law for the “restoration” of the professional civil service went into effect. The new law began the forced exodus of university faculty members and Privatdozenten who were deemed imical to the German state, and thus unsuitable for their positions, either by virtue of their “race” as Jews or “non-Aryans,” or for their political identity as social democrats, communists, or liberals. They did not only lose their positions, but they were also denied any possibility of earning a living in Germany. The Nazis’ aim, which was supported by many students, was to restore the “fundamental German character” of the universities. Yet in their determination to refashion German universities as centers of anti-Semitic, pro-Nazi indoctrination, they instantly destroyed the German tradition of Lern- und Lehrfreiheit, which had protected the freedom of academic inquiry.

More than a thousand academics would lose their jobs by the end of the year, and more than two thousand would be dismissed by the end of the 1930s, a trend that was intensified by the 1935 Nuremberg Laws and the 1938 pogroms. About one-third of all faculty positions were terminated altogether. Another ten thousand may be added to the number of dismissals when artists, writers, and professionals are included in the total. Jewish centers such as the University of Frankfurt—which had been founded by Jewish merchants before the First World War as a center of the new social sciences—were particularly hard hit. Relative to the half-million German refugees created by Nazi expulsions during the Reich, the number of intellectual émigrés was small, yet entire schools of
thought were eliminated, especially in the social sciences. About sixty percent of the dismissed academics emigrated, which immediately produced about 650 refugees in the first wave of 1933. Because of its extensive experience funding European researchers and arranging transatlantic scholarly exchanges, the Rockefeller Foundation was well positioned to become one of the most important institutions in placing the exiled scholars and funding their new positions at universities around the world.¹

It was in this context that Lazarsfeld arrived in New York on September 29, 1933, equipped with a letter of introduction from the assistant director of social sciences at the Rockefeller Foundation, noting his particular interest in “the contribution of psychology to social and economic research.” As one of the “bright young promising people” chosen by the Rockefeller Foundation, Lazarsfeld had the freedom to travel where he wished, with no specific duties or obligations.² By this time, Lazarsfeld’s study of the unemployed in the Austrian village of Marienuth had been introduced to the American audience in a report that appeared in The Nation magazine, and at least one major American publisher had expressed interest in publishing a translation of the study.³ Just before his departure, Lazarsfeld’s Vienna research center, the Österreichische Wirtschaftspsychologische Forschungsstelle, had begun a study on the living conditions in the new Gemeindebauten, the great public housing projects of the Social Democratic municipal government. Lazarsfeld, as a representative of his

³ McMurry, “When Men Eat Dogs,” 1933, 15–18; Charles [Lears?] to Lazarsfeld, December 20, 1933, Blaue Mappen 17, Bio-1, Biographie 1933–1946, PFL Vienna. According to Lazarsfeld, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) produced a “typewritten” English translation in 1933. But by the time Marienuth had been canonized as a classic of social research in the 1960s, Lazarsfeld strongly resisted the publication of an English translation. He was somewhat embarrassed by its crude methodology, and he thought that it should be treated as a “historical document” and not a work with contemporary relevance. He pleaded in vain with his collaborators Marie Jahoda and Hans Zeisel not to publish an English translation. Lazarsfeld to Herman Lants, December 12, 1966, Blaue Mappen 36, Correspondence, 1966–1968, PFL Vienna; Lazarsfeld to Jahoda, January 23, 1967, Blue Mappen 61, “Marienuth,” PFL Vienna; Lazarsfeld to Zeisel, March 28, 1967, Blaue Mappen 19, Bio-3, PFL Vienna.
The Art of Asking “Why?”

The Art of Asking “Why?”

research center, was looking to make contacts with “housing people” in the US in the hopes of arranging some financing for these studies.4

Lazarsfeld immediately sought the guidance of the recently-appointed Columbia University sociologist Robert Lynd, who would become a friend, colleague, and mentor to whom Lazarsfeld would later credit his entire “American existence” and his “whole professional career.”5 Just as Lazarsfeld had been inspired by the methodology of the Middletown study carried out by Lynd and his wife, Helen, Lynd believed that the Marienthal study demonstrated Lazarsfeld’s dedication to producing useful knowledge for the socialist movement.6 Lynd immediately arranged for Lazarsfeld to give a talk on the Marienthal study before a meeting of sociologists in New York, and he set up another talk that Lazarsfeld would give before a group of marketing consultants. Lynd also contacted a New York publisher about a manuscript on the psychology of marketing that Lazarsfeld was working on. After taking up residence in New York, Lazarsfeld spent several weeks that fall visiting the psychologist Gordon Allport, as well as other contacts in the Business School at Harvard, before he returned to Columbia.7

It was fortuitous that Lazarsfeld arrived in the United States at the dawn of the New Deal era, perhaps the most dramatic break from American political traditions since the Civil War, which ushered in an age of “unprecedented” economic justice, as historian Jefferson Cowie has put it.8 Seeing an ally in Lazarsfeld, Lynd helped his protégé to get involved working on various New Deal programs, a regime of progressive reform that was deeply attractive to the Social Democrat in Lazarsfeld. “You know as an old Viennese socialist,” Lazarsfeld recalled, “I really felt completely at home with the New Deal—with the Roosevelt administration.”9 The findings of the Marienthal study convinced Lazarsfeld

7 Frederic Thrasher to Lazarsfeld, November 14, 1933; Lynd to Lazarsfeld, November 15, 1933; Ordway Tead to Lazarsfeld, December 14, 1933; V.H. Pelz to Lynd, February 2, 1934; V.H. Pelz to Lazarsfeld, February 26, 1934, Blaue Mappen 17, Bio-1, Biographie 1933–1946, PFL Vienna; “LAZARSFELD, Dr. Paul Felix (Jewish),” Box 3, RG 10.2, Fellowship Recorder Cards, Discipline 5: Humanities Fellows, FA426, RF, RAC.
8 Cowie, Great Exception, 89.
9 Quoted in Morrison, “Transference of Experience,” 192.
that the American policy of work relief was preferable to the European standard of the dole, which, he found, led to apathy and, eventually, a greater vulnerability to the regressive temptations of fascism.\(^\text{10}\) Lynd had been working on a study of the effects of unemployment on the middle and upper classes in Montclair, New Jersey, for which he had received a major grant. Lazarsfeld, whose work was already funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, wanted and expected to work with Lynd as his assistant, analyzing the hundreds of detailed questionnaires gathered for the project. However, Lynd, who was a strict moralist, refused, believing that employing Lazarsfeld in this way would amount to “exploitation.” As a result, Lynd’s Montclair questionnaires were never properly analyzed, according to Lazarsfeld.\(^\text{11}\)

Yet Lynd was determined to help Lazarsfeld make connections in the world of American social research. “During the first few years of my life in this country pretty much everything that I had I owed in some way to Lynd,” Lazarsfeld recalled. “There’s really hardly anything I don’t owe to him.” With the help of Lynd and through his reputation as an expert in the study of unemployment from the Marienthal study, Lazarsfeld was invited to work on research projects for the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) in Washington, where he stayed from December of 1933 through February of 1934. Although he did not exactly think of himself as a sociologist at the time—he only reluctantly categorized himself as such when he came to the US—Lazarsfeld ingratiated himself with a group of empirical sociologists at FERA who analyzed census data and would later form the Sociological Research Organization.\(^\text{12}\) The FERA sociologists were planning to undertake a comprehensive, nationwide study of the occupational characteristics of the unemployed, and that spring they would call on Lazarsfeld to undertake an “intensive inquiry” into the “more obscure” psychological and sociological effects of unemployment along the lines of his Marienthal study.\(^\text{13}\) Through this work, Lazarsfeld became increasingly invested in seeing the success of the New Deal project, and he embraced his emerging identity as a sociologist to contribute to its programs. Just as he had

\(^{10}\) Lazarsfeld, “Methodological Problems,” 231.

\(^{11}\) Lazarsfeld, interview by Joan Gordon, COH, August 16, 1962, Rote Mappen, PFL Vienna.


\(^{13}\) “LAZARSFELD, Dr. Paul Felix (Jewish),” Box 3, RG 10.2, Fellowship Recorder Cards, Discipline 5: Humanities Fellows, FA.426, RF, RAC.
undertaken surveys on the success of socialist propaganda in Austria, Lazarsfeld proposed to a federal government agency a study on public attitudes toward New Deal policies.14

Lazarsfeld and Lynd both used the experience of consumers as an empirical basis for social research, though Lazarsfeld appreciated any kind of market research as a venue to develop new methodologies, while Lynd saw consumer surveys mainly as a means to social reform and a way to champion progressive politics. Lynd had published a lengthy report on “The People as Consumers” for the President’s Research Committee on Social Trends. Lynd’s social-democratic impulses were evident in his discussion of consumer advocacy groups like Consumers’ Research and the National Consumers’ League, and in his call for a federal agency with the specific charge of defending the consumer’s interest.15 That idea would come to fruition with the Consumers’ Advisory Board (CAB) under Roosevelt’s National Recovery Administration (NRA). As a Board member, Lynd arranged for Lazarsfeld to direct studies of consumer demand, buying habits, and the organization of consumer advocacy groups.16 In an article published in an Austrian journal in February of 1934, Lazarsfeld reported the results of his American studies and the NRA’s innovative price-fixing market interventions and attempts to limit unfair competition, noting Lynd’s work defending consumers’ interests for the CAB. He observed the business community’s opposition to an Office of Consumer Standards which, with the application of product grading, would threaten to nullify the years of work corporations had spent building up the public’s appreciation of brand names through advertising. Lazarsfeld foreshadowed the Supreme Court’s eventual dismantling of the NRA by observing American conservatives’ anxiety over its “collectivist” or socialist elements, the lack of a truly socialist labor movement in the US, and the frustrating ideology of individualism, which tended to reduce consumer interests to those of a rational “economic man.”17

Lynd preferred to see Lazarsfeld as an innovative researcher who was committed to using the empirical tools of sociology to advance progressive social reforms. Unlike Lazarsfeld, Lynd had grown up without political interest. Lazarsfeld believed that Lynd spent the rest of his life atoning for “not having seen the

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15 Lynd and Hanson, “The People as Consumers,” 857–911.

16 Alexis Sommaripa to Dexter Keezer, January 16, 1934; Lynd to Mrs. J.J. Daniels, January 24, 1934; Ruth Boynton to Lazarsfeld, January 27, 1934; Dexter Keezer, to Alexis Sommaripa, January 29, 1934, Blaue Mappen 17, Bio-1, Biographie 1933–1946, PFL Vienna.

light earlier” through younger surrogates like Lazarsfeld himself. But Lazarsfeld’s work with the Bühlers’ Psychological Institute, his interest in human motivations and decision-making, and his experience directing market research at the Forschungsstelle in Vienna identified him as a new kind of social psychologist who was increasingly of great interest to American businessmen and marketing specialists for purely practical reasons. Lazarsfeld was drawn to such studies not because he had a particular interest in marketing problems, per se, but mainly because this field could provide him with the opportunity—and, importantly, the money—to practice his empirical methods of investigating choices and motivations. During the winter and spring of 1934, Lynd’s efforts to promote Lazarsfeld’s work elicited many invitations for speaking engagements and other inquiries from trade, professional, and academic associations, as well as from advocacy organizations, such as Consumers’ Research. Lazarsfeld once substituted for Lynd at a speaking engagement before a group of consumer researchers in Washington, presenting his Viennese market research studies to an “extremely interested” audience. He became increasingly “fashionable” in the world of consumer research, receiving invitation after invitation for speaking engagements, making himself known to important people in the world of public opinion polling such as George Gallup.

In May of 1934, Lazarsfeld took a tour of the Midwest, visiting H.H. Maynard in the Department of Business Organization at Ohio State University. Lazarsfeld also visited David R. Craig, Director of the Research Bureau for Retail Training at the University of Pittsburgh, with whom he would establish a working relationship that would lead to further collaboration. In June, Lazarsfeld returned to New York, where he would periodically work with Lynd on empirical research projects on the effects of the Depression. But instead of undertaking to properly analyze the questionnaires from the Montclair study, Lazarsfeld assisted Lynd in giving a seminar on the material at Columbia.

By that time, it had become increasingly clear to Lazarsfeld that his prospects in the US were much better than they were in Vienna. In February, the Austrian civil war had ended with the fascist Engelbert Dollfuss outlawing the Social Democratic Party, which had been at the center of Lazarsfeld’s social, political, and professional life since his childhood. Like many prominent socialists, Lazarsfeld’s family members, including his parents and his wife, Marie Ja-

19 Lazarsfeld, interview by Joan Gordon, COH, January 8, 1962, Rote Mappen, PFL Vienna.
hoda, were imprisoned for their political activities. Lazarsfeld’s parents had hidden Otto Bauer’s wife Helena in their house for several days after her husband, the leader of the Social Democrats’ revolt, had fled the country. A member of the Jahoda clan later helped her to escape, and Lazarsfeld’s father spent three months in jail when police discovered the offense. Although Dollfuss was assassinated in a failed Nazi coup in July, his successor, Kurt von Schuschnigg, maintained the newly-established fascist regime and was hardly more tolerant. As a Jewish socialist, Lazarsfeld’s already dim prospects for a career at the University grew unimaginable under these conditions. The fate of the Forschungsstelle, which Lazarsfeld’s friend and colleague Hans Zeisel had been temporarily overseeing, seemed uncertain. Lazarsfeld decided that he did not want to go back to Austria. Given the circumstances, officers of the Rockefeller Foundation were, in Lazarsfeld’s view, “very decent” and agreed to renew his fellowship for another year, beginning September 30, 1934. At the time of his application renewal, Lazarsfeld had envisioned spending part of the second half of his fellowship in Europe, but he would soon become so busily involved in the world of American market research studies and government unemployment surveys that he would end up staying in the US for the duration.21

As an “Austrian with a method,” Lazarsfeld began to gain confidence in the novelty and usefulness of his research techniques. He spent about a month during the summer of 1934 working with Craig in Pittsburgh, using interview techniques he had developed at the Vienna Forschungsstelle. They collaborated on a study on the use of rayon fabrics by eight hundred Pittsburgh women, finding, among other things, that women of a higher “intellectual level” were more likely to reject rayon. Lazarsfeld found the collaboration with Craig productive, and he would later propose expanding the investigation to the problems of department stores, but he quickly moved on in his tour of American academic psychology and social research. He spent a considerable amount of time working with and studying under Luther Fry at the University of Rochester and J.G. Jenkins in the Department of Psychology at Cornell University, with whom he would also spend some time observing business operations at General Electric in Schenectady, New York. Although there was, at the time, only one proper sociological research center in the United States—Howard W. Odum’s Institute for

Research in Social Science at the University of North Carolina—Lazarsfeld did not visit it because, firstly, he still did not properly view himself as a sociologist at the time (he identified more as a “social psychologist”), and, secondly, he was “not very much interested in the racial problem,” which was the main object of study there. “So race relations, the racial issues, didn’t make any sense to me, coming from Europe, so I never went to North Carolina,” Lazarsfeld confessed. “I would go where they would make studies on unemployment, on market research, adolescents.”

One of the places Lazarsfeld visited was the Psychological Corporation (PSC) in New York. In 1921, a group of applied psychologists led by James McKeeen Cattell—who had obtained his doctoral degree under Wilhelm Wundt in Leipzig—launched the consulting firm PSC in an effort to make their services available beyond the limited sphere of academia. The advertising business was still struggling to shed its nineteenth-century Barnum image and establish itself as a serious profession. Up to then, market research had consisted mostly of tabulating brand preferences, indexing media coverage, and calculating the “buying power” in particular regions, but PSC was one of the first American consulting firms to employ trained psychologists to consider the subjective experience of consumers as they were relevant to marketing problems. By the early 1930s, the company was directed by Henry C. Link, a former student of Walter Dill Scott, who developed the Psychological Barometer or “Link Audit,” a semianual household survey on consumer products and brands. The Vienna Forschungsstelle would even cooperate with the PSC on the publication of an Austrian Sales Barometer in 1935. At least at first glance, the work of the PSC appeared to Lazarsfeld to be interesting and innovative. Among Lazarsfeld’s colleagues there was Rensis Likert, who became so impressed by the work of the Forschungsstelle that he would translate one of its studies on tea consumption. Likert, who would go on to found the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan, was Lazarsfeld’s only ally in the “anti-behaviorist stand” he would take at the PSC.

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23 Marchand, Advertising the American Dream, 8–9, 69–76; Friedman, Birth of a Salesman, 236; Marchand, Creating the Corporate Soul, 247; Fleck and Stehr, “Introduction,” 6–8.

24 Lazarsfeld to John Popplestone, October 11, 1966, Blaue Mappen 19, Bio-3, PFL Vienna.

25 Lazarsfeld, interview by Joan Gordon, COH, January 8, 1962, Rote Mappen, PFL Vienna.
While working at the PSC, Lazarsfeld proposed a number of projects that would employ his method of motivational research, such as a study on the psychological aspects of people involved in stock market activities. He was suspicious of economic thinking which, he believed, did not take psychology into account or consider the social status and background of important economic actors. He wanted to conduct a study based on “several thousand” qualitative interviews that were designed to reveal unconscious motivations. Yet Lazarsfeld’s keen interest in decision-making and motivation ran contrary to the behaviorist psychology that had held sway in the US since the 1920s. Behaviorism considered obscure and unmeasurable mental processes to be unscientific, privileging instead the analysis of observable phenomena and stimulus-response mechanisms as a means of understanding human action. 26 Although the director of the Psychological Corporation would later enlist the Vienna Forschungsstelle as its European liaison, Lazarsfeld’s unorthodox methods were generally met with resistance by his behaviorist supervisor. 27

Lazarsfeld soon grew frustrated with the “radical behaviorism” and poor management of the PSC’s director, Link, who objected to Lazarsfeld’s efforts to develop more sophisticated questionnaires that were designed to avoid the problem of “rationalization.” 28 Lazarsfeld preferred the technique of the “open-ended” interview: rather than the rote “yes-no” type of questioning preferred by the PSC president, the field researcher conducting an open-ended interview would try to elicit past experiences that might reveal basic psychological drives. 29

26 Lazarsfeld, “Proposal for a Study of the Psychological Aspects of Stock Market Activities,” Psychological Corporation, ca. 1933/34; “TENTATIVE OUTLINE, Indicating nature of data to be obtained by carefully trained interviewers concerning Interviewees (Iee) and their dealings in the stock market,” ca. 1933/34, Blaue Mappen 17, Bio-1, Biographie 1933–1946, PFL Vienna; Cohen-Cole, Open Mind, 5–6, 142–46.
28 Lazarsfeld, “An Episode,” 295; Lazarsfeld, interview by Ann Pasanella, April 19, 1975, Rote Mappen, Biography Tapes, PFL Vienna. One of Lazarsfeld’s studies for the Milk Research Council acknowledged the problem of respondents’ rationalizations—which were evident from the contradictory conclusions of the study—but it fell short in developing a method to probe their unconscious motivations. The study was based on 2,000 interviews and questionnaires, the results of which were categorized with punch-cards and tabulated by a machine that sorted the data into categories defined by economic class and sex. The study found a widespread belief in the nourishing quality of milk, which served as a sort of all-purpose health aid that could help consumers to both put on weight or slenderize; induce sleep or combat fatigue; and soothe the nerves or act as a stimulant. “A Study of the Psychological Factors Influencing the Drinking of Plain Milk by Adults,” made for the Milk Research Council, Inc. by the Psychological Corporation of New York, Special Counsel: Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Ph.D., Psychological Department, University of Vienna (Rockefeller Fellow in U.S.A., 1934–35), January 29, 1935, Folder Fo050-1, Box 1, Bureau of Applied Social Research Archive [hereafter, “BASR”], Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York.
Lazarsfeld became disillusioned by the banal, “very stupid” surveys that the PSC conducted in the manner of commercial marketing agencies that had no academic incentive to refine their research methods. He believed that his methods were technically much more advanced than those practiced by the Americans. Lazarsfeld chafed at the American behaviorist methodology that took “objective” data, such as purchasing behavior, as worthy of analysis, but largely ignored “subjective” data, meaning mainly consumers’ conscious or unconscious motives for their purchasing behavior. Lazarsfeld did not deny the problem of “false motive,” but he believed that it could be avoided with the proper questioning technique used in combination with objective data.30

Lazarsfeld soon had an opportunity to clearly articulate his techniques for an American audience. In October of 1934, he published an article in The Harvard Business Review on “The Psychological Aspect of Market Research,” in which he explained his method of using the statistical analysis of data drawn from interviews to develop a generic profile of the psychological motivations of the typical buyer of a particular commodity. Lazarsfeld described the “accent” of motivation, which included three stages: the attributes of the commodity purchased, including its color, packaging, etc.; the influences coming from the outside world, including advertisements, shopping environments, and sales pitches; and, finally, the impulses experienced by the consumer-respondent, which were his or her personal attitudes and predilections. This matrix of affective forces combined to produce the motivation for a decision or behavior. The job of the researcher was to isolate these factors through a directed interview, and then carefully tabulate and interpret the results.31 The article received much attention in commercial market research circles, giving Lazarsfeld many professional contacts which he would later exploit to find jobs for his colleagues from the Forschungsstelle when they began to arrive in America as refugees after Hitler’s Anschluss of Austria in 1938.32 By November of 1934, only one year after his arrival in the States, Lazarsfeld had caused such a stir that the
“portly, bespectacled” psychologist from Vienna was flatteringly profiled in the marketing periodical *Tide* as a guru to marketers and a master analyst of hidden consumer “motives.”

In December, Lazarsfeld was summoned by the sociologist George A. Lundberg, the “great prophet of quantification,” to work once again on the unemployment project for FERA. In January of 1935, Lazarsfeld went to the University of Chicago, where FERA had established and funded a “special tabulation outfit” for Lazarsfeld to direct. Lazarsfeld would work on the project through the spring. As a visiting fellow for the Social Science Research Council, Lazarsfeld undertook an analysis of data that was compiled in FERA’s Occupational Characteristics Survey, which covered some 150,000 relief cases. He attempted to apply a secondary “psychological” analysis to interpret the data. Lazarsfeld’s system of cross-tabulation led him to a finding that his American fellows, working with the same data, had missed. They saw the correlation between education and employment and had determined that lower education led to higher unemployment, but Lazarsfeld pointed out that younger people were generally more educated, and age, not education, was the determining factor in rates of unemployment. Age was the key element in prolonging the *duration* of unemployment because older workers had virtually no chance of being re-hired. Lazarsfeld’s analysis was later published by the Works Progress Administration (WPA).

Lazarsfeld’s confidence in the superiority of his methods over those of the disinterested behaviorists and the rote questionnaire tabulators would be publicized in the summer of 1935 with the publication of his article, “The Art of Asking WHY in Marketing Research” in *National Marketing Review*. Lazarsfeld used the opportunity to disparage market researchers’ exclusive use of “ste-

34 Lazarsfeld respected Lundberg’s talents in quantitative sociology, but he lamented the “very right-wing” turn he would take later as a member of America First. According to Lazarsfeld, Lundberg rationalized anti-Semitism as a kind of open-mindedness, characterizing his position thusly: “You should be objective. What’s wrong with the anti-Semites? Why don’t you study what’s wrong with Jews?” Lazarsfeld, interview by Joan Gordon, COH, August 16, 1962, Rote Mappen, PFL Vienna.
reotyped” questionnaires, which were unreliable, he argued, because respondents, whose knowledge of their own motivations may be rather “hazy,” inevitably interpreted them in peculiar and idiosyncratic ways. The only way to determine consumers’ motivations in a consistent and usable way was through the qualitative interview technique, which came to be known as the “depth” interview. Interviewers recorded their subjects’ responses verbatim and later classified, tabulated, compared, and quantified their data.

Because his fellowship would be ending in the fall and he needed to return to Austria to acquire a visa, Lazarsfeld arranged a trip to Europe in July of 1935. He had planned to finish the remainder of the Rockefeller Fellowship in Europe before returning to the United States. Lazarsfeld had a daughter with Marie Jahoda; their marriage, however, had by this time dissolved. Jahoda would remain in Vienna, where she had taken over the directorship of the Forschungsstelle.37 Herta Herzog, an associate in market research at the Forschungsstelle who would become Lazarsfeld’s second wife, planned to join him on his return to the US.38 Lazarsfeld had a position lined up with David Craig at the University of Pittsburgh that earned him a visa, but when that job ultimately fell through, Lazarsfeld decided to emigrate anyway, despite the somewhat shaky validity of his papers. “I thus arrived in New York as the classic immigrant, penniless,” recalled Lazarsfeld, a bit facetiously.39

In fact, Lazarsfeld had already established so many contacts that he had no problem at all finding a job, and he had even kept the room he was renting at 113th Street and Broadway in New York. Lynd very quickly found him a position at the University of Newark.40 Lazarsfeld would serve as the supervisor of

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37 Lazarsfeld, interview by Ann Pasanella, March 12, 1975, Rote Mappen, “Biography Tapes,” PFL Vienna; “LAZARSFELD, Dr. Paul Felix (Jewish),” Box 3, RG 10.2, Fellowship Recorder Cards, Discipline 5: Humanities Fellows, FA426, RF, RAC; Sills, “Paul F. Lazarsfeld,” 251–82. During the winter and spring of 1935, Charlotte Bühler was also touring the United States as a Rockefeller Fellow and visiting lecturer. “BÜHLER, Prof. Charlotte,” Box 3, RG 10.2, Fellowship Recorder Cards, Discipline 5: Humanities Fellows, FA426, RF, RAC.


40 As much as he appreciated Lynd’s help, Lazarsfeld would also note the “social anti-Semitism” that his mentor participated in. “Lynd always was, without knowing it, an anti-Semite, there is not the slightest doubt,” Lazarsfeld said. In scouting out job opportunities for Lazarsfeld, Lynd, in a letter to a prospective employer, gave Lazarsfeld the “compliment” of noting that he did not “look very Jewish.” In a reply, the potential employer noted that, indeed, he had heard very good things about Lazarsfeld but that, on the contrary, he did clearly show the marks of his “race.” (In one telling of this anecdote, it was Edward Day in the Social Science division of the Rockefeller Foundation who said Lazarsfeld “shows all the signs of his race.”) While La-
students’ analyses of thousands of questionnaires that had been filled out by unemployed youth for the National Youth Administration (NYA), a New Deal program. Not unlike the unemployed socialist students who had worked at his Forschungsstelle in Vienna, Lazarsfeld recalled that these students “transferred an inclination for common action into an acceptance of academic teamwork.” The students’ work studying the problem of unemployment was itself a form of work relief for the poor students, whom Lazarsfeld kept busy analyzing data for dozens of studies on a variety of topics. “The supervisor was supposed to invent work... because that was the problem,” Lazarsfeld recalled. The students worked as data analysts; they were the human computers for Lazarsfeld’s studies. Lazarsfeld envisioned building up a research center at Newark along the lines of the Forschungsstelle, and he had a willing partner in the president of the university, Frank Kingdon. “I convinced... Kingdon... that if he wanted to make that a great university he had to have a research center,” Lazarsfeld remembered.41

As he had done at his Vienna research center, Lazarsfeld would use contracts with corporations, government entities, and private organizations to fund the activities of the Newark Research Center, which was informally organized in October of 1935 and officially established on May 21, 1936. The field studies done by the Center had the purpose of training students, giving them an employment opportunity, developing research methods, publishing studies, helping the city of Newark to understand its social and political problems, acting as a consulting service for local businesses, and, finally, raising more funds for the “perpetuation and enlargement” of the Center’s activities. Student workers—of whom there were about sixteen in addition to thirty-one NYA relief students—would not only be given employment for the time being but also training that could lead to jobs later on. Funding came from many sources, including the National Research Project of the WPA, but for the first several months of its existence, the principal financial support for the Research Center came from Lazarsfeld was on his travelling fellowship, he was typically introduced not as being Austrian but as being “Viennese,” which he felt to be a big advantage in terms of intellectual impressions, and sometimes his general Viennese foreignness concealed his Jewishness. Yet Lazarsfeld actually felt more comfortable in American business circles than in academic circles, where he believed that the latent anti-Semitism was much more marked and that he was more readily identified as being Jewish. That kind of “social anti-Semitism” did not exist as much in business circles, where he “propagandized” the use of social science in market research, simply because Jewishness was virtually non-existent as a social category in those spaces. “I felt completely unembarrassed in these business circles and never quite at ease in academic,” he recalled, partly because most of those businessmen “had never seen a Jew.” Lazarsfeld, “An Episode,” 300; Lazarsfeld, interview by Ann Pasanella, February 21, 1975, Rote Mappen, Biography Tapes, PFL Vienna. 41 Lazarsfeld, interview by Joan Gordon, COH, November, 29 1961, Rote Mappen, PFL Vienna; Lazarsfeld to Bernard Bailyn, February 7, 1968, Rote Mappen, “miscelle scientific II,” PFL Vienna; Lazarsfeld, interview by Ann Pasanella, March 12, 1975, Rote Mappen, PFL Vienna.
zarsfeld’s old allies in social research, Max Horkheimer’s Institute of Social Research, which was by that time exiled in New York.42

The Nazis had shut down the Frankfurt-based Institut für Sozialforschung in March of 1933, and after some time spent in exile in Geneva, Horkheimer’s group would end up relocating to New York in May of 1934. At its new quarters near the Columbia University campus at 429 West 117th Street, it would be rechristened as the “International Institute of Social Research.” Just as he had worked to integrate Lazarsfeld into the American academic scene, Lynd would be a key figure in orchestrating the transatlantic relocation of Horkheimer’s Institute to Columbia. The historian Thomas Wheatland has pointed out that the interpersonal politics of the sociology department at Columbia would have given Lynd a strong incentive to endorse the incorporation of the Institute, the members of which he would have viewed as intellectual allies. Indeed, the Institute would specifically thank Lynd, along with Robert MacIver, chair of the sociology department, and especially Nicholas Murray Butler, president of the university, for his “expression of scientific solidarity” in offering a building in Morningside Heights. When Horkheimer received the disappointing news that Lazarsfeld might be heading to Pittsburgh, he would note that their “mutual and respected friend, Professor Lynd” was aiming to reestablish their collaboration in New York. Lazarsfeld never did go to Pittsburgh, and when he got the Newark Research Center up and running, he would welcome the financial support that the Institute might offer, and their collaboration continued.

Lazarsfeld’s Vienna Forschungsstelle had done empirical studies for the Studien über Autorität und Familie (Studies on Authority and the Family), which would ultimately conclude that the German working class had been vulnerable to Hitler and Nazism because the patriarchal German family structure fostered submission to authority. The project had been suspended when the Institut was shut down by the Nazis, but work would resume in Newark in 1935. Lazarsfeld analyzed inquiries that had been carried out by Käthe Leichter in Switzerland, and Studien über Autorität und Familie would eventually be published by a Paris publishing house in 1936. The Institute was generally happy to delegate much of its quantitative analysis to Lazarsfeld, even if, in the view of member Erich Fromm at least, he did not have a “sufficiently good grasp” of the Institute’s “theoretical points of view.” Nevertheless, Lazarsfeld did in some sense help to ease the Institute’s transition into the American social research scene. For the purpose of demonstrating its interest in its host country, the Institute also conceived of a study of the authority structure of American fami-

42 Lazarsfeld to Frank Kingdon, ca. 1937, Rote Mappen, about bureau I, PFL Vienna.
lies, which began as the dissertation project of the sociologist Mirra Komarovsky and would be carried out under Lazarsfeld’s supervision. The study was based on interviews with fifty-nine families in Newark, which were coded and put through the typological classifications typical of the Forschungsstelle’s analyses. The study, eventually published by the Institute in 1940 as *The Unemployed Man and His Family*, with an introduction by Lazarsfeld, would find that the condition of unemployment diminished the authority of the father within the family.

Horkheimer would thank Lazarsfeld for the “great speed” with which he had carried out his work for the Institute. Lazarsfeld was often listed as a member of the Institute of Social Research on its letterhead from the period, and the Newark Research Center would collaborate with Horkheimer and Fromm on research studies related to unemployment and working-class culture, some of which would never be published. Several of the Institute’s permanent members, including Leo Lowenthal and Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno, would later work on projects for Lazarsfeld’s American research centers in their various incarnations. Another benefit of the collaboration with the Horkheimer Institute, at least in the view of historian Rolf Wiggershaus, was that it gave Lazarsfeld “the feeling that he had not entirely betrayed his Austrian Marxist past.”

The many commercial contacts Lazarsfeld had established during his various visits, lectures, and speeches during the Rockefeller Fellowship proved to be very valuable for getting contracts for the Research Center. The Newark Research Center’s funding scheme relied on outside contracts to cover half of Lazarsfeld’s salary and the Center’s expenses, while the University provided space, a portion of the secretary’s salary, and telephones. Among the contracts taken by the Center was a study sponsored by the WPA of Millville, New Jersey,

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44 Lazarsfeld, interview by Ann Pasanella, March 12, 1975, Rote Mappen, PFL Vienna.
which, like Marienthal, had suffered from chronic unemployment. The study was commissioned by the Social Science Research Council and the University of Chicago sociologist Samuel Stouffer, who directed a series of studies looking at the effects of the Depression on the family. Another Research Center study found that “personal contacts” was the most important factor in finding a job. The Center also did consumer studies on topics such as youth milk consumption, finding that milk drinking was a habit that needed to be conditioned. The workers provided by the NYA, under the supervision of an official from the Federal Writers Project, also worked on a study on the class, racial, and age stratification of magazine readership. Among the corporate jobs done at the Center were studies on consumers’ perception of fabrics for the Du Pont corporation and the use of home movies for the Eastman Kodak company.

While he directed the Research Center and occasionally taught seminars at the University of Newark, Lazarsfeld also continued his own writing on the methods of market research. He was commissioned to write four chapters for a textbook produced by the American Marketing Association, *The Technique of Marketing Research*. According to Lazarsfeld, this was the first textbook describing market research in a systematic way. One of the chapters considered the practice of “depth psychology,” which Lazarsfeld cited as the beginning of “motivation research.” As he had done in “The Art of Asking WHY,” Lazarsfeld divided the psychological, reason-analysis of the purchasing decision into three parts: internal tendencies, outside influences, and product attributes. Lazarsfeld’s chapters guided readers on the proper conduct of interviews, helping as-

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46 Lazarsfeld and Gaudet, “Who Gets a Job?” 64–77; Lazarsfeld, et al., *Coming of Age in Essex County*.
47 “Dislike of Milk among Young People: Development of a Method to Measure and Analyze This Dislike,” Milk Research Council, Inc. and the University of Newark Research Centre, August 1936, Rote Mappen, T/U I (3 bis 7), PFL Vienna; “Milk Drinking Habits Among Young People,” a Psychological Study made cooperatively by the Milk Research Council, Inc. and the University of Newark Research Centre, 1938, Rote Mappen, T/U II, PFL Vienna.
48 Lazarsfeld and Wyant, “Magazines in 90 Cities,” 29–41. The study found, for example, that industrial workers were avid readers of *True Story*, African Americans were fond of *True Confessions*, and the highly-educated on the East Coast read the *Atlantic Monthly*. Lazarsfeld decided to use the findings to determine the most “average” city, which turned out to be Muncie, Indiana—literally Lynd’s *Middletown*. Lazarsfeld, interview by Ann K. Pasanella, March 12, 1975, Rote Mappen, PFL Vienna.
49 Lazarsfeld to Frank Kingdon, ca. 1937, Rote Mappen, “about bureau I,” PFL Vienna.
50 “LAZARSFELD, Dr. Paul Felix (Jewish),” Box 3, RG 10.2, Fellowship Recorder Cards, Discipline 5: Humanities Fellows, FA 426, RF, RAC.
piring market researchers to identify their subjects’ psychological “rationalizations,” which were evasive responses that disguised genuine motivations. Lazarsfeld advised readers on how to get resistant respondents to withdraw their defenses so that they would submit to embarrassing revelations, such as a habit of reading a low-brow magazine. Lazarsfeld summarized useful concepts from the field of psychoanalysis, such as the Freudian concept of repression. He referenced Fromm and the famed Viennese psychologist Alfred Adler, whose theory of the “inferiority complex”—that a desire for security drove human behavior in a quest for dominance over others—had been frequently applied in the work of the Forschungsstelle.\(^5\)

All was not well, however, at the Forschungsstelle in Vienna, nor were things well with the members of Lazarsfeld’s family who remained in his home city. In December of 1936, Lazarsfeld received a letter from a friend from the Forschungsstelle who had fled to London, notifying him that the headquarters of the Forschungsstelle had been raided by the fascist police and that Marie Jahoda, its acting director, had been arrested and imprisoned for “revolutionary socialist activities” and for being a leader of the now-illegal socialists. A raid of Jahoda’s house also revealed evidence—including letters from Lazarsfeld, from whom she had separated by then—which indicated that Jahoda was associated with the leading figures of the Second International in Paris. The police charged employees of the Forschungsstelle with possessing and distributing newspapers, brochures, and pamphlets from banned “revolutionary socialist” organizations in Austria and other European countries. Since the Dollfuss regime had banned the Social Democratic Party after the Austrian civil war in February of 1934, Austrian socialists had gone underground, maintaining an organization called the Revolutionary Socialists, which coordinated with exiled party leaders Otto Bauer and Julius Deutsch, who had set up in Brno, Czechoslovakia, just across the Austrian border. The Revolutionary Socialists organized a central committee in Vienna, and they managed to continue publication of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, distributing as many as fifty thousand copies of each weekly issue. The Forschungsstelle itself, which the police had been monitoring for months if not years, was believed to be under the direction of the banned socialists and a center for their organizational efforts. Police listed the addresses and occupations of each employee of the Forschungsstelle, fifteen of whom had already been convicted of participating in the illegal socialist or communist movements. In

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addition to Jahoda, several other Forschungsstelle employees were imprisoned for their socialist activities. Another twenty-eight were known to police as “radical Marxists,” and the rest belonged to the socialist parties. Sixty-seven were identified as Jewish. The police also identified Lazarsfeld as the founder of the “social psychological” organization, the Forschungsstelle, and listed his present occupation at the University of Newark.53

In the summer of 1937, Lazarsfeld returned to Austria for what would be the last time before the war. With the help of the Labour government in England, he managed to get Jahoda out of prison, and they fled Austria with their daughter. Jahoda went to England, where she would stay for the duration of the war, and Lazarsfeld’s daughter would accompany him back to America.54

**Conclusion**

Although Paul Lazarsfeld did not come to the United States in 1933 as an émigré, anti-Semitism was partly the reason for his taking the opportunity presented by a travelling fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation. By the end of the fellowship term in 1935, he had essentially become an émigré due to the rise of fascism in Austria. What limited opportunities Lazarsfeld would have had to pursue a career in Austria were eliminated with the regimes of Dollfuss and Schuschnigg. He thus became part of a larger intellectual migration of Jewish refugee scholars from Germany, among whom were members of Max Horkheimer’s Institut für Sozialforschung. With the assistance of Lazarsfeld’s mentor Robert Lynd, the “Frankfurt School” of scholars would end up exiled at Columbia University in New York, where they resumed their collaborations with Lazarsfeld.

The refugees were assisted by international aid organizations, academic associations, Jewish groups, and philanthropies such as the Rockefeller Foundation. Academics such as Lynd were all fully aware that these were some of the brightest minds in the world, capable of tackling important social problems.

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such as unemployment and other ill effects of the Depression. Lynd viewed Lazarsfeld as something of a protégé and saw to it that he succeeded in establishing himself in the world of American sociography. The many New Deal programs and organizations of the early Roosevelt years provided Lazarsfeld, already known for his Marienthal study of the unemployed, with ample opportunities to practice his methods of social research and make contacts with important people in the field in the US.

Yet, increasingly, Lazarsfeld became known as a sophisticated survey researcher who analyzed qualitative interviews with quantitative methods to produce new insights into human motivations. These unorthodox methods challenged the behavioristic tendencies of American researchers, and they made his work highly interesting to American businessmen and market researchers. Lazarsfeld’s methods had been developed in a research organization staffed with socialists, but their usefulness in the context of the American consumer marketplace suggests that competitive actors in a capitalist economy will adapt and use whatever methods work, regardless of their ideological origins. While Lynd had seen consumer research as a means to an end with respect to progressive social reform, Lazarsfeld saw any kind of survey research—no matter who the client was—as valuable in itself to the extent that it allowed for the practice of research methods and the employment of researchers. This was entirely in line with his practice in Vienna, though it would increasingly strike Lynd as a kind of “selling out.”