Social Research as a Calling

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Citation to Publisher
Version: No citation available.

Citation to this Version: Toby, Jackson. Social Research as a Calling, 1980. Retrieved from doi:10.7282/T3RN3677.

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In the first days of August 1960, Sam Stouffer was in New York, planning an international study of the obstacles to reducing fertility rates, sponsored by the Population Council. He felt that this was another opportunity for social research to show what it could do: in this case to contribute to the solution of one of the world's most serious problems. On August 24th he died of cancer. The disease was so far advanced by the time it was diagnosed that no treatment was possible. He was hard at work until the week before his death.

Earlier that same year, Stouffer assembled a selection of his papers for publication, not realizing they were to be his final statement to the profession. He chose an appropriate title, *Social Research to Test Ideas*, and he carefully selected a favorite Shakespearian quotation to open the book that would draw attention to the value of skepticism:

Glendower: I can call spirits from the vastly deep.

Hotspur: Why, so can I, or so can any man; But will they come when you do call for them?

-King Henry IV, first part, Act III, Scene 1.

*Social Research to Test Ideas* was an appropriate title because Stouffer was not interested in research to learn about trivia; he always insisted that the payoff of data collection was the opportunity to understand what was going on. That is to say, he was interested in theory. Here is how he put it in his Preface:

The press of a button, drunkenly or soberly, can destroy life on earth. But, if vouchsafed continuity, the human spirit has, thanks in part to modern science and technology, seemingly illimitable possibilities for understanding and mastery.

For the better understanding of man's relations to man, we have had for centuries the records of history and the insights of philosophers and poets. For only a few decades have we attempted also to study society with the theoretical and empirical tools of science and the results are small and tentative, when compared with the accumulated wisdom of the ages.
Too much has been promised, too fast, by some social scientists, especially by those unchastened by the arduous, meticulous, and often unrewarding labor of empirical testing of ideas. Overexuberance generates a predictable reaction, which is probably wholesome even when the reaction extends to sharp attacks on the basic strategy of studying man with the tools of science.

The most effective response to critical essays will not be more and better critical essays. Rather, it will be demonstration, by patient example, of what social science can do. (Stouffer, 1962, p. xiii)

Sam Stouffer's prose style reflects a little of his commitment to and enthusiasm for social science. His personal style, however, was less imposing -- he was slightly below average height, wore steel-rimmed glasses, and sported a vestigial moustache. When he wasn't smiling, there was nearly always a cigarette dangling from his lips. It provided chronic suspense because Stouffer did not use ashtrays. Students and colleagues would watch the ash grow longer and longer as he talked excitedly about a research problem until at last it fell. If he noticed the ash on his dark suit, he would brush at it ineffectually, enough to produce a light smudge. At the beginning of the day, when Stouffer strode into his office and flung off his coat and battered hat, he looked quite dapper; by nightfall his suit would be covered with smudges from the volcanic ash rained down upon it.

I often wondered whether the elegant Ruth Stouffer chided her husband for sloppiness. I guessed that, after more than twenty years of marriage, she did not. As far as I knew, she raised no objections either to the long hours that he put in at his office, or, more usually, in the "machine room" -- the "machine" being an IBM counter-sorter. Stouffer frequently grew so absorbed as he ran cards through the sorter and calculated percentages on his slide rule that he would fail to start home for dinner on time. When he realized how late it had gotten, he would hastily dash to his office, throw on his hat and coat, and rush grimly down the wide stairs of Emerson Hall, stairs that had been trodden in previous generations by William James. On occasions, ten minutes after his frantic departure, Ruth Stouffer would appear at the door of the machine room and ask, disconsolately, "Is Mr. Stouffer here?" He had forgotten that they had arranged to meet at the office and go together to some engagement. I felt vaguely guilty as I confirmed what she must have already suspected.

In a curious way Sam's sloppiness and tardiness enhanced his attractiveness. They obviously sprang from an enthusiasm for social research that enabled him to blot out distractions. This blotting out of mundane distractions had its disadvantages, too. To be a passenger in a car he was driving while concentrating on a research problem was perilous. For example, during a trip between Emerson Hall and his home we discussed relationships in some role-conflict data tabulated that afternoon. This was thirty years ago; neither of us was wearing seat belts. Sam would refer to the tables as he drove the familiar route, sometimes studying the data for several seconds as we sped along. He would look up just in time to see the car in front of him or a traffic light and would jam on the brakes. We made it from Cambridge to Belmont. But Sam was wholly unaware of the dangers we had escaped.
Robin Williams (1979) had similar experiences with Stouffer, which he interprets as follows:

Sam was a person of amazing energy. My image of him is one of ceaseless motion and intense mobilization. When he walked, his pace was what to most people would have been running. He chain-smoked --- dropping ashes heedlessly. His mind seemed always to be racing beyond what could be said or done in any given period of time.... He was wholly committed to the task. If one thing didn't work, he would try another and another and another. It follows that he was ingenious and inventive. He was an entrepreneur of legendary alertness and adaptability -- always under the flag of social science.

STOUFFER AT HARVARD

Sam Stouffer spent the last fourteen years of his life (1946-1960) as Professor of Sociology and Director of the Laboratory of Social Relations at Harvard. I knew him fairly well between 1946 and 1951, first as one of a group of graduate students in his seminars, then as his teaching assistant in statistics, his research assistant, and finally as a junior colleague on a research project dealing with conflicting social norms. He was more than a teacher to me; he was a role model. I imitated him as best I could in small matters as well as large; I found myself putting my feet up on my desk as he did when having a relaxed conversation. I am tempted, therefore, to portray him as a charismatic figure who exercised a distinct influence on Harvard graduate students at that period of time. In retrospect, however, I think Sam's influence on students, though great, was inextricably bound with the influence of his friend and colleague, Talcott Parsons. Stouffer as Director of the Laboratory of Social Relations and Parsons as Chairman of the Department of Social Relations formed a leadership team. And, although there were outstanding individuals on the faculty -- Gordon Allport, Clyde and Florence Kluckhohn, Henry Murray, Jerome Bruner, Alex Inkeles, George Homans, Frederick Mosteller, Richard Solomon, Leland DeVinney, Henry Riecken, Brewster Smith -- it was the joint influence of Stouffer and Parsons on colleagues as well as students that gave the Social Relations Department its distinctive character.

How did it happen that the ebullient Sam Stouffer, skilled at organizing huge empirical research projects, should hit it off so well with a sociological theorist whose style of work required only a quiet room and a typewriter? Stouffer and Parsons had known each other only casually before Stouffer was invited to join the Harvard faculty. (The decision to make this offer was by an ad hoc committee that included prominent sociologists who were not members of the Harvard faculty.) Few persons could have anticipated in 1946 that Stouffer and Parsons would become close personal friends and would develop a theoretical-empirical orientation that was able to unify an exciting multidisciplinary department for more than a decade. In my opinion, a major ingredient of their joint stewardship of the Department of Social Relations was a common commitment to social science, a faith that both theory and empirical investigation were necessary for scientific progress and a willingness to work incredibly hard to bring this progress into being. Stouffer and Parsons were not merely sociologists
by profession; they felt *called* to be sociologists in the religious sense (emphasized by Weber) of feeling called to work in the secular world. This common conception of the sociological enterprise enabled them to bridge temperamental and stylistic differences. They respected each other enormously.

Mutual respect helps to explain why, when Parsons completed the manuscript of *The Social System*, he asked Stouffer to read it before sending it off to the publisher. Despite his busy schedule, Sam read the manuscript through. He considered *The Social System* a major accomplishment, but he hoped that it would receive some months of editorial polishing. Sam had edited his father's newspaper in Sac City, Iowa, from 1923 to 1926, and before that he had taken a Master's degree in English at Harvard. He always took a keen interest in maximizing clarity of expression. He was sorry that Talcott was too impatient to get his thinking before the profession to postpone publication.

Stouffer's impact on Harvard went beyond the Department of Social Relations. President Conant and Provost Paul Buck consulted him frequently about appointments and policy decisions. For example, when Francis Keppel was appointed Dean of the School of Education in 1948, Stouffer had been at Harvard for only two years. Nevertheless, he had been influential enough for Keppel (1979) to write "...I have always suspected that Sam had something to do with my appointment as Dean in 1948." Somehow, Stouffer's small-town Iowa background did not prevent him from gaining powerful admirers in sophisticated Cambridge.

At the memorial service for Stouffer on October 25, 1960, Paul Buck recalled the close relationship between James Conant and Stouffer in the following anecdote:

On election night 1948, Conant and I heard the returns together. When the result became known, Conant (who incidentally was a warm admirer of Sam) turned to me and said, "When you see Sam tomorrow tell him not to be discouraged. We too in Chemistry have explosions in our laboratory. They are most embarrassing but they don't end Chemistry."

Of all the people who suffered that night, Thomas Dewey, who lost the election to Harry Truman, George Gallup, who suffered publicly on national television as the returns made a shambles of his confident prediction of a Dewey victory, and others like Elmo Roper, who were almost as embarrassed, it was Stouffer's possible discomfiture from his identification with social research that evoked Conant's expression of sympathy. And Sam had not made *any* election predictions!

**STOUFFER AS TEACHER**

Sam Stouffer communicated in his teaching the same enthusiasm for research to test ideas that he expressed in his busy round of daily activities. Students responded. Undergraduate and graduate students alike found him interesting, stimulating, even exciting. He worked hard at teaching as he did at everything. Before going to class, he would sit nervously in his office for twenty minutes to a half hour writing and rewriting the outline of his remarks. When he delivered the lecture, it flowed smoothly, effortlessly, and it would probably have surprised his listeners to know that he
had prepared for that lecture as though he had never given a lecture before. Once, when he seemed particularly overwrought over an undergraduate class he was to meet in about five minutes, I expressed puzzlement that such an experienced (and successful) teacher was so concerned about an upcoming class. "Look," he said, "there are two hundred students in that class. If I give a poor lecture, I will have wasted two hundred hours of people's time. That's a responsibility." I hadn't thought of it that way before, although I did from then on. He prepared new lectures, not because he couldn't locate his old lecture notes, but because he felt that he owed it to his listeners to provide his freshest and best thoughts on the topic at hand.

Stouffer's good friend and colleague from the University of Chicago, Philip Hauser, remembers Stouffer's teaching as follows:

As a lecturer, Sam was one of the most stimulating and disheveled professors that ever existed. His substantive work at the blackboard was always first-rate but the perpetual cigarette in his mouth made it difficult often to distinguish between what part of his jacket and vest were the dripping ashes and what part was the chalk dust. Both were evident and profuse. (Hauser, 1979)

Good as Stouffer was as a lecturer, his best teaching took place in seminars, particularly the seminars he conducted with Talcott Parsons. The 1948-49 seminar on social mobility was co-directed by Stouffer, Parsons, and Florence Kluckhohn, and illustrated Stouffer's approach to graduate teaching. Sam wanted to give graduate students the opportunity to see senior professors at work, thinking about a problem, analyzing data, making mistakes, arguing among themselves. He spoke of "conducting my education in public." And so the three faculty members, along with the fifteen to twenty graduate students enrolled in the seminar, launched an empirical study of intergenerational mobility in the Boston metropolitan area as reflected in the educational plans of students in ten public high schools. Questionnaires were constructed and administered; selected students and their parents were interviewed intensively; data were coded, punched on IBM cards, and tabulated. Theoretical papers were written -- by Talcott Parsons as well as student members of the seminar -- trying to describe the social processes that were occurring. Presentations of data analyses were made -- some by Stouffer and others by his colleagues and students -- testing the fruitfulness of these theoretical models.

Few publications resulted directly from the Harvard mobility project and, to the best of my recollection, only a couple of Ph.D. dissertations. However, the continuing seminar on social mobility gave succeeding cohorts of Harvard graduate students inside views of their professors at work. Students who saw themselves as "theorists" conducted live interviews and "got their hands dirty" (in Sam's words) from moving a couple of thousand punch cards through the counter-sorter. I have in my mind's eye the image of Talcott himself interviewing a suburban schoolboy -- and failing to achieve the richness of Florence Kluckhohn's interview protocol; she used no tape recorder but seemed to have total recall. Even if Talcott did not actually conduct interviews -- my memory may be playing tricks -- he certainly treated empirical data with the greatest attention and respect. Students could not fail to get the message. Theory and research are both necessary for sociological contributions.

Correlatively, students whose initial orientation was empirical learned in the seminar
to appreciate the value of theory. During one session Sam would present the painstaking analysis of how primary- and junior-high school marks provided clues "as to when those who are not college oriented fell off the ladder" (Stouffer, 1962 p. 230). The next week Talcott would arrive bearing copies of a 63-page dittoed memorandum with some such title as "Theoretical Problems in the Study of Social Mobility." Sam would listen attentively, puffing on the inevitable cigarette, feet up on the seminar table, as Talcott developed his analysis. Talcott's presentation would be directed toward the data; he sought to provide plausible theoretical explanations for what Sam was finding as well as to generate further predictions. For example, Stouffer noted a suggestion in the data that boys whose mothers had more education than their fathers were especially likely to aspire to higher education. He and Talcott had discussed this finding during a weekend at the Parsons' New Hampshire farm over one or more glasses of apple wine. Talcott's memorandum for the seminar the following week set forth what he called "the apple-wine hypothesis," namely, that women disappointed in their husbands' accomplishments were especially apt to redirect their frustrations over this by encouraging educational and occupational accomplishment on the part of their sons.

Stouffer taught many things in that seminar that went beyond the topic of social mobility. He suggested by his example that research findings do not leap out of the data if the researcher is brilliant enough, that they emerge at the end of a long process that includes much drudgery. Furthermore, he showed a willingness to assume a good part of that drudgery himself. Although he had research assistants -- I was myself his research assistant for a time -- he treated them as colleagues and worked alongside them. He did not sit in his office waiting for machine runs to be brought to him. Perhaps he found it embarrassing to order assistants to do this and get that. He sought to avoid even the possibility of exploitation in his relationship with graduate students. (He shared credit generously when it came time to publish the results of research.) But there was another reason he did his own tabulations of data: his impatient temperament. In his eagerness to see results quickly, he frequently didn't wait to wait for someone else to find out within a few hours what the data showed when he could find out RIGHT AWAY. According to M. Brewster Smith, who worked with Sam in the Research Branch of the War Department in World War II and then became one of Stouffer's colleagues in the newly formed Department of Social Relations at Harvard, the advent of computers led to his nonhierarchical style of research becoming less feasible.

His personal style of research fitted the stage of precomputer technology, when the investigator, running his sets of data cards through the counter-sorter himself, could quickly adapt his tactics of analysis to the emerging results. Stouffer's career ended just as the requirements of modern electronic computers were tending to impose a greater separation between the investigator and his data. (Smith, 1968 p. 278)

Howard Schuman, a distinguished University of Michigan researcher, disagrees.

Although the early development of the computer separated social scientists from their data, use of interactive programs on terminals has returned us to where we were in the 1950s but with enormously

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1 Merton (1957, pp. 103-108) introduced the term "serendipity" -- coined by Horace Walpole in 1754 -- into social science as a way of referring to an adventitious aspect of research findings.
increased powers to recode and calculate. Stouffer would have been quite at home in today's terminal room! (Schuman, 1979).

Stouffer might well have led the way in adapting computer technology not only to a democratic style of leadership but to the subordination of computers to the intellectual requirements of the research problem.

Certainly, Stouffer's ingenuity should not be underestimated. When Stouffer was President of the American Sociological Society in 1952-1953, and concerned that young sociologists did not find it easy to get to the annual meetings of the Society, he arranged that the annual program consist entirely of contributed papers. His purpose in doing so was not dissatisfaction with previous programs. It was to enable more sociologists, especially younger sociologists not likely to be invited to participate in the program, to give a paper and thereby to increase their likelihood of having travel expenses to the meeting paid by their employers. From then on, contributed papers were always included at annual meetings. In addition, the total number of papers increased enormously, thereby broadening participation further.

STOUFFER THE APPLIED SOCIOLOGIST

Because Sam Stouffer had enormous faith in the potential importance of sociology, in its ultimate capacity to help transform the world, he was glad to put sociological ideas and research techniques to work in practical applications. But he was under no illusions that either our theories or our methods were very useful yet. He was on the side of those who tried to improve and to fine-tune measurement techniques so that theories could be tested more adequately.

Just as research in medicine has depended on the invention of instruments like the thermometer and microscope, so the new social research depends and will increasingly depend on what some people deprecatingly call gadgets. A questionnaire or an attitude test is such a gadget (Stouffer, 1962, p. 7).

However, he did not think that society could be expected to share his vision of the potentialities of sociology; sociologists could not reasonably expect to be given two hundred years of financial support while developing their theories and methods, on the assumption that then the profession would be ready to make big contributions. He had other reasons for being interested in applied sociology, but in my opinion his main reason was his feeling that sociology had to pay its way currently.

... I do not think it is either necessary, desirable, or indeed possible for us to take an extreme position of withdrawal from practical application. There are three reasons. One, we are citizens as well as social scientists, and we have an inescapable obligation to society in our citizenship role. Second, financial support of long-term research will not be forthcoming unless what might be

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2 Stouffer's name was originally Andrew Samuel Stouffer. His parents did not foresee that his initials, A.S.S., might lead to ridicule. The same unfortunate initials, A.S.S., characterized the American Sociological Society. Sam Stouffer campaigned (eventually with success) for the change to "American Sociological Association."
called the engineering applications of that research can be shown to have manipulable consequences. Third, efforts to deal with practical problems can sometimes, though not always, help sensitize basic research to the location of strategic variables. (Stouffer, 1962, p. 4)

Stouffer put his ideas and his skills to practical use on all levels. Within Harvard, he served on strategic committees, advised the President and other high officials, and designed surveys when information was needed from faculty or graduate students. In the larger society, he was also in demand. A constant stream of long-distance telephone calls interrupted his flow of work. The Bureau of the Census. The Social Science Research Council. The Russell Sage Foundation. Chairmen of Sociology Departments at other universities. The sociology editor at John Wiley & Sons. One of the reasons he worked in the machine room instead of his office was that there he could usually escape the telephone. Sometimes his trusted secretary, Shirley Atkinson, would wordlessly poke her nose into the machine room when a particularly urgent call was coming in; he would understand; rather grimly, he would then stalk across the hall and into his office. When he picked up the phone, he responded with warmth to the caller, as though the call could not have come at a better time. He would concentrate on the problem being propounded to him for as long as necessary. Then he would return to the machine room, leaving the pile of unanswered letters on his desk. Mrs. Atkinson would plead with him to answer his mail, but she was rarely successful. Once in a while she would get him to dictate a few pressing letters. He explained to me that, if he answered his mail, he would never get to his research.

Sometimes he would explain the problem on which he was being consulted if I happened to be in his office when a call came in. His flexibility sometimes surprised me. For example, a high official of the Greyhound Bus Company was considering hiring Elmo Roper to conduct a poll of users and potential users of long-distance buses. Roper's fee was $50,000. Question: "Was this a judicious expenditure of Company money?" Stouffer's answer: "Elmo Roper is one of the best people in the polling business; he can do a poll as well as anyone. But he's also a damn smart guy. You might consider hiring him to travel on your buses from New York to California and back again and write a report for you on what he observes. He'll charge you $50,000 anyway; his time is valuable. But you might get even more useful information for your money than you would from a poll." I never learned whether the Greyhound Bus Company took Sam's advice. But the advice itself was not what I expected one of the leading practitioners of quantitative social research to give. Stouffer adapted his response to the requirements of the problem, as he perceived them; he was not a doctrinaire statistician.

In 1948, Harry Truman won the presidency, defeating Thomas E. Dewey and third-party candidate Henry Wallace after nearly all the polling organizations had predicted a Dewey victory by a wide margin. And, as recalled above this was not only a public-relations disaster for George Gallup and Elmo Roper; it seemed to threaten the credibility of quantitative social research more generally. The Social Science Research Council responded by calling upon some outstanding academic social scientists to reanalyze the pre-election polls and explain what went wrong. Although Stouffer's time was fully committed to a variety of projects, including preparing the two volumes of The American Soldier (1949) for publication, when the SSRC asked him to help, he took it as his professional obligation to help clarify the situation. He and Duncan MacRae, Jr., contributed a chapter to the monograph published by the SSRC in 1949; they examined evidence, over-
looked or ignored by the professional pollsters, of a last-minute swing to Truman. They recommended greater caution about predicting Election Day behavior from polls taken during the course of the campaign.

When I was a student of Stouffer in the late 1940s, a consequential book by Gunnar Myrdal (1944) was still being read and discussed in the Harvard community as elsewhere throughout the country. I remember a large public forum devoted to *An American Dilemma*. It was billed as "Myrdal's Dilemma: Is It Real?" The theme of much criticism of the book was that its assessment of the prospects for racial equality in the United States was overly optimistic. Recall Myrdal's thesis: that the egalitarian implications of the American Creed and the blatant racial inequality institutionalized in the system of white supremacy were on a collision course. Something had to give, and Myrdal predicted that it would be the doctrine of white supremacy. Myrdal proved to be right; his optimism was fully justified by the civil-rights revolution. What was not generally known at Harvard in the late 1940s and is still less well known today were the organizational and substantive roles Sam Stouffer played in this important project. Organizationally, Stouffer worked under Myrdal's direction helping to coordinate the efforts of a large number of scholars working on the preparation of research papers. When Myrdal returned to Sweden after the outbreak of World War II, Stouffer inherited the full organizational responsibility for the project until Myrdal was able to return. Without him, there might have been no publication of *An American Dilemma*. Substantively, Sam contributed a working paper on Negro migration. Myrdal incorporated Stouffer's research in one chapter of the final manuscript, but there was a fundamental difference of interpretation between Myrdal's chapter and Stouffer's working paper. Stouffer considered the trends of black migration from the rural South to the large cities, especially the Northern cities of large industrial states with many electoral votes, to be of major causal significance; Myrdal emphasized the pressure of cultural inconsistency. Both thought that the position of the Negro in American society would improve dramatically, but they arrived at this conclusion from somewhat different lines of reasoning. Who was right? Even in retrospect, the answer is unclear. But the post-World-War-II influx of black population into the industrial states of the North and West certainly provided political leverage for the civil-rights movement. After it was shown that the margin of John F. Kennedy's victory over Richard Nixon in 1960 was provided by black voters in large Northern cities, it became much easier for the federal government to support the civil-rights movement.

In 1941, after finishing his work with Myrdal, Sam Stouffer moved to Washington to direct the survey-research activities of the War Department. He organized several hundred questionnaire surveys of soldiers in most areas in which American troops were stationed. Stouffer surely did not direct research in the Army in order to provide illustrative material for his classes after the war, although that was one byproduct. The halls of Emerson Hall overflowed with cabinets containing drawers of punch cards from these various surveys while Sam worked on *The American Soldier*, a distillation of what was learned from this vast research. And Stouffer shared with fascinated students what he was learning from attempting to present his military research to a social-science readership.

He also shared with us the political background of his military research, background that did not appear explicitly in *The American Soldier* or in the subsequent two volumes of the four-volume series of *Studies in Social Psychology in World War II*. We learned
that, despite the strong support of his boss in the Information and Education Division, General Frederick Osborn, who knew Franklin Roosevelt personally and had other social connections useful for bureaucratic leverage, the Research Branch enjoyed a chronically precarious status within the Army. Old-line senior officers were shocked to learn that these academic types wanted to ask troops their opinions of their officers' leadership abilities. So-called morale surveys might put ideas into heads that never considered the possibility that orders could be questioned. Stouffer had to prove the value of social research to these skeptics. The battle to convince skeptics was fought over and over again during Sam's years in Washington. One of his victories gives the flavor of the problem. An early survey showed that conscripts hated spit-and-polish basic training. In addition, physical-conditioning experts raised doubts about the _effectiveness_ of traditional approaches, including close-order drill. Stouffer and his colleagues obtained permission to conduct an experiment. They designed a new program of conditioning based on the methods of college coaches. The new program was compared with the traditional approach; comparative morale studies of soldiers undergoing the different types of training were made as well as before-after tests of strength and endurance. The experiment demonstrated that the new approach put men in _better_ physical condition _faster_ than the old and also reduced griping about basic training. The report of the experiment was read by senior officers at the War Department, perhaps by General George Marshall himself. It had two consequences. It resulted in a change in the methods used by the Army to improve the stamina of recruits, and it convinced some generals that social research was useful.

At the same time that Stouffer was preparing _The American Soldier_ for publication, he was also working on a codification of methodological studies, especially studies of attitude scaling, that would eventually be published as _Measurement and Prediction_ (1950), the last of the four volumes comprising _Studies in Social Psychology in World War II_. In the course of this codification, Louis Guttman and Paul Lazarsfeld came and went through the corridors of Emerson Hall. They and other specialists in measurement problems, including Frederick Mosteller, who was only peripherally involved in _The American Soldier_, cultivated at graduate seminars an appreciation of the possibilities and the difficulties of rigorous ordering of shades of opinion. We talked about Guttman scales and Lazarsfeld's latent structures, paired-comparisons and scales of intensity. Sam was pushing one of his pet ideas: through the improvement of methodological tools, sociologists would enhance their ability to test hypotheses. Stouffer never lost this interest in improving methods of social measurement. Along with a group of younger colleagues, he published an article (Stouffer _et al_, 1952) demonstrating an ingenious technique for increasing the concentration of the underlying dimension in a Guttman-type scale. The published article was purely methodological, but the illustrative data were obtained in the course of investigating sensitivity to social sanctions on the part of Air Force officers -- under a contract with the Human Resources Research Institute of the Air Force. He continued to believe that applied research was often an opportunity for sociologists to develop stronger research tools.

One reason Stouffer did so much data processing himself was that he wanted to see the results as soon as they emerged from the counter-sorter. But he was not impatient when it came to presenting his findings. He would search for exactly the right words to convey his

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3 Robin Williams (1979) put it this way: "He liked to operate the IBM counter-sorter, eagerly watching the cards drop into slots to see whether his current hypothesis would survive the empirical test."
theoretical ideas. Doubtless, he discarded dozens of verbal tags before settling on the terms, "relative deprivation," and "intervening opportunities."

As diligently as Sam worked to express his research findings in clear, precise English, he strove equally hard to find the best way of presenting *quantitative* data in tables and charts. Take, for example, the well-known chart from *The American Soldier* in which he highlighted the anomalous responses of a probability sample of enlisted men to the question, "Do you think a soldier with ability has a good chance for promotion in the army?" (See Figure 1.)
Figure 1. Opinions about promotion opportunity-comparisons by education and rank between Military Police and Air Corps (white enlisted men in the Army one to two years, continental United States). Military police data from special survey of a representative cross section of MP's, S-107, March, 1944. Air Corps data are a segment from representative cross section of all white EM in United States, S-95, January, 1944.

Stouffer's objective was a fairly complete multivariate analysis of the responses to the question; at the same time he did not want to overwhelm the reader with complexity. He toiled for hours until he achieved a readily understandable presentation of data that ran counter to common sense. He was pleased with what he accomplished. He showed branch of service (Military Police versus Air Corps) in a straightforward way on the horizontal axis of the chart. He dichotomized rank on the vertical axis (noncoms versus privates and pfc's). He then dichotomized the resulting four categories by educational achievement (grade school and some high school versus high school graduates and beyond). None of this was especially ingenious, although considerable thought must have gone into the reduction of rank and educational attainment to dichotomies. In his presentation of the dependent variable, however, Stouffer conveyed a great deal of information in a deceptively simple format. He arranged the eight bars so that, although the percentage in each of four categories was revealed in full, a dark horizontal line dichotomized each bar. Furthermore, the bars were arranged in steps in proportion to the percent saying "A very good chance." The result was to show quite clearly what he wanted to show, namely, that soldiers in the Air Corps had less favorable attitudes toward promotion opportunities than soldiers in the Military Police and that better educated soldiers had less favorable attitudes than poorly educated soldiers even though better-educated soldiers and soldiers in the Air Corps were more likely to be promoted. (Since the samples were probability samples of the populations from which they were drawn and since Stouffer included the number of cases on which the percentages in each bar were based, the reader could infer from the data that soldiers in the Air Corps were objectively more likely to be noncoms and that the better-educated soldiers were objectively more likely than poorly educated soldiers to be noncoms.) That the better-educated soldiers were dissatisfied with promotion opportunities did not in itself suggest the concept of relative deprivation. Stouffer could have explained their dissatisfaction by Durkheimian reasoning: expectations as well as objective personal circumstances give rise to satisfaction or dissatisfaction. But the finding that soldiers in the Air Corps were more dissatisfied than soldiers in the Military Police suggested a further consideration; it suggested that the social context should be examined in order to understand the level of expectations. He developed the concept of relative deprivation initially to account for anomalous results by branch of service and then, by extension, to contextual effects in other subject areas. I myself find "relative deprivation" useful in thinking about cross-national crime rates (Toby, 1979).

STOUFFER THE PATRIOT

Sam Stouffer died before the Vietnam War heated up to the point that young Americans began burning draft cards, wearing the flag on the seats of their jeans, and
suggesting in other ways suspicion of their country, if not outright hostility. But even in the
1940s and 1950s, Sam's unabashed love for the United States seemed excessive compared
with the "cooler" sentiments of colleagues and students. He told me, for example,
after a visit to a base of the Strategic Air Command in connection with a
research project, that the young pilots, navigators, and bombadiers that he met made
him feel proud to be an American. Born as he was in the small town Sac City in Iowa (in the
first year of the twentieth century, Sam must have been routinely exposed during his early
years to the assumption that the United States was the greatest country in the world, the
favorite of God, and that it contained wonderful and moral people. Furthermore, he went
to Morningside College in Sioux City, where that assumption was unlikely to be
challenged. And even after attending Harvard (as a graduate student in English from 1921
to 1923), he returned to his home town where he edited the Sac City Sun from 1923 to
1926. I can imagine him covering 4th-of-July celebrations organized by the American
Legion post and responding enthusiastically to the speeches and the parades. One of the last
pieces of writing Sam did was a preface to the textbook I co-authored with Harry
Bredemeier. Social Problems in America: Costs and Casualties in an Acquisitive Society
might well have seemed to Sam too critical of American life. As consulting editor for
John Wiley & Sons, he could have recommended putting greater emphasis
on positive features, but he did not suggest changing a comma. He did include a
paragraph in his Preface that might be interpreted as a mild rebuttal:

The authors love America and American institutions. But as social scientists they know that in
any society there are tensions, generated often by the very ideals which are most basic and most
honored in that society. America is, of course, not an exception. And the authors pull no punches in
showing in detail wherein this is so. The rewards for success are high -- higher than perhaps
anywhere in human history. But, correspondingly, the relative deprivation of failure is necessarily
also high, even though absolute deprivation may be lower in America than in societies most of
whose members can have only minimal aspirations. (Bredemeier & Toby, 1960, p. vii)

Sam's personal history predisposed him to be a patriot but not an unthinking one.
He was committed to certain values -- civil liberty, intellectual freedom, education,
individual opportunity -- and he perceived the United States as favorable to those
values. Such values help to explain why he accepted the invitation of the Fund for
the Republic, the brain-child of iconoclast Robert Hutchins, to conduct a survey of
public attitudes toward civil liberty at the height of the McCarthy era (1953-1954). It
may not seem today to have been a particularly dangerous undertaking. But at the
time, Senate and House committees were vying with one another to run suspect
Communists out of public life. Careers were being ruined, most of them in
government but some in academia as well. The Fund for the Republic, whose then
President was Clifford P. Case, was widely considered left-wing and possibly
subversive. Stouffer conducted the survey and published his findings in Communism,
Conformity, and Civil Liberties (1955). He did not escape unscathed. In connection
with consultation work for what had become the Department of Defense, he had had a
security clearance; the Department attempted to revoke it. Anonymous but "reliable"
informants had questioned his loyalty. Stouffer fought the revocation. To this day his
son, John, treasures the transcript of the hearing, which resulted in his complete vin-
dication.
A fascinating aspect of *Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties* is the light it throws on Stouffer's brand of Americanism. Although born and raised in a small town, Sam clearly identifies the big city as the seed-bed of tolerance. Part of the reason for the greater tolerance of city people is the opportunity city life provides for contact with diverse people and ideas. Another reason is indirect; city life is associated with educational opportunities, and Stouffer tended to regard education as conducive to progress.

... *schooling puts a person in touch with people whose ideas and values are different from one's own*. And this tends to carry on, after formal schooling is finished, through reading and personal contacts. Now, we can plausibly argue that this is a necessary, though not the only, condition for tolerance of a free market place for ideas. To be tolerant, one has to learn further not only that people with different ideas are not necessarily bad people but also that it is vital to America to preserve this free market place, even if some of the ideas traded there are repugnant or even dangerous for the country. The first step in learning this may be merely to encounter the strange and the different. The educated man does this and tends not to flinch too much at what he sees or hears.

Similarly ... the citizen of a metropolitan community is more likely to rub shoulders with a variety of people whose values are different from his own and even repugnant to him than is the man or woman in a village. The city man has to learn to live and let live in his heterogeneous community to an extent not necessary for the village. (Stouffer, 1955, p. 127)

In view of his strong patriotic feelings, Stouffer was fortunate to be in charge of the Research Branch during World War II. Indeed, it is not too much to say that the surveys that he commissioned contributed their part to achieving victory over Germany and Japan, even when they did *not* test ideas or help to develop research tools. One of the last surveys to guide an administrative decision was one of immense practical importance. The War Department wanted to avoid a chaotic demobilization following military victory, such as had occurred after World War I. The Research Branch proposed a point system based on systematically surveyed opinions of soldiers about the weight that should be given to various factors in setting priorities for discharge.

But there were strong pressures from some important generals to change the system after V-J Day, especially to reduce or eliminate points for combat credit, in order to retain as long as possible the best trained men and give priority in discharge to those with less experience. From one military-efficiency point of view, this demand was not unreasonable. But what about morale implications? (Stouffer, 1962, p. 185)

General Marshall decided to accept the recommendation of the Research Branch. The point system was institutionalized as the guide for demobilization, and demobilization proceeded uneventfully.

Stouffer's work for the War Department was deeply satisfying. He had an opportunity to help his country and at the same time to demonstrate that social research was useful. He fostered the development of new tools of social and attitude measurement. And he must have known that he would eventually codify the substantive findings in social scientific publications. Yet there was one aspect
of his War Department service that, as a patriot and as the clear leader of a fairly large military unit, must have disappointed him. He was never given a commission as a brigadier general. Francis Keppel (1979), who worked closely with Sam in the Research Branch, comments as follows:

I first met Sam when he was brought to the War Department by Frederick H. Osborn (later Major General Osborn) to advise on what became in time the Research Branch of the Information and Education Division. The very idea of setting up a group to sound out the opinion of soldiers on anything -- much less on what they thought of their commanders -- was astonishing. It scarcely fitted into the old Army's notion of discipline and command relationships. But General George Marshall, the Chief of Staff, was not an ordinary man, and he supported Frederick Osborn's plan. As you may recall, Osborn made himself into a social scientist through his work in genetics and population, and he selected Stouffer as the best man to be the chief professional. What Sam brought to it, in addition to his scholarly qualifications, were three qualities: transparent honesty and patriotism, bubbling enthusiasm, and a good eye for talent. The group he helped to assemble, as I remember it, would have made a first-rate faculty anywhere, anytime.

There was no question in anyone's mind that Sam was the leader -- but he was not ideally fitted to be the Commanding Officer in the military sense. As his colleagues one by one changed from civilian clothes to uniforms, he wanted more and more to wear one himself. There was a time when he had reason to hope that this would come about. But in the end General Osborn decided that the freedom of civilian status -- which let Sam see anyone from messenger to General without difficulties of status -- was the best arrangement. There was also a haunting worry that Sam's jacket would be covered with cigarette ashes much of the time. And anyway Sam did not operate through channels naturally.

STOUFFER THE HUMAN BEING

I can still see Sam in my mind's eye, moving rapidly from place to place, partly, I suppose, because of his reservoirs of energy, but also because of a zest for the task at hand. Much of the time the task at hand was social research to test ideas. His commitment to sociology was passionate. He gave the data a fair chance to disconfirm his hypotheses because he couldn't imagine doing otherwise. But he had a relentless desire to know how the particular hypothesis he was testing at the moment made out.

I can also see the warm smile that played around Sam's lips when he chatted with a student or colleague. Although no one was busier, no one seemed more accessible. How much clock-time he spent with his family I do not know. But in whatever time he shared with his children, he must have communicated the same warmth that total strangers glimpsed. His son writes, "My perception of my father is that of a very warm and loving human being" (John Stouffer, 1979). And Ann Stouffer Bisconti (1979) reports the joint recollections of herself and her sister, Jane Stouffer Williams:

The characteristics of my father, as a person, that were most outstanding to me were his humanity, his strict adherence to his values, and his rather outlandish sense of humor. He never forgot -- or could forget -- his roots. As you probably know, he was the older son of a devout Methodist couple who lived in a small town in Iowa. His father owned and
edited the local newspaper, the *Sac Sun*. Early studies of the Bible, especially the Old Testament, and the classics stimulated his imagination and developed his lifelong love for geography, history, and literature.

After graduating from Morningside College in Sioux City with a major in classics, my father took his master's in English at Harvard. The experience was an eye-opener. As he used to tell us, he spent nearly all his time the first year in Widener Library reading the unexpurgated versions of Boccaccio's *Decameron* and other similarly racy volumes to which he had no access in Iowa.

During this period, he maintained constant contact with his parents. He sent all his English papers to his father for him to critique, and those that remain bear the witty and clear-thinking commentary of this man who so obviously influenced the intellectual development of the son. The enclosed exercise in writing editorial paragraphs is of particular interest, I think, because it illustrates not only this correspondence between father and son but also the blossoming statistical orientation of the young English major.\(^4\)

Even after he became engrossed in the mission of making sociology a science, my father carried with him a boundless appetite for knowledge about the world around and a fascination for history and literature. You may recall that, in his lectures, he illustrated his points with references ranging from Shakespeare to Sherlock Holmes to Iowa corn fields to baseball. I remember because I was a student in the last course he ever taught.

He had an overwhelming need to communicate to his family his tremendous enthusiasm. My sister, brother, and I remember the fervor with which he read poetry aloud to the whole family. He also enjoyed reading spine-chilling short stories with a voice that evoked a most sinister mood. When I was a child, he rarely missed my bedtime story; a favorite was Hillyer's *A Child's History of the World*. I also remember a good many Saturdays spent in the machine room at Harvard's Laboratory of Social Relations where we both watched in awe as the little cards fell into boxes in the sorter.

Wherever we traveled, my father knew more than the guides; he seemed to have a story for every street corner in Europe. It was a standing joke that my father took his family from Chicago to the summer place in Vermont by way of California. The detours often were somewhat unusual; always they were a learning experience.

After a car trip to New York, we were taken to Grand Central Station to see the red carpet laid out for the Twentieth Century Limited. On a trip to Mexico, we stopped over in Houston to see how far the airport had been built from this rapidly expanding city; we also stopped in Atlanta to see the drinking fountains labeled "for whites only."

My father was intensely patriotic and had a great love of the American heritage. As a youth, he was responsible for saving the oldest log cabin in Sac County; the cabin is still preserved in a local park. He would go miles out of his way to cross over a covered bridge or to pass through

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\(^4\) Stouffer wrote for his English course as follows: "Who said the profession of poetry writing is unpopular today? The Reader's Guide of Periodical Literature lists 2,575 poems which actually were printed in current magazines from January to November of last year. And at the end of the list one is told to 'see also Children's Verses.' This is an average of 232 poems a month or 7 4/5 a day. Every three hours, somewhere in the English-speaking world, poet's eye ceases its 'fine frenzy rolling' and another product of love's labor is ready for butchery in the abattoir of the critics."
a quaint New England town. It would be impossible to describe the anguish he suffered when under personal attack during the McCarthy era.

He set high goals for himself and his family, never accepting second best. In some ways, this may have been a weakness as well as a strength. After losing in the finals of a college tennis championship he put down his racquet and never played again (Bisconti, 1979).

Even his attempt to prevent the introduction of a television set into the Stouffer household was recognized as well intentioned. He did not forbid it exactly. In 1951, when the technology of color television was still on the horizon, he told me gleefully that he was assuring his children that the Stouffers would have the first color television set on the block. I learned from his son that he finally gave in. According to John Stouffer's letter (1979):

What finally broke down his resistance was his insatiable interest in what was going on in the world around him.

Ann Stouffer Bisconti (1979) remembers the place of the television set in the Stouffer household as follows:

I can see my father now in our large paneled library, with one eye on the evening news and one hand holding a martini, while the other eye and the other hand are working away at the rumbling Monroe and casually recording columns of numbers on long sheets of paper rolling over onto the floor.

If there is a heaven and if Sam Stouffer is in it, perhaps the Monroe calculator is still rumbling and the long sheets of paper are still rolling onto the floor.

REFERENCES

1950