

Lazarsfeld, Paul Felix (1901–76)

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Abstract

Paul F. Lazarsfeld is best known for his contributions to methodology, in particular to the quantitative side. However, he possessed a much broader portfolio that enabled him to become one of the leading figures of social sciences in the decades after the end of WWII. His Viennese upbringing stocked him with cultural capital and his mingling in the Social Democratic movement of his hometown convinced him that the world could be made a better place, although this *weltanschauung* may later have shifted to changing the smaller world around him. His major impacts on social sciences of the second half of the twentieth century have been (1) the creation of research institutes devoted to empirical social research, funded by outside sources and offering students a training site; (2) inventing and refining techniques of data collection and analysis; and (3) enriching the usability and applicability of the sociological body of knowledge in the fields of socio-psychological consequences of long-term unemployment, mass media, and audience communication, and the then underdeveloped field of the sociology of social sciences.

Not all scholars possess the same type of academic portfolio, nor do they follow identical paths to become recognized and exhibit influence. Self-confident and humble inhabitants of the academic world pursue observable strategies – even hermits have one – to make their names and accomplishments known to others. Usually academics of all branches favor written communication, publish books or articles, or try to be present in person at as many professional gatherings as possible, exhibiting what even the vernacular now refers to by a sociological-sounding term: networking. In the past, only a minority explored alternatives to the traditional mode of communicating scholarly deeds. One twentieth century social scientist was particularly inventive in making his vision of social research known to others; his name is Paul Felix Lazarsfeld (PFL for short in the remaining text). He created institutions and invented a new label for his preferred version of research: ‘empirical social research.’ The establishment of stable patterns of collaboration allowed him to disseminate his vision of the craft to others by recruiting disciples to work on his ideas, and he was successful even in persuading people of equal status to join in such endeavors. A portrait of this “institution man,” a label he proposed for people like himself (Lazarsfeld, 1969: 302), has to pay tribute to several facets of his performance and personality but should not sidestep the more conventional products, his writings. I will start with presenting PFL’s core convictions with regard to the craft of social research, then discuss his methodological contributions, followed by an overview of his substantive work, and end with a gloss on his biography and the contexts in which he was able to develop all these accomplishments.

Lazarsfeld’s Vision

At the core of PFL’s convictions is the belief that the explication of what ordinary researchers do will help to improve future work in social sciences. He might have picked up the technique of *explication de texte*, or close reading, during his early visits to France, or perhaps his call for explication merely exhibits the

pattern of multiple discoveries. In any case, this attitude became a characteristic element of his work habit and philosophy over a period of half a century. Something of a corollary to this is his understanding of the aims and merits of methodology: “I read somewhere a quotation from the English poet Wordsworth who said that poetry is emotion recollected in tranquility [...] Since then I have always stressed that methodology is intuition reconstructed in tranquility” (Lazarsfeld to Hans Zeisel, 5 October 1967, as quoted in: Pasanella (1994): 22). Also he phrased his vision of the task of the methodologist elsewhere only slightly differently: “The sociologist studies man in society: the methodologist studies the sociologist at work” (Lazarsfeld, 1959: 171). Besides writing on methodology, he devoted even more energy to disseminating his insights and the findings to others, for which he used different paths and suggested even more than he used.

A consequence of his reconstructive methodological efforts was that PFL became aware of lacunae and shortcomings in the conduct of other social researchers, and to fill these gaps he regularly invented new techniques and encouraged others to do the same. Alongside the explicator we see therefore the constructor and individual who experimented regularly to improve the toolbox of social researchers. Disentangling these two sides is nearly impossible and not what is called for here, besides the fact that in looking at PFL one needs to be aware of both these sides of him.

Whether particular traits of a personality belong to the individual’s self-image, or could be analyzed separately, or should be seen as the causal factor behind one’s utterances do not need to be resolved here. But PFL’s managerialism, activism, and restlessness – or what one could call a nearly permanent eagerness to join in and make suggestions – dramatically influenced his successes and also contributed to his failures. PFL always was a *homo politicus*, someone who wanted to intervene into the world around him and who probably devoted more energy to keeping his businesses running than to disengaging from the world at least temporarily to fine-tune a manuscript. At the same time, PFL was highly aware of the role of published words and regularly

pleaded with editors and publishers regarding his overdue submissions by proclaiming that he would not become famous for adhering to deadlines.

Lazarsfeld's Substantive Contributions to Social Research

As indicated, PFL's methodological work consists of three parts: first, inventions of new techniques; second, reconsiderations of the work done by others from the point of view of the implicit rules that made those works possible; and third, didactic means to help others to profit from predecessors.

It is easiest to start with the third point. At the age of 28, PFL published his first textbook *Statistisches Praktikum für Psychologen und Lehrer* (Lazarsfeld, 1929) which offered the students of psychology at the University of Vienna, Austria basic knowledge of statistics. In that work PFL explained simple features at some length, for example, how to transform absolute numbers into percentages and how to calculate a correlation coefficient. After migrating to New York, PFL contributed chapters to a textbook-like compendium for market researchers, *The Technique of Marketing Research* (1937), presenting insights about the design of questionnaires from a psychological perspective and elaborating on techniques of classification. During the next two decades, PFL wrote a huge number of papers and assembled his own together with papers from others in the highly influential *The Language of Social Research: A Reader in the Methodology of Social Research*, edited together with Morris Rosenberg and published with a leading publishing house for social sciences at that time, The Free Press, in 1955. He downplayed the number of papers that were his own by attributing some of them to Elias Smith, his pseudonym. While the reader's title was telling, only its subtitle provided a real rationale for the volume from the editors: by offering best practices the individual creative scholar could get a better starting background for her endeavors. In 1972, *Continuities in the Language of Social Research* expanded the scope of contributions even further, but by then the market for research technique textbooks was not as receptive as in the middle of the 1950s when the Lazarsfeld-Rosenberg reader was used nearly everywhere social research was taught.

Providing teaching material was one side of PFL's mission to transform empirical social research from an amateur activity into a cumulative scientific effort. From the very start in Vienna, he regularly brought together groups of collaborators, mostly subordinates working on his projects, to offer them instruction, develop new ideas and applications, and refine present ones. In addition to his social democratic background that favored egalitarianism, he was convinced that if one wants to become a good empirical social researcher one needs to go through a period of apprenticeship (Stehr, 1982: 154). There were several more or less well-defined steps one had to climb before one could reasonably start doing her own project. Even ancillaries such as secretaries, endlessly typing draft after draft of manuscripts, and Strichler, people who count questionnaires' answers by hand in the form of stripes on paper, could rise to higher levels of prosperity (one of PFL's first American secretaries, Rose K. Goldsen, eventually became a professor of

sociology at Cornell University). Later on, when the Bureau of Applied Social Research (BASR) became affiliated with Columbia University, graduate students could start their careers at the BASR as a coder, calculator, or research assistant, use its data and infrastructure to write a dissertation, and then be hired as an affiliate of the 'Bureau,' as it was called. Those who successfully completed third party financed projects remained for a while or went on in their academic careers. PFL's attempts to institutionalize this form of instruction beyond the space of his 'firm' however failed.

The list of publications from PFL does not show any direction. Contrary to major sociological theoreticians, his oeuvre does not evolve like a program incubated step by step. Looking for a label for PFL's style of methodological thinking one could characterize it as offering solutions on demand. Several observers and witnesses confirmed that PFL always saw interesting connections between variables, caught evolving problems out of field notes, and detected spurious correlations much quicker than anyone else around the table. Some of these serendipitous problems he solved overnight, so to speak, others remained in his head and in his notes for very long periods. Let us for comparison look at one smaller revelation and one of the long-lasting methodological struggles PFL fought.

During the years PFL directed the Princeton Radio Research Project (1937–40), he invented, without calling it by the name, secondary analysis. He was able to do so because the financial backer of the whole project, the Rockefeller Foundation, did not press him to collect data first hand. The foundation officers were interested in understanding the then new mass communication device, the radio, and in particular its effects on the audience. At the very beginning the following question was put in front of the research team: "do those who listened to educational programs change their opinions afterward or not?" Ingeniously PFL persuaded market researchers to hand their data over to him and promised to deliver them surplus value in exchange. These data could not be analyzed in today's style of meta-analysis because the Hollerith machines that were used severely restricted reuse of punched cards, and data stacking techniques were not yet available. Still, PFL identified, in each study, crucial variables, cross-tabulated them, and then compared the results from the different studies. For instance, he was able to show that those who held an opinion beforehand overwhelmingly held that they did not care to intentionally listen to educational or political programs, but a third of those listening did reform their opinion afterward, be it by changing from one party to another, or from nonvoting to voting, and so on. PFL presented these insights first in a small paper (originally published as Lazarsfeld, 1939; reprinted in Lazarsfeld, 2011: pp. 401–416) where he inserted new variables step-by-step and came to revealing conclusions. Even more telling than the results is the long-lasting effect of the insight it provided. One could easily draw the invention of the panel study design back to these small observations about changes during a campaign. During the 1940 presidential campaign which resulted in the re-election of Franklin D. Roosevelt for the third time, PFL first used repeated interviews of the same sample of respondents, the panel design (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944).

Not all problems could be satisfactorily solved in similar ways, PFL worried. Take as an illustration his struggle finding out why people do what they do. Very early in his career he contemplated the occupational choices of young Austrian workers (Lazarsfeld, 1975a). Under the influence of his then mentor Karl Bühler he thought about the interplay between ‘outer’ and ‘inner’ factors and called the acting of one upon another a ‘motive.’ Unsatisfied with this pseudo-solution to his big problem PFL some years later, probably under the influence of those American sociologists who later became known as symbolic interactionists, distinguished between ‘inner motives’ and ‘mechanism,’ which direct an individual, and the outer ‘situation,’ whereby only the encounter of these two independent forces cause an ‘action’ (Lazarsfeld and Kornhauser, 1955). Some years later, he again returned to this topic when he tried to understand why people vote as they do. Now under the spell of quite another intellectual environment he theorized that a citizen, labeled an ‘organism,’ stands under the influence of on the one hand a stimulus, for example, a political campaign, that she recognizes selectively, and on the other hand a set of personal dispositions. This aspect of the formation of the voting process is the concern of psychology, whereas sociology studies the ‘implementation’ of all these causes, which results in a particular vote as the response to all the foregoing influences (Berelson et al., [1954]1986: 278). Still not really satisfied with this solution to the big problem, which he once jokingly called the “methodological equivalent of socialist voting and buying of soap” (Lazarsfeld, 1969: 279), he finally persuaded the editor of the 1968 edition of the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, his longtime collaborator and later biographer David Sills, to reserve an entry for his ‘theory’: reason analysis (Kadushin, 1968). It does not diminish his legacy if one adds that this particular part of his oeuvre was not highly consequential.

Nothing could be further from the point than to come to the conclusion that PFL’s attempts should be seen as failures. Just the opposite, along the way he found serendipitously other interesting things and even invented a machine: the famous Program Analyzer that documents positive versus negative evaluative responses by listeners, which was the result of his collaboration with Frank Stanton from CBS. During his whole career PFL codified data collection techniques, improved the phrasing of questions, and developed data analysis tools and routines.

Usually PFL is put into the quantitative camp of the social sciences which is correct only with some qualifications. The majority of his written contributions to methodology belong more or less to the quantitative branch, but from the very beginning until his last days PFL thought seriously about nonquantitative research strategies. Although he once argued prominently that qualitative research should be restricted to the exploratory steps of any research project (Barton and Lazarsfeld, 1955; reprinted in Lazarsfeld, 1993: 210–217), he conceded elsewhere to qualitative approaches a more independent value. First, PFL was never an advocate of random sample large-scale survey research. Instead he preferred smaller and pointed samples – as in all the famous voting studies under his direction: Erie County, Ohio; Decatur, Illinois; and Elmira, New York – but he was willing to go one step further by using case study designs from the very beginning onward.

Second, he assigned an independent role to qualitative analysis whenever quantitative data analysis resulted in anomalies it could not resolve statistically. PFL’s plea for what he labeled ‘deviant case analysis’ did not get as much attention as others of his suggestions but it remained on the table since its first announcement.

Third, he even prepared a separate statement on methodology immediately after the study on unemployment was published in 1933. This study’s subtitle classified the investigation as belonging to sociography, never a widely used name. The methodology manuscript remained unpublished but PFL recycled its main message when he wrote his memoir 34 years later. Quoting from the then still unpublished paper (now included in Lazarsfeld, 2011: 243–265) he proposed five rules for data collection:

- a. For any phenomenon one should have objective observations as well as introspective reports.
- b. Case studies should be properly combined with statistical information.
- c. Contemporary information should be supplemented by information on earlier phases of whatever is being studied.
- d. One should combine ‘Natural and experimental data,’ meaning questionnaires and solicited reports and unobtrusive measures.

Lazarsfeld, 1969: p. 282

Given his educational background in mathematics it is no wonder that PFL tried to utilize his competences, but it seems that he largely abstained from pursuing this path, focusing instead on more substantive thinking. Whatever he might have contributed to the new specialty of mathematical sociology – obviously, he helped establish it organizationally – PFL remained an empiricist. While some of his collaborators and disciples later joined the newly formed rational choice camp in sociology, one could argue, probably convincingly, that PFL would have continued proposing an empirical theory of action (see Lazarsfeld, 2011) instead of jumping into the highly abstract mode of theorizing to be found in rational choice papers.

Substantive Contributions by PFL

PFL is very often reduced to his role as a methodologist, sometimes even more narrowly seen as a quantitativist; and he is not to be acquitted from contributing to this caricature, himself, for example, when he referred to this stereotype in jokes he made or quoted, not realizing that the audience might not get his irony (e.g., Lazarsfeld, 1972: xvi; Stehr, 1982). However, the list of substantive contributions to several special branches of sociology and neighboring disciplines is impressive, and the fact that decades after his death some of them are still quoted is impressive in itself. A study of socio-psychological consequences of long-lasting unemployment made him known to social scientists for the first time when in 1933 *Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal* (The Unemployed of Marienthal) came out in print. Its first edition did not list any authors’ names on the cover but indicated that the study had been done by the *Wirtschaftspsychologische Forschungsstelle*; the authors’ Jewish-sounding names had been removed to secure

the study's publication at that turbulent time (see my introduction to the reprint for more details, [Jahoda et al., \[1933\] 2002](#)). During his first years in New York, PFL wrote some shorter papers on this topic and influenced through verbal communication Robert and Helen Lynd who redesigned their follow-up study *Middletown in Transition* ([Lynd and Lynd, 1937](#)) under the influence of *Marienthal*. Marie Jahoda, PFL's *Marienthal* study collaborator and first wife, exhibited a continuing interest in unemployment; she returned to this topic in the 1970s when the level of unemployment again was growing, whereas PFL stopped studying unemployment himself and contributed to this topic later on only indirectly as the dissertation supervisor of Mirra Komarovsky ([\[1940\]1971](#)).

PFL contributed several key ideas to mass media and audience research, and the studies done at the BASR formed what he called the 'Columbia tradition' (because he disliked 'school' as a designation). According to this tradition the effects of mass media are not as dramatic as educated lay people feared. As a consequence PFL did not buy into the hidden persuader message of Vance Packard, which influenced the upper stratum of middle class people in the whole Western world, and he refrained from joining the chorus of those lamenting the spread of mass society. The main point of disagreement between the Columbia perspective and the, in itself highly diverse, critical approaches can be formulated as the difference between causal attribution (media cause something) and second-tier effects (media support particular attitude formation). Critical theorists of mass media's influence argue that media itself, starting with the movie theater, radio, then television, and more recently the Internet, cause alienation, passivity, isolation, and so on, whereas PFL and his collaborators assigned to the media a more differentiated ensemble of functions ([Katz, 1987](#)). Obviously, mass media confer status to whatever is covered by them. Someone's appearance on a television show makes this person known to a huge number of viewers, and the same is true for political issues and other impersonal topics covered by the media. This way mass media legitimize the status of what they have chosen to present to their audience. Secondly, the mass media assure social norms. Recall that particular deviant behavior was banned from being broadcast up to very recent times, and 'problematic content' is still banned in countries like the People's Republic of China. During PFL's lifetime, this function was also enforced in advanced Western societies, and one can only speculate what he would say about recent developments that have nearly broken down any barriers by airing the weirdest forms of behavior. Nevertheless, the media suitability of only particular types of politicians, for example, could still be seen as proof of this point. Very much in agreement with any critical theorists, the Columbia duo – PFL and Robert K. Merton – identified as a third feature the narcotizing dysfunction of the media, something the two wrote about as early as 1948 but could be found in more recent studies on the decline of civility, weakening of social bonds, and so on ([Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1948](#)).

The most consequential and most often cited concepts PFL coined originated at the crossroad between audience and voting research. Studies about the formation of political decisions revealed telling insights. The two-step-flow of communication might be the most prominent. This was first

mentioned, in a characteristically Lazarsfeldian way, in the closing remarks of *People's Choice*. There PFL hinted at more research that should be done, for which he asked for future money, and mentioned in particular the dissemination of political messages through opinion leaders and the micro details of the change of one's political opinion ([Lazarsfeld et al., 1944](#)). The notion of a two-step-flow derived from the community study he conducted where researchers first met 'opinion leaders,' and obtained people's reaction toward 'cross pressure' before Election Day, however did not see a direct and unequivocal impact of the media. The 'crystallizers,' – individuals who did not change their preferences during the campaign, reacted toward the media messages completely differently from those who followed the media for entertainment reasons, not to mention those who made use of the news to persuade members of their social networks for whom to vote.

Seminar discussions at the Bureau helped to develop another pair of concepts. BASR's associate director Merton distilled around that time, from different empirical material, the opposition of the local and the cosmopolitan ([Merton, 1968](#): pp. 441–474). According to PFL and his colleagues, political messages could not be delivered to voters directly but only through the help of the cosmopolitan opinion leaders. Political parties, candidates, and anyone who wants to distribute their messages to audiences need the help of intermediators who enforce the message through their talking to other people. In *Personal Influence* PFL with the help of Elihu Katz refined and confirmed the two-step flow mechanism further ([Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955](#); for a more recent reevaluation see [Simonson, 2006](#)).

A third section of PFL's substantive contributions consists of his writings on the history of empirical social research, the present status of the field, and the utilization of applied social research. His concern with the past could be traced back at least to *Marienthal* when PFL suggested to his friend Hans Zeisel to round out the book with a historical sketch of sociography. *Academic Mind* ([Lazarsfeld and Thielens, 1958](#)), a monograph on the 'social scientist in a time of crisis' according to the subtitle, can be seen as the beginning of a 'sociology of the social sciences' as a distinct feature of PFL's portfolio. It also contains several of his own papers on the roots of the style of research he committed himself to. Particularly worthy of mention here is his rediscovery of Adolphe Quételet – PFL became Quételet Professor of Social Science at Columbia in 1962 – as a forerunner of quantitative studies, as also his commissioning of a couple of dissertations devoted to early stages of empirical social research in the United States, Germany, and France. Besides the rediscovery of a forgotten quantifier and the investigation of developments at the national level, his publications also contain investigations of the role of social sciences, and empirical social research in particular, in contemporary times. During the last decade-and-a-half of his life PFL devoted some of his curiosity to this topic and, again, he tried to persuade others to join him, this time less successfully than in his earlier attempts ([Lazarsfeld et al., 1967, 1975](#)).

Academic Mind demonstrates PFL's capabilities and convictions in more than one way. First of all, it took some courage to take over a study about the consequences of the hysteria

orchestrated by the US Senator Joseph McCarthy in the midst of the 1950s. Secondly, the design of the data collection is unique: PFL was able not only to hire two public opinion research agencies to administer the interviews but also commissioned David Riesman afterward to execute a restudy of both the interviewers and the interviewees to prove the validity of the whole study. The report of the findings is of the finest PFL and his collaborators could deliver. Cleverly constructed indices, measuring 'worry' and 'caution,' result in a combined index of apprehension. This measure varies according to characteristics of individuals and also with those of the place where one works: 'permissiveness' on the one side and 'quality of the college' on the other. If one has to select an exemplar for illustrating the BASR style of conducting empirical social research, this book could serve above all others. It is indeed surprising that when PFL came under fire for his 'abstracted empiricism' Mills [1972]1959 he did not pull out this book for defense, but instead reprinted the accusation (Lazarsfeld, 1972: 428–440).

The Personal Equation

In his 1969 'Memoir' PFL listed as a third factor to disentangle the roots of his research style, what he called the 'personal equation' – the two others were the ideological component and intellectual climate. Whether his introspective explanation was pertinent is not to be discussed here. But it is clear that in his case biography did shape his oeuvre. There is no book length biography of PFL at hand, but besides his autobiographical essay and some interviews he gave, we do have several biographical portraits providing the cornerstones of his trajectory (Sills, 1979, 1987; Pollak, 1980; Sills, 1987; Morrison, 1998). Born in 1901 into an assimilated Jewish upper middle class family in Vienna, young Paul was more affected by his mother than his reserved father Robert, a lawyer. Sofie Lazarsfeld (1881–1976) not only held a 'salon' in the family's inner district apartment, but she also earned recognition as an individual psychologist, as the dissidents from Freudianism under the leadership of Alfred Adler called their approach, and as the author of a counseling book *Woman's Experience of the Male* (1931). Due to the social network of his mother, PFL became acquainted with several leading intellectuals of the time. Friedrich Adler, no relation to Alfred, the lifelong lover of Sofie, impressed PFL both intellectually and politically. Because of him, PFL started studying mathematics, and after Adler's assassination of the Habsburg prime minister in 1916 PFL visited him in jail and took part in demonstrations outside court. PFL's early years were marked primarily by his political activism. Being what today in the United States would be called a 'community organizer' brought young PFL in close contact with workers and activists from the Social Democratic party. He organized summer camps for working class children and young adults where he also gave lessons. Party affiliations brought him to France for a while, and during his student years he also participated in a political cabaret and played the viola at the home of the Jahodas, the family of his first wife. His Jewishness was highly visible, but his affiliation with Judaism did not last long. When the Austrian Republic was

founded in 1918 people could renounce their religion and become *religionslos* ('nonreligious'), and PFL immediately joined the group of nonbelievers. His Jewish background would have made it difficult to climb up in the party; and although this would not have been completely impossible, a regular career in the Austrian academic world was banned for leftist Jews. PFL, therefore, never held any official position at the University of Vienna but belonged to the circle around the psychologists Charlotte and Karl Bühler from their arrival in Vienna in 1924 until his move to New York in 1933. Intellectually, his perspective consisted of an Austro-Marxist view which functioned for him as a substitute for any formal education in social sciences, a diverse familiarity with both the academic and the extramural wing of psychology, and a competence in mathematics which enabled him to do statistical analyses at a much more sophisticated level than most of the other people around him doing social research. Due to the intellectual climate in interwar Vienna, he also picked up some of the ideas which later became known as the Vienna Circle of neopositivism.

PFL came to the United States first on a fellowship that the Rockefeller Foundation offered to 'bright young men,' as it was expressed back then. At the end of the 2-year (1933–35) fellowship, the still young man – recently divorced, jobless in his European hometown, which also had been taken over by a right wing authoritarian political movement, but possessing a considerable amount of cultural capital – took the riskier path and returned from his native Vienna to New York to look for a job. Thanks to Robert Lynd, PFL was able to secure a meager job in New Jersey, acting as a counsel for young unemployed people and being paid himself from New Deal schemes. He survived the first two years on the fringe of the academic world and got a chance in 1937 to run a well-funded research project, which became known as the Princeton Radio Research Project. From then onward PFL managed to hide himself inside institutions he himself had established. His first attempt, back in Vienna, where he founded a research unit called the *Wirtschaftspsychologische Forschungsstelle* in 1931, was a failure, economically. It never earned enough money to pay the bills, but it was intellectually stimulating enough to produce what is still the only world-renowned empirical social research book written by Austrians, the *Marienthal* study. In Newark, PFL managed to raise enough money so that his small unit could survive. After the first Rockefeller contract came to an end in 1940 PFL became a devoted and successful 'foundation beggar.'

In 1941, Columbia University hired two new sociology professors, PFL at the level of associate and Merton as assistant professor, because the department could not come to a consensus on what specialization they should prefer. Instead of fighting each other the two men who did not know each other before started a marvelous collaboration and also became close friends; both told the story first to a journalist and later wrote about it from their respective points of view (Hunt, 1961; Lazarsfeld, 1975; Merton, 1998). PFL remained in Columbia until he reached retirement age in 1969. Probably disappointed by Columbia not offering him emeritus status, he commuted during the last years of his life to the University of Pittsburgh, where he had been appointed Distinguished Professor of Social Sciences. As a consultant for the Ford Foundation and other

such organizations he traveled regularly to Europe, where he arranged consultancies or visiting professorships for himself in Oslo, Paris, and Vienna. At the Bureau, in particular, from whose directorship PFL resigned as early as in 1949 but where he remained an associate director for the rest of his life, he assembled a distinct group of disciples around him. Out of this microenvironment several famous studies emerged which did not fall into PFL's own field of specialization but whose authors had gotten much inspiration from him. To mention just a few: Lipset's *Union Democracy* (Lipset et al., 1956), Lerner's *Passing Tradition* (Lerner, 1963), and Coleman et al.'s early network study on the diffusion of knowledge within the medical profession (Coleman et al., 1966). However, it seems that the Bureau had its best time before the 1960s, at which time a new mood conquered the hearts and minds of young social scientists. PFL's ingenuity at getting funds from every corner of the moneyed world – the publisher of low-quality magazines McFadden, Philip Morris, or the Office of Naval Research – was suddenly seen from the opposite perspective, and he was accused of 'following the money.'

At least one generation lies between his death and the present, so PFL has become a figure from history. As such it would be worthwhile to see a full-fledged biography of him come out, one offering an interpretation of some of the sides of him that have been difficult to understand: his contradictory feelings of inferiority, marginality, superiority, and his professional self-confidence; why he saw his migration to New York more like an exile than an early instance of being a global player; his generosity and his bullying that some characterized as running a 'machine'; or his lack of awareness of the potentialities for misunderstandings as, for example, in the case of selecting the name of his own style of doing research, namely 'administrative research.'

While waiting for such a book it is worth studying his writings, at least to learn how good empirical social research has been administered.

See also: Celebrity; Communication Research and Media Studies, History of; Communication, Twostep Flow of; Deprivation: Relative; Frankfurt School: Institute for Social Research; Functionalism, History of; Gatekeepers in Social Science; Media Events; Merton, Robert K (1910–2003); Mills, Charles Wright (1916–62); Public Opinion: Social Attitudes; Quetelet, Adolphe (1796–1874); Rational Choice Theory in Sociology; Sociology, History of; Vienna Circle: Logical Empiricism; Voting, Sociology of.

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